Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"Did they need to reduce Aleppo to rubble to defeat terrorism?"

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Thank you Mr President.

I'd like to begin with the words of a Syrian teacher left trapped in Aleppo.

"People here are dying of pain, dying of hunger, dying of bombing, dying of coldness. This is the situation now in Eastern Aleppo." End of quote.

Those are the words of just one of the tens of thousands of men, women and children currently enduring hell in Aleppo. They are words that should haunt us all.

We welcome the message sent by the Membership in holding this meeting today, but in truth, only three members of this organisation can bring an immediate end to the suffering and collective punishment - the Asad regime and their Russian and Iranian backers.

They claim that they can't because they need to defeat terrorism. Really? Did they need to reduce Aleppo to rubble to defeat terrorism? Did they need to destroy hospital after hospital to defeat terrorism? Did they need to block humanitarian aid time after time to defeat terrorism?

These actions won't defeat terrorism and extremism; they will only fuel it.

Russia claims they're being misrepresented. They proudly point to the suspension of combat operations yesterday and the evacuation of 8,000 people as evidence of their humanitarian intent.

But until Russia, Iran and the Syrian regime have implemented every word of the resolution we are about to adopt, and the countless others passed by the Security Council, it will simply be too little, too late. Too little, too late for that teacher and for his pupils. Too little, too late for the thousands who have died, the thousands who are suffering.

And yet, despite all of this, it could still get worse. Hundreds of men and boys are disappearing as they flee eastern Aleppo, taken by the regime, their fate unknown.

So let us call on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, not abduct or attack them as they leave. Let us call on them to allow the United Nations to put in place necessary measures

that will ensure the protection of those fleeing and to allow the UN to play a role in planning evacuations.

In truth, whether these steps are taken or not, the fighting in Aleppo will eventually end. And when the guns fall silent over the rubble of that once great city, the war, the killing, the suffering, will all continue on elsewhere.

The Asad regime will only control one third of Syria. And despite trying, they cannot control the hearts of those fighting for peace and democracy. We cannot give up, we must not give up. We must use every tool at our disposal, including in this General Assembly resolution, to bring about an end to the suffering.

And ultimately, Mr President, we must never forget. When I was Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina the guns had been silent there for a decade. But in that time, Slobodan Milosevic, the architect of that conflict, of that genocide, was already behind bars facing justice.

Make no mistake, the war in Syria, like the war in Bosnia, will eventually come to an overdue end. Our memories are long and whether in one year or in ten, there will be accountability for those responsible for all those deaths in Aleppo and across Syria.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/did-they-need-to-reduce-aleppo-to-rubble-to-defeat-terrorism