

Video: Who's Funding the White Helmets?

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As the U.S. moves closer toward all out war in Syria, a lot of what our government seems to base its intelligence on, especially claims of chemical weapon use by the Syrian government, is an impartial humanitarian group called the White Helmets.

You've no doubt, heard of the White Helmets. They have been praised in the media as heroes and have [reportedly](#) saved more than 100,000 lives as of April 2018.

But who are the White Helmets really? Are they a legitimate organization or pawns, funded for the purpose of regime change?

Let's give it a Reality Check you won't get anywhere else.

Despite a recent U.S. funding freeze for humanitarian aid for Syria, the U.S. [continues](#) to fund the controversial group, known as White Helmets.

The White Helmets claim to be a neutral entity in Syria. They say they are just helping people caught in the middle of a civil war. But are they?

Follow the money and you will find numerous ties to government funding from not only the U.S., but the U.K., the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.

Untangling these ties to the White Helmets is complicated, so stay with me.

According to [their website](#), the Syria Civil Defense, nicknamed the White Helmets, formed in "late 2012- early 2013" as self-organized groups.

Realizing they needed training, [20 Syrians](#) went to Turkey back in March 2013 to learn from a former British army officer named **James Le Mesurier**.

Le Mesurier has [ties](#) to the failed NATO intervention in Kosovo. He developed a training program for Syrians that included trauma care, command and control and crisis management courses.

He is credited for helping form the White Helmets' structure and operations.

Le Mesurier was able to fund this training program through Mayday Rescue, his Netherlands-based non-profit funded by [grants from](#) the Dutch, British, Danish and German governments.

Now, this brings us to December 2013, when the U.K.-based PR machine backing the White Helmets was established.

It's called the Voices Project, [set up](#) as a private limited company for public relations and communications activities.

Part of the Voices Project's articles of incorporation [state that](#) the organization seeks to "influence public opinion" and "influence governmental and other bodies and institutions regarding reform ... legislation and regulation."

Who set up the Voices Project? The first listed director on the articles of incorporation is **Jeremy Heimans**, the [co-founder and CEO](#) of the global PR platform "Purpose" and a co-founder of controversial online activist network "Avaaz".

Though Heimans [stepped down](#) from his position with the Voices Project in 2015, his connection to the project is worth noting. Here's why.

In February 2014, New York-based "Purpose" listed a [job posting](#) for interns to "help launch a new movement for Syria."

By March 2014, the Voices Project set up The Syria Campaign NGO, which they describe as "a human rights organisation that supports Syria's heroes in their struggle for freedom and democracy."

This, coinciding with the graduates of the Mayday Rescue training establishing new teams in Syria.

Six months later, in October 2014, a conference of these teams came together to establish the Syrian Civil Defense as an official, national organization. They then became known as the White Helmets, [thanks to](#) The Syria Campaign.

According to their website, the White Helmets have been [directly funded](#) by Mayday Rescue, and a company called Chemonics, since 2014.

Yet there's [evidence](#) that both of those organizations started supporting the White Helmets back in early 2013, right around the time the White Helmets claim to have formed as self-organized groups.

Mayday Rescue, as we said, is funded by the Dutch, British, Danish and German governments. And Chemonics?

They are a Washington, D.C. based contractor that was [awarded](#) \$128.5 million in January 2013 to support "a peaceful transition to a democratic and stable Syria" as part of USAID's Syria regional program. At least \$32 million has been [given directly](#) to the White Helmets as of February 2018.

The firm has been [funded](#) by USAID for years, and carries a record of failures in supporting so-called humanitarian interventions, including in Libya.

What you need to know is that first, this was only part one of our look at the White Helmets.

There are even more dots to connect here, including the relationship between USAID,

Chemonics, Jeremy Heimans and Azaaz. We will make those connections in another episode of Reality Check.

But for today, let's make this clear: there are very real questions about the authenticity of the voice of the White Helmets as representative of the Syrian people.

It is also clear that the White Helmets have ties to organizations that are being funded by governments that have been seeking, and right now continue to, seek to overthrow the Assad government and to establish a new regime in Syria.

And yet our media and government act as if the information coming from the White Helmets is coming from an impartial observer. When in fact, it appears to actually be coming from an organization that is being funded with an agenda to see the Syrian government overthrown.

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