

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

UPR Submission

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The United Kingdom



سازمان دفاع از قربانیان خشونت
Organization for Defending Victims
of Violence

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About ODVV

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is focused on promoting human rights, supporting victims of violence, empowering Iranian civil society, and offering human rights consultations to the Iranian institutions and organizations. ODVV is actively involved in running various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Other activities include:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva;
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Unilateral Coercive Measures (Economic Sanctions), Racism, Racial Discrimination, Islamophobia and Xenophobia;
- Publishing *Defenders* Quarterly (in English), human rights news and developments *Weekly* (in Farsi), daily updating ODVV websites in English, Farsi and Arabic;

4. ODVV is submitting the following report on the human rights situation of the United Kingdom, as well as the human rights situations caused by its foreign policy, in order to contribute to the improvement of human rights both inside and outside the country.

Human Rights Concerns in the United Kingdom

Asylum Seekers and Migrants

5. ODVV expresses serious concerns over the situation of asylum seekers and migrants. It seems that the United Kingdom pursues laws and policies with little regard for their impact on human rights of the vulnerable group. In the previous UPR cycle, the UK only noted¹ the recommendations on asylum seekers. The government's recent plan to "turn around" boats of migrants and refugees in the English Channel is irresponsible, dangerous, and unlawful. Pushbacks at sea would further endanger people already in a perilous situation, raising concerns for their rights and safety.
6. After announcing the plans, UK border enforcement guards were filmed conducting drills in which they appeared to practice potentially dangerous techniques such as pushing and ramming boats with jet-skis.²

Rights to Adequate Standard of Living

7. The United Kingdom policies that affect levels of domestic poverty are considered as another source of concern because they do not seem to comply with the socioeconomic rights obligations of the country. In October 2021, the government cut up to £1,040 per year from social security support to people on the Universal Credit system, despite widespread warnings³ that doing so would further exacerbate poverty. Domestic civil society groups and frontline professionals predicted the step would increase food insecurity, debt, and homelessness and harm physical and mental health. This is while the UK accepted a recommendation on "Develop[ing] clear national strategies for the eradication of the poverty of about four million children..."⁴

Discrimination

8. Racial and ethnic disparities continue, including in employment, criminal justice, and health, while in previous round of UPR, the country received about 9 recommendations on combating social discrimination and accepted seven out of nine⁵. ODVV is concerned that Islamophobia still remains one of the most acceptable forms of racism in the country. However, in the previous cycle, the UK supported a recommendation on taking effective measures to combat hate speech, Islamophobia, and racial aggressive acts⁶.
9. Discrimination in the exercise of police powers continued to be a concern. Data on fines issued for non-compliance with the COVID-19 related lockdown revealed that Black and Asian people were disproportionately fined. Police figures published in 2020 showed

¹ UPR United Kingdom - Session 27 / May 2017 - Responses to Recommendations - English | UPR Info (upr-info.org)

² <https://news.sky.com/video/channel-crossings-border-force-staff-seen-training-to-use-turn-around-tactics-12407299>

³ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/09/Universal%20Credit%20-%20HRW%20Letter%20to%20MPs%20-%20September%202021.pdf

⁴ . Recommendation No. [134.168 by Syrian Arab Republic](#)

⁵ . Recommendations NO.: 134.177 by Libya; 134.178 by Uzbekistan; 134.87 by the United States; 134.95 by Kazakhstan; 134.96 by Republic of Korea; 134.111 by Thailand and 134.128 by Malaysia.

⁶ . Recommendation NO. 134.23 by Egypt

that Black people were up to eight times more likely to have Taser used against them than White people in 2018/19.⁷

10. A draft policing law proposed in July 2021 drew widespread criticism for risks that deepen racial and gender disparities in the justice system while forcing professionals to betray the trust of vulnerable people.⁸
11. The Kingdom has received 15 recommendations on addressing and decreasing hate crimes⁹ in 2017 UPR and accepted 14 recommendations while the official statistics have recorded increasing rates of hate crimes from 2017 to 2021¹⁰.

