



Foreign &
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From the Secretary of State

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Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chairman
UNA-UK
United Nations Association - UK
3 Whitehall Court
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Thank you for your letter of 17 May about the situation in Syria.

I welcome your organisation's efforts in debating the situation in Syria and I share your desire to see a diplomatic breakthrough to end the violence. We are working to make the recent US-Russia led initiative to establish negotiations between the regime and the opposition a success.

I understand your concerns regarding the provision of arms to opposition groups. The agreement to lift the arms embargo for the Syrian National Coalition sends a clear signal to the Assad regime that it has to negotiate seriously, and that all options remain on the table if it refuses to do so. We have not sent arms to any side during the conflicts of the Arab Spring and we have no immediate plans to go down this route in Syria. If we were to pursue this, it would be under the following conditions: namely in coordination with other nations, in carefully controlled circumstances, and in accordance with our obligations under national and international law.

The UK has been working intensively with our international partners to encourage the opposition to unite and set out a vision for a future Syria where the rights of all communities, including ethnic and religious minorities, are fully respected. Both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, and I reinforced these messages to the senior leadership of the Syrian National Coalition during their visit to London in April. It is encouraging that the National Coalition is responding to these messages as clearly illustrated by its declaration to the international community on 20 April.

The planned Geneva conference and the prospect of a political solution to the conflict makes it ever more important that the international community is ready to help Syria get back on its feet after more than two years of debilitating violence and destruction. Planning is needed to ensure the international community is poised to help Syria tackle a range of challenges, including political reform, maintaining security and public order, dealing with the humanitarian situation and revitalising the economy.

The UK has played a leading role in galvanising international planning, including through encouraging the multilateral agencies to plan support for post-conflict Syria. We convened a conference in Wilton Park in January to bring together the Syrian National Coalition and its key international supporters to discuss the challenges Syria will face once the conflict ends and to discuss possible solutions.

Since the conference, the National Coalition has developed its plans for transition further and we are actively working with them to ensure the international community is ready to help support implementation.

Our priority remains advancing a political transition that ends the conflict, allows refugees to return to their homes, and prevents further radicalisation in Syria. We will do all we can to ensure that the forthcoming US-Russia Geneva conference delivers that outcome.

*For needs,
Will*

WILLIAM HAGUE