



Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

14 December 2017

Dear Ms Thornberry,

We are writing to you, as campaigners for peace in Syria, to express our disappointment at your comments in the House, at the Oman, UAE and Iran debate on Monday 11 December 2017.

In your question to the Foreign Secretary, you proposed a deal which would involve Iranian and allied forces, withdrawing from Syria in exchange for the withdrawal of coalition forces, the maintenance of Assad in power, and the provision of aid for reconstruction.

Assad's regime has been responsible for extensive and systematic crimes against humanity, and for the large majority of civilian deaths during the war. Any implication that Assad has a place in the future of Syria is therefore deeply harmful, as is any suggestion that the UK might fund the reconstruction of Syria under his rule.

To allow Assad to continue in his position as President, after all the crimes he and his allies have committed, would be entirely opposed to the values of the Labour Party, which should always champion democracy, social justice and equality. The party should instinctively stand in solidarity with oppressed people; to further enable an oppressor would be damaging, not just for Syria, but for human rights worldwide.

UN Security Council Resolution 2254 calls for UN-led talks — the Geneva process, not the Russian-led Astana talks — leading to elections. Free and fair elections are impossible as long as Assad holds as many as 200,000 Syrian citizens hostage in his prisons; and inconceivable as long as the Assad regime can prevent UN agencies from delivering even basic medical aid to civilians in besieged Eastern Ghouta in the suburbs of Damascus.

Without legal accountability, any reconstruction funding will reinforce the criminality of the Syrian regime which led to this crisis. As long as a just and viable political solution is out of reach, the UK should support reconstruction only in ways which strengthen rather than undermine the legal rights of Syrians. This can only be possible in areas outside of the control of the Assad regime.

We ask that you please clarify Labour's position on the Assad regime, and re-establish the party as one that actively condemns those responsible for mass murder and genocide and seeks to hold them accountable. To do otherwise would be to let down those living under the regime's bombs.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sana Kikhia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sana Kikhia  
Syria Solidarity UK

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Taylor', with a horizontal line underlining the name.

David Taylor, Vice Chair  
Labour Campaign for International Development