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Syria and the « White Helmets »: Fake Humanitarian Entity Supported by US-NATO. A Politically Motivated Hoax?

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Unknown to most people, the White Helmets brand was conceived and directed by a marketing company named "The Syria Campaign" based in New York. They have managed to fool millions of people. Walt Disney might have made a great movie about this: unarmed volunteers fearlessly rescuing survivors in the midst of war without regard to religion or politics. Like most other "true life" Disney movies, it is 10% reality, 90% fiction.

Due to its success, Western countries are dedicating ever larger amounts of funding. The White Helmets were the 17 October TIME magazine cover story. Nikolas Kristof at the NY Times has gushed over them for years. They recently won a 2016 Right Livelihood Award. Netflix has recently released a special 'documentary' movie about the White Helmets. With impeccable timing, the mainstream media acclaim reached a crescendo with both the UK Guardian and The Independent calling on the Nobel Committe to award this year's Nobel Peace Prize to the White Helmets.

It's not just establishment that has gushed over the White Helmets. Codepink recommended the Netflix movie and DemocracyNow! ran a puff piece interview with the infomercial directors. The Intercept published an uncritical promotion of the White Helmets and their dubious leader. (CodePink received a lot of criticism and later issued a correction.)

The Reality Behind the White Helmet Image

In contrast with the uncritical promotion of the White Helmets, there have been some investigations of their reality during the past 1.5 years. This timeline shows the early investigations. In April 2015 Dissidentvoice published an expose of their actual creation and purpose. Since then there have been an increasing number of articles and videos revealing what is behind the 'feel good' veneer. Vanessa Beeley has produced numerous articles including documentation of the REAL Syrian Civil Defense which was founded six decades ago. She initiated an online Change.org petition which gathered 3.3 thousand signatures to NOT GIVE THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE to the WHITE HELMETS. That was twice as many signatures as the petition to GIVE the Nobel Prize to them. Apparently that fact upset someone influential because Change.org removed the petition without explanation. Did it violate "community standards"? You can judge for yourself because the petition is shown here.

Another online petition, also at CHANGE.ORG, is still up and running. It calls on the Right

Livelihood Foundation to RETRACT their award to the White Helmets. The petition includes ten reasons they do not deserve the prize and are not what they are presented to be. They stole the name Syria Civil Defense from the real Syrian organization. They appropriated the name "White Helmets" from the Argentinian rescue organization Cascos Blancos/White Helmets. They are not independent; they are funded by governments. They are not apolitical; they actively campaign for a No Fly Zone. They do not work across Syria; they ONLY work in areas controlled by the armed opposition, mostly Nusa/Al Qaeda. They are not unarmed; they sometimes do carry weapons and they also celebrate terrorist victories. They assist in terrorist executions.

In recent weeks, information about the true nature of the White Helmets has been spreading. Max Blumenthal has a two part expose at Alternet: "How the White Helmets became International Heroes while Pushing US Intervention and Regime Change in Syria » and "Inside the Shadowy PR Firm that's Lobbying for Regime Change in Syria »

Scott Ritter has written an article which critically looks at the White Helmets' "lionization". Internationally, the Israeli TV station I24 ran a special report with the title "White Helmets: Heroes or Hoax?", giving equal coverage to supporters and critics. Even "The National" out of United Arab Emirates has documented the controversy around the White Helmets.

Franklin Lamb Lashes Out at White Helmet Critics

Some supporters of the White Helmets have lashed back. The British military contractor who initially set up the organization has accused his critics of being 'proxies' for the Syrian and Russian governments. And in recent days, Franklin Lamb leaped to the defense of the White Helmets with an article titled "Political Defamation Campaign targets Rescue Workers in Syria".

Lamb's critique is almost as misleading as the group he defends. It appears he has not read many of the serious criticisms and exposes of the White Helmets. He does not provide references or sources so that a reader can compare his description with what critics actually said.

Lamb accuses critics of waging a "malicious campaign" against the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and International Committee of the Red Cross as well as the White Helmets. That is false. Here is what has been actually said: "Unlike a legitimate rescue organization such as the Red Cross or Red Crescent, the "White Helmets" only work in areas controlled by the armed opposition." The online petition to RETRACT the Right Livelihood Award says "The NATO White Helmets actually undermine and detract from the work of authentic organizations such as the REAL Syria Civil Defense and Syrian Arab Red Crescent."

Lamb echoes White Helmet propaganda by repeatedly referring to them as volunteers. But they are not. They are all paid–with the White Helmet media managers in Brooklyn New York, Gaziantep Turkey and Beirut Lebanon making sizable salaries. As to the on-the-ground 'White Helmets' based Nusra territory in Aleppo and Idlib, they are paid much more than full time Syrian soldiers for their part time real and staged rescue operations.

Lamb laments the fact that MSF (Medicins Sans Frontiers /Doctors without Borders) has been criticized. However MSF has shown itself to be politically biased. The organization has no staff inside Syria yet continues to issue statements as if they had clear compelling evidence when it seems they do not.

Recently MSF claimed that four hospitals in terrorist controlled sectors of East Aleppo had been bombed and two doctors injured. They do not identify the names or locations of the hospitals or the names of the doctors. The report is apparently based on hearsay. Perhaps MSF does not identify the name or location of the hospitals because when they did report names and locations, such as with Al Quds Hospital in April 2016, it was found that their report was inconsistent and full of contradictions.

MSF claimed "According to hospital staff on the ground, the hospital was destroyed by at least one airstrike which directly hit the building, reducing it to rubble."Photographs from before and after the event showed this assertion to be untrue. The so called "Al Quds Hospital" was an unidentified largely vacant apartment building with sandbags at the ground floors. MSF's bias is also shown by the fact they refuse to provide any services or support to the 90% of the Syrian population which is in government controlled areas. MSF has not responded to a previous open letter questioning their bias. Nor have they responded to invitations to visit government controlled Aleppo to evaluate the reality versus the claims of their allies in Nusra/Al Qaeda territory.

> Lamb says "The White Helmets are being attacked with all sorts of unfounded accusations and conspiracy theories". On the contrary, the evidence is overwhelming. White Helmets are funded by Western governments which want 'regime change'. White Helmets pick up bodies after execution. White Helmets carry weapons and celebrate jihadi victories. White Helmets ONLY work in areas dominated by Nusra or an ally. White Helmets actively campaign for a No Fly Zone. These are not "conspiracy theories"; they are facts easily proven in the videos and articles about them.
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> Lamb says, "White Helmet rescuers are much like Syria's population in general, including most of the 12 million refugees, who have come to abhor politics." It is true that nearly all Syrians abhor the war that has been imposed on them. However, the vast majority of Syrians also hate the terrorists while most 'White Helmets' are allied with them. Lamb is also wrong on the refugee count. There are about 12 million internally displaced persons but the number of refugees is closer to 4 million. Two thirds of the internally displaced persons are living inside Syria in areas under government control.

The White Helmets were "branded" by a marketing company called The Syria Campaign which itself was "incubated" (their term) by a larger marketing company called Purpose. Along with managing the online and social media promotion of the White Helmets, the Syria Campaign has parallel efforts in support of "regime change" in Syria. One of these efforts has been to criticize United Nations and humanitarian relief organizations which supply aid to displaced persons living in areas protected by the Syrian government. This situation is documented in an editorial here where the author says "The allegations made by the Syria Campaign and others were written by people who know nothing about the UN and how it must work." Apparently unaware of the facts about The Syria Campaign, the outraged Franklin Lamb calls this "defamatory nonsense!"

Lamb echoes the White Helmet propaganda that they have saved "65,000 Syrian citizens, many being their neighbors, families and friends". This is extreme exaggeration. The areas controlled by the terrorists have very few civilians living in them. A medical doctor visiting east Aleppo two years described it as a 'ghost town'. When cat videos were popular on social media, the White Helmet video team produced their own fake cat video. It showed White Helmet members playing with stray cats in empty neighborhoods. They say, "The

homeowners abandoned this district and its kittens." Yes, most of the civilians abandoned it because the terrorists invaded it. In short, this number of rescues is an extreme exaggeration. The real number is probably just a few percent of that.

Lamb believes the critics of the White Helmets are 'defaming" them. It's almost laughable except it's bitterly ironic. The REAL Syrian Civil Defense works on a shoestring budget with REAL volunteers without a video team accompanying and promoting them. Most in the West are unaware they even exist. The situation for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which is a genuinely neutral and independent relief organization, is similar although they at least have a good website.

Lamb complains about "the massive use of pejorative language to smear rescue workers". The reality, of course, is the precise opposite in the case of the "White Helmets". There has been a flood of uncritical praise for this three year old organization created by the West and for goals of the West. On the contrary, they have not been sufficiently examined and exposed. Lamb's heartfelt concernt about the poor White Helmets being unfairly criticized is bizarre.

Franklin Lamb claims to have filed his article from Aleppo University Hospital. This is located in government protected Aleppo. Why does he make no reference to the victims of terrorist bombings, sniping and attacks who fill the Aleppo Univesity Hospital? Why does he make no reference to the REAL Syrian Civil Defense which brought to the hosptial many injured victims. In his closing, Franklin invites anyone interested to visit the White Helmets with him. Is he serious? Very few journalists or Western 'observers' have been in terrorist controlled Aleppo for years. Two of the last batch were James Foley and Stephen Sotloff, subsequently murdered by ISIS. Franklin needs to provide some evidence that he actually was in East Aleppo with the Nusra and the White Helmets. Otherwise one might question whether his conversations with White Helmet 'volunteers' were actually in Gaziantep Turkey.

The Controversy Continues

As the Syrian government and allies try to finally crush or expel the terrorists from Aleppo, the White Helmets have become a major tool in the West's propaganda toolchest. The image of the White Helmets deflects attention from the sectarian violent and unpopular nature of Nusra and other armed opposition groups. This is used in parallel with accusations that Syrian and Russian attacks are primarily hitting civilians. Western media gives an image that there are only civilians and White Helmets under attack in east Aleppo; the terrorists have been whited out of the picture.

White Helmets have gone from being talked about to the ones doing the talking. News stories increasingly use White Helmet witnesses as their theme or source. One day CNN says a White Helmet aid center has been hit. Another day it is claimed that White Helmet individuals are being "hunted". A White Helmet performs the role of journalist not first responder as he claims to be "eye witness" to Syrian barrel bombs destroying the humanitarian convoy and warehouse on September 19 in Orem al Kubra.

There are reasons to be suspicious. For example, in the case of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy that was attacked in Orem al Kubra:

* This is the same town where the documentary "Saving Syria's Children" was filmed. A

detailed investigation has shown that sequences in that BBC movie were largely if not entirely staged.

* This town is controlled by the infamous Nour al Din al Zinki terrorist group which recently filmed itself beheading a young Palestinian Syrian boy.

* It is illogical that Syrian or Russian planes would attack a SARC convoy. They could have stopped the convoy when it was in government held territory. The Syrian government works together with SARC. Why would they attack the convoy?

* The one to 'benefit' from the atrocity is the US Coalition and those supporting the regime change project. The attack took attention away from the US killing of 70+ Syrian soldiers on Sept 17 and facilitated the resumption of accusations against Syria and Russia. More contradictions and inconsistencies regarding the White Helmet witness are pointed out in this incisive analysis.

* The Russian and Syrian governments called for an independent investigation of the attack site but this has not been done, presumably because the terrorists controlling the area have not allowed it.

With massive publicity, there is now greatly increased public awareness of the three year old White Helmets. Ironically SARC, which works with neutrality, have been largely ignored. And the original 60+ year old Syrian Civil Defense continues to work with absolutely no recognition in the West.

Are the White Helmets heroes or politically motivated hoax? The time to investigate is now. It does little good to uncover falsehoods and manipulations years later. This is especially true because the people who created and uncritically promoted previous hoaxes such as Nayirah and the Kuwaiti incubators, Curveball and the Iraqi WMD have gone without penalty or punishment despite the enormous cost in lives and resources. The White Helmets should be seriously investigated lest they be used to promote more war in Syria.

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