



UK Mission
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Note Verbal No. 144

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 3/2025; further to the letter dated 02 April 2025 from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

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, 03 June 2025

Special Procedures Branch
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



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United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Response to communication UA GBR 3/2025 from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Thank you for your letter of 2 April 2025 to the Foreign Secretary regarding your concerns about [REDACTED] and her three British children, who you state are currently located in Camp [REDACTED] in Northern Syria.

Consular assistance

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.

We do not routinely comment on individual consular cases. 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 response below therefore responds to the issues and themes you raise in your letter rather than the specific circumstances of the named individuals.

UK support to Syria

This is a critical but fragile moment for Syria following the collapse of the Assad regime and transition to a new government. The UK is committed to supporting an inclusive, stable and prosperous future for the people of Syria.

At the Syria Pledging Conference in Brussels on 17 March, we pledged up to £160 million of UK support to Syria's recovery and stability in 2025. This will provide life-saving assistance to millions of Syrians inside Syria and across the region. Since the fall of Assad, the UK has provided over £62 million in additional humanitarian assistance to support vulnerable Syrians inside Syria and across the region.

There remains significant humanitarian need in communities across North West Syria (NWS), with nearly two million internally displaced persons residing in more than 1,500 camps or settlements. The UK contributes to the UK-led Aid Fund for Syria and the Syria Cross Border Humanitarian Fund, which are the backbone of the international humanitarian response in NWS. The UK was the largest donor to both funds in 2024.

Deprivation

The UK Government does not comment on individual cases to confirm whether an individual has been deprived of British citizenship. The British Nationality Act 1981 (BNA 81) provides the Secretary of State with powers to deprive a person of citizenship status. Section 40(2) allows the Secretary of State to deprive any person of British citizenship, should they deem it conducive to the public good to do so. Deprivation on the ground it is conducive to the public good can be used where individuals pose a threat to national security, or have been involved in war crimes, serious and organised crime, and unacceptable behaviours such as extremism or glorification of terrorism. Deprivation is not usually¹ permitted should it render the individual stateless and so decisions are taken in accordance with the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. These decisions are not arbitrary nor are they taken lightly. They are taken in accordance with the BNA 1981 and are consistent with the requirements of UK domestic and international law.

The UK courts have examined whether there is evidence of the deprivation power being used arbitrarily.² There has been no finding that the deprivation power has been exercised arbitrarily in any case challenged before the courts.

Deprivation of British citizenship on conducive to the public good grounds is used sparingly and each case is assessed individually following careful consideration of advice from officials and lawyers and in accordance with international law. Consideration of each case also includes whether an individual's fundamental rights are engaged. This includes any impact on an individual's ECHR rights, which is taken into account when considering whether to deprive a person of their British citizenship.

Where a decision is made to deprive an individual of British citizenship on the basis that to do so is conducive to the public good, the best interests of any children, are taken into account in accordance with the duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 regarding the welfare of children, when the Home Secretary decides whether to deprive their parent. Where a child is outside the UK and beyond the UK's jurisdiction under section 55 of the 2009 Act, the Home Secretary nevertheless chooses to apply the spirit of that duty and still takes into

¹ By means of the Immigration Act 2014, the UK Government introduced a power where the individual naturalised as British and conducted themselves in a manner seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the UK - the Secretary of State may deprive, even if doing so would leave the person stateless, if the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds for believing that the person is able, under the laws of another country, to become a national of that country

² The Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) concluded in the case of R3 v SSHD [SC/150/2018] that there was 'no evidence that the power to deprive [an individual of British citizenship] has been used arbitrarily'.

account the best interests of the child when making her decision. Whilst Section 55 demands that the child's interests are of primary concern, national security implications are also taken into account. The Home Secretary will consider the best interests of the child as a primary consideration and whether the policy and public protection considerations outweigh any best interest considerations.

An individual who is deprived of British citizenship, has a right of appeal against the deprivation decision under section 40A(1) of the BNA 81 or under section 2B of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) Act 1997.

Trafficking

The UK Government is committed to identifying victims of modern slavery and trafficking in the UK. The UK does not make determinations on modern slavery for individuals outside of the UK. This is a longstanding policy and is in line with the UK's international obligations.

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

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

We do not routinely comment on individual consular 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 Northern 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 have been taken to inquire into the detention of Ms [REDACTED] and her three children in the camp, including its expected duration, their fate and whereabouts, and the process and fairness of any investigation.

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

3. Please provide details on the domestic mechanism(s) in place in the United Kingdom to review requests for repatriation, including your Excellency's Government's powers to weigh, on one hand, the rights of Ms [REDACTED]'s children to return, and on the other, the interest in preventing family separation and preserving family unity, in compliance with international law and its ability to enforce such decisions. 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. As our travel advice states, 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 Ms [REDACTED] and her three young children, as well as all other nationals including men, women, and children, who are arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in North-East Syria. Please explain how these are compatible with the obligations of your Excellency's Government under international human rights law 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 consular cases. Each request for consular assistance, including repatriation, is considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

- 5. Please clarify what steps have been taken by your Excellency's Government to ensure that Ms [REDACTED]'s right to family life and the right of her children will be maintained after her detention in camp has ceased.**

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

- 6. Please clarify if there has been any consideration or identification procedure regarding indicators of trafficking in persons in the case of Ms [REDACTED]. 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 camps in Syria who may be victims of human rights abuses, including trafficking.**

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

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.

- 7. Please indicate whether the revocation of Ms. [REDACTED]'s citizenship will be reconsidered in light of proportionality considerations and due process**

concerns, as well as the fact that she was coerced into travelling to Syria. Please indicate what measures are available to Ms. [REDACTED] to be able to appeal the presumptively arbitrary withdrawal of her British nationality resulting in harmful consequences for her and her children.

The UK Government does not comment on individual cases. As stated above, an individual who is deprived of British citizenship, has a right of appeal against the deprivation decision under section 40A(1) of the BNA 81 or under section 2B of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) Act 1997. As part of the appeal process, the appellant has the opportunity to make representations, and to put forward evidence to support their grounds of appeal.