

Britain to Vote on Bombing Syria: There Are Thousands of Reasons Not to

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On Friday, Prime Minister David Cameron stood up in Parliament and told all the MPs how very important it was that the United Kingdom joined the orgy of bombing Syria. He is closely following Tony Blair's path to Iraq, using fear of 'terrorism', exaggerating so-called 'intelligence' and wanting desperately to be seen as a tough leader. In a few days MPs will hold a vote on this and he's sent them all home to 'think it over' during the weekend.

There are many reasons why Members of Parliament should not vote in favour of bombing Syria. The most obvious reason is that it would simply be immoral, if only because totally innocent civilians would be killed, injured, maimed, made homeless, parentless or childless. But 'voting with your conscience' often seems to include military might.

Those who favour military action will immediately talk about precision targeting, an impossibility where missiles and bombs are concerned. On a drone operator's screen or in a smaller screen in a fighter jet way up in the air, you cannot guarantee that the building is empty of people, or that the 'terrorist' base only houses militants. Where people are, there will necessarily also be civilians, supposedly protected by international law.

And there is the temptation to use too much of the power at your disposal, like the Americans using a Cruise missile to 'take out' a Taliban leader travelling in a car through an Afghan market square. Just possibly the 'intelligence' was correct and the said Taliban leader was blown to bits. The other shredded people are just 'collateral damage'. But - a whole Cruise missile to assassinate one man?

Another reason is that joining in the bombing crusade would make it more likely that Britain would suffer retaliatory attacks on its home soil. This is not something most MPs want to consider. They will go on denying that the West's violent interference in the Middle East and other majority Muslim states has caused much of the terrorism they say bombing Syria will protect us from. But few politicians like to take responsibility for past actions.

And make no mistake, the word 'crusade' is an apt one for that is certainly, initiated by George W Bush, what the West is fighting. So too is IS/Daesh/ISIS/ISIL. When they first appeared on the horizon their stated aim was to reach back into the origins of Islam and create a grand caliphate. And why do you think one of their names is ISIL, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant? The Levant is what the medieval Crusaders called the Middle East.

Where are the MPs who are wise enough to bring an end to this silliness? But no, they'll happily swallow David Cameron's 'intelligence' that claims there are 70,000 'moderate' rebels in Syria, a figure disputed by all those better informed about the region than

Cameron. I suppose we should be glad he has not yet told us ISIS can reach us in 45 minutes.

He speaks of the 'rebels', but as almost all the fighters have come from other countries (the majority apparently from Europe), they really can't be said to be rebelling against a government that is not theirs. Nor is it, as he claims, a 'civil war', the whole sorry mess having been engineered by William Roebuck from inside the US Embassy in Damascus back in 2006 because, according to Roebuck, President Assad was too popular, not just in Syria but in "the region", all fully documented in the leaked cables between Damascus and Washington.

Then there are legal reasons why the UK should not bomb Syria. Cameron has repeatedly insisted that 'Assad must be removed'. But President Assad is the democratically elected leader. Despite the difficulties an election was held last year and delegates from more than 30 countries said the election was "free, fair and transparent" (he had been voted in for a second term back in 2007).

International law has this to say about interfering in another state's business or removing its leader:

1970 UN Declaration on Principles of International Law' Point 6;

"No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Consequently armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements are in violation of international law."

That is clear enough. The UK was illegal in Afghanistan, illegal in Iraq, illegal in Libya and now it wants to be illegal in Syria too. The US and France are illegally acting in Syria. ISIS and all the other 'rebel' fighters are there illegally. Apart from Syria's own military forces, the only forces that have a legal presence there are the Russians and the Iranians - because President Assad invited them.

We also cannot wage 'war' on terrorists. Terrorism is not an act of war but a crime which, legally, the police should deal with, not armies. Cameron claims that bombing Syria (an act of war upon another state) will "keep our country safe". But one state can only go to war with another state if that state has physically attacked the first. Syria has attacked no one, for which good and neighbourly policy it is being bombed out of existence.

Further, we would, according to him, be 'defending our values'. Cameron's big on British values. I presume that includes the ability to bomb other countries and their poor terrified civilians. That is a value I for one can do without.

Cameron is also relying heavily on the UN Resolution recently passed that "urges UN member states to take all necessary measures to combat ISIL/Daesh in Iraq and Syria because of the unprecedented threat it represents to international peace and security." However, 'all necessary measures' does not automatically authorise military force; that needs a Chapter VII Resolution. It would not make UK airstrikes legal. But this is not the first, sixth, or twentieth time that our leaders have demonstrated how little they care for law.

And when will 'all necessary measures' include such things as diplomacy rather than turkey-strut braggadacio? Why should bombing be the one and only option? What good has bombing ever done, except to cause damage and grief?

For there are hundreds, no, many thousands of reasons why MPs should vote against bombing Syria – the countless children in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and now Syria, damaged by the West's 'precision targeting'. You can see some of them here, illustrating a song called *Somewhere in Baghdad*.* and it will tear your heart out.

<http://notinournamecd.co.uk/somewhere-in-baghdad-christmas-2015>

Whatever else you do in the next few days, persuade your MPs, whatever their party, to watch this video. It will only take 4 precious minutes of their time, and if it doesn't convince them that we must not bomb, then quite frankly, they are not fit to represent us.

* This song is part of a CD titled *Not in Our Name*, and it will be released on December 10. It came out of a 'Project for Christmas' organised by members of the Impeach Tony Blair Facebook Group. The writers, singers, musicians and everyone else who helped create this CD freely gave their time and talent and paid for the production of the album. All the proceeds will go to Blair's victims in Iraq.

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