



KURDISTAN SOLIDARITY FORUM (KSF)

Forûma Pişgirtia Kurdistan

Independent • Non-Profit • Non-Partisan

Human Rights • Democracy • Kurdish Rights

London, United Kingdom

3 October 2026

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

10 Downing Street

London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Subject: Urgent UK action to protect the rights of Kurds in North and East Syria

The Kurdistan Solidarity Forum (KSF) calls on your Government to take urgent diplomatic action to protect the rights, security and political future of Kurdish communities in Rojava Kurdistan (North and East Syria) following the major political and security changes of 2026. The January fighting between Syrian government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the subsequent transfer of territory and institutions to Damascus, and the integration of Kurdish forces into the Syrian state have fundamentally altered the position of Kurdish communities. We therefore request sustained UK scrutiny, concrete diplomatic action and a substantive written response setting out how the Government will protect Kurdish civilians and their rights during this transition.

The transition must not come at the cost of Kurdish security, equality, political participation or cultural rights. The UK Government should judge Syria's new authorities by their conduct and accountability, not assurances alone. This is particularly important given the background of President Ahmed al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani, who previously led Al-Nusrah Front. The United Nations has previously listed Al-Nusrah Front within its ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions framework. KSF recognises the political transformation that has taken place in Syria, but believes that continued international scrutiny of the treatment of minorities, security institutions and alleged abuses is essential.

Reports from 2026 have raised serious concerns regarding Kurdish civilians, including allegations of arbitrary detention, mistreatment and deaths in custody. In Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh in Aleppo, Syrians for Truth and Justice documented arrests, detention at checkpoints, confiscation of belongings, beatings and degrading treatment. Other monitoring organisations have also reported killings and deaths in detention following the fighting. These allegations require credible investigation and effective judicial scrutiny.

KSF is particularly concerned that Kurdish civilians may face detention or questioning because of suspected links to the former SDF or Kurdish-led institutions. Political or military association alone must not be treated as grounds for detention without evidence of a current criminal offence. Allegations of torture, degrading treatment and deaths in custody must be independently investigated, including where those investigations involve government forces or affiliated armed groups. Kurdish language and cultural rights must be protected

in practice. Syrian authorities have recognised Kurdish cultural and linguistic identity and introduced provisions for Kurdish-language education. However, restricting Kurdish instruction to three classes per week, with core subjects taught in Arabic, has prompted protests from Kurdish students and educators. Meaningful mother-tongue education should be a key measure of the Syrian Government's commitment to equality and inclusion.

KSF is further concerned by the killing of Sipan Hazni, a Kurdish serviceman serving within the Syrian military structure following the integration process. His abduction and killing in September 2026, followed by protests, arrests and reported deaths at Kobani prison, underline the fragility of the current transition. While Syrian authorities have opened an investigation, Kurdish political and civil-society organisations have called for an independent and transparent inquiry capable of establishing who was responsible and whether any individuals or institutions facilitated, concealed or obstructed the crime. The UK therefore has an important role in ensuring the transition does not replace one system of insecurity with another. Kurdish civilians must live safely, participate meaningfully in Syria's political future, preserve their language and culture, and receive equal protection under the law.

We therefore ask you to instruct the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to pursue the following six actions:

- 1. Make the protection of Kurdish rights a priority in UK engagement with Syria:** Raise the security, political, cultural and linguistic rights of Kurdish communities directly with the Syrian authorities and through relevant international forums. Press for meaningful Kurdish participation in Syria's political and constitutional processes and for equal protection under the law.
- 2. Intervene to protect Kurdish civilians and detainees:** Raise cases involving Kurdish civilians detained at checkpoints or because of alleged links to the former SDF or Kurdish institutions. Press for due process, access to lawyers and families, protection from torture and ill-treatment, and the release of anyone detained without a lawful basis.
- 3. Demand independent investigation and accountability:** Press for credible, independent investigations into unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, torture, deaths in custody and other serious violations involving Syrian government forces or affiliated armed groups. This should include an independent investigation into Sipan Hazni's killing and whether individuals or institutions facilitated, concealed or obstructed the crime.
- 4. Protect Kurdish language, education and cultural rights:** Press Syrian authorities to protect Kurdish-language education and cultural expression. Kurdish children must access education in their mother tongue without discrimination, while Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights are protected through clear, enforceable guarantees.
- 5. Protect Kurdish communities during the security transition:** Ensure that UK engagement with Damascus addresses the risks created by the incorporation of armed factions into Syria's military and security structures. Where credible allegations of abuses exist, press for effective oversight, transparent investigations and accountability rather than relying solely on political assurances.
- 6. Establish sustained UK monitoring and consultation with Kurdish civil society:** Establish regular consultation with independent Kurdish political, civil-society, women's and human-rights organisations to ensure UK policy reflects affected communities' experiences and priorities. The UK should maintain close monitoring of displacement, property rights, detention, civilian security and implementation of Kurdish political and cultural rights.

We recognise the complexity of the United Kingdom's engagement with Syria and the importance of supporting stability following years of conflict. However, stability must not come at the expense of minority rights, accountability or civilian protection. The integration of Kurdish areas into the Syrian state must be accompanied by meaningful guarantees of equality, security, political participation and cultural rights.

Prime Minister, the events of 2026 have fundamentally changed the position of Kurdish communities in Rojava Kurdistan. The UK now has an opportunity to ensure that this transition is governed by accountability, equal rights and civilian protection rather than fear, exclusion or impunity. We urge your Government to use its diplomatic influence to protect Kurdish civilians and ensure that their rights are not treated as secondary to wider political or security objectives.

We request a substantive written response within 30 days of receipt, addressing each of the six actions above and outlining the responsible FCDO team, next steps and proposed timetable. Where the Government cannot pursue a request, we ask that it explain its position and identify any alternative measures. Urgent action to protect life and prevent further abuses should proceed without waiting for that response.

We also request a meeting with the responsible FCDO minister or senior officials within six weeks to discuss these priorities and establish a channel for follow-up. KSF stands ready to engage constructively through peaceful, lawful and evidence-based dialogue.

Prime Minister, **the security and rights of Kurdish communities must not be an afterthought in Syria's political transition.** We urge your Government to act now to ensure that Kurdish civilians are protected, Kurdish rights are upheld and credible accountability is secured for serious violations.

Yours faithfully,

**For and on behalf of the Management Committee
Kurdistan Solidarity Forum (KSF)**

London, United Kingdom
Email: info@ksf.org.uk
Website: www.ksf.org.uk

