



THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN GENEVA

June 7, 2021

Fionnuala Ní Aoláin
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights
and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism,

Elina Steinerte
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,

Agnes Callamard
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Michael Fakhri
Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Balakrishman Rajagopal
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to
an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination
in this context

Felipe González Morales
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

Fernand de Varennes
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Joseph Cannataci
Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy

E. Tendayi Achiume
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination,
xenophobia and related intolerance

Mama Fatima Singhateh
Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including
child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material

Nils Melzer

Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
or punishment

Siobh  Mullally

Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children

Dubravka  imonovic

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

Pedro Arrojo-Agudo

Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Elizabeth Broderick

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against
women and girls

Dear Special Procedures Mandate Holders,

Thank you for your correspondence dated January 26, 2021. Please find enclosed the U.S.
response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Daniel A. Kronenfeld', with a stylized, flowing script.

Daniel A. Kronenfeld
Human Rights Counselor

U.S. Response to UN Joint Communication Regarding Human Rights Concerns for U.S. Nationals in Syrian Al-Hol and Roj Camps

Thank you for your letter dated January 26, 2021. We are grateful for the work you do across the globe to promote respect for human rights, and for the opportunity to provide the below information concerning U.S. law, policy, and practice.

The United States affirms its support for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We share many of your concerns regarding potential human rights abuses and restrictions on unhindered access to humanitarian aid for vulnerable populations. We strongly support humanitarian access in northeast Syria, particularly to vulnerable populations, such as those at the Al-Hol camp, where almost two-thirds of the camp's population are children.

The United States continues to encourage countries to repatriate their citizens from northeast Syria, including women and children living in camps in the region. The United States continues to lead by example, having repatriated 12 adult U.S. citizens and 16 U.S. citizen minors from Syria and Iraq, and we are willing to provide logistical and diplomatic support for the repatriation of women and children to their country of origin, with the goal of rehabilitating them and then reintegrating them into society.

With respect to the "registration and verification" exercise referenced in your letter, it is our understanding that on June 10, 2020, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) initiated a registration operation of the almost 10,000 third-country nationals housed in the Al Hol camp's Foreign Annex, which is separate from the areas of the camp where more than 50,000 Iraqis and Syrians reside. The SDF said that the registration operation was conducted in order to facilitate the repatriation of the camp's foreign population and noted that the operation was concluded after two days, with the Camp Administration stating that all of the third country nationals had been registered.

The United States supports efforts to facilitate the repatriation of the foreign population resident in the camp, and we also understand your concern regarding the impact of such operations on humanitarian operations at the camp. In our own discussions with the SDF, we expressed concerns about the significant disruption to humanitarian services at the camp during the June 2020 operation, as our humanitarian partners were limited to providing food and water at the Annex, and other critical services for the Annex population – including medical care – were suspended. Although services to the rest of the camp were allowed to continue, many humanitarian partners reported difficulties in accessing the camp during the operation. We conveyed these concerns to local authorities and also requested that humanitarian organizations be permitted to conduct protection monitoring.

During the SDF operation to improve security at Al-Hol in March-April 2021, we witnessed improved coordination between the SDF and humanitarian organizations serving the camp's population. Although some issues remained, the SDF allowed life-saving services to continue throughout the week-long operation and attempted to address promptly any concerns raised by humanitarian organizations, including making it easier for residents to access the health services at the camp during the operation. We, along with other partners, remain engaged with the SDF

regarding ongoing and future security measures – which are important for the welfare of residents of Al-Hol – so that such operations continue to be coordinated with relevant humanitarian organizations and do not unduly impede access.

The United States strongly supports the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and services to those in need in Syria. Notably, we are actively engaged and supporting the re-authorization of the cross-border humanitarian access provided in the Security Council Resolution 2533 (2020), and we hope to expand such access to include border crossings authorized by previous resolutions. These efforts to reauthorize and expand cross-border access have been prioritized out of a recognition of the importance of ensuring that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reaches people in need throughout Syria through the most direct routes.

Over the last ten years, the United States has provided nearly \$13 billion in humanitarian aid to Syrians affected by this tragic conflict, regardless of where they live. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic poses a grave threat to vulnerable populations, such as those living in Al-Hol and Roj camps. The United States continues to fund food, shelter, water, health, sanitation, education, psychosocial support, protection, and other humanitarian activities in Al-Hol and Roj camps to address the needs of camp residents, including tens of thousands of young children. We urge members of the international community to scale up resourcing of NGOs across Syria to fill existing gaps in the provision of humanitarian aid and services.

Most of the Al-Hol and Roj camps' populations are women and young children; approximately one-half of Al-Hol's population are children under the age of 12. The best way to ensure the well-being of the camps' populations is to repatriate them to their countries of origin or, in the case of the Syrians, to support their reintegration into local communities.

Thank you once more for your letter.