

PM remarks: 16 March 2026

16.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The Prime Minister's remarks at a press conference in Downing Street.

The conflict in Iran and across the Middle East is now entering its third week.

So I want to take a moment to set out how we are responding to this crisis and standing up for the British people.

Our priority is always the national interest.

And so we have been clear and consistent on our objectives throughout this conflict.

First, we will protect our people in the region.

Second, while taking the necessary action to defend ourselves and our allies...

We will not be drawn into the wider war.

And third we will keep working towards a swift resolution that brings security and stability back to the region...

And stops the Iranian threat to its neighbours.

I want to see an end to this war as quickly as possible.

Because the longer it goes on, the more dangerous the situation becomes...

And the worse it is for the cost of living back here at home.

In recent days I've visited community centres in England and Northern Ireland...

And I know people are really worried about what this means for them.

And look - I grew up working class in the 1970s...

I remember how it feels when you're struggling to make ends meet.

The knot in your stomach every time the bills come through the door.

And that's at the forefront of my mind in meeting this crisis -

So, in a moment, I will set out what we're doing to help people with the cost of living.

But let me first give you an update on what we're doing in the region.

We continue to work around the clock to help our people in the Middle East.

As of this morning, over 92,000 British nationals have returned to the UK...

On commercial and government charter flights.

Now that work continues – including to support British citizens in Lebanon.

Our Armed Forces are working 24/7 to protect British lives and British interests and support our Gulf partners.

We have thousands of service men and women in Cyprus and across the region.

3 squadrons of fighter jets...

Working alongside counter-drone teams...

To intercept Iranian attacks.

They are protecting our people, our bases and our allies – night and day...

And I pay tribute to all of them.

We are also continuing our diplomatic response.

The Foreign Secretary has been in the region in recent days.

I am in close contact with leaders from across the Gulf, and Europe and beyond.

I met Prime Minister Carney earlier this morning.

And I will be meeting President Zelenskyy soon –

Because it's vital that we continue to focus on supporting Ukraine.

We cannot allow the war in the Gulf to turn into a windfall for Putin.

Now, it's clear the US operation has massively weakened the military capability of the abhorrent regime in Iran.

The question is what comes next.

When the fighting stops we are going to need some sort of negotiated agreement to constrain the threat posed by Iran, to limit their ability...

to rebuild their nuclear programme...

To pose a ballistic missile threat...

And arm their proxy militias –

And limit the threat they can pose to international shipping –

Which is hitting global supplies of oil, of gas and fertiliser which is pushing up prices here at home.

We have already acted alongside other countries to release emergency oil stocks at a level that is completely unprecedented.

But ultimately, we have to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to ensure stability in the market.

That is not a simple task.

So, we are working with all of our allies, including our European partners, to bring together a viable, collective plan...

That can restore freedom of navigation in the region as quickly as possible...

And ease the economic impacts.

Now, because of the decisions that we have taken...

The British economy is better placed that it otherwise would have been to weather this storm.

Since the election, we've built up our national resilience.

We are delivering the biggest uplift in defence spending since the Cold War.

We're investing in clean British power, to boost our energy security...

And protect working people from volatile fossil fuel markets.

And because we have brought stability back to our public finances...

Stability that I will never put at risk...

We are in a better position today than we were at the start of the Ukraine war four years ago.

Back then inflation was 5% and rising.

We have brought it down to 3% today.

And this isn't just about dry economics...

It's about values.

We've built this resilience this for a reason -

To give us the space to act to support working people...

And shelter our country from the shocks, the volatility that is buffeting our world.

And we are acting.

So this morning, I want to set out five steps that we're taking to tackle the cost of living.

First, we have capped energy bills until the end June - saving the average household £117.

That's in addition to the Warm Homes Discount of £150 for the most vulnerable in society.

No matter what happens now in energy markets -

In three weeks' time your energy bills will be cut and then capped for the next three months.

And I can announce today that we are giving a legal direction to the energy companies -

To ensure every penny of the savings we delivered through last year's budget...

Is passed directly onto customers, to keep bills as low as possible.

Second, we have extended the cut in fuel duty until September...

And we've introduced the cheap fuel finder...

Forcing petrol stations to publish their live prices...

To make it easier for drivers to choose the lowest price.

Now let me be really clear on this -

Back in 2022, when prices spiked because of the conflict in Ukraine...

I campaigned for a windfall tax on oil and gas companies.

And we have raised it in government -

To ensure that companies can't profit from price spikes like these...

And that money will go back into people's pockets.

I simply will not allow companies to make huge profits from the hardship of working people.

This Government was elected to stop that...

And we will.

That's also why we're going to support rural communities with the cost of heating oil -

This is point number three.

The CMA reported last week what every heating oil customer already knows -

Accounts of suppliers cancelling orders and jacking up prices.

That kind of conduct is simply unacceptable.

So if the companies have broken the law, there will be legal action.

And because it's clear this market is under regulated -

We are going to put that right, to ensure consumers get a better deal.

But we won't just wait for that.

I am announcing immediate support for vulnerable heating oil customers today -

Providing £53 million for those households that are most exposed.

Fourth, we are pushing ahead with our long-term plan...

To build Britain's energy security and independence.

Because otherwise we will continue be subject to wild fluctuations in oil and gas prices.

We've already brought in £90 billion of investment in clean British energy -

And that's enough to power the equivalent of over 20 million homes.

Just last week, we committed to reforming regulations so we can fast-track new nuclear power stations.

This has been opposed every step of the way,

By those who want to resist the push for clean energy.

They did the same throughout the entire period of the last Government - and they won.

But we see here, as we did with Ukraine...

That this is a vital cause.

Because until we get ourselves off the rollercoaster of international oil and gas markets...

And onto clean, homegrown British energy...

Tyrants like Putin and the Ayatollahs will be free to attack our energy security.

So we won't slow down on this -

We will go faster.

Fifth, we will continue to work towards a swift resolution of the situation in the Middle East.

Because there is no question...

Ending the war is the quickest way to reduce the cost of living.

And look - it's moments like this that tell you what a government is about.

My answer is clear.

Whatever the challenges that lie ahead -

This government will always support working people.

That is my first instinct - my first priority -

To help you with the cost of living throughout this crisis.

And I want to make one final point.

Because moments like this also tell you about leadership.

Whether to commit British troops to military action...

Is the most serious responsibility for any Prime Minister.

I have been attacked by some for my decision not to join the offensive against Iran.

But at every stage, I have stood by my principles -

Principles which I held just as strongly when it came to the debate on the Iraq war in 2003.

Principles which I believe are shared by the British people -

That our decisions should be based on a calm, level-headed assessment of the British national interest...

And that if we are to send our servicemen and women into harm's way -

The very least they deserve is to know that they do so on a legal basis...

And with a proper, thought through plan.

Now, there are others who would have made a different decision two weeks ago.

They would have rushed the UK headlong into this war...

Without the full picture of what they were sending our forces into...

And without a plan to get us out.

That is not leading, it's following.

My leadership is about standing firm for the British interest...

No matter the pressure.

And I believe time will show that we have the right approach.

Right on the economy and the cost of living.

Right on defence and energy.

And right on this war -

In the best interests of the British people.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-remarks-16-march-2026>