



Rethink Rebuild Society

The voice of the British Syrian Community

Press Release

03/07/2017

Syrians outraged by The Canary's publishing of lies

By republishing Seymour Hersh's debunked conspiracy theory absolving the Assad regime of using Sarin on the civilians of Khan Sheikoun in April, The Canary is responsible for spreading malicious propaganda that serves the interests of the dictatorship.¹

Hersh's story received minimal media interest, seemingly because it falls far short of journalistic standards, and does not stand up to scrutiny.² The Canary takes this as evidence of a conspiracy on the part of the BBC to defend the 'official narrative'. Hersh's unsubstantiated story contradicts the assessments of Western governments, independent experts, and even the defences of the Assad regime and Russia.

Syrians have had concerns about the BBC's coverage of the conflict in the past,³ but The Canary's suggestion that it has deliberately covered up details of the Assad regime's chemical massacres is nonsense. The Canary depends on clickbait headlines and shocking stories, but in spreading this misinformation it has crossed a line. Given that the story is very obviously false, this amounts to nothing more than scoring political points and gaining attention by using the innocent victims of the Assad regime.

It is unsurprising that the story is used to advertise the work of the Stop the War Coalition, which routinely attempts to marginalise or silence the voices of Syrians.⁴

Haytham Alhamwi, Advocacy Director at Rethink Rebuild Society, said: *"The Canary's slogan is 'for the people, not the powerful', but conspiracy theories like this only serve the interests of the brutal Assad regime. Propaganda and conspiracy theories not only prevent Syrian voices from being heard, but also push the policy debate away from real, lasting solutions to the conflict in Syria."*

ENDS

For further information and press enquiries, please contact 07769704656, or email: yasmine@rrsoc.org

Rethink Rebuild Society has established itself as a non-profit organisation that acts as an umbrella for the British Syrian community, and endeavours to clarify the Syrian cause to its audience in the UK and the wider public.

¹<https://www.thecanary.co/2017/06/30/people-tearing-bbc-alarming-decision-just-made-video/>

²<http://al-bab.com/blog/2017/07/syria-seymour-hersh-and-sarin-denialists>;

<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2017/06/25/will-get-fooled-seymour-hersh-welt-khan-sheikhoun-chemical-attack/>

³http://rrsoc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Analysis_of_BBC_Coverage_on_Syria.pdf

⁴<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39540340>; <https://leftfootforward.org/2015/11/stop-the-war-refuse-to-listen-to-syrians-during-debate-on-syria/>