

Speech: "This is Russia's seventh veto on Syria in five years."

Thank you Mr President.

I am appalled that Russia has vetoed this resolution today and I am surprised and disappointed that China has chosen to join them – at complete odds with the principles of non-proliferation that both China and Russia claim to support so strongly.

As permanent members of this Council and as Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Russia and China have a clear responsibility to take action against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. By vetoing this resolution today, they have undermined the credibility of this Council and of the international rules preventing the use of these barbaric weapons.

In Security Council resolution 2118 we all agreed – Russia and China included – that any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic will lead to this Council imposing measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Thanks to those vetoes today, we have failed to do so.

This wasn't a political text. It was a technical resolution in response to an impartial and factual report by the Security Council-mandated Joint UN-OPCW Investigative Mechanism. It was a report we all called for. It was an investigation we all supported.

But instead of backing the resolution, we have seen yet again that Russia is prepared to abuse its veto power to stand by a regime that has no regard for its own people. That has no regard for the most basic rules of war or international treaties; a regime that has indiscriminately bombed and besieged its own people. A regime that has turned chemical weapons on its own population, killing six year old children like Mohammed.

This is Russia's seventh veto on Syria in five years. What further evidence do we need that Russia will always prioritise the Asad regime over the protection of the Syrian people? Well, today we have learnt that they will plunge to new depths; that they would rather cover up for Asad then prevent the further use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

The Russians will say this resolution is based on weak or flawed evidence. But the JIM was a fully independent UN mechanism which Russia created. Russia agreed the methodology the JIM would apply. And yet when they came up with an answer Russia didn't like, all of a sudden, there's a problem.

Russia's answer is that Syria should conduct its own investigation. The idea that the guilty party should investigate itself is absurd and it is clearly recorded that the JIM's investigation has been obstructed by the Syrian regime.

Russia will claim the JIM doesn't meet a legal standard of evidence. Well, it

was never intended to. As we all agreed in SCR 2235 it was meant to examine the available evidence in an impartial manner and come to a conclusion.

Russia will claim that we should be focusing on Daesh's use of chemical weapons. But we already have robust and comprehensive measures in place to combat Daesh. The draft resolution would have reaffirmed our commitment to those measures and reiterated our condemnation of Daesh.

Russia will say that supporting this resolution will disrupt the Syrian political process. Well, this is simply not true. The United Kingdom remains committed to working with Russia, and everyone else, through the UN to help the Syrian people reach a lasting political settlement.

But not taking action against chemical weapons use undermines confidence in the international community's ability to tackle flagrant violations of international law. It undermines confidence and trust of ordinary Syrians affected by these horrific attacks. This is no way to build the right conditions for successful political talks.

Despite Russia and China's actions Mr President, I want to reiterate our thanks to the JIM for their work and to international partners who helped the JIM. Because of that tireless work, we know without doubt that the Asad regime and Daesh used toxic chemicals as weapons against civilians in Syria.

Those responsible for such attacks remain free and unpunished to this day. Today we had a chance to step up and begin to end that impunity. Instead, Russia and China have let down the people of Marea, the people of Talamenes, Sarmin and Qaminas, and the wider international community that seeks justice for those horrific attacks.

Without a clear response to these flagrant abuses of international law, the Asad regime is only going to be emboldened to preserve its chemical weapons capabilities and to continue to use those chemical weapons. We should all be concerned by reports of further chemical weapons use in Syria, most recently in Aleppo and East Hama last year.

And in response to these vetoes, Daesh too will surely only be encouraged to continue using chemical weapons – something that Russia claims to oppose. And the longer term credibility and utility of the Chemical Weapons Convention will also suffer.

But the United Kingdom will not let Russia's actions today stop us from working with international partners to see justice for the victims, and to prevent the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. This includes the international, impartial and independent mechanism on Syria agreed by the General Assembly last year. We must be able to demonstrate that the international system works, and that we are able to bring those responsible for using chemical weapons to account. Anything less is not an option.

Thank you.

Speech: “Will we take action against those who use chemical weapons in Syria? It’s that simple.”

Thank you Mr President.

This Council is about to be asked a simple question. Will we take action against those who use chemical weapons in Syria? It’s that simple.

