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**Note Verbal No. 018**

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to submit its response to communication UA GBR 12/2024, further to the letter dated 29 November 2024 from the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the 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; the Independent Expert on the promotion of democratic and equitable international order; the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 22 January 2025.

Special Procedures Branch  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



UK Mission  
Geneva

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Response to Special Procedure communication UA GBR 12/2024 of 29 November 2024 from the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the 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; the Independent Expert on the promotion of democratic and equitable international order; the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.**

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Thank you for your letter of 29 November 2024 to the Foreign Secretary regarding your concerns about [REDACTED], and her [REDACTED] children currently located in Al Roj internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in North-East Syria.

Consular assistance

We do not routinely comment on individual cases. The answers to the questions below respond to the issues and themes you raise in your letter rather than the specific circumstances of the named individuals.

Where a British national in Syria has an authorised representative, we will engage with them on the specific case and any issues they raise.

The UK Government has advised against all travel to Syria since 2011. The United Kingdom has no consular presence within Syria from which to provide assistance. This makes it difficult to provide direct help to British nationals located there, but we carefully consider how we can support every British national that asks for our help. We are committed to considering every request for consular assistance on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

## Humanitarian support

The situation in Syria is complex and fast-moving. The UK remains in regular contact with the authorities and humanitarian partners on the ground in North-East Syria to monitor developments. We are fully committed to promoting security and stability in this area.

The UK continues to support those in need across North-East Syria. Our humanitarian assistance aims to improve humanitarian conditions in communities and IDP camps; help vulnerable women and children; and support early recovery and resilience building. Through INGOs and UN organisations, we provide multi-sector assistance - including water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), health, nutrition, child protection, and education services - in IDP camps and communities; help vulnerable women and children, through mental health and psychosocial support and efforts to reduce gender-based violence; and support early recovery and resilience building, through providing agricultural and livelihoods opportunities.

Please see the responses below to specific questions raised in your correspondence.

1. Please provide any information and comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

We do not routinely comment on individual cases.

The UK Government does not agree that it is subject to any positive obligation to act in this context and in particular notes that British nationals (and indeed other individuals) located in North-East Syria are not within the UK's jurisdiction whether for the purposes of the European Convention on Human Rights or of any other instrument of international human rights law to which the UK is party mentioned in your communication.

2. Please provide information on what steps were taken to inquire into the incommunicado detention of ██████████ by the camp guards, including the conditions for detention, her fate and whereabouts at that time, and the legality, process and fairness of the investigation.

We do not routinely comment on individual cases.

3. Please provide details on the domestic mechanism in place in the United Kingdom to review requests for repatriation, including your Excellency's Government's powers to weigh the rights of persons to return in compliance with international law and its ability to enforce such decisions. Additionally,

please clarify how your Excellency's Government intends to ensure the preservation of the family unit in all circumstances.

The UK Government has advised against all travel to Syria since 2011. Our travel advice states that the United Kingdom has no consular presence within Syria from which to provide assistance. This makes it difficult to provide direct help to British nationals located there, but we carefully consider how we can support every British national that asks for our help. We are committed to considering every request for consular assistance on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

4. Please provide details on steps taken or foreseen to repatriate [REDACTED] and her children, particularly in light of their deteriorating health and the prospect of the imminent removal of her [REDACTED] son remaining in the camp. Please explain how these are compatible with the obligations of your Excellency's Government to take all necessary and possible measures to protect its nationals from the violation of their right not to be subjected to acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

We do not routinely comment on individual cases. Each request for consular assistance, including repatriation, is considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

5. Please provide information on what steps have been taken to address [REDACTED] and her children's deteriorating health conditions and access to treatment, including securing urgent interim medical assistance and medicine.

We do not routinely comment on individual cases.

The UK continues to support those in need across North-East Syria. Our humanitarian assistance aims to improve humanitarian conditions in communities and IDP camps; help vulnerable women and children; and support early recovery and resilience building. Through INGOs and UN organisations, we provide multi-sector assistance - including water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), health, nutrition, child protection, and education services - in IDP camps and communities; help vulnerable women and children, through mental health and psychosocial support and efforts to reduce gender-based violence; and support early recovery and resilience building, through providing agricultural and livelihoods opportunities.

6. Please indicate the steps that your Excellency's Government has taken, or is considering taking, to ensure access to an effective remedy, including through domestic judicial mechanisms, for your nationals being held in al-Hol and al-Roj camps who may be victims of human rights abuses, including trafficking or acts tantamount to enforced disappearances.

The UK is clear that all parties in Syria must respect their obligations and responsibilities towards civilians under applicable international law regimes, including international humanitarian law. Responsibility for camp facilities is ultimately a matter for the relevant authorities.