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# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

## Debate on human rights in 2025

Each year on 10 December we celebrate International Human Rights Day by highlighting issues of importance from around the world. It is an opportunity to reflect on progress made over the last year, as well as an opportunity to highlight the injustices that remain. For the last ten years Amnesty International UK and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Human Rights have held a Parliamentary reception to celebrate human rights. For eight years we welcomed a Minister or Secretary of State at that event to set out the UK Government's commitments to human rights. As we have not been joined by a government representative since the 2024 election, we urge Parliamentarians to use this debate to express the importance of the UK government prioritising opportunities to join civil society and human rights activists from around the country to promote human rights. When civil society, rights' activists, Parliament and Government come together, we can speak with one voice about the benefits that human rights bring to people's lives, which is needed now more than ever.

Human rights are under attack globally, and this briefing covers a selection of priority issues for Amnesty International UK, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza and conflict in Sudan, threats to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), transnational repression to Hong Kong nationals, and British Nationals arbitrarily detained abroad.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. **Sudan:** Given the reports on UK military equipment being used by the RSF, what steps has the UK government taking to conduct its due diligence when licensing arms transfers to the UAE, which has reportedly diverted weapons to Sudan?
2. **Israel and the OPT:** Will the UK government ensure consistency across its foreign policy in response to violations of international law and i) commit resources to support war crime and other violation investigations in Gaza (as it has done for those committed in Ukraine) and ii) end trade with illegal settlements in illegally occupied Palestine (as it has done in illegally occupied parts of Ukraine and Crimea).

3. **Hong Kong – Transnational Repression:** What steps is the Government taking to engage with civil society organisations and affected communities on the issue of transnational repression?
4. **ECHR:** Does the Government accept the risk that pursuing changes to the interpretation of the ECHR may do little to satisfy its critics and could embolden those voices pressing to withdraw from the Convention entirely?
5. **Ahmed al Doush:** Will the UK government call for the release of British national Ahmed Al-Doush, a British national detained in Saudi Arabia?

## Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

**Gaza:** On 3 December 2025 Amnesty International published a [legal analysis](#) setting out that Israel's genocide continues in Gaza, despite the ceasefire. At least 327 people, including 136 children, have been killed in Israeli attacks since the ceasefire was announced on 9 October. Israel continues to restrict access to critical aid and relief supplies, including medical supplies and equipment necessary to repair life-sustaining infrastructure, violating multiple orders from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for Israel to ensure that Palestinians have access to humanitarian supplies.

The objective probability that the current conditions would lead to the destruction of Palestinians in Gaza persists, particularly considering the enhanced vulnerability of the population to sickness and spread of disease following months of famine caused by years of unlawful blockade and months of total siege earlier this year. This has created circumstances that would lead to a slow death of Palestinians resulting from the lack of proper food, water, shelter, clothing or sanitation.

While there has been some very limited improvement, Israel continues to severely restrict the entry of supplies and the restoration of services essential for the survival of the civilian population including by blocking the entry of equipment and material necessary to repair life-sustaining infrastructure and required to remove unexploded ordnance, contaminated rubble and sewage, all of which pose serious and potentially irreversible public health and environmental risks.

Israel's systematic displacement of Palestinians from fertile lands has continued unabated, with Israeli military currently deployed across around 54-58% of the Gaza Strip. Israel has not stopped severely limiting Palestinians' access to the sea.

For there to be any hope of sustainable peace for Palestinians and Israelis alike, there has to be accountability for the grave violations committed and that are ongoing. Decades of impunity for grave violations of international law have laid the ground for genocide to be committed. **The UK Government must ensure there will be justice and accountability for the genocide and crimes against humanity committed against Palestinians in Gaza and should provide expert technical support to aid investigations of war crimes and other violations, just as the UK is doing for [Ukraine](#).**

**West Bank:** On 25 October the UN [reported](#) that Israeli settler attacks are surging whilst steps to annex the West Bank intensify. Since 7 October 2023, and up until 13 November 2025, Israeli security forces and settlers have killed at least 1,017 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Among the victims were 221 children. On 24 October, a video verified by the UN Human Rights office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory shows an Israeli settler, joined by Israeli security forces, together severely assaulting a 58 -year-old olive farmer in Nahhalin, Bethlehem.

The UN has reported that October was the worst month on record for settler attacks, and 757 attacks have been recorded in the first half of 2025 alone – 13 per cent higher than the same period last year. Most attacks have been recorded in Area C, which is increasingly being emptied of Palestinians. However, the UN Human Rights office has also been increasingly documenting attacks in Area B, indicating an ever-shrinking space for Palestinians.

