



## Reaction to the UK's vote to bomb Syria Thursday, 3 December 2015

As British Syrians, we regret the decision of the House of Commons to vote for airstrikes in Syria along with the US-led Coalition against ISIL.

UK involvement in the Coalition will not necessarily make us safer from the threat posed by terrorist groups, nor is it expected to have any significant impact in addressing radicalisation on the ground in Syria. Rather, it very much has the potential to fan the flames of radicalisation and therefore expose us to greater vulnerabilities.

We stress that any threat that ISIL poses to the UK is ultimately attributable to the Assad regime. Without first addressing the Assad regime's indiscriminate use of force in Syria, which created the violence, chaos, and destruction that allowed for the emergence of terrorist groups in Syria, we cannot begin to tackle the threat posed by ISIL. In the current situation, even a successful military campaign against ISIL will lead to the emergence of similar groups to fill the void created by the Assad regime's destruction.

Similarly, without addressing the Assad regime's indiscriminate aerial bombardments, we will not be able to convince Syrian moderate opposition forces to cooperate with us in our fight against ISIL. It should be recalled that Syrians themselves have been on the front lines against ISIL. However, to expect them to turn their efforts against ISIL while they are being bombed from the sky by Assad (and now Russian) forces is wishful thinking. We therefore need to ensure support and protection for the moderate opposition and for the civilians which they fight for in order for them to effectively combat ISIL on the ground.

We do not expect that the UK's involvement with the Coalition will lead to any success in combating ISIL as long as civilians remain unprotected from Assad and Russia's indiscriminate aerial bombardments. We will continue to campaign for a comprehensive solution to the Syrian conflict, which holds at its core civilian protection.

Signatories:

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