



A guide to taking action to prevent British military action on the people of Syria

Following terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November, the UK Parliament is preparing to debate a proposal for military action in Syria. This is expected to be early in the week of 30 November, although dates may change.

Quakers in Britain have made a statement, which is online at: www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-responding-to-terrorism.

Mass lobbying of MPs was a huge factor in defeating David Cameron's last attempt to bomb Syria in 2013. If we want to stop the UK bombing Syria, then taking action now is crucial.

Actions that Quakers could take

Write to your MP

You and/or your local meeting could write to or even meet your MP(s) ahead of the vote on Syria. As this is expected to be during the week of Monday 30 November, it may be quickest to send your letter by email, although a paper letter sent quickly may also reach Parliament in time. 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 this tool: <http://act.stopwar.org.uk/lobby/stopbombingsyria>.

Vigils & Demonstrations

If you are interested in holding a peace vigil there is a guide here: <http://old.quaker.org.uk/peace-vigil-guide>. Send Sam Walton an email at samw@quaker.org.uk if you would like examples of flyers and literature that have already been used for vigils recently. To find demonstrations you may want to look at www.stopwar.org.uk.

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.

Reach out to others

Local Muslim communities may be feeling vulnerable or under suspicion. Quakers see acts of terror as crimes, not as acts of faith. Could you reach out to them, perhaps by offering a shared meal or visiting them? Perhaps there is some joint work you could do together?

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 "Quakers in a Time of War" for guidance. Find it at <http://old.quaker.org.uk/sites/default/files/Advice-for-Friends-in-times-of-war-web.pdf>

Phrases to use

- Terrorism is a deliberate attempt to provoke fear, hatred, division and a state of war. War – especially war with the West – is what ISIS/Daesh wants. It confirms the image they project of the West as a colonialist 'crusader' power, which acts with impunity to impose its will overseas and especially against Muslims.
- The military actions of Western nations recruit more people to the cause than they kill. Every bomb dropped is a recruitment poster for ISIS, a rallying point for the young, vulnerable and alienated. And 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 that others do the same.
- Look carefully at how national and international actions have contributed to the creation and maintenance of terrorist threats, 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 address its most serious problems, including 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.
- Resist the marginalisation & demonization of Muslims, which is a key plank in ISIS's plan for success. We must engage in acts of solidarity and coexist with our Muslim brothers and sisters.
- Justice for terrorist crimes must come through the rule of law. Acts of terrorism are not acts of war, and must not be treated as such.

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 and policy: Sam Walton, Peace & Disarmament Programme Manager, samw@quaker.org.uk, 020 7663 1067