



16 April 2018

*Dear Prime Minister,*

You will know that the Speaker is expressly prohibited by Standing Order No 24 (6) from giving the House reasons for his decisions on applications for emergency debates. Exceptionally, however, I feel that I owe you some explanation of my decision to hear first an application for an emergency debate on Syria from a backbencher, supported by a wide range of colleagues, including Select Committee Chairs with different (and often opposing) views, rather than from you as Prime Minister.

I am grateful to you for coming to the House to make a statement on the matter today, and no doubt answering a lot of questions from colleagues on all sides of the House. I do want to acknowledge the patience with which you answer backbenchers' questions on these occasions.

I am glad that you and your colleagues in Government share the prevailing view that the House will also want an emergency debate on the Syrian situation today. The issue is as to how best to facilitate such a debate. I would of course have been happy to accede to a request for an earlier sitting of the House if you had made one. In that event you would have been able to put to the House whatever motion you thought appropriate, and it could have been voted on. And by the same token Ministers are free to bring forward a debate on a general or substantive motion tomorrow or a future day.

But from where we are now I judge it best for the House, having heard your statement and front bench responses to it and the subsequent exchanges, to have a debate led by a backbencher, supported by backbenchers from across the House, and then hear frontbench speeches in response. That does not of course preclude business which may be brought forward tomorrow.

*Yours ever,*

Speaker

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Prime Minister