



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Our Ref: FC41927

21 January 2026

Dear Yvette,

Re: The Escalating Violence Across North-East Syria

I am writing to urge immediate and decisive action in response to the escalating violence across north-east Syria, which is having a devastating impact on Kurdish communities and poses growing risks to other ethnic and religious minorities throughout the region.

Credible reporting indicates severe civilian harm during this January 2026 escalation, with Kurdish authorities stating that more than 150,000 people have been displaced. The BBC reports that Syrian forces have moved into areas east of Aleppo following the withdrawal of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, including entering Deir Hafer, after recent deadly clashes. Syrian authorities have confirmed that at least 4,000 civilians have fled the area amid warnings of landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Additionally, there are also grave concerns regarding the conduct of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-led authorities, who are accused of releasing Islamic State detainees and carrying out indiscriminate attacks against Kurdish communities. For many Kurds, these developments represent the re-emergence of ISIS-era threats under a new “state-like” structure, intensifying fears of renewed extremism, persecution and large-scale displacement.

These developments demand more than expressions of concern. While I welcome the comments made in The House yesterday by the FCDO Minister, Hamish Falconer MP, calling for de-escalation and humanitarian assistance, the scale and pace of events now require a stronger and more visible response from the UK and its partners.

I therefore urge the Government to:

- make an immediate further public statement, including at the United Nations, condemning violence against civilians and minority communities
- press urgently for international accountability, including the consideration of targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for abuses
- intensify diplomatic efforts with allies to prevent further military escalation and protect civilian populations
- ensure humanitarian access is safeguarded and adequately resourced

A failure to act decisively now risks emboldening those responsible, normalising violence against minorities, and setting a dangerous precedent that will almost certainly lead to repeated abuses and further displacement.

The safety of Kurdish communities - and of minorities more broadly - is a matter of deep and immediate concern to many of my constituents and to the Kurdish diaspora across the UK.

I would be grateful for your urgent response setting out the concrete steps the Government will now take, including what immediate diplomatic, economic or sanctions-based measures are under active consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Feryal Clark', is written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Feryal Clark MP