



Press Release

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Syria's White Helmets Named 2016 Right Livelihood Award Laureate

Syria Civil Defence, a group of 3,000 volunteers who have saved over 60,000 people from the rubble of buildings across war-torn Syria, has been announced as a Laureate of the 2016 Right Livelihood Award.

Popularly known as The White Helmets, they were recognised 'for their outstanding bravery, compassion and humanitarian engagement in rescuing civilians from the destruction of the Syrian civil war'.

The announcement was made today in Stockholm by Ole von Uexkull, Executive Director, and Marianne Andersson, Board Member of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation. The decision was made by an international Jury that had considered 125 nominations from 50 countries.

"The White Helmets represent ordinary Syrians who want peace and security. These volunteers are a beacon of hope amid the human tragedy of the Syrian civil war. It is therefore even more horrifying that these first responders are themselves targeted. In giving the Right Livelihood Award to Syria Civil Defence, we applaud the compassion, solidarity and courage of their lifesaving work. We also add our voice to those calling for an immediate end to the conflict that has thus far cost the lives of nearly 500,000 Syrians," said Ole von Uexkull.

A lifeline and a rare source of hope for the besieged civilian population, the White Helmets also assist in the reconstruction of damaged public infrastructure, and educate the population on safety measures to take during an aerial attack.

Their deep commitment to humanitarian action has drawn international attention to the plight of Syria's citizens and the devastation caused by barrel bombs, and they remain outspoken in calling for an end to the hostilities in the country.

Speaking from New York where he is attending the UN General Assembly today, Raed al Saleh, Director of Syria Civil Defence, said: "The White Helmets are humbled to be recipients of the Alternative Nobel Prize, the Right Livelihood Award. This not only



represents recognition of the heroism of our 3,000 volunteers and the gratitude of the 62,000 civilians we have saved but is international recognition of volunteer rescue workers the world over, as well as the bravery of ordinary Syrian civilians trying to lead life with dignity. We are humbled to accept this incredibly prestigious award and sincerely hope that in the very near future we can put down our rescue tools and start the generational task of rebuilding Syria.”

Established in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award honours and supports courageous people and organisations offering visionary and exemplary solutions to the root causes of global problems. It has become widely known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize' and there are now 166 Laureates from 68 countries.

In addition to presenting the annual award, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation also supports the work of its Laureates, particularly those whose lives may be in danger due to the nature of their activities.

Syria Civil Defence receives a cash award of SEK 750,000 (ca. EUR 80,000).

It is the first time that the Right Livelihood Award goes to a Laureate from Syria.

Syria Civil Defence are the subject of a Netflix short documentary “The White Helmets”, released on September 16, which follows three members of the group in their training and work.

If you would be interested in interviewing a member of the White Helmets or the Right Livelihood Award Foundation, please contact:

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High-quality photo and video materials are available from: www.rightlivelihood.org/2016