



**The following statement is issued by STAND's student-led leadership teams in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France**

**18 April 2018**

STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities strongly condemns continuous violations of international law in Syria, including the recent suspected chemical attack in Douma. We call for a renewed effort to protect innocent civilians.

On 7 April 2018, Syrian civilians were attacked with chemical agents in Douma, a formerly rebel-held town east of Damascus. According to human rights watchdogs, between 40 and 70 civilians were killed, and over 500 impacted in total, including those wounded and still in critical condition. Hundreds more remain in need of medical and humanitarian aid. Although drastic, this attack is not surprising – it falls within a dangerous precedent and pattern of chemical weapons use by the Assad regime and tacit permission from Russia, its ally in the conflict. The attack perpetuates a reigning culture of impunity in the conflict and underscores the Assad regime's disregard for civilian lives and international law.

As student leaders advocating against genocide and mass atrocity crimes, we are deeply concerned about the massive civilian harm in Douma and condemn the attack with the utmost severity. We recognize that while this attack has particularly captured the attention of the international community, that chemical attacks are only one of a wide host of tactics that have been used against Syrian civilians for the past seven years. Throughout the conflict, civilians have been continually targeted by barrel bombs and double tap strikes. Siege warfare has also been systematically employed to starve civilians and prevent them from accessing medical care.

While we remain vigilant and wary of military responses to the conflict, we also recognize the relative absence of viable alternatives in a bloody, ongoing conflict that has already claimed the lives of thousands. We stand with our Syrian counterparts in our belief that we must explore every avenue to bring this conflict to an end.

As citizen advocates from three of the five permanent United Nations Security Council countries, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, we commend our national leadership and international representatives for swiftly condemning this attack on the behalf of both the victims and the international community at large. In light of the subsequent punitive military airstrikes conducted by the three states, we strongly insist that all future actions taken to address the crisis in Syria are multilateral in both design and implementation, to ensure effective and sustained pressure to prevent further use of both chemical and conventional weapons against civilians by all parties to the conflict. Additionally, we call on the legislative bodies of each country to stay engaged and committed to upholding international law and the protection of civilians.

Failure to sustain diplomatic and political pressure would maintain the dangerous precedent that the international community has shown time and time again: that such attacks can continue with impunity.

**STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities**, was founded in 2004 by students at Georgetown University. Since then, STAND has expanded to high school and college campuses across the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Originally an acronym for “Students Taking Action Now: Darfur,” STAND’s mission quickly expanded to ending and preventing genocide and mass atrocities wherever they may occur. Today, STAND focuses on Sudan, South Sudan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Yemen, as well as on emerging atrocity issues such as those in Burundi and the Central African Republic, and on comprehensive atrocity prevention and peacebuilding policy.

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