Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary comments on chemical weapons use in Syria

2017-10-26

Speaking following the release of the report by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and United Nations' Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

This independent report from expert investigators reaches a clear conclusion: the Asad regime used sarin nerve gas against the people of Khan Sheikhoun in Syria on 4 April with tragic consequences for hundreds of victims.

Britain condemns this appalling breach of the rules of war and calls on the international community to unite to hold Asad's regime accountable.

In 2013, Russia promised to ensure Syria would abandon all of its chemical weapons. Since then, the investigators have found the Asad regime guilty of using poison gas in four separate attacks. Russia has repeatedly attempted to disrupt efforts to get to the truth of the Khan Sheikhoun attack, denying sarin was even used and then this Tuesday vetoing a

UN

Resolution that would have extended the mandate of the investigative team. Russia has consistently chosen to cover up for Asad. This was the ninth veto it has used to protect Asad and the third it has cast to prevent the Asad regime from being held accountable for its poison gas attacks.

This behaviour can only undermine the global consensus against the use of chemical weapons. I call on Russia to stop covering up for its abhorrent ally and keep its own commitment to ensure that chemical weapons are never used again.

The report also found that Daesh was responsible for a sulphur mustard attack on the town of Um Housh in September 2016. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

This appalling attack by Daesh is yet another example of Daesh's desperate methods. Any use of chemical weapons is abhorrent – whoever is responsible – and it must stop once and for all.

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