

The West's Silence About the Bombing of Russia's Hospital in Aleppo is Shameful

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As everyone who follows the international news knows, the last few months have witnessed a blizzard of angry stories and complaints from Western government concerning alleged Syrian and Russian bombing of hospitals in Aleppo.

This blizzard contrasts starkly with the almost complete silence in the West about the [attack on the Russian hospital in Aleppo yesterday](#).

To be clear, no-one is denying that the attack took place, or that the Jihadis were responsible, or that Russian nurses were killed during the attack.

Nor is anyone saying that the hospital was not clearly marked with the Red Cross symbol, or that the Russians did not disclose its location.

Nor is anyone denying that the hospital was located well away from the front line. Nor is anyone saying that it was located close to some site of military significance.

There is room for doubt about whether or not the attack was intentional, though there is a good deal [more evidence to suggest it was intentional](#) than is the case with the attacks the West says have taken place against hospitals in jihadi controlled eastern Aleppo.

In light of all this the West's almost complete silence about this attack is deafening.

There have been no furious articles in the Western media, no angry editorials in the leading Western newspapers, no heartbreaking photographs of alleged victims, no passionate denunciations in the UN Security Council by Power and Rycroft, no stern lectures from Toner and Kirby. The ghastly trio of Boris Johnson, Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande have nothing to say.

As for the Western NGOs which typically wax so lyrically indignant whenever an (uncorroborated) attack on a hospital in jihadi held eastern Aleppo takes place, their response to the attack on the Russian hospital has been [strangely muted](#), drawing down on them the anger of Russia.

I have made my own doubts clear about the claims of a deliberate Russian campaign to destroy the hospitals in eastern Aleppo. I have pointed out that all the reports of these attacks originate from an area of eastern Aleppo under Al-Qaeda's control, which is out of reach of Western journalists, and that they must therefore be treated as suspect. Here

is [what I said](#)

“There are no Western journalists in Jihadi controlled eastern Aleppo and scarcely anywhere else in Syria. The Western journalists that are in Syria largely stick to the government controlled areas. Very occasionally the odd Western journalist travels into Jihadi controlled areas, but it is a long time since any have visited eastern Aleppo, in fact – they have not done so since it came under siege.

What that means in practical terms is that reports that come out of the Jihadi controlled areas of Syria – including eastern Aleppo – and which appear in the Western media, are reports made at second hand. Western reporters do not tour the sites of the allegedly bombed hospitals. Rather the Western media is simply passing on reports from eye witnesses or alleged eye witnesses of the attacks, and reporting them as true. The same applies to Western governments, including the US government.

What this means in the Syrian case is that all the reports of the attacks on the hospitals are provided by persons who to a greater or lesser extent operate under Jihadi control. In northeast Syria that essentially means Al-Qaeda control.

This does not in itself mean that bombing of hospitals never takes place. However, what it does mean is that the scope for Al-Qaeda to manipulate the stories is boundless. In any war situation, the risk of accepting unconfirmed accounts of events by one party to the conflict is great. When the party in question is Al-Qaeda – a violent internationally proscribed terrorist organisation – the risk of doing so is even greater.”

I was interested to see that the British journalist Patrick Cockburn, in my opinion by far the best informed and most objective Western reporter of the fighting in Syria, also [recently pointed out the dangers of relying upon uncorroborated information](#) originating from the Jihadi controlled areas of Syria.

“Experience shows that foreign reporters are quite right not to trust their lives even to the most moderate of the armed opposition inside Syria. But, strangely enough, the same media organisations continue to put their trust in the veracity of information coming out of areas under the control of these same potential kidnappers and hostage takers. They would probably defend themselves by saying they rely on non-partisan activists, but all the evidence is that these can only operate in east Aleppo under license from the al-Qaeda-type groups.

It is inevitable that an opposition movement fighting for its life in wartime will only produce, or allow to be produced by others, information that is essentially propaganda for its own side. The fault lies not with them but a media that allows itself to be spoon-fed with dubious or one-sided stories.

For instance, the film coming out of east Aleppo in recent weeks focuses almost exclusively on heartrending scenes of human tragedy such as the death or maiming of civilians. One seldom sees shots of the 10,000 fighters, whether they are wounded or alive and well.”

Western governments and Western media who have claimed over the last few months to care so much about the fate of hospitals in Aleppo now have an indisputable story about an

actual attack on an actual hospital in Aleppo. They have however practically nothing to say about it. They have not even made the very bad argument that the Russians brought the attack on themselves by attacking other hospitals in Syria.

I suspect the silence is in part driven by reluctance to admit to the Western public the embarrassing fact that the Russians, instead of barbarically bombing hospitals in Aleppo, are actually sending hospitals to Aleppo.

The main reason however is surely that the hospital is Russian. As in so [many other matters that concern Russia and Russians](#), attacks on Russian hospitals somehow in the West simply don't matter in the way attacks on other hospitals do, even if those hospitals are controlled by Al-Qaeda, and even if there are good reasons to doubt [whether they even exist](#).

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