

Dear Mr. Danilow,

Thank you for contacting me about the ongoing civil war in Syria. I appreciate having the opportunity to know your views on issues of importance to Northwest Florida and our Nation.

As you know, the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, has been waging war against his own people for nearly two years. More than 100,000 lives have been lost, including more than 1,400 civilians who were massacred in a sarin gas attack on August 21, 2013. While this was not the first use of chemical weapons in the conflict, it was the incident President Obama chose to use as justification for involving the United States in this Syrian civil war. After the President announced his intent to strike Syria, the public outcry was swift and loud. I joined several of my colleagues in urging the President to respect the Constitution by presenting his case for war to Congress, the branch of government responsible for making declarations of war. Perhaps unprepared for the opposition to his war plans, the President did seek Congressional authorization to use force in Syria. He sent Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey to Capitol Hill to argue his case. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed an amended authorization; however, due to bipartisan opposition, Majority Leader Harry Reid never scheduled a final vote in the full Senate.

By the time I had the opportunity to question these Administration officials in the House Armed Services Committee, it had already become obvious that there were not enough votes in the House or the Senate to approve the President's plan to go to war. Now, after Secretary Kerry's offhand suggestion that Assad might escape attack by turning over his chemical weapons to the international community for destruction, the President is leaving open the possibility of a strike against Syria while pursuing a weapons inspection regime led by Syria's ally, Russia. I am concerned that the President's indecisiveness throughout the Syrian crisis and the inconsistency of his Administration's Syria policy has damaged the United States' standing in the world. By setting red lines he was not prepared to enforce, then proposing half-measures in response to repeated violations of those red lines, the President has diminished our credibility and has likely emboldened those we wish to deter.

I remain opposed to United States involvement—both direct and indirect—in Syria's civil war. Mass slaughter of innocents, whether perpetrated with conventional or chemical weapons, is atrocious; however, Syria's civil war is not ours to fight. The United States currently has no vital national security interest in Syria. Until a clear, convincing argument can be made to the contrary, I will oppose efforts to draw this country into another long, expensive war.

If you would like to receive further information on issues of importance to you, please log on to my website at <http://jeffmiller.house.gov/>. As always, please feel free to contact my office if you have any further concerns.

Sincerely,

Jeff Miller  
Member of Congress