

20 March 2017

Dear Mr. Sutton,

We are representatives of UK-based Syrian advocacy and community organisations. We thank you for taking the time to respond to Rethink Rebuild Society's [report](#) 'Altering the Trends: The BBC's Biased Reporting on the Syrian Conflict'.

We appreciate that the BBC endeavours 'to report the Syrian civil war objectively' as you state in your emailed response. Indeed, this is what we would like to see as a community. However, we do not feel that our concerns, as embodied through the released report, have been properly addressed in your response.

Our primary concern pertains to the wording of article headlines. You will of course know that the vast majority of readers do not read past article headlines and therefore, the manner in which they are phrased is critical to shaping readers' understanding about a particular situation. Given our direct and collective advocacy experience on the Syrian issue, we are not convinced that the BBC's current policy of assigning article headlines 'clearly implies' – as you say – when attacks are perpetrated by Assad and/or its Russian allies, in contrast to attacks/crimes perpetrated by other parties. This is indeed the essence of the problem: readers do not understand that Assad/Russia are the primary perpetrators of attacks in Syria which means that public opinion is misled with respect to the dynamics of the conflict.

We furthermore believe that our concerns can be addressed despite the character limitation that you mention in your email. For example, a 3 October 2017 article with the headline 'Syria conflict: Hospital in rebel-held Aleppo 'bombed again'' could be worded 'Syria conflict: Assad forces bomb Aleppo hospital again'. Similar re-wording can be done with other article headlines to provide a more accurate depiction of the conflict while adhering to character limitations.

We would like to request the opportunity to meet with yourself to present our concerns and to have an open and frank discussion on some of the issues which we outline in our report. Kindly let us know if this will be feasible and what dates you might be able to meet with us.

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Dr. Yasmine Nahlawi, Rethink Rebuild Society  
Dr. Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, Syrian Association of Yorkshire  
Reem Assil, Syrian Platform for Peace  
Abdullah Allabwani, Oxford for Syria  
Dr Mohammad Alhadj Ali, Syrian Welsh Society  
Dr. Abdullah Hanoun, Syrian Community of the South West  
Clara Connolly, Syria Solidarity UK  
Dr. Bachar Hakim, Syrian Society of Nottinghamshire  
Dr. Mohammad Tammo, Kurds House