



TPN 005/2020

The Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (High Commissioner for Human Rights) and refers to the urgent appeal UA IRL 3/2019.

With reference to the aforementioned appeal, and the correspondence submitted under cover of TPN 098/2019, enclosed please find a further response from Tánaiste & Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Coveney T.D.

The Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (High Commissioner for Human Rights) the assurances of its highest consideration.





14 January, 2020

Dear Mandate Holders

I refer to your joint urgent appeal of 15 November concerning Ms Lisa Smith and her child. I would like to update you on developments in this matter since my initial reply to you on 19 November.

I can confirm the return to Ireland of Ms Smith and her daughter on 1 December 2019.

As I stated in my initial reply, the Government first became aware in March 2019 of the presence of Ms Smith and her daughter, both Irish citizens, in the Al Hol detention camp in North East Syria, where the situation was very difficult. We were particularly cognisant of the grave conditions in the camp, in particular for children, and a worryingly high child mortality rate. We monitored developments and worked closely with relevant partners in the region with a view to the safety and welfare of Ms. Smith and her young child.

Our primary concern throughout this case was the consular welfare and safety of the two Irish citizens, in particular Ms. Smith's daughter. Once we became aware that Ms. Smith and her daughter had been detained by Turkish forces during the conflict in Northern Syria in October, we contacted the Turkish authorities to make known our concerns and our interest in their safe return to Ireland. As you will be aware, the Turkish authorities have a policy that all foreign citizens involved in the conflict in Syria and detained in Syria should be removed from Turkey and, where possible, returned to their country of origin.

The Turkish authorities facilitated consular engagement in relation to Ms Smith and her daughter and we remained in ongoing contact with them in this regard. A small Emergency Civilian Assistance Team, comprising of personnel from across relevant Departments and state institutions and agencies, deployed to Turkey to reinforce the consular capability of our Embassy in Ankara. They accompanied Ms Smith and her daughter on their return to Dublin on 1 December on a commercial flight.

Subsequent to her return, Ms Smith has been charged with membership of a terrorist organisation and has been released on bail pending further proceedings. The matter is now one for the Irish courts, the Director of Public Prosecutions and An Garda Síochána (Ireland's National Police Service).

I would like to reassure you that at all times the Government was conscious of its obligations under international law, including international human rights law. This included providing consular assistance to Ms Smith and her daughter to the extent possible and facilitating their safe return to Ireland.

I remain at your disposal should you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Coveney', with a stylized, cursive script.

Simon Coveney  
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade