



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

17 August 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re. Syria**

We write following our letter to the Foreign Secretary on 23 July, regarding the urgent humanitarian situation in Syria, to which we have not received a satisfactory reply.

The UK continues to support a complex network of economic sanctions, which are directed at the Government of Syria, but which greatly harm civilians – especially in the context of COVID-19.

Earlier this month, a group of UN experts<sup>i</sup> warned that these sanctions are “bringing suffering and death” in Syria. They “should be lifted – or at a minimum eased – so people can get basics like soap and disinfectants to stay healthy, and so that hospitals can get ventilators and other equipment to keep people alive... Sanctions that were imposed in the name of delivering human rights are in fact killing people and depriving them of fundamental rights, including the rights to health, to food and to life itself.”

Human rights expert Idriss Jazairy says it is now “undisputed” that economic sanctions “contribute to a worsening of the humanitarian situation [in Syria], contrary to their stated intentions.” Likewise, Hilal Elver, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, says: “The continued imposition of crippling economic sanctions on Syria... severely undermines the ordinary citizens’ fundamental right to sufficient and adequate food” and that “it is now a matter of humanitarian and practical urgency to lift unilateral economic sanctions immediately.”

Their concerns are shared by Syrian doctors and humanitarian workers inside Syria. They testify to the severe impact of economic sanctions on access to adequate food supplies and life-saving medicines, with, for example, reports that 40 doctors have died in Damascus from COVID-19. According to a recent article in the medical journal *The Lancet*, these “blunt bilateral instruments, which have not been approved by the UN Security Council and have been opposed by the UN Commission on Human Rights, imposed on Syria in the unsupported belief that they will hasten regime change, have

seriously impeded the country's ability to cope with the pandemic... The Syrian health system, already fractured by years of conflict, is being further destroyed by sanctions."

The evidence is clear: continuation of economic sanctions will prolong the suffering of the Syrian people. We therefore urge you to reconsider UK priorities so that civilians are no longer used as a totally ineffective means of political pressure on the Syrian Government.

It is the poor who bear the brunt of these actions. Economic sanctions must be stopped.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline Cox". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Caroline" and the last name "Cox" clearly legible.

**Baroness Cox**

**Lord Green of Deddington**, British Ambassador to Syria 1991-94

**Peter Ford**, British Ambassador to Syria 2003-06

**Lord Dannat**, Chief of General Staff of the British Army 2006-09

**Lord West of Spithead**, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff 2002-06

**Lord Williams of Oystermouth**, Archbishop of Canterbury 2002-2012

**Lord Carey of Clifton**, Archbishop of Canterbury 1991-2002

**Dr Christopher Cocksworth**, Lord Bishop of Coventry

**Lord Alton of Liverpool**

**Lord Stoddart of Swindon**

**Lord Ramsbotham**

**Lord Hylton**

**Lord Judd**

**Lord Naseby**

**Lord Alderdice**

**Dr Michael Nazir-Ali**, Bishop of Rochester 1994-2009

**Dr Michael Langrish**, Bishop of Exeter 2000-13

**Dr John Eibner**, CEO Christian Solidarity International

**Dr Andrew Ashdown**

**Dr Audrey Wells**

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<sup>i</sup> UN experts, 7 August 2020: Ms Alena Douhan, Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights; Mr. Obiora Okafor, the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health; Mr. Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Ms Agnès Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.