

Lord Alton,  
House of Lords,  
London,  
SW1A 0PW



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

19 July 2017

Dear David

During the Lords debate on the International Relations Committee Report, *The Middle East: Time for a New Realism*, on 4 July, you raised the issue of the collection of evidence of Daesh atrocities on religious minorities. You asked if the Minister could update the House on how well this evidence collection is going.

We remain very concerned about appalling crimes committed against Christians, Mandeans, Yezidis and other minorities, as well as the majority Muslim population in both Iraq and Syria. We are determined to seek justice for all Daesh victims around the world. This includes victims who are targeted because of their religion or beliefs. We are also funding projects and specialist organisations to gather and preserve evidence of Daesh atrocities in Syria and Iraq. However this task will take considerable time to achieve given the conditions on the ground.

The growing body of evidence that terrible crimes have been committed against them is one reason why the Foreign Secretary launched the campaign to Bring Daesh to Justice, in the sidelines of UNGA last year.

The UK has a long-standing commitment to accountability for human rights violations and abuses in Syria. We continue to support the independent UN Commission of Inquiry's investigations into human rights violations and abuses in Syria. In May 2014, the UK co-sponsored a UN Security Council resolution to refer all those responsible for war-crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, regardless of affiliation, to the International Criminal Court. Russia and China chose to veto this resolution.

Investigative and prosecutorial work is underway across the world to hold Daesh to account. However, we believe the international community must come together to increase the number of prosecutions of Daesh fighters for atrocity crimes.

We are working with the Government of Iraq and other international partners to identify ways to take this work forward, including through the UN. We need to act now to avoid evidence of crimes by Daesh being lost or tampered with, thereby limiting future justice options.