

Rethinking Security Statement

in response to reports of planned new UK military intervention in Syria

13th April 2018

The apparent use of banned chemical weapons in Eastern Ghouta has inflicted further horrific suffering on the population of Syria. As a crime against humanity, the use of these weapons also threatens our common, global security.

As concerned citizens, we call on the UK government to adopt a course of action which meets the following tests: 1) it addresses the severity of this crime; b) it contributes to the de-escalation of the Syrian conflict and 3) it contributes to reversing deteriorating global security dynamics. Such a course of action is necessarily going to require careful consultation and consideration.

Hasty, reactive military intervention of the type currently being debated does not meet these tests. It increases the scope for further deadly confrontation and reduces the potential to address these challenges as a shared international problem.

An independent investigation into the events in Ghouta remains crucial. Despite this week's Security Council disagreements, robust diplomatic efforts to achieve this goal should not be abandoned or undermined. Instead of military strikes, we urge the UK government to support efforts to hold the perpetrators to account through due process, and in particular to support the work of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We also urge the UK government to utilise its considerable diplomatic capabilities to contribute to the de-escalation of the conflict and a return to the negotiating table. This could include encouraging the EU to engage urgently with Russia to this end and the US to consider holding back on military action. While not under-estimating the difficulty of this task, it remains the only viable means of alleviating the humanitarian crisis and working towards a durable political resolution that meets the needs of the Syrian people.

This new crisis demonstrates the abject failure of current approaches to global security. We urge the government to desist from compounding the failures of its policies towards the Middle East, to cease its military interventions and to end arms exports to all parties in the region. We call for an urgent and comprehensive rethink of the UK's approach to security and international relations, based on systematic commitment to its declared values of human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy and equality.

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