

View from the House

Parliament was recalled on the 26 September to debate a motion to approve air strikes by UK armed forces against ISIL in Iraq.

There is no heavier responsibility on any Member of Parliament than to decide whether to commit UK armed forces into combat. Although this mission does not involve ground troops in Iraq or UK military action elsewhere, I can assure you I have considered this decision very carefully.

I have huge admiration for the bravery, spirit, and the duty to serve displayed by all of our armed forces. So there is no graver decision for our Parliament and our country than whether to commit UK forces to action.

There is a just cause for action on both humanitarian grounds and on the grounds of national interest, as the instability caused by the overthrow of the democratic state of Iraq means it could become a haven and training ground for terrorism directed at the UK.

Military action in this case is a last resort. ISIL have shown that they are not an organisation that could or should be negotiated with. The UK is responding to the request of the democratic state of Iraq, so there is a clear legal base for action.

The aims of the mission are clear: international military air power is supporting the Iraqi army and the Kurdish Peshmerga in their ground campaign against ISIL. The use of air power is accompanied by training and resources to support their efforts.

There is broad support for action. All 28 EU member states, the Arab League, a regional coalition of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar supporting the action. The action is proportionate, with the UK now committing six Tornado aircraft and continued surveillance, targeting ISIL military capacity in Iraq.

Following the debate, I concluded the criteria of a just cause, last resort, legal base, reasonable prospects, regional support, proportionality – have been met.

I understand that there is deep unease about the UK committing military force once again to the Middle East. But as a result of the decision, we will be supporting action to prevent the foreseeable and certain killing of Sunni, Shia, Kurdish, Christian, and Yezidi Iraqis. The action is specific, has broad international support and is about supporting a democratic state.

It is for reasons of protecting Britain's national interest, and protecting the values for which we stand, that I supported this action.

Valerie Vaz MP
28 September 2014