



Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Foreign Secretary  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

23 July 2020

Dear Dominic,

We write, first, to commend the introduction of a sanctions regime to target those involved in serious human rights violations. Such a forensic approach, you suggest, will send a clear and direct message to perpetrators of abuse without punishing the wider population of a country.

We agree entirely: innocent civilians must not be exposed to suffering as a result of UK-backed sanctions. Harm to people living in targeted countries must be very carefully avoided, especially in the context of COVID-19.

Such harm, however, is precisely what is happening in Syria, where the UK continues to support a complex network of economic sanctions, which are directed at the Government of Syria, but which greatly harm civilians.

UN Special Rapporteur, 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, who testify to the severe impact of economic sanctions on access to adequate food supplies and life-saving medicines. According to a recent article in the medical journal *The Lancet* (2 July 2020), 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.”

While we commend the introduction of the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime – and support the need to hold individual perpetrators to account – we urge you to reconsider UK priorities so that foreign policy initiatives do not prolong the suffering of the Syrian people. It is the poor who bear the brunt of these actions. They must no longer be used as means of political pressure on the Syrian Government.

Economic sanctions must be stopped.

Yours sincerely,

**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

**Christopher Cocksworth**, Bishop of Coventry

**Lord Alton of Liverpool**

**Lord Ramsbotham**

**Lord Hylton**

**Lord Stoddart of Swindon**

**Earl of Oxford and Asquith**

**Lord Alderdice**

**Earl of Sandwich**

**Lord Judd**

**Lord Cormack**

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

**Dr Andrew Ashdown**

**Dr John Eibner**

**Dr Audrey Wells**