



## Foreign & Commonwealth Office

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06 June 2017

Dear Paul

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0452-17**

Thank you for your email of 5 May 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*Matthew Rycroft tweeted on 25th April a picture of himself and what appeared to be Read Saleh and that 90,922 people have been saved by the White Helmets*

<https://twitter.com/MatthewRycroft1/status/856987919222964225>

*Can you provide the evidence, as recorded data for such figures.*

*You may be aware that many people know that White Helmets are a terrorist organisation.*

*Can you send any due diligence that has been carried out over the last 5 years to convince the FCO that the White Helmets are a bona fide First Aid Organisation worth funding and not a terrorist organisation?*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

In answer to your question:

The United Kingdom has provided assistance to Syria Civil Defence (SCD) - also known as the White Helmets - since June 2013 through the Conflict Pool and its successor, the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). Recipients of CSSF are carefully selected to prevent funds and equipment being given to those involved in extremist activities or human rights violations. We monitor the situation on the ground, and all equipment transfers are approved

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by HMG immediately before delivery. All our assistance is carefully calibrated and legal, is aimed at alleviating human suffering and supporting moderate groups and is regularly monitored and evaluated. Syria Civil Defence is a Syrian-led, independent organisation with an agreed Code of Conduct (see <http://syriacivildefense.org/volunteers-save-lives>). It is dedicated to saving life wherever and whenever possible and does not have relationships with registered terrorist groups.

UK funding to the Syrian Civil Defence has been used to train and equip many of the over 3,000 active volunteers working in 120 civil defence teams inside Syria, delivered by trusted third party implementers. Each of the 120 Syria Civil Defence (SCD) teams is required to make an operational report after each civil defence operation it conducts. The operational report requires the team to list the number of deceased and the number of people rescued. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have stated that SCD are their most routinely reliable source inside Syria.

Since August 2014, the number of people rescued by the Syrian Civil Defence has been collated at a national level as a total figure. As at 1st May, the number of lives saved by Syria Civil Defence is 95,024. It was for this work that the Syrian Civil Defence were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015 and 2016.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

If you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the FOI and DPA Team, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room K4.04, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: [foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk](mailto:foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk). You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Near East Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office



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