

Please use the forward button above to send this on to a friend or neighbour - if they aren't on the internet please print it off for them! Best of all ask your friends and neighbours to sign up for my email newsletter through my website or by emailing me on [anna.soubry.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:anna.soubry.mp@parliament.uk)



## Anna Soubry MP working hard for Broxtowe

[www.annasoubry.org.uk](http://www.annasoubry.org.uk)

E-newsletter | August 31st 2013

"If only all ministers answered questions like Anna Soubry does." *David Aaronovitch, The Times*

"she has a record of unusually free speech" *Simon Carr, The Independent*

"part of the beating heart of the parliamentary Tory party" *Quentin Letts, The Daily Mail*

Hello again,

As you will know, on Thursday Parliament rejected a Government motion on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

This motion supported the principle of military intervention to protect innocent children and adults from further unlawful and despicable attacks, but it was no "rush to war" - it was an option.

The motion clearly stated Britain would not get involved in any such military action

- without another vote,
- without more evidence
- and without more attempts to convince the UN to step in.

On that basis and for reasons I will explain, I supported the motion; but, despite supporting their own motion which did not rule out military intervention, Labour chose to vote against the Government motion and it was defeated.

The Prime Minister immediately accepted the vote; the result is that even though evidence continues to emerge that the perpetrator of these appalling and unlawful attacks on innocent citizens is indeed the Syrian regime, if there is any military intervention by other

countries we will not be playing our part. I also believe we have considerably weakened our negotiating hand.

There are those who oppose all war and whilst I may not agree with them I respect their views. On Thursday evening there were both Conservative and Labour MP's who passionately believe we should not take any military action in Syria whatever the circumstances, and they accordingly voted against or abstained on both motions. They acted on principle and rightly so.

As you may know I was on holiday when Parliament was recalled. I had been following events via emails and in newspapers downloaded from the Internet. My own view based on what I had seen and read was that innocent civilians in Syria had again been attacked, there was very strong evidence that chemical weapons had been deployed and good evidence the attack had been launched by the Syrian regime. My view was that if Assad was using chemical weapons against his own people then this was clearly a war crime - a breach of humanitarian law requiring a tough response which could, possibly should, include military intervention.

However, I knew the UN officials had not completed their enquiries as to whether chemical weapons had been used (it is important to remember they were not enquiring as to who was responsible for any deployment of chemical weapons). I was also very concerned that we should not rush into any military intervention for a number of reasons and I made my concerns known to the Government.

I have little doubt there is an overwhelming desire amongst the vast majority of sensible people not to get entangled, again, in the type of desperately complicated and dangerous situation we found ourselves in Iraq. The situation in Syria is particularly difficult because the opposition to the President Assad's regime is so diverse and frankly contains some groups we most certainly do not want to support or give succour to.

Back in early 2003, I was a candidate in the City Council elections, in the run up to the invasion of Iraq. I was very much opposed to the invasion and war in Iraq, and didn't hesitate to make my views known. It gave those of us who argued against the invasion of Iraq no pleasure that our analysis and fears were in time proved right. Had I been your MP I would not have voted in favour of the invasion and I say that not with the benefit of hindsight but given my publicly stated views at the time.

So I came to the debate on Thursday about Syria with a clean political conscience unlike many, on both sides of the House of Commons, who voted for the invasion of Iraq and who now quite understandably, fear making the same mistake again.

I read the Government motion and agreed with it. It clearly states,

**"a strong humanitarian response is required from the international community and that this may, if necessary, require military action that is legal, proportionate and focused on saving lives by preventing and deterring further use of Syria's chemical weapons;"**

As I say this is no "rush to war" especially as it also states a second vote would have to take place before we engaged in any military action in Syria and we should continue to persuade the UN to step in,

**"every effort should be made to secure a Security Council Resolution backing military action before any such action is taken, and that before any direct British involvement in such action a further vote of the House of Commons will take place;"**

It is also important to note that Labour's motion was not against the principle of military intervention - on the contrary it stated it,

**"supports steps to provide humanitarian protection to the people of Syria but will only support military action involving UK forces if and when the following conditions have been met"**

Many of those conditions were echoed in the Government's motion.

The first vote was on Labour's motion which I didn't support as I believed the Government's was considerably better - far clearer as a statement of principle. Labour lost the vote and we then voted on the Government motion which I believe, given what their own motion had said, the Opposition could have supported or at least have abstained.

