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Caroline Lucas MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

*Dear Caroline,*

Thank you for your email of 2 July about Syria.

I share your concerns about the situation in Idlib, northwest Syria. The Assad regime's Russian-backed offensive began there in earnest on 6 May, following weeks of increasing regime and Russian airstrikes. The Foreign Secretary issued a statement the following day, calling on the Syrian regime and Russia to 'respect their obligations under the Sochi agreement and international humanitarian law.' We have repeated this call and regularly raised our concerns about the increased violence in Idlib, alongside our international partners. In particular, the UK has been a prominent voice at three recent emergency sessions of the UN Security Council on this matter.

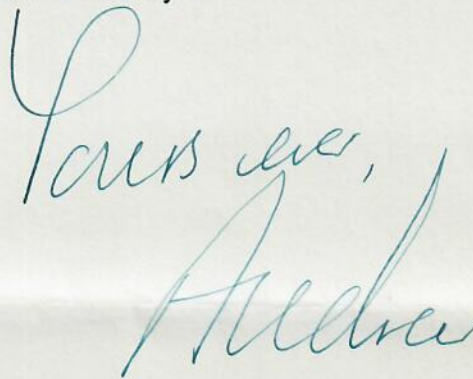
Tragically, as I set out to Parliament on 18 June, the violence has continued. 330,000 people have fled their homes in just six weeks and three million more remain at risk. Strikes against civilian infrastructure have been especially egregious, with at least 25 health facilities and 37 schools being hit. Targeting these deliberately would constitute a war crime. The UK strongly supports those organisations that pursue accountability for the most serious crimes committed in Syria. We are, for example, a major donor to the UN-mandated International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, which collects and analyses evidence to build case files for future criminal proceedings.

We continue to urge all sides to de-escalate the violence and restore the ceasefire. We are also calling on all parties to work with the UN agencies and others to ensure that the acute humanitarian needs of civilians in and around Idlib are fully addressed. Last year alone, the UK provided over £80 million in humanitarian assistance to this

region, which included supporting the provision of food, shelter and other essential items for those caught up in the conflict. We remain the second largest bilateral donor to the Syria crisis, having committed £2.81 billion in aid since 2011.

As you will be aware, our priority remains to end the conflict through a negotiated political settlement on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. To this end, the Foreign Secretary hosted the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, in London in March for productive discussions on his approach, which the Government fully supports.

The UK will continue to do all that we can to ensure that a long-term, lasting solution is found to resolve the current crisis in Syria. In the meantime, we will maintain all efforts to help those people affected by it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Murrison', written over a faint, larger signature that is partially obscured.

**The Rt Hon. Dr Andrew Murrison MP**  
**Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa**