

G4S THREAT REPORT

MAY 2021

National Security

The UK Treasury has said it plans to consider proposals to block companies from listing on the London Stock Exchange on national security grounds. Under potential new rules, the UK could block a company from listing on the exchange if it would give a foreign state access to commercial or state secrets.

Firms owned by individuals who might harm UK interests could also be blocked under the new proposals, which would likely impact sectors including technology, defence and national infrastructure.

The decision to strengthen security rules comes amid attempts by Chancellor Rishi Sunak had previously said he would relax the UK's strict stock market listing rules in a bid to attract investment.

Civil Unrest

In response to Israel's military action in Gaza, tens of thousands of people gathered in cities and towns globally over the weekends of 15 and 22 May to demonstrate **in support of Palestine**. In the UK, organisers estimated that over 180,000 people attended a rally in Hyde Park, **London**, making it the largest pro-Palestine rally in UK history. The rally mostly passed off peacefully, although scuffles took place in Kensington when pro-Palestine supporters approached a counter-rally in support of Israel. Smaller rallies took place in Manchester, Bristol and Nottingham, where participants called on the UK government to condemn Israel's actions in Gaza.

Some Palestine solidarity groups in the UK have also engaged in direct actions against Israeli companies operating the country. In **Leicester**, pro-Palestine activists stormed a factory owned by UAV Tactical Systems, a subsidiary of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit, which produces drones used by the Israeli military. Demonstrators also made their way to the roof of the factory and disrupted operations for several days. Palestine Action, the group behind the protest, has said it also intends to target Elbit operations in Greater Manchester and Staffordshire.

Groups who support Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS), an economic movement aimed at reducing consumption of goods produced in Israel, and which calls on companies to divest from operations in Israel, have utilised the recent media attention on the issue to garner support for their cause. However, any increase in support is likely to be limited to grass-roots level consumer boycotts of Israeli products rather than large-scale divestment of operations in Israel or any government sanctions. The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) has called on supporters to boycott Israeli fruit and vegetable exports, AXA, HP, Puma, Ahava, SodaStream, Sabra and Pillsbury, after the group said it identified that boycotts of these brands would have a direct impact company operations.

Natural Disasters

The environment secretary has outlined plans to protect and restore nature in the UK and tackle the country's biodiversity crisis. The changes will include an amendment to the Environment Bill requiring a legally binding target for species by 2030, aimed at halting the decline of several plant species.

The secretary also announced a new Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme which will support the restoration of 35,000 hectares of degraded peatland in England, backed by over £50 million between 2021 and 2025.

Political

Ireland has become the first EU member state to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank using the phrase "de facto annexation". Ireland's parliament voted in favour of the motion tabled by the opposition Sinn Fein party on 26 May. Foreign Minister Simon Coveney has said the vote is a clear signal of the depth of feeling on the issue across Ireland. Israel has rejected what it has termed as Ireland's baseless position and has said it intends to distance Ireland from any future role in the peace process.

In the UK, Dominic Cummings, a former advisor to the Prime Minister, spoke to the Commons Health, Science and Technology committee regarding the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cummings claimed the government could have avoided thousands of deaths if it had implemented lockdown restrictions earlier and provided clearer messaging to the public. He also claims the health secretary failed to act upon advice about the virus spread in care homes. Following the committee, PM Boris Johnson has expressed his support for the health secretary and has distanced himself from the claims.

Cyber Security

More than 50 percent of manufacturing firms in the UK have reported being the victim of cyber-crime over the past 12 months. The increase in attacks has been linked to the move to working from home, with cyber security measures often not as robust at home as in office settings.

More than 52 percent of businesses have said they now have cyber security insurance in place to protect against the growing threat, and a number of companies have appointed a board director with cyber security responsibilities. As flexible working becomes increasingly utilised in the post-pandemic economy, companies will need to prioritise cyber security awareness for all staff members but particularly those working remotely.

International Security

In May, China overtook Germany as the UK's largest import market. The increasing trade between the two countries is largely linked to brexit-related trade decreases with EU countries, and comes despite the UK's continued criticisms over the security situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

China recently sanctioned several UK MPs who voiced their opposition to China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Trade Secretary Liz Truss has warned the UK must not become dependent on China, calling on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to strengthen its rules. Chinese investment in the UK has reached more than GBP 135 billion and is likely to continue despite ongoing concerns around human rights and security.



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