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Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab | CREDIT: Simon Dawson/Bloomberg

Britain will impose sanctions on authoritarian regimes that arrest or intimidate dissident journalists, under foreign secretary plans

By Edward Malnick, SUNDAY POLITICAL EDITOR

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Britain will impose sanctions on authoritarian regimes that harass and imprison dissident journalists and campaigners, as part of its role as a "good global citizen" after Brexit, Dominic Raab declares today.

Writing in The Sunday Telegraph, the Foreign Secretary pledges that the Government will

use new legislation to “provide a layer of UK accountability” against “those who target journalists, whistle-blowers and human rights campaigners with impunity in their own countries”.

The move follows calls by MPs for ministers to use economic sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans, to punish foreign officials involved in “violating media freedom”.

The Commons foreign affairs committee had expressed concern that the UK has not imposed sanctions on Saudi figures in relation to the murder of [Jamal Khashoggi](#), the Saudi-born Washington Post columnist killed in the kingdom’s consulate in Istanbul a year ago.

As he prepares to fly to New York with [Boris Johnson, to attend the UN General Assembly](#), Mr Raab signals that ministers will take unilateral action against those involved in intimidating or locking up journalists, when Britain sets its own sanctions policy after Brexit, having previously been part of a joint approach taken by EU members.

"When we leave the EU, we will ... reinforce our sanctions legislation to hold those who commit serious abuses of human rights to account – by barring them from entering the UK, and freezing their assets such as bank accounts," Mr Raab states.

“That will provide a layer of UK accountability against those who target journalists, whistle-blowers and human rights campaigners with impunity in their own countries.”

This week Mr Raab will appear at an event in New York with [Amal Clooney, the human rights lawyer about a Media Freedom Coalition set up by Canada and the UK, for which Mrs Clooney is now a special envoy](#).

Mr Raab said he and the Prime Minister intended to use their visit to the UN to “reinforce Britain’s role in the world as a good global citizen.”

He added: "We will be a champion of the basic freedoms enshrined in the UN Charter, and a doughty defender of the rules based international system – the world’s best bet when it comes to tackling the challenges we all share."

Earlier this month the foreign affairs committee, chaired by Tom Tugendhat, the Conservative backbencher, cited figures showing that an average of one journalist died every four days between 2008 and 2018 due to their work.

“Most were not killed while reporting on war, but deliberately targeted,” the committee said. “Their deaths overwhelmingly go unpunished ... Unlike Canada, the [Foreign Office’s] partner in this summer's Global Conference for Media Freedom, the UK has not imposed sanctions following the murder of Jamal Khashoggi”

Last year [Theresa May introduced legislation specifically targeting human rights abusers with asset freezes and bans from entering the UK](#), as part of the country's response to the chemical weapons attack on [Sergei Skripal](#), a former spy, and his daughter, Yulia, in

Salisbury, in March 2018. It later emerged that the measures would not come into force until after the UK leaves the EU.

Mr Raab's comments make clear that ministers intend to use the legislation to punish individuals linked to the targeting of journalists as well as individuals linked to attacks such as those on Mr Skripal and his daughter.

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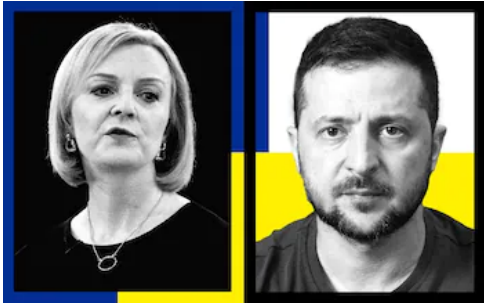
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