Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK position on briefing by Russia and Syria at the OPCW: 26 April 2018

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The UK has outlined its position on the briefing by the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic held at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) today on “the staged incident in Syrian Duma on 7 April, with the participation of unwitting comedians and other witnesses from the famous ‘White Helmets’ footage broad (sic) to The Hague straight from the site of the event.”

Ambassador Peter Wilson, the UK’s Permanent Representative to the OPCW, said:

Russia and Syria’s briefing at the OPCW premises today is a stunt. The Director General has opposed Russia’s decision to host this briefing today. The UK will not attend, in company with our allies.

The OPCW is not a theatre. Russia’s decision to misuse it is yet another Russian attempt to undermine the OPCW’s work, and in particular the work of its Fact Finding Mission investigating chemical weapons use in Syria;

The Director General of the OPCW has called on Russia and Syria to work with the Fact Finding Mission, and to wait for its report. Russia and Syria have ignored his concerns.

Describing chemical weapons victims as ‘comedians’ is despicable. It shows the utter disregard Russia and Syria have for the suffering of the Syrian people, and indeed the global norm against chemical weapons use.

Widespread reports of intimidation of witnesses to the Douma attack is a cause for real concern. The Director General has asked states to supply information about the Douma attack to his Fact Finding Mission. Russia and Syria should do so, instead of waging a propaganda campaign of misinformation. We will not compromise with states that seek to degrade the structures and treaties that keep us safe.

Any witnesses with information related to chemical weapons attacks in Syria should be heard by the impartial OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM). We support the FFM and urge others to cease attempts to undermine its vital work.

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