At the same time settlement expansion has ramped up. Over the past year, there have been 84 new settler outposts compared to 49 the year before, according to data from the Israeli NGO Peace Now. This marks a rapid escalation compared to the yearly average of eight outposts in the past decade. In June Amnesty International [reported](#) that Israel had displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, the largest displacement since 1967.

In July 2024 the International Court of Justice found that Israel's occupation was unlawful and directed third states "*To abstain from entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory*" and "*To take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*". **The UK government must fully implement the ICJ Advisory Opinion and – at minimum – end all trade with settlements.** Given the direction from the ICJ and the precedent in UK law and policy to ban trade in goods originating from other illegally occupied territories (Crimea and illegally occupied parts of Ukraine), it is unclear what the obstacles are which are preventing the UK from taking this step.

## Sudan

In September 2024 the UN Security Council extended an arms embargo in place since 2004 which applies only to the Darfur region. It failed to expand the embargo to the rest of Sudan. The existing arms embargo had been poorly implemented and frequently violated and is wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the current crisis. The conflict continues to be fuelled by an almost unimpeded supply of weapons and ammunition to Sudan, including to Darfur, by states and corporate actors around the world. States and various armed groups in Sudan used neighbouring countries as supply lines for [weapons transfers](#) into and around the country.

Large quantities of manufactured weapons and military equipment from China, Russia, Turkey and [the United Arab Emirates](#), among other countries, continue to be

imported into Sudan, where there is a substantial risk of them being used for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. In addition, hundreds of thousands of blank guns are exported to Sudan by companies in Türkiye along with millions of blank cartridges for likely conversion into lethal weapons.

It has been reported that [UK military equipment has been used by the RSF in the conflict](#), suspected to have been diverted by the UAE. The UN Security council has been given photographs showing UK made engines in UAE manufactured armoured vehicles used by RSF forces responsible for widespread killings and other atrocities. Other UK equipment documented also included small arms targeting systems believed to have been licenced to UAE and subsequently diverted to Sudan.

Licensing data shows at least 26 licences granted categories that would include these systems between 2015 and September last year (2024). The UK government must conduct its due diligence and review its arms licenses to the UAE and conduct a full review into how UK weapons and components have ended up in Sudan. The UK should also suspend arms export licensing to the UAE until there is no longer a clear risk that such items might be diverted to Sudan.

The issue with UK supplied engines being used in armoured vehicles raises a number of additional concerns. Despite serial numbers indicating they were specifically intended for use in these APCs, it's possible that they were not originally subject to arms export licensing requirements. This and similar cases over the years have highlighted a serious loophole in UK export controls concerning goods that do not meet the threshold and specification for arms export licences, but nevertheless provide critical components to the finished military system. In 2022, the UK government announced significant changes to export licencing controls to help close this long-standing loophole to be able to stop components like engines and other parts that ordinarily would not need arms export licences from being exported and used by military forces in embargoed destinations. The example of UK made engines being found in military vehicles in Sudan is an example of the type of loophole the UK government wanted to close. This is known as the enhanced Military End Use control, which imposes licencing controls on these goods and requires the government to notify the company in writing that any product that risks being used by military forces would become subject to arms export licensing and refused in these exact sorts of circumstances. The government must now demonstrate that on the basis of this evidence, it has invoked its 2022 Military end-use provision and notified the UK company that these engines are now subject to export controls and taken the necessary action to stop this from happening in the future. Compliance teams should also investigate these activities to ensure that the company followed all existing export control requirements, including what steps it had in place to prevent its products contributing to serious violations of international law.

## Key recommendation

The UK government should halt all arms transfers to the United Arab Emirates until it can ensure there is no risk of diversion to Sudan. The government must ensure that UK engines and any other relevant components found to have been used by [the RSF in the conflict](#), are subject to export controls, including through – if necessary – invoking its 2022 Military End Use Control provision.

## **Hong Kong – Transnational Repression**

Chinese authorities' efforts to curtail academic freedom and other rights beyond China's borders is part of a phenomenon increasingly referred to as "transnational repression", which refers to Chinese authorities' actions to silence, control or deter dissent and criticism by overseas Chinese students and others, in violation of their human rights.

Chinese authorities' crackdown against pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders who are leading activism overseas includes harassment of their families in Hong Kong and arresting on the ground activists allegedly affiliated with them on suspicion of "providing financial assistance to the exiled activists". Furthermore, Hong Kong equates international exchange that they do not approve of as "collusion with foreign forces". Police label benign day-to-day interaction between activists and foreign actors as acts that can potentially endanger national security.

