Mosul

Dear Boris,

I have met with representatives from a humanitarian organisation working on the Mosul response, who have recently returned from there. I was taken by their insight into the situation and the worrying humanitarian picture they were able to report. I promised that I would write to you to raise the concerns we discussed.

De-mining

As you know, Daesh has heavily mined many civilian areas, which will make it impossible for some people to safely return home after the offensive. It has been estimated that US$112 million is required for emergency mine action response. I understand that the UK Government has provided £8.25 million for UN-led (UNMAS) efforts to manage explosive hazards – £3.5 million is specifically for in and around Mosul. The UK Government is also providing technical assistance and support on demining; is there a co-ordinated international strategy that this is part of and, if so, please could you share more information on it?

What is the UK Government doing to support the registration and accreditation for mine actors in Federal Iraq? What alternatives is the UK Government pursuing in order to continue the clearance of mines in the absence of approved actors in Federal Iraq to carry out this action in and around Mosul?

Civilian protection in Western Mosul

Civilian protection should be central to Coalition forces involved in the military campaign to retake Western Mosul. Measures should be taken to avoid harm to civilians and civilian structures. Continued commitment to the centrality of civilian protection by all armed actors will be critical, including when forces move into the much more densely populated city centre. What discussions is the UK Government having with the Government of Iraq and with all Coalition partners about this?

Screening processes (particularly the informal screening sites)

The UK Government and other donors should support the Government of Iraq to ensure that screening processes respect humanitarian principles and due process of law. These screening processes must be carried out in a formal, regular and timely manner.
To help ensure these standards, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office should urgently strengthen its monitoring of security screening processes, in both formal and information locations, and report publicly on its findings. Is the UK Government engaging in any way with the UNAMI Human Rights Office to ensure that it consistently monitors both formal and informal screening locations, including screening taking place in situ, and is reporting publically on its findings?

Returns (especially forcible returns)

Concerns were raised with me that there is increased pressure being exerted on IDPs to return to their place of origin. Premature returns in Iraq have taken place even when IDPs have expressed fear about returning due to the risk of explosive hazards, presence of militias, the destruction of infrastructure, housing and property, and the lack of basic services.

These actions raise concerns about post-conflict stabilisation and reconciliation in Iraq. Returns to Mosul (and elsewhere) should only occur if they are voluntary, safe, supported, informed, and take place in a dignified manner.

Donor governments, including the UK, should support social cohesion and reconciliation efforts in Iraq and support Iraqi authorities to address the root causes of conflict. I look forward to hearing from you on how the UK is working towards this.

I am copying this to the Secretaries of State for International Development and Defence.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Twigg MP
Chair of the Committee

Copied to: Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for International Development
Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence