

# US to Shell Out \$6.6mn for White Helmets 'Vital Operations' Weeks after Promising Funding Freeze

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*The United States will resume funding for the controversial, militant-linked White Helmets, a month after the group had its financial support frozen. The State Department also lauded the group for saving "100,000 lives" in Syria.*

**President Donald Trump** has authorized the US State Department, in conjunction with the United States Agency for International Development, to [release](#) \$6.6 million for the "vital, life-saving operations" of the so-called Syrian Civil Defense group, known colloquially as the White Helmets, and for the UN's International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), a UN agency that is investigating war crimes committed during the conflict.

A statement released by State Department spokesperson **Heather Nauert** claimed that the White Helmets had saved more than 100,000 lives since the conflict in Syria began. The generous praise may even surprise the White Helmets - by their own [estimates](#), they've only rescued some 70,000 people.

"Despicable. More money to the propagandists of the White Helmets, who so many Aleppo and Ghouta civilians say worked with or were terrorists of al-Qaeda, Jaysh al-Islam," **Eva Bartlett**, an independent journalist who has made multiple trips to Syria, tweeted in response to the news.

The controversial group - which operates exclusively in militant-held areas of Syria, and whose members have been photographed and filmed fraternizing with jihadists - reportedly had its US government funding cut off in March. A CBS report claimed last month that \$200 million used to fund the group, as well as other programs in Syria, were "under active review" and that the White Helmets hadn't received US payments in weeks.

In contrast to their American allies, the British government vowed in May to keep money flowing to the White Helmets. UK **Prime Minister Theresa May** pledged last month to review the current financial package for the group, hinting at further funding down the track.

"We do support them, we will continue to support them, and... [we] will be looking at the level of that support in the future," May said, during Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons.

A Freedom of Information Act request revealed that, as of March 2018, the UK government has [funded](#) the White Helmets to the tune of £38,425,591.23 (approximately \$51,148,535).

The group has enjoyed celebrity status in the West, with a documentary praising it even winning an Oscar award. But the western-funded organization has run into hard times lately, both with funding and bad publicity. Pink Floyd co-founder **Roger Waters** recently lambasted the White Helmets at a concert in Barcelona, calling the group a *“fake organization that exists only to create propaganda for jihadists and terrorists.”* His remark came after emails emerged showing that the White Helmets tried to lobby Waters with Saudi money.

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