Chinese and Hong Kong authorities' systematic dismantling of human rights has gone global - alarmingly using bounties to silence dissent and deter other activists and organisations from engaging with wanted advocates. Hong Kong police have offered rewards of HK\$1 million (equivalent to GBP £100,000) for information leading to the capture of 13 individuals based overseas. The 13 alleged "fugitives" are accused of a set of vaguely defined national security offences, including "colluding with foreign forces" and "inciting secession." At least eight of these individuals reside or base their activism work in the UK. These bounties not only threaten the liberty and safety of the activists targeted; they also have far-reaching consequences on other activists who are now left feeling increasingly uncertain about their security, whether in Hong Kong or overseas. The bounties only compound the already existing climate of fear.

In July 2025, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) issued the inquiry report on "*Transnational Repression in the UK*", which rightfully concluded the UK government is lacking in its domestic and diplomatic responses to transnational repression. Gaps persist in key areas such as police training, the absence of a dedicated reporting mechanism, consistent and cross government data gathering, and limited community outreach, leaving those targeted without the comprehensive protection and support they need.

### **Key recommendation**

Amnesty International is calling on the UK Government to adopt a more proactive, consistent and cross-departmental strategy to transnational repression, and act strongly with concrete actions to protect affected individuals and communities across the country.

## **European Convention on Human Rights**

The [latest proposals](#) by the Government to change the asylum system and other parts of the wider immigration system include a renewed threat to further undercut the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). There are broadly two specific aspects to this. However, a further vital consideration is the wider context and aim of the proposals when viewed as a whole.

## Article 8

A great deal of the recent policy debate about migration in the UK has centred around the alleged role of Article 8, the right to private and family life, in immigration decisions. As has been conclusively shown,<sup>1</sup> much of this debate is completely overblown (only 0.73% of foreign national offenders, for example, successfully appealed against deportation on human rights grounds), based on misleading representations of cases made to sound more controversial than they are and misrepresenting the extent to which Article 8-based decisions actually impact on case outcomes. Nevertheless, the government has decided to follow its predecessor in pointing the finger at Article 8, deflecting criticism. The government has therefore announced that it intends to introduce legislation for the express aim of further restricting consideration of private and family life when the Home Office refuses someone permission to stay in the UK and is seeking to remove them from the country (such as in deportation cases).

Specific proposals include that legislation should:

- Confine family life in immigration cases to partner-partner and parent-child relationships. It is unclear, but it appears possible that the intention would be that only parent-child relationships that concerned minor children or, at least, dependent children would be included in any new statutory framework.
- Ordinarily require removal or deportation proceedings to overrule any private or family life that has developed in the UK after a first decision to refuse someone permission to stay – save in “*the most exceptional cases*.” On the face of the matter, it seems intended that legislation would require this to apply however long had passed since that original decision.

Although the intention to deprive refugees and migrants of full respect for their private and family life in immigration proceedings is clear enough, it is not clear how fundamentally different are these proposals to the existing regime introduced by section 19 of the Immigration Act 2014, during a previous period when a government was pointing the blame at the ECHR and Article 8. That regime already gives specific recognition solely to partner-partner and parent-child relationships; and treats private life and family life as having little weight when it develops during periods in which the person is in the UK without permission.

## Article 3

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<sup>1</sup> Other ways Governments have increased tensions surrounding human rights by immigration policy are explained in [Amnesty's June 2025 briefings on Article 8](#): private and family life and [on Deportation](#) (and Article 8). The Home Secretary's latest proposals indicate that these same flawed approaches on Article 8 and deportation are also to be continued.

The government has also announced new plans regarding Article 3 ECHR – the prohibition of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. On this, the Government has indicated that it will seek agreement with the other members of the Council of Europe with the hope of limiting the absolute bar on inhuman and degrading treatment. The intention is to make the Home Office freer to remove or deport people from the UK in circumstances where this may expose them to conditions that are so severely detrimental to their physical or mental health as to be inhuman or degrading.

Although the intention is to exclude such matters as severe prison conditions and limited healthcare in other countries from consideration in removal or deportation proceedings, the courts – including the European Court of Human Rights – has already greatly limited the scope for these matters to prevent removal.

### **The wider asylum and immigration context**

The wider context is the Government's express intention to attempt to calm social division that manifests in xenophobic and racist hate towards, amongst others, refugees and migrants by pursuing its own hostile and punitive policies against these same people. In this, like in much else among its latest proposals, the Government is closely following its predecessor and a policy approach promoted by both the official opposition and the Reform UK party. Yet, this approach of hostility and deterrence rather than compassion and asylum provision, is only further increasing public and political tension on human rights commitment – including pressure on the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Government approach is, therefore, extremely dangerous. It has effectively given its backing to hostility to refugees and migrants and to human rights laws and those who seek to uphold them. It is also increasing the circumstances in which people most harmed by its policies will have to turn to those same human rights laws; and therefore, increasing the salience of the European Convention on Human Rights and court decisions relating to the Human Rights Act 1998 and that Convention. Worse, by other measures such as, for example, to refuse accommodation and support to people seeking asylum who will be made destitution and homeless and to severely restrict the capacity of refugees and migrants to integrate well, the Government is adopting an approach that will likely make the poor social consequences of its approach even more visible.