Will we take action on behalf of those whose lives have been destroyed by these senseless weapons?

Will we take action for people like Mohammed Abdul-Razzuk Alhashash?

Thanks to the testimony of those on the ground, we know that Mohammed was admitted to hospital at 1:30 PM on the 21st of April 2014. A couple of hours earlier a Syrian regime helicopter had dropped two containers on his home town of Talmenes, exposing him and many others to a yellow toxic gas.

After the attack Mohammed was unable to breathe. He lost consciousness. On arrival at hospital he was intubated under mechanical ventilation. His face was red. Pink foam poured from his mouth. His pupils were dilated. His lungs were crackling. His heartbeat and breathing stopped. CPR was performed but all attempts to revive him failed. Mohammad died at two o’clock. He was six years old.

Mohammed is why we are here today. We are here in this Chamber to begin to bring justice for him, for his family and for the hundreds, if not thousands of other Syrians whose stories are all too similar to his own.

This isn’t about politics. At its core this isn’t really about the JIM or the OPCW. Forget the acronyms. This isn’t even about Syria. This is about taking a stand when children are poisoned. It’s that simple. It’s about taking a stand when civilians are maimed and murdered with toxic weapons; weapons used in complete disregard for the international rules and norms that we all claim to uphold.

So in a moment when we are asked to vote on this resolution, I hope that all members of this Council will lift their hands in favour of this text – and do so with Mohammed in their minds.

Thank you.

People fleeing war more likely to find shelter in poorer countries, says UN refugee agency

28 February 2017 – Most of the 3.2 million people driven forcibly from their homes in early 2016 found shelter in low- and middle-income countries, according to a new study by the United Nations refugee agency.

“The biggest contributors providing a safe haven to the world’s uprooted people are poorer communities,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in a news release yesterday.

More than half the new refugees in the first half of 2016 fled Syria’s conflict, with most staying in the immediate region – Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, according to the UN Refugee Agency’s (UNHCR) Mid-Year Trends 2016 report.

Other sizable groups fled Iraq, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, the UN agency reported.

For example, relative to the sizes of their populations, Lebanon and Jordan host the largest number of refugees, while in terms of economic performance the biggest burdens are carried by South Sudan and Chad.

“Today we face not so much a crisis of numbers but of cooperation and solidarity,” Mr. Grandi said.

RELATED: Refugees fleeing danger are ‘not dangerous themselves’ – UN refugee agency chief

Of all countries, Turkey sheltered the greatest number of refugees, hosting 2.8 million by mid-2016. It was followed by Pakistan (1.6 million), Lebanon (one million), Iran (978,000), Ethiopia (742,700), Jordan (691,800), Kenya (523,500), Uganda (512,600), Germany (478,600) and Chad (386,100).

Speaking earlier this month, he criticized the politicizing of refugees in Europe, the United States, and other industrialized countries and regional blocks.

“These are people that flee from danger, they’re not dangerous themselves,” he had said.

[News story: Foreign Secretary responds to UNSC vote on chemical weapons use in Syria](#)

It is deeply disappointing that Russia and China have blocked the UN Security Council from taking action in response to the appalling use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Security Council's own investigation has found attacks were committed by the Syrian regime and Daesh on the Syrian people. Despite support from the majority of the Security Council, Russia, along with China, has chosen to prevent action.

Along with our international partners, the UK will continue to seek justice for the victims of these heinous chemical weapons attacks and work to deter the further use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

[Public want paedophiles dealt with properly – Diane Abbott](#)

Diane

Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, speaking in response to remarks from Chief Constable Bailey, said:

“These comments are deeply troubling. The public are right to demand that this crime is treated with the utmost seriousness.

“Talk of police forces who ‘cannot cope’ will fuel concerns that this is motivated by lack of resources.

“Labour has repeatedly warned about the consequences of Tory cuts to the police budget and to overall police numbers.

“It's not good enough for ministers to say that they expect these crimes to be investigated properly, when their cuts are placing the police in an impossible position.”

Ends

**Notes
to editors**

– Reports of Chief Constable Stephen Bailey's remarks are here
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39112911>

– Since 2009 total police officer numbers have fallen by
20,000

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36857326>