Terrorism and Counterterrorism

12. The UK has passed and announced a number of counter-terrorism measures, which are of concern. Worries have been expressed over the statelessness of an individual - Shamima Begum - who joined a terrorist group when she was a child and later denied citizenship and entry to the country.¹¹
13. Citizenship revocation and statelessness have lethal effects upon human individuals. Shamima Begum's case highlights how the dignity of citizens from marginalised backgrounds — in this case a combination of an ethnic minority, a girl/woman, a Muslim, and a mother— has been systematically undermined by the state. Although, the country supported recommendation to review counter-terrorism measures¹² which target individuals or groups based on race, ethnic background or religion, including Muslims or Muslim communities, in the 2017 cycle.¹³
14. Under a proposed rule change quietly added to the nationality and borders bill,¹⁴ individuals could be stripped of their British citizenship without warning, if it is not “reasonably practicable” to do so, or in the interests of national security, diplomatic relations or otherwise in the public interest.

Arms Trade

15. The UK is in breach of its international commitments, since it resumed issuing licences for military exports to Saudi Arabia in July 2020, after a court ruling in June 2019 required the government to suspend new licensing of military equipment to Saudi Arabia. UK-made weapons are being used in Saudi Arabia's devastating attacks on Yemen, which have killed thousands of civilians and created the world's largest humanitarian catastrophe. The UK is one of Saudi Arabia's leading arms suppliers, along

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/united-kingdom/report-united-kingdom/>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/sep/13/policing-bill-will-deepen-racial-and-gender-disparities-say-experts>

⁹ <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/29/12053488/uk-police-hate-crimes-57-percent-brexit-vote>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021>

¹¹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/united-kingdom>

¹² Recommendation No. 134.128

¹³ UPR United Kingdom - Session 27 / May 2017 - Responses to Recommendations - English | UPR Info (upr-info.org)

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/nov/17/new-bill-quietly-gives-powers-to-remove-british-citizenship-without-notice>

with the United States. It is also a major supplier of arms to the United Arab Emirates, another country in the coalition that is bombing Yemen.

16. The published value of UK arms licensed for export to the Saudi-led coalition since the bombing began in March 2015 is £6.9 billion, however, CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) estimates that the real value of arms exported to Saudi Arabia is over £20 billion.¹⁵
17. Several sources including the reports prepared by the UN Experts on Yemen¹⁶ raise questions over UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the role of British military advisers. In addition, accounts prepared by some NGOs have offered clear and undeniable evidence that the military equipment made and exported by the United Kingdom to the Coalition has been used to fuel the conflict, mass killing of civilians by targeting civilian gatherings including weddings, funerals and crowded market places and ruin civilian structures including schools; mosques; markets, factories and food storage warehouses in Yemen.¹⁷
18. In response to the excessive use of force against United States Black Lives Matter protesters, members of parliament and several organizations,¹⁸ called on the UK to suspend exports of crowd control equipment, such as tear gas and rubber bullets, to the United States law enforcement agencies.
19. This is while in 2017, the Kingdom received and accepted a recommendation¹⁹ on careful assessment of the transfer of arms to the countries where they are likely to be used for human rights abuses and violations.

Recommendations

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) calls on the government of United Kingdom to:

20. Urgently review the impact of and reverse its rules and measures on asylum seekers and immigrants.
21. Ensure all current and future counter-terrorism measures are fully compatible with international human rights law and standards.
22. Pay particular attention to how counter-terrorism measures impact the rights of persons to be protected from inhumane or degrading treatment, arbitrary deprivation of private and family life.
23. Halt its arms trade with countries that are killing civilians and conduct serious investigations into alleged war crimes committed by the Saudi led coalition using UK made arms, aircrafts, military machinery and munitions.
24. Prevent proceeding with the planned benefit cut where they cause violations of people's human rights- including the rights to an adequate standard of living and social security.

¹⁵ <https://caat.org.uk/homepage/stop-arming-saudi-arabia/uk-arms-to-saudi-arabia/>

¹⁶ S/2018/594.

¹⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/exposed-british-made-bombs-used-civilian-targets-yemen;>

<https://caat.org.uk/homepage/stop-arming-saudi-arabia/the-war-on-yemens-civilians/>

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Yemen-report-draft_3.5_PDF-w-cover.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/usa-protests-uk-should-review-exports-security-equipment-us-police-forces>

¹⁹ . Recommendation No. 134.132

25. Thoroughly study and address hate crimes – including hate crimes against Muslims - discrimination and Islamophobia and take effective measures to combat hate speech, xenophobia and Islamophobia that are on the increase in the society.