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 all this, they have said they will use force if necessary.

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.

I’ve been really glad to see the strong response from HMG in sending a military envoy to the region to support the Office of the High Representative, and having seen the debates on Bosnia recently, I was glad to see that the situation is being taken seriously, but there seems to be a lack of specifics on just what to do.

Based on its consultation with experts in Bosnia, the Aegis Trust - which provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Genocide Prevention - is recommending the following steps, and as your constituent I urge you to press the British Government to take them as swiftly as possible:

1) Re-deploy UK troops to Bosnia

Until Brexit, the UK had a troop contingent on the ground in Bosnia. After Brexit, they were withdrawn from EUFOR’s Operation Althea, significantly weakening it. I’m asking that you press for the MoD to re-deploy a battalion to either Tuzlia, or Brcko, in the country’s strategically important centre. This would be a powerful deterrent to any attempt by Republika Srpska to follow through on its threat to break away. Returning UK troops to Bosnia is simple. Since Brexit, they have in fact returned several times as part of EUFOR’s Sarajevo-based “Multinational Battalion”, a rapid-response force created to allow Operation Althea to be re-enforced by NATO allies.

2) Identify sanctions targets and impose sanctions

Please ask the FCDO to work with the British 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 will not hurt the general public in Republika Srpska.

Please ask the FCDO and HM Treasury to impose a full range of sanctions on these individuals on the basis of the following pieces of legislation: The Bosnia and Herzegovina Sanctions (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (created with the express intent to be used in situations such as these) and the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

Please call for the regulations 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 HMG 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 the international cash transfers. The company’s board is made up of members of the G10 Central Banks, including the UK. Please ask that the Treasury work with the Bank of England (and the other Central Banks) 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. UK must stand with survivors, deploy peacekeepers & sanction Bosnian Serb leadership now

In all this, speed is of the essence. Dodik hopes to separate Republika Srpska from Bosnia by early summer 2021. Imposing measures after the fact would be too late. Conflict will have already started.

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.”

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. So please do all you can to ensure the UK helps prevent this conflict. Such life-saving action is surely the highest calling of anyone in politics.

Yours sincerely,

[YOUR NAME HERE]

[Please add your full postal address below your name, as your MP will only respond if they can see you live in their constituency]