

In 2016, the government's "stability maintenance" policies look set to continue. These are likely to target groups perceived as disruptive. Many of those detained in 2015 may face further legal action. Proposed laws on foreign NGO management and cyber security may further restrict political space. We will work with the grain of reform where we judge this will yield meaningful progress, for example on rule of law. We will continue to raise human rights issues through whichever channel is most effective.

Colombia

There was mixed progress on the human rights situation in Colombia in 2015, despite efforts by the government of Colombia to improve it. President Santos took several significant steps to address human rights issues as part of the process to end the conflict between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). On 23 September, a landmark deal was reached on transitional justice and reparations for victims. In October, both sides agreed an accord to trace disappeared victims of the conflict. On 15 December, agreement was reaffirmed to establish a truth commission, reparations for victims, and punishment for war criminals.



March opposing sexual violence in conflict and supporting survivors organised by BE Bogota's partner organisation in Colombia 'Corporación Mujer Sigue Mis Pasos'

The Land Restitution and Victims' Law (2011) continues to provide compensation for victims, although progress is slow. Furthermore, in July, the government approved Law 1761, which categorises femicide as a separate crime and increases the punishment to up to 50 years' imprisonment. The Presidential Adviser for Human Rights published a human rights report in December after a five-year hiatus. However, human rights violations and abuses across a number of sectors remain a concern, including sexual violence, internal displacement, forced disappearances, and targeting of human rights defenders (HRDs). 63 HRDs were killed in 2015, a 13% increase from 2014. Colombia also remains one of the countries in the world with the highest levels of impunity.

The UK has been a strong supporter of Colombia's improvement on human rights issues. Our overarching

human rights objectives are to reduce impunity for human rights violations and abuses, improve access to justice, and support strong government institutions. Through prioritising three issues – the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), business and human rights, and HRDs – the UK has made a tangible difference. The UK helped Colombia draft its National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights, published in December 2015. This is the first of its kind outside of Europe. The UK continues to raise human rights concerns with the Colombian government on a regular basis, including on specific cases.

The peace process, which both sides are committed to concluding in 2016, will further help the government of Colombia to tackle human rights issues. The FARC's unilateral ceasefire and the government's suspension of aerial bombardments have reduced the intensity of hostilities. However, there is concern that security could worsen on the signing of a peace deal, as illegal armed groups and criminals may fill the vacuum left by FARC's demobilisation. Threats to land reform campaigners and HRDs may increase in the short term. Underlying drivers of the conflict, such as inequality and corruption, may lead to an increase in social protest.

For 2016, the UK's human rights priorities will include further support for the post-conflict stage of the peace process. In addition to comprehensive bilateral support, the UK is a significant contributor to the UN Post-Conflict Trust Fund and the EU Trust Fund for Colombia. The UK will also continue working bilaterally on the priority areas of PSVI and HRDs, as well as business and human rights.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The human rights situation in the DPRK showed no sign of improvement in 2015.

The DPRK government continued to reject the findings and recommendations of the UN Commission of Inquiry report, and to protest against resolutions passed by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and UN Security Council (UNSC). It persisted in rejecting serious engagement with the international community and did not undertake any notable measures to improve the domestic human rights situation. Whilst the DPRK accepted 114 recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, they declined discussions on their implementation plans, despite the encouragement of the international community.

In 2015, human rights remained one of our policy priorities for the DPRK. We helped ensure the issue remained high on the international community's agenda, and raised concerns directly with the DPRK authorities. We also supported small-scale projects aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable groups in the DPRK.

We worked to focus attention on the DPRK's human rights record through international fora such as the UN General Assembly, the UNSC and the HRC, where lobbying by the UK government helped to secure strong resolutions. We also supported the 14th session of the EU-DPRK political dialogue

held in Pyongyang in June 2015, where the EU side raised human rights, including the use of prison camps, torture, and the lack of freedom of expression and political freedoms.

