

Syria – Views from the First Minister and others ahead of Westminster debate



Our Edinburgh MPs are making their respective ways back to Westminster tomorrow to take part in the debate over any action on Syria. When The Edinburgh Reporter met Sheila Gilmore MP the other day she hoped it might be delayed till Monday which is the day that MPs were due to return anyway, but the situation now seems to require a quicker response.

The Prime Minister David Cameron spoke in an interview about the chemical weapons attack yesterday:-

The PM has given an interview about [#chemicalweapons](#) attack in [#Syria](#) – read the transcript: <http://t.co/fZSfYHcGwz>

– No. 10 Press Office (@Number10press) [August 27, 2013](#)

Foreign Secretary William Hague made a statement earlier today in London but also wrote in The Telegraph about the need for a challenge following the apparent use of chemical weapons in Syria last week.

The use of chemical weapons in [#Syria](#) is a moral outrage that cannot go unchallenged, writes [@WilliamJHague](#) <http://t.co/hqKJd2ilNg>

– Telegraph News (@TelegraphNews) [August 28, 2013](#)

Full Statement on Syria (LL) <http://t.co/xTiSV3E7r8>

– FM Alex Salmond (@AlexSalmond) [August 28, 2013](#)

As the UK Government prepares to put a resolution to the UN Security Council on “authorising necessary measures to protect civilians” in Syria later today, First Minister Alex Salmond said:-“The Scottish Government condemns unreservedly the actions of the Assad regime over recent months and years. In particular, we condemn and deplore any use of chemical weapons by any party as a crime against humanity. If the findings of UN inspectors do point to this appalling attack having been perpetrated by the Syrian regime, Assad and those responsible should face the full accountability of the International Criminal Court.

“Any resort to military action should always be approached carefully, on an evidential base, and within a clear legal framework – and only after full consideration of the aims, objectives and consequences. At this stage, we consider that these criteria have not been met and therefore that the case for military action in Syria – or the UK’s participation in it – has not yet been made.

“The Scottish Government believes that the UN inspectors should be given the time and the full support of the international community to complete their investigations.”

Welcome the recall of Parliament and the assurance that MPs will get a chance to vote on a substantive motion

– Douglas Alexander (@DAlexanderMP) [August 27, 2013](#)

Labour’s shadow foreign secretary, Douglas Alexander expressed

his party's views when he said:-“I believe that ahead of any action involving the UK armed forces in Syria it is the responsibility of the British Prime Minister to come to the British Parliament and to make his case, to set out the evidence he has seen, to explain his course of action that he wants to advance and answer the questions of politicians and of parliamentarians ahead of a vote in the House of Commons.

“We have not seen the evidence that the Government has seen. We are not clear as to the Government's military objectives. Is it limited for example to trying to degrade chemical weapons facilities or is it a broader objective of trying to fundamentally alter the course of a civil war?

“I would not rule out the possibility of support for the government, but I think that it is incumbent on the government to set out its case, allow us to ask questions and then a judgement will be reached. I don't think anyone is contemplating using ground troops from the UK or elsewhere as a response to what happened last week and I am equally unconvinced that the case has been made to arm the Syrian rebels.

“Tony Blair's views on this have been well known for some time but we have taken a different course as the Labour Party today. While we are open to the government making its case to Parliament we think there is a real urgency to know more about the government's military objectives

“I think the public would expect the opposition, and all parliamentarians to hold the government to account. I don't think it would be appropriate for the opposition to write a blank cheque to the government. They have a job of work to do but so do we as the opposition. That is why we need Parliament to be involved in this decision.”