

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

UK National Commission for UNESCO Welcomes the Release of Alan Johnston

London, UK – 4 July 2007. The UK National Commission for UNESCO^{1, 2} welcomes Alan Johnston's release after 114 days. It is excellent news that the BBC journalist is alive, well and free and the National Commission sends its best wishes to Alan, his family and his colleagues.

The media played an important part in events. As Mark Thompson, the Director-General of the BBC, said, "the visible support of Alan's colleagues, which he heard about from time to time from The World Service and TV, really helped him through and buoyed his spirits".

In December 2006, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1738, which confirmed war correspondents' right to the status of prisoners of war under the Third Geneva Convention. Resolution 1738 provided that journalists, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered civilians, and should be respected and protected as such. The Council demanded that all parties to armed conflict comply with their obligations under international law to protect civilians in armed conflict and that states should prosecute those responsible for serious violations.

The UK National Commission for UNESCO joins other media organisations in the UK and demands that the Palestinian Authority must ensure that this does not happen again. According to Reporters without Borders, 15 journalists have been kidnapped in the Gaza Strip since 2005 and their abductors have never been arrested or punished although many of them are known to the security forces. This impunity must end.

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For further information, please ring the UK National Commission for UNESCO on +44 (0)20 7766 3491.

Notes to Editors

- ***The UK National Commission for UNESCO*** is an independent body set up by HM Government to act as the national coordinator for UNESCO's activities and policies in the UK; and as a focal point for UNESCO HQ, HM Government and UK Civil Society. For more information, visit www.unesco.org.uk.
- ***The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*** is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations. It is headquartered in Paris whose purpose is "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture". It is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom. For more information, visit www.unesco.org.