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*Dear Dr Mella,*

Thank you for your letter of 25 April addressed to the Prime Minister about Syria. I have been asked to reply.

The Foreign Secretary made the Government's views on Syria clear on 16 May in a statement to parliament. He said:

"Two [other] lessons should act as a warning in the region to those who might be tempted to think that legitimate aspirations can be ignored. The first is that demands for political and economic freedom will spread more widely and by themselves, not because Western nations advocate these things, but because they are the natural aspirations of all people everywhere. The second is that governments that set their face against reform altogether are doomed to failure. Simply refusing to address legitimate grievances or attempting to stamp them out will fail. Reform is not a threat to stability; it is the guarantor of it over the long term. It is not credible or acceptable for any country in the region to repress now and suggest that reform will only follow later, nor is it sustainable to promise economic reform without steady political development.

"This is our message to Syria, alongside our utter condemnation of the violence. Only meaningful reform which meets the aspirations of the Syrian people can provide peace and stability for Syria in the long term. The alternative – ever more violent repression – simply stokes up anger and frustration that will spill over in the future.

"The European Union has already imposed a travel ban and assets freeze on 13 individuals in the Syrian regime, and on Friday we informed the Syrian Ambassador to London that if the violence does not stop immediately, the EU will take further measures including sanctions targeted at the highest levels of the Syrian Government.

"Alongside this action in the EU we are seeking a response from the UN Security Council in New York, where we are working to convince others that the Security Council must send an unequivocal message of condemnation of the situation and call for urgent political reform."

In addition to the EU sanctions agreed on 10 May, a further 10 names, including President Bashar Al Assad, has been added to the sanctions list. We have made clear to President Assad that he needs to end the violence, release all political prisoners, allow people to protest peacefully and begin a credible process of substantive reform.

*Yours sincerely,*

**Jim Fraser**  
Near East Group