

Urge the UK government to seek political and diplomatic solutions to the situation in Syria



A guide for Friends

The Quakers in Britain statement on the Syria intervention:

We see with horror the death and devastation being imposed on the people in and around Syria. We believe that the use of chemical weapons should be challenged. However, as a faith community our religious understanding and experience is that true peace cannot be imposed by military might.

We remain convinced that there are both moral and pragmatic reasons to oppose military action in Syria. Bombs dropped from the air kill indiscriminately, and also increase the risk of terrorist retribution. Those who suffer the most in violent conflict are non-combatants, ordinary people including women and children.

Instead we support the process of building peace. Peace is rarely immediate or easy, but it results in genuine long-term security. True peace comes from hard work and thoughtful actions.

We urge the Prime Minister not to sideline democratic processes, and to consider the long-term impact of any action in Syria.

Actions to take

Write to your MP

You and/or your local meeting could write to or request to meet with your MP(s) or MSP(s) to discuss Syria and state your opposition to bombing people. It may be quickest to send your letter by email but ordinary post is fine too. You could send your MP the full statement from Quakers in Britain and use the list of points on the other side of this document to write in your

own words. Although an original letter is more effective, you could use some of the ideas in this [model letter](#) from the Stop the War campaign.

Engage in wider discussions about security

The conflict in Syria profoundly matters for our world because it affects international peace and stability. How can peace be

more effectively promoted at home and abroad? [Read and share the statement from Rethinking Security](#) on UK military intervention in Syria. Take part in [civic conversations](#) about it and attend the national conference in June to explore [new approaches to national security](#).

Vigils & demonstrations

If you are interested in holding a peace vigil there is a guide here: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/organising-a-vigil.

To find demonstrations you may want to look at www.stopwar.org.uk. We encourage Friends to take a Quakers for Peace poster or to make your own with your own words for any external protest.

Practice meaningful solidarity

Support the actions organised by those affected by the conflict and amplify the voices of Syrians.

Many meetings are Sanctuary Meetings that have welcomed and advocated on behalf of Syrian refugees. Their stories can be shared among meetings and with faith communities.

Now is also a good time to learn more about the roots and impacts of the conflict in Syria. Here are some highly recommended articles and books to read:

Articles

[A Syria For All Its People – Two Books on an Unnecessary War](#) – Maryam Saleh
[The ‘anti-imperialism’ of idiots](#) – Leila Al Shami
[Syria’s civil war explained from the beginning](#)

Books

The Impossible Revolution: Making Sense of the Syrian Tragedy – Yassin Al-Haj Saleh
We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled – Wendy Pearlman
Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War – Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila Al-Shami
Syria Speaks – Edited by Malu Halasa, Zaher Omareen, Nawara Mahfoud
Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria – Lisa Wedeen

Engage within your local meeting

Not everyone in your local meeting will be of the same mind about a suitable Quaker response. If your Quaker Meeting is unsure about how to respond, you could read [Advice for Friends in times of war \(PDF\)](#) for guidance.

Get the word out

We encourage you to write to your local newspaper, tweet and blog. You could open up a discussion on Facebook or tell

your local media that you have written to your MP or are planning a vigil. If you are approached by the media please contact

Anne van Staveren on
annev@quaker.org.uk.

Suggested phrases

- There is no justification for the use of chemical weapon attacks and their use is illegal. If there is suspicion of their use, UN Inspectors must be involved and their reporting considered at all times.
- As a faith community our religious understanding and experience is that true peace cannot be imposed by military might.
- Using airstrikes to bomb Syria increases the risk of a conflict between nuclear-armed rivals.
- Using bombing as a tactic to claim that violence is unacceptable is contradictory.
- Every effort must be made to invest in peacebuilding and peacemaking with the people of Syria
- Every bomb dropped on Syrian cities drives yet more people to flee and seek refuge in safer countries.
- We believe our country should act with wisdom and far-sighted courage. A wisdom that rises above the temptation to respond to every problem with military might. A wisdom that looks back at our military failures in Libya and Iraq and Afghanistan and learns from experience. The courage – and strength – to think through the likely consequences of actions to find a long term, lasting solution.

What we are asking our politicians to do

- The UK and NATO allies must stop arming and financing any of the parties fighting in Syria, before we can expect others do the same.
- Look carefully at how national and international actions have served to deepen and prolong the war in Syria, and amend our arms trade and other aspects of our foreign policy. This means an end to armed drone strikes, and pressure on our allies to end detention without trial, torture and export of armaments. We ask for renewed efforts to enable Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, and a re-evaluation of the UK relationship with Saudi Arabia.
- Observe international law and apply it equally to all parties.

- Build cooperation among nations, strengthening those international institutions which contribute to peace.
- Export peace rather than war, so that we can create the conditions the world needs to truly address such as climate change.
- Welcome refugees, so we can not only meet the acute needs of those individuals but also undercut the narrative of fear and mistrust.
- Engage in acts of solidarity with those directly impacted by the conflict and experiencing suffering and loss as a result.

Contact

- Advice on writing to MPs: Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary Engagement Officer, jessicam@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1107
- Advice on the media: Anne van Staveren, Media Officer, annev@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1048 or 07958 009 703 (mobile)
- Advice on vigils/demonstrations Sahdya Darr, Peace & Disarmament Coordinator, sahdyad@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1108