



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

17 April 2020

Our reference: MC2020/01191

Martin Barber
Chair
United Against Inhumanity

By email: UAI.UKcontact@gmail.com

Dear Mr Barber

Thank you for your letter of 18 February about the conflict in north-west Syria.

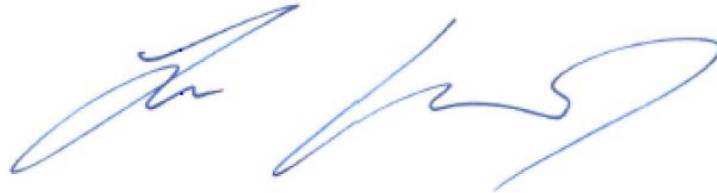
We are gravely concerned by the recent escalation in military action by Russia and the Syrian regime in Idlib in north-west Syria and have continued working actively for a diplomatic solution. Following the UK's repeated calls for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, we welcomed the announcement on 5 March that Turkey and Russia had agreed a ceasefire, as an addendum to the Sochi deal of 2018. I am pleased that this ceasefire continues broadly to hold. Preventing a further worsening of the humanitarian crisis is our priority. On 3 March, the UK announced a new package of £89 million in humanitarian aid to help save lives and protect Syrians at increasing risk of violence in Idlib. The following week, an RAF C-17 delivered 37 tonnes of UK aid for Idlib to Hatay, Turkey.

On 1 April I spoke with UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen and commended his efforts to introduce a nationwide ceasefire, particularly in light of the acute risk that COVID-19 presents. The UK is committing £16 million to help the most vulnerable countries prepare for and respond to the virus and £10 million to the World Health Organisation's Emergency Flash Appeal.

The UK has called on all parties to respect agreed ceasefires and to abide by International Humanitarian Law (IHL); and we will continue to do so. By targeting schools, hospitals and emergency first responders, the Assad regime and Russia have demonstrated scant regard for IHL. We welcomed the publishing of the UN Commission of Inquiry report on 2 March, which illustrated the war crimes that both Russia and the regime have committed by indiscriminately attacking civilian areas. It

also called for further investigation by the Turkish authorities into incidents in north east Syria.

The UK will continue to support efforts towards a long term political settlement for Syria. As I discussed with the UN Syria Envoy, I hope that the urgency of COVID-19 presents an opportunity to break away from entrenched political positions and for the regime to engage meaningfully in negotiations

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes that are difficult to decipher as specific letters.

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa