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http://www.thecomet.net/news/we_echo_the_call_of_syrian_women_anti_arms_activists_blockade_mbda_s_henlow_site_to_protest_against_airstrikes_on_so_called_islamic_state_1_4519210

‘We echo the call of Syrian women’ – anti-arms activists blockade MBDA’s Henlow site to protest against airstrikes on so-called Islamic State

By JP Asher



An activist holds a flare aloft during the Sisters Against Arms Trade protest outside MBDA's Henlow site this morning. Photo: Ewa Jasiewicz @ewajasiewicz

A group calling itself ‘Sisters Against Arms Trade’ has barricaded the entrance of missile producer MBDA’s Henlow site this morning to protest

against the arms industry and British airstrikes on the so-called Islamic State in Syria.



An activist lets off a flare during the Sisters Against Arms Trade protest outside MBDA's Henlow site this morning. Photo: Ewa Jasiewicz @ewajasiewicz

The female protesters, who are about 10 in number and clad in red and black, sat down outside the site's gate before 6am this morning.

They have let off flares and put up signs with slogans such as 'Aleppo is burning', 'Bread not Bombs' and 'No Missiles Will Be Produced Here Today'.

The sit-in is part of a co-ordinated series of protests, with an allied group called 'London Palestine Action' picketing at BAE Systems' headquarters in London.

The protesters claim on social media that MBDA has sent its workers home. A spokesman for the company told the Comet it had no comment to make.



The Sisters Against Arms Trade protest outside MBDA's Henlow site this morning. Photo: Ewa Jasiewicz @ewajasiewicz

The British government overwhelmingly approved RAF airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Syria amid that country's brutal civil war in December 2015, shortly after terrorists from the Islamic State group – also referred to as IS, ISIL, ISIS or the Arabic acronym Daesh – killed 130 people in Paris.

A Sisters Against Arms Trade spokeswoman said: “We stand against all bombardment of Syria and the Kurdish areas.

“Syrian women are the forgotten protagonists in the Syrian struggle for self-determination.

“It is the call of Syrian women that we echo today for dignity, self-determination, and food not bombs.

“The only people who have benefited from the UK's decision to bomb Syria are weapons manufacturers. MBDA has seen record profits from its deadly business.”

Police were called shortly before 6am. A spokeswoman said at 10.20am: “Four police units have been dispatched and officers are at the scene in order to facilitate lawful and peaceful protest, ensuring the safety of all involved and that all laws are upheld.”

The British intervention against ISIL comes as part of a US-led coalition, one of several operating against the terror group. France's defence minister said in January that more than 22,000 ISIL fighters had been killed by coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

Airwars, a team of independent journalists monitoring the international airstrikes, estimates that at least 1,172 civilians are likely to have been killed since outside intervention against ISIL began – most of them by Russian forces aiding the Syrian government under Bashar al-Assad.

The British government first approved airstrikes on ISIL in September 2014, at that time restricting operations to Iraq.

The defence secretary Michael Fallon said in September 2015 that there had been approximately 330 ISIL members killed by RAF airstrikes in Iraq up to that point, with no civilian casualties.