Since Thursday more compelling evidence has emerged that chemical weapons have been deployed by the Assad regime against their own people. We now learn of an attack on a school and the terrible injuries to children and I would urge you to watch an interview on last night's Newsnight with Dr Rola who has been working in Syria and who witnessed those injuries and has seen the Syrian planes attacking innocent civilians. I found her evidence compelling.

(click [here](#) for the link to the episode or [here](#) to watch the interview with Dr Rola on the BBC News web site).

Part of being British has been our willingness to take in the refugee and asylum seeker fleeing persecution at home. I was proud that when there has been clear evidence of the need to take action to protect the innocent living under tyranny, Britain led from the front and wasn't afraid to do the right thing. The situation in Syria is not the same as the situation in Iraq a decade ago, the similarity is with Bosnia where we and other nations failed to intervene and stop the slaughter.

When the Government lost the vote on Thursday evening Labour MP's yelled with delight. I have no doubt they celebrated defeating the Government and not because they had advanced any noble cause. Equally, I have no doubt Assad and his supporters were also cheering.

Blatant party politics came into play and my great fear is that in reducing our options we are weakened as a nation and most importantly we have weakened our ability to protect the innocent and bring about peace in Syria.

I will be sending out my usual email newsletter next week.

Have a great weekend,

Anna

---

## **The Government's motion**

That this House:

- Deplores the use of chemical weapons in Syria on 21 August 2013 by the Assad regime, which caused hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries of Syrian civilians;
- Recalls the importance of upholding the worldwide prohibition on the use of chemical weapons under international law;
- Agrees that a strong humanitarian response is required from the international community and that this may, if necessary, require military action that is legal,

proportionate and focused on saving lives by preventing and deterring further use of Syria's chemical weapons;

- Notes the failure of the United Nations Security Council over the last two years to take united action in response to the Syrian crisis;
- Notes that the use of chemical weapons is a war crime under customary law and a crime against humanity, and that the principle of humanitarian intervention provides a sound legal basis for taking action;
- Notes the wide international support for such a response, including the statement from the United Nations Security Council, to "overcome internal disagreements and take action against those who committed this crime, for which the Syrian regime is responsible";
- Believes, in spite of the difficulties at the United Nations, that a United Nations process must be followed as far as possible to ensure the maximum legitimacy for any such action;
- Therefore welcomes the work of the United Nations investigating team currently in Damascus, and whilst noting that the team's mandate is to confirm whether chemical weapons were used and not to apportion blame, agrees that the United Nations Secretary General should ensure a briefing to the United Nations Security Council immediately upon the completion of the team's initial mission;
- Believes that the United Nations Security Council must have the opportunity immediately to consider that briefing and that every effort should be made to secure a Security Council Resolution backing military action before any such action is taken, and that before any direct British involvement in such action a further vote of the House of Commons will take place; and
- notes that this Resolution relates solely to efforts to alleviate humanitarian suffering by deterring use of chemical weapons and does not sanction any action in Syria with wider objectives.

## **The Opposition Motion**

### **This House:**

Expresses its revulsion at the killing of hundreds of civilians in Ghutah, Syria, on 21 August 2013;

believes that this was a moral outrage;

recalls the importance of upholding the worldwide prohibition on the use of chemical weapons;

makes clear that the use of chemical weapons is a grave breach of international law; agrees with the UN secretary general that the UN weapons inspectors must be able to report to the UN security council and that the security council must live up to its responsibilities to protect civilians;

supports steps to provide humanitarian protection to the people of Syria but will only support military action involving UK forces if and when the following conditions have been met:

1. The UN weapons inspectors, upon the conclusion of their mission in the eastern Ghutah, being given the necessary opportunity to make a report to the security council on the evidence and their findings, and confirmation by them that chemical weapons have been used in Syria;
2. The production of compelling evidence that the Syrian regime was responsible for the use of these weapons;
3. The UN security council having considered and voted on this matter in the light of the reports of the weapons inspectors and the evidence submitted;
4. There being a clear legal basis in international law for taking collective military action to

protect the Syrian people on humanitarian grounds;

5. That such action must have regard to the potential consequences in the region, and must therefore be legal, proportionate, time-limited and have precise and achievable objectives designed to deter the future use of prohibited chemical weapons in Syria; and

6. That the prime minister reports further to the House on the achievement of these conditions so that the House can vote on UK participation in such action.

This House further notes that such action relates solely to efforts to deter the use of chemical weapons and does not sanction any wider action in Syria.

Anna Soubry MP

Barton House,

Chilwell,

NG9 4AJ

0115 9436507

[anna.soubry.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:anna.soubry.mp@parliament.uk)

Anna Soubry MP, Barton House, High Road, Chilwell, NG94AJ