

Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt
Secretary of State for Foreign affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 1AA

20 July 2019

Dear Foreign Secretary,

On 15 July, the Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a report focused on the deliberate targeting by the Syrian Air Force of relief efforts by the White Helmets and others. Combined with the deliberate targeting of schools, hospitals and other medical facilities and the deliberate denial of access to relief for besieged communities, this constitutes what we are sure you will agree is a despicable policy and a totally unacceptable series of flagrant breaches of longstanding humanitarian norms. And yet these tactics have been used repeatedly over the past eight years, with devastating consequences for civilians and aid workers and apparent impunity for those ordering and committing the atrocities.

Worse still, the failure of the Security Council and national governments to address decisively these outrages in Syria has emboldened belligerents in other conflicts both in the region and beyond to commit similar atrocities, safe in the belief that no action will be taken against them.

We acknowledge and appreciate your various statements in recent weeks on the importance of ensuring respect for the norms and laws relating to the behaviour of warring parties during armed conflict. At a time when the relevance of such norms is increasingly called into question, both by words and deeds, these reminders are important and timely.

The British Government's insistence on respect by Syria of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a welcome step forward in reasserting the regard for international norms. But we are shocked and disappointed by the Government's reluctance to be similarly robust in its attitude to flagrant and systematic breaches of International Humanitarian Law by the same government of Syria and its backers. We believe that the British Government should and must use its presence on the Security Council and use its international authority in other fora to consistently draw attention to the regular and widespread disregard for International Humanitarian Law in Syria that has so severely limited the protection of the civilian population and undermined humanitarian relief operations.

INHUMANITY

UNITED AGAINST INHUMANITY

On behalf of United Against Inhumanity (UAI), we therefore call on you to launch an urgent international initiative to condemn these crimes in the strongest possible terms and to work with others to develop effective ways of bringing these crimes to an end and their perpetrators to account. We cannot sit back and accept that this is happening in 2019 and that our government seems unwilling to take effective steps to stop it. Your welcome commitment to international norms and standards surely requires this.

On behalf of:

United Against Inhumanity (UAI)

Dr Martin Barber OBE

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