We took every available opportunity in 2015 to raise our serious concerns about DPRK human rights directly with the DPRK government in London and Pyongyang. Senior FCO officials met diplomats from the DPRK Embassy and visiting senior DPRK officials. These meetings were used to reiterate our concerns over the DPRK's failure to uphold its international obligations. The British Embassy in Pyongyang repeatedly raised our concerns on human rights directly with the DPRK government.

In 2015, the FCO funded a number of projects aimed at increasing awareness of international human rights standards and improving the provision of equipment available to disabled persons in the DPRK. We have also offered technical human rights training for DPRK officials but, at the time of writing, the DPRK authorities had yet to respond.

Human rights remain a priority for our DPRK policy in 2016. We will continue to work with like-minded partners to urge the DPRK government to accept the existence and extent of their human rights violations, and to demonstrate a willingness to take steps to address these issues – for example, by agreeing to a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur and other senior UN officials.

We will maintain pressure on the DPRK through international fora (such as the UN and EU), and look for ways in which we can support the work of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights through its office in the Republic of Korea. Alongside this, we will press the DPRK to deliver on the UPR recommendations they have accepted, and use bilateral and international engagement to keep pressure on the DPRK.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The human rights situation in the DRC deteriorated in 2015. There was some progress on efforts to tackle sexual violence but other human rights continued to be violated, especially related to the electoral process. There were arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, reports of torture of political activists, attacks on freedom of speech, and extra-judicial killings by state agents.

In 2015, the UK's human rights work in the DRC focused on protecting political space and preventing sexual and gender-based violence. We worked to build long-term stability in the east, through contributions to MONUSCO (UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC), the work of the Department for International Development, and projects supported by the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

We were concerned about the tightening of political space during 2015. There were a number of arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society figures and human rights defenders (HRDs). The British Embassy in Kinshasa monitors trials of political detainees on a regular basis, and raises concerns at the highest levels of the DRC government. We officially raised the Filimbi activist case, involving young people arrested in

March and April 2015 at a workshop designed to encourage Congolese youth to perform their civic duties peacefully.

The DRC government made some progress in addressing impunity in the armed forces. In September the Military High Court delivered its verdict upholding the conviction of Colonel Mukalayi for the murder of HRD Floribert Chebeya. In December, the National Assembly adopted legislation updating the Military Penal Code, abolishing immunity for these crimes for the Head of State and other government figures. However, we are concerned that many in the security forces continue to enjoy impunity for human rights violations.

We remain deeply concerned about the massacres in Beni, and are supporting MONUSCO in preventing future incidences and reducing human rights violations in the east of the country. We are particularly disturbed by the recent escalation in Nande-Hutu ethnic conflict in North Kivu province.

The UK funds projects that help victims of sexual violence in conflict to obtain justice. We are working with the DRC government to encourage use of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict by legal and medical practitioners. This work includes translation of the International Protocol into Swahili and Lingala to enable its effective use at a local level.

In 2016, the UK will continue to focus on political and civil society space and abuses related to the forthcoming Presidential elections. We will monitor arrests, detentions and disappearances of opposition and civil society figures, and will raise any concerns with the DRC government. We will continue to encourage the DRC government to take concrete steps to improve respect for human rights, particularly by taking action against armed groups in the east. We will also continue our work on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, funding a number of grassroots projects and working closely with Jeanine Mabunda, the DRC President's Personal Representative on the Fight Against Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment.

Egypt

In 2015, Egypt held parliamentary elections, completing the final institutional stage on its road map for political transition. At the same time, Egypt faced a significant terrorist threat, resulting in at least 366 deaths (in addition to the attack on the Metrojet aircraft that killed 224 people). Against this background, the human rights situation remained poor and continued to deteriorate.

Although 2015 saw pardons for a small number of prisoners, Egypt continued to detain activists, journalists and protesters. In February, 230 activists were sentenced to life imprisonment in a mass trial in relation to protests in 2011. In May, former President Mohamed Morsi was sentenced to death in a mass trial with more than 100 others. Pre-trial detention periods were long; photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid (Shawkan) has been in pre-trial detention since August 2013.

In 2015, reports of torture, police brutality, and forced disappearance increased. A local NGO documented reports of 676 cases of torture and 137 deaths in detention. The National