The attempt to renegotiate the meaning or application of Article 3 will also be used as a test by those who want the UK to leave the Convention. In an echo of the response to the Cameron government's attempted renegotiation of the terms of the UK's EU membership pre the Brexit referendum, failure or lack of quick progress will be jumped on as justification for leaving.

### **Key recommendation**

The UK Government must protect the ECHR and not threaten the future of the UK's commitments to the ECHR and human rights more broadly. The UK Government must provide protection through making the asylum system fair and efficient and repeal all the previous Government's harmful legislation, including asylum provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. The Home Office could then resolve asylum claims effectively and



reduce the current need for appeals by thousands of people because that Act requires their claims to be wrongly refused.

## Ahmed al-Doush

12 May 2025, British national Ahmed Al-Doush was sentenced to 10 years in prison (later reduced to 8) following his arrest by Saudi authorities on 31 August 2024 on a family holiday to the country. Al-Doush was convicted by Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism court, and while information of his charges and conviction has not been shared, a judge told him that he would face serious charges for social media posts falling under his right to free expression. He has faced multiple violations of his fair trial rights. **The exact reasons and evidence for Al-Doush's charges and conviction are still unknown and have not been clarified to the family, nor the UK Government.**

Al-Doush's family has raised serious concern about the way the UK Government has supported Al-Doush and the family living in the UK. Their frustration and concern stem from the ongoing lack of urgency and active steps taken to resolve Al-Doush's situation. The UK Government has secured five visits to Al-Doush in detention – one only secured in the days after the family decided to make Al-Doush's situation public. The family feel that after a year of detention there have been minimal further steps taken to protect his rights or to raise his case with urgency. Despite numerous requests from the UK government to Saudi authorities, the UK government has failed to secure any court documents, including details of the exact reasons and evidence for the charges against Al-Doush or the trial judgment from May 2025 – nearly six months ago. The FCDO has stated that they will continue to make these requests but have conceded that the Saudi authorities do not have to provide them with this information which would allow the UK Government to fully understand why a British citizen has been detained for what appear to be charges based on the exercise of free expression. **Most concerning is that the UK Government has not yet publicly called for Al-Doush's release if he is detained solely for exercising his human rights, nor does it appear the UK government is privately calling for it or acknowledging the urgency and impact of violations to Al-Doush's rights.** This reluctance to take a position has resulted in the Saudi authorities, during submissions before the UN, pointing to the UK government's failure to speak out on behalf of Al-Doush as evidence that Saudi authorities are not doing anything wrong.

There is also concern about the treatment of Al-Doush's four British citizen children (one of whom was born since Al-Doush's arrest) and his wife living in the United Kingdom who were left completely in the dark for 2.5 months with the UK Government refusing to share any information known about Al-Doush's detention, status or well-being on the grounds of data protection. This continued until the UK Government could meet with Al-Doush and get his consent to share any information with his wife – which only occurred in mid-November.

### Key recommendation:

The UK government must publicly call for Ahmed al-Doush's immediate and unconditional release if he is detained solely for exercising his human rights.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Sudan:** The UK government should halt all arms transfers to the United Arab Emirates until it can ensure there is no risk of diversion to Sudan. The government must ensure that UK engines and any other relevant components found to have been used by [the RSF in the conflict](#), are subject to export controls, including through – if necessary – invoking its 2022 Military End Use Control provision.
2. **Gaza:**
3. **Hong Kong – Transnational Repression:** The UK Government to adopt a more proactive, consistent and cross-departmental strategy to transnational repression, and act strongly with concrete actions to protect affected individuals and communities across the country.
4. **ECHR:** The UK Government must protect the ECHR and not threaten the future of the UK's commitments to the ECHR and human rights more broadly. The UK Government must provide protection through making the asylum system fair and efficient and repeal all the previous Government's harmful legislation, including asylum provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. The Home Office could then resolve asylum claims effectively and reduce the current need for appeals by thousands of people because that Act requires their claims to be wrongly refused.
5. **Ahmed al-Doush:** The UK government must publicly call for Ahmed al-Doush' immediate and unconditional release if he is detained solely for exercising his human rights.