

IVAW Statement on Syria Strikes

April 17, 2017



Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) condemns in no uncertain terms the bombing of Sharyat airbase in Syria six days ago by Donald Trump's administration. As veterans of the unending and expanding wars conducted over the last 16 years, we know intimately that U.S. military intervention exacerbates and further militarizes conflicts overseas and that the people who pay the greatest price are the everyday people of occupied nations. We also know that this is not the first time our military has been used in the Syrian conflict. U.S. bombs have been dropped on Syria under both the Trump and Obama administrations, resulting in more than a thousand civilian deaths.

As we oppose the long history of U.S. intervention and destabilization in Syria and in the region, we also acknowledge and oppose the many actors causing death and devastation to the people of Syria. Bashar Al-Assad has responded brutally to a popular, non-violent uprising for democracy and freedom which emerged in 2011 and in the years since has descended into civil war. The government has used barrel bombing campaigns, tactics designed to create famine, "disappeared" lead dissidents and voices of opposition, and tortured. In addition to the U.S., foreign nations including Russia, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, and Turkey have utilized Syria as a battleground for their proxy wars, further entrenching the violence. We know that without self determination, including an end to all foreign intervention, the Syrian people can't truly be free.

We also know that the Trump administration, following the pattern of administrations before it, is deeply intertwined with the military-industrial complex and seeks to increase mutual profit through expanding U.S. wars. This is reflected in the erratic and dangerous foreign policy that the Trump administration is engaged in, as well as the astronomical proposed increase of the U.S. military budget by \$54 billion. We see global arms dealers, weapons manufacturers, and defense contractors as beneficiaries of the violence in Syria who stand to turn a profit with each new strike and each successive deployment.

We call for a stop to all U.S. military actions in Syria, including the removal of all U.S. troops and bases in the country. These cruise missile strikes were launched without consultation with Congress nor with the United Nations Security Council. They continue a series of dangerous precedents that justify military force "as humanitarian" in nature and expand executive power at the expense of democratic oversight. Time and time again, this drive towards war-making has served to create the conditions for further destabilization, displacement, and civilian casualties that have devastating

consequences locally, regionally, and in this case globally as we have seen in recent days with the building tensions between North Korea and the United States.

As the Trump administration claims that its strikes on Syria are for humanitarian reasons, its policies at home and abroad instead demonstrate their strategy in mobilizing war, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment as a means of leveraging fear and consolidating power. Just as we have challenged the so-called "War on Terror" and this most recent military strike, we continue to challenge Islamophobia and the "Muslim ban" at home. If the Trump administration wants to be humanitarian, it can begin to address the crises it has inherited by ending its policy of denying immigration from majority Muslim countries and accepting Syrian refugees in significant numbers to the United States.

We call for an independent investigation by U.N. arms inspectors into the recent release of chemical weapons on a civilian population, and for an internationally led effort to broker a cessation of violence in Syria. From the hundreds of civilians killed in Mosul last week to the ongoing attacks on Yemen, U.S. military operations continue to worsen political instability and erode people's chances for survival. We call for accountability for the war crimes that the U.S. has committed in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and countless other countries since the beginning of the so-called "War on Terror."

As we recognize that U.S. foreign policy primarily relies on war and war profiteering, we also recognize the danger in failing to acknowledge that the people and countries it targets are distinct from each other. When it comes to local needs, demands, and accountability moving forward, we aspire to follow the lead of the people directly impacted by these wars.

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