

Later, the Jordanian government revealed that some of them would now be resettled in Britain. Its spokesman announced that Britain, Germany and Canada made a 'legally binding undertaking' to resettle them 'within a specified period of time' due to 'a risk to their lives'. Legally binding, eh?

What was this risk? What were they so worried about? Why do they need to come to Britain when the whole Arab Muslim world must presumably long to welcome these glorious, self-sacrificing heroes?

For, according to the Foreign Office, and many others, the 'White Helmets' are the good guys.

They like them so much they have so far spent £38.4million of your money and mine on supporting them.

The FO is in a mess over this. It has for years been backing the Islamist rebels against the Syrian government, a policy which involves supporting exactly the sort of people we would arrest if we found them in Birmingham.

Perhaps that is why it claims the 'White Helmets' are 'volunteers' (they are often paid) and that they have 'saved over 115,000 lives during the Syrian conflict' and done 'brave and selfless work' to 'save Syrians on all sides of the conflict.'

When I asked them to provide independent, checkable evidence for these assertions, they came up empty after three days of searching.

This is not surprising, as the 'White Helmets' generally operate only in areas controlled by unlovely bodies such as the Al-Nusra Front, until recently an affiliate of Al Qaeda, and the equally charming Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam), famous for putting captured Syrian Army soldiers in cages and using them as human shields.

Independent Western observers, whether they are diplomats or journalists, can't really go to these zones, because they are quite likely to end up very dead and probably headless.

So you can choose whether to believe the 'White Helmets' and their flattering picture of their own goodness, or wonder why exactly they are in such need of protection that these much-feted and saintly humanitarians are willing to be evacuated through a country that most Arab Muslims loathe and despise, rather than rely on the mercy of their own countrymen.

Is it possible (I only ask) that, while undoubtedly brilliant at public relations, and at making slick videos showing themselves rescuing wounded children, the 'White Helmets' are not quite as nice as they say they are?

Even the USA, which has for years (like us) helped the Syrian rebels, refused entry to the leader of the 'White Helmets', Raed Saleh, when he arrived at Washington's Dulles Airport in 2016. They won't say why.

The FO tells me that the Home Office, not them, will be vetting those chosen to come here. I hope they are careful when they do so. I am sure that future Home Secretaries will not be grateful if any of the new arrivals turns out to have the same opinions as Abu Qatada.

In any case, it is time the British Government came clean about who it has been helping in Syria.

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