

The Syria Campaign briefing on the Emergency Parliamentary debate 11th October 2016



The situation in Aleppo is critical. Hospitals and medical facilities are being targeted daily and more than 275,000 people are besieged in the east of the city by the Assad regime, backed by Russia. Here's what MPs should be aware of and what they can do:

- **Over 100,000 children are being bombed in Aleppo.** They are being attacked with illegal barrel bombs, cluster bombs, incendiary weapons and 'bunker buster' bombs¹.
- **Over 100 children have been killed** in Aleppo since the ceasefire broke down on September 21², out of a total of 600 civilians killed³.
- **The Assad regime has blocked the entry of humanitarian aid⁴** and, along with Russia, attacked a UN aid convoy on September 19, killing 20 humanitarian workers⁵.
- **Hospitals are being systematically targeted.** 382 medical facilities have been destroyed in Syria since the start of the war, 90% of them by the Assad regime and Russia according to Physicians for Human Rights.⁶
- **Failure to stop the crisis in Aleppo could lead to another Srebrenica or Rwanda,** warned UN Special Envoy Staffan De Mistura.⁷
- **Chemical weapons continue to be used with impunity.** The UN declared conclusively this summer that the Syrian air force has used chlorine gas against civilians⁸. More than 138 attacks have been documented since UN Security Council resolution 2118⁹.
- **All this fuels the refugee crisis.** Syrian refugees in Europe are more than twice as likely to be fleeing Assad than ISIS. A majority say that a 'no-fly zone' will help Syrians stay in their country, only half that figure say 'increased aid' will help more stay.¹⁰

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/26/hell-itself-aleppo-reels-from-alleged-use-of-bunker-buster-bombs>

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/01/world/middleeast/aleppo-syria-civilians.html>

³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/assad-putin-aleppo-latest-syria-civil-war-a7348486.html>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/13/syrian-regime-is-blocking-aid-from-entering-eastern-aleppo-claims-un>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/20/un-aid-convoy-attack-syria-us-russia>

⁶ Physicians for Human Rights live Syria map tracking attacks on medical workers and hospitals

https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_syria_map/web/index.html

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/06/aleppo-could-be-destroyed-by-christmas-warns-un-envoy-for-syria>

⁸ UN investigation finds Assad regime and ISIL used chemical weapons this year

http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54795#.V_x2gFQrLIU

⁹

<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-regime-uses-chemical-weapons-again-hama-governorate-138-us-es>

¹⁰ Face-to-face survey with 889 newly arrived refugees in conjunction with the Berlin Social Science Center

<https://diary.thesyriacampaign.org/what-refugees-think/>

- **The Assad regime is responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths.** Monitoring groups say 95% of civilian deaths are at the hands of the Syrian regime¹¹. Russia has killed more civilians than ISIS in Syria - in a third of the time¹².
- **Diplomacy alone is failing.** Russia has used its veto at the UN Security Council five times to stop action to protect civilians, most recently last weekend.¹³ A US-Russia brokered ceasefire lasted seven days before Russian and regime forces attacked an aid convoy.¹⁴ The Assad regime had earlier rejected the ceasefire, vowing to retake all rebel-held territory by force hours before the deal started.¹⁵
- **A credible threat of force is needed to protect civilians and promote a genuine negotiated settlement.** Declaring a form of no-fly zone, sometimes called a 'no-bombing zone', would deter the Assad regime and Russia from these ongoing war crimes. Since the Assad regime relies heavily on its air force, the establishment of a no-bombing zone would send a clear signal that only peace talks will end the conflict, as in Bosnia in 1993.¹⁶
- **This would not require boots on the ground or a military confrontation with Russia.** It could be enforced by meeting any attack on civilians with a measured response against Syrian regime targets only. As Hamish de Bretton-Gordon OBE, former commanding officer of NATO's Rapid Reaction CBRN Battalion says, "A *"no-bombing zone" to deter these indiscriminate aerial attacks and to create safe havens is the only option at the moment with a realistic chance of success: It is militarily feasible, does not confront Russia, and can be implemented in days.*"¹⁷
- **64% of the UK supports a no-fly zone** over parts of Syria, according to a YouGov poll released today¹⁸.
- **Hillary Clinton supports no-fly zones in Syria as do key European allies.** In a debate Sunday night, Hillary Clinton said, "I advocate today a no-fly zone and safe zones. We need some leverage with the Russians."¹⁹ Earlier this year German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she favoured establishing "some form of no-fly zone".²⁰

For more information related to this briefing, please email info@thesyriacampaign.org

¹¹ According to the Violations Documentation Center and the Syrian Network for Human Rights <http://whoskillingciviliansinsyria.org/>

¹² According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russians-killing-more-civilians-than-isis-in-syria-9ssqcxl6s>

¹³ Russia vetoes UN resolution calling for end to assault on Aleppo: <http://www.france24.com/en/20161008-russia-vetoes-french-draft-un-resolution-aleppo-truce-syria>

¹⁴ Amnesty report on destroyed humanitarian convoy: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/09/syria-horrific-attack-on-un-aid-convoy-is-a-flagrant-violation-of-international-law/>

¹⁵ Assad vows to take back all lost territory, just hours before ceasefire prohibiting taking new territory: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/12/assad-vows-to-retake-whole-of-syria-ahead-of-ceasefire/>

¹⁶

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2016/09/09/western-military-intervention-saved-lives-in-bosnia-it-can-work-in-syria-too/>

¹⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/11/safe-havens-needed-syria-151108085808311.html>

¹⁸ The survey was commissioned by Avaaz.

¹⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/10/us/politics/transcript-second-debate.html>

²⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-merkel-nofly-idUSKCN0VO1ZH>