Dear __________,

I’m writing with deep concern about recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are likely to push the country back into armed conflict in coming months, unless the international community takes effective action now - including vital steps which our own government could take.

On December 10th, the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs announced a plan to break away from Bosnia, to seize all state property and to re-establish their own separate army for Republika Srpska - the army which was responsible for genocide against Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in 1995. To achieve this, they have said they will use force. If Bosnia returns to war, the risk of mass atrocities is high.

The leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Milorad Dodik, is committed to separation whatever the cost, and is supported by powerful allies, particularly Russia - and of course Serbia. To quote Emir Suljagić, who survived the genocide at Srebrenica as a 17-year-old translator for UN peacekeepers, "This is the time to act... Mark my words, if this gentleman [Milorad Dodik] is allowed to continue doing this, without consequences, this country is going to be at war six months from now."

Based on its consultation with experts in Bosnia, the Aegis Trust – an international genocide prevention organisation which works with the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial – is recommending the following steps, and as my elected representative, I urge you to press the government to take them as swiftly as possible:

1) Support the EUFOR / NATO forces in Bosnia.

After Brexit, EUFOR's Operation Althea, tasked with overseeing the peace in Bosnia, was significantly weakened by the departure of the British contingent. I’m asking that you press our Defence Ministry to make a public commitment to supporting the peacekeeping operation and to pledge to send troops to support EUFOR’s Sarajevo-based “Multinational Battalion”, a rapid-response force created to allow Operation Althea to be re-enforced by EU / NATO allies. This would be a powerful deterrent to any attempt by Republika Srpska to follow through on its threat to break away.

2) Identify sanctions targets and impose sanctions

Please ask the Foreign Office to work with our Embassy and the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo to establish a list of individuals from the political leadership of Republika Srpska to be designated for sanctions. Milorad Dodik must sit at the top of this list. These sanctions can be surgically targeted and need not hurt the general public in Republika Srpska.

Subsequently, please ask the Foreign Office to impose a full range of sanctions on these individuals. Please call for the sanctions to applied fully, including asset freezes, travel bans and most importantly a ban on making available any financial or economic resources to the individuals designated, or to people connected to them. As you well know, sanctions work best when imposed as a joint effort. Please ask our government to work with international partners to extend the sanctions globally.

3) Implement SWIFT Ban

SWIFT is a Belgium-based company paid by almost all banks around the world to facilitate international cash transfers. It is overseen by the world’s major economies.
Please ask that – if our country is in any position to influence SWIFT, that our Central Bank works to ensure that Milorad Dodik, and the other sanctions targets, are excluded from the SWIFT system. This would mean they are unable to transfer funds internationally.

The Aegis Trust has released an excellent primer on this crisis - a 3-part podcast, ‘Peace at Risk in Bosnia’ - which unpacks the roots, context and potential solutions. If you have time, please listen, and please share it with other policy makers: championhumanity.buzzsprout.com

As pointed out in the podcast by Emir Suljagić - director of the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Centre - survivors of the Bosnian Genocide are terrified by these developments and are reliving their trauma all over again. I would be very grateful if you could take a moment on social media to share the podcast and show your support for survivors. You could use or adapt something like the following:

Powerful warnings from @suljagicemir1 @JasminMuj @hikmet_karcic @tmilovanovic94 @DrjMSmith @SrebrenicaMC @PCRCBiH re #PeaceAtRiskInBosnia in new @Aegis_Trust podcast championhumanity.buzzsprout.com. We must stand with survivors, strengthen peacekeeping & sanction Bosnian Serb leadership

In all this, speed is of the essence. Dodik hopes to separate Republika Srpska from Bosnia by early summer 2022. Imposing measures after the fact would be too late. Conflict will have already started.

The world let Bosnians down badly in 1995. This time, we know the present path leads to bloodshed - and we have a chance to stop it. With this in mind, please do all you can to ensure our government helps prevent this conflict. Such life-saving action is surely the highest calling of anyone in politics.

Yours sincerely,

[YOUR NAME HERE]

[Add your full postal address here - your elected representative will only respond if they can see you live in their constituency]