



## Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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### **Syria – Military Action**

Thank you for contacting me about recent military action in Syria.

The Prime Minister has been clear that the fact that this terrible chemical weapons attack took place in Douma in our world today is a stain on our humanity, and I agree with her that the UK and its international allies had to respond to this.

Their response was limited, targeted and proportionate, and came on the back of a significant body of information, including intelligence, that indicates that the Syrian regime was responsible for this attack.

There have been extensive diplomatic attempts to commit Syria to dismantling its chemical weapons programme, which have failed. The Government had no choice but to conclude that diplomatic action on its own was not going to work.

The purpose of our military action was to significantly degrade Syrian Chemical Weapons capabilities and deter their future use. Everything possible was done to avoid escalation and to prevent civilian casualties.

This action was not about intervening in the civil war in Syria or about regime change but about protecting civilians and upholding and defending the global consensus of nearly 100 years that chemical weapons should not be used. It is absolutely right to try to prevent the use of chemical weapons, either in Syria or on the streets of the UK, to become normalised.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has a power of veto. Russia has used its veto 12 times regarding Syria since the conflict began in 2011, including six times in relation to chemical weapons, and at least three vetoes that relate to ceasefires, which demonstrates the deadlock at the UN and the futility of seeking a meaningful resolution on military intervention.

I believe that it is right that the Prime Minister must have the flexibility to act in a limited, proportionate and speedy way to deal with a very real threat. However, when the Government decides to take action without a Parliamentary debate, it is right that Parliament is given an opportunity as soon as possible to give all Members the ability to question the decision and hold the Government to account. That is why the Prime Minister came to the House at the first opportunity and why the issue has been given significant Parliamentary time since then.

I know that the Government shares my view that international efforts need to be in support of the UN-led process. The Syrian negotiation commission engages constructively and without preconditions, but clearly to achieve progress the Assad regime must also engage credibly in Geneva and Russia must use all its influence to ensure that it does.

I am pleased that the UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date, we have committed over £2.71 billion in humanitarian funding to the region. UK aid has already delivered over 27 million food rations, 10 million relief packages, 10 million vaccines and 12 million health consultations for those in need in Syria.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Whittaker MP