

# “Sweden’s Government Skips Answering Questions on Its Aid to the Allies of al-Qaeda in Syria”

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*Why has Sweden been very tight-lipped about and shied away from publically talking about its aid to what it prefers to call Syrian ‘opposition’ during the 8-year terror war on Syria? And has Swedish tax money benefited terrorists?*

This topic, i.e. Sweden’s aid to the Syrian opposition was tackled by Patrik Paulov, freelance journalist and Author of the book Syria’s silenced voices, in his opinion article which was published in Svenska Dagbladet newspaper on October, 9, 2019.

The journalist asked in his article about the reason behind the silence of Swedish media and politicians on how aid has benefited terrorist in Syria while several other European countries have broken the silence over this issue after the broadcast of some documentaries disclosing that money intended for the so-called the ‘Free Syrian Army’ was handed to armed extremist terrorists.

He pointed out that Sweden has started to support the so-called ‘democratic opposition in Syria’ since August 2012 when then-Foreign Minister Carl Bildt invited Syrian ‘opposition’ figures to hold a meeting at Hässelby Castle in Stockholm.

“Sweden’s support for the opposition-led aid project Syria Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF) is an example. Financiers of the SRTF are 10 Western countries plus e royal dictatorships- United Arab Emirates and Kuwait,” Paulov said, indicating that Sweden only contributed twice to SRTF, last time in 2015. The total amount was 56,5 million kronor.

Foreign Ministry’s evaluation of SRTF, signed on October 23, 2018, mentioned no words about the influence of terrorist groups in the “opposition areas” where the project was implemented.

The evaluation also said nothing about the collaboration between the Syrian ‘opposition’, which chairs the SRTF, and al-Nusra Front [ Jabhat al-Nusra] and other armed extremist groups.

In April 2015, the head of the so-called the ‘Syrian Opposition Coalition’, Khalid Khoja admitted that his organizations has a tactical alliance with al-Qaeda. The coalition’s formed head, Ahmad Jarba, was chairman of the assistance fund that received 40 million SEK. In April 2014, he visited the town of Kassab from which 2000 Syrian Christians were displaced by the foreign-backed ‘opposition’.

“When Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven read the Declaration of Government on September 10, he stated that “it will be a criminal act to have contact with a terrorist organization”. The obvious consequence is: How then should we see the fact that Swedish aid has been given to Syrian opposition who have been in working together with terrorists?,” Paulov argued.

As a writer and journalist, he has sought to know the Swedish government’s view on this issue and other issues related to Sweden’s aid to Syria. But the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has refused his request for an interview. And when he sent written questions, the ministry chose to skip answering the questions.

Most politicians and journalists in Sweden do not know what has really happened in Syria

“My take is that the Foreign Ministry of Sweden does not want to highlight or discuss the role of Sweden in this regime shift-war. It is much easier to be quiet. And as most politicians and journalists in Sweden do not know what has really happened in Syria, the government gets away with being quiet,” Paulov told Syria Times e-newspaper.

He asserted that no one from the his country’s government or any other politician bothered to answer his opinion article in Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet in October where he wrote about how aid from European countries had fallen into the hands of terrorist groups.

The journalist made it clear that Netherlands stopped its aid for the Syrian ‘opposition’ groups shortly after the Dutch Foreign Ministry presented the report “Review of the monitoring system of three projects in Syria”, which unveiled that ‘opposition’ groups, such as the ‘Free Syrian Army’ and the White Helmets, are likely to have contacts with terrorists.

The report also pointed out that there was no independent documentation of how more than € 40 million given by the Netherlands 2015-2018 was spent. Aid may therefore have fallen into the wrong hands.

“There is a difference between Sweden and the above-mentioned country. For example, none of the major media has examined the opposition-related projects that Sweden has supported with hundreds of millions of kronor. Another difference is that the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to lack the critical approach that exists in the Netherlands. It is clear from the official documents on the Syrian assistance from the Swedish Foreign Ministry that I requested and read,” Paulov, added.

He believes that not everything Sweden does in Syria is wrong.

“Syria needs humanitarian assistance after almost nine years of destructive war and Sweden has contributed a lot. But what I want to highlight and discuss with my investigative articles and my book is that Sweden at the same time, is involved in the regime change project together with NATO countries and the Gulf states.”

“On the one hand, Sweden provides emergency relief, while on the other, Sweden is complicit in the disaster that created so much suffering and forced so many Syrians to flee their country. The Syrian opposition that Sweden supported with money is now fighting together with the Turkish army in the

northeast of Syria and they are causing a lot of suffering. This is something the Swedish government or Swedish media do not want to discuss. Instead they talk about giving 100 million crones extra to the victims," Paulov affirmed.

He concluded by saying: "It is high time to seriously consider Sweden's support for the Syrian 'opposition', and the consequences have been for the war and terror-stricken Syrian people."

Paulov has been speaking about his book and Syria in many cities this autumn. He has been to Sthlm, Göteborg, Jönköping, Uppsala, Helsingborg, Växjö, Nybro and Linköping. In Göteborg he has been speaking at a public meeting with 100 people, at the Göteborg book fair and also at a sport event called the Peace race.

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