

## UK Charity Which Shares Syrian Opposition “Aims and Objectives” Benefits from Alan Kurdi Tragedy

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[Fabrication in BBC Panorama 'Saving Syria's Children'](#) 9 September 2015

*Hand in Hand for Syria, the UK registered charity at the heart of the controversial 2013 BBC Panorama programme [Saving Syria's Children](#), is receiving all the proceeds from a new fund established in honour of [Alan Kurdi](#), the three year old who drowned along with his mother and brother as his family attempted to reach Greece from Turkey on 2 September 2015.*

The Guardian [reports](#) that the [Aylan Kurdi Fund](#) was set up within 24 hours of the circulation of photographs of the boy's body. As of 9 September 2015 the fund had received [over £50,000](#) in donations.

According to [Saving Syria's Children](#), Hand in Hand for Syria “helped set up” the largest refugee camp in Syria – Atmeh on the Turkish border.

In the documentary, two doctors volunteering with Hand in Hand visit Atmeh and check up on hospitals run by the charity, including Atareb Hospital, Aleppo, where the BBC Panorama team filmed the dramatic arrival of alleged victims of an incendiary bomb attack on a school playground in nearby Urm Al-Kubra. These [scenes](#) – [first transmitted](#) just as the UK parliament voted on military intervention in Syria – have become the subject of [worldwide scepticism](#).

The UK Charity Commission's [website](#) states that Hand in Hand for Syria exists for “the advancement of health or saving lives”. Until July 2014 the [Facebook banner](#) of Hand in Hand's [co-founder and chairman](#) Faddy Sahloul read “WE WILL BRING ASSAD TO JUSTICE; NO MATTER WHAT LIVES IT TAKES, NO MATTER HOW MUCH CATASTROPHE IT MAKES”. The image was [removed](#) shortly after it was [commented on](#) publicly. [1] [2]



Image: Facebook banner of Hand in Hand for Syria's co-founder Faddy Sahloul, deleted July 2014

Also on Hand in Hand's [executive team](#) is Dr Rola Hallam, one of the two medics featured in 'Saving Syria's Children'. The documentary tells us that "Rola's family is from Syria and she lived here as a child. Now she's an intensive care doctor in London, specialising in paediatric medicine."

On 30 August 2013, the day after the BBC's [initial report](#) on the alleged Aleppo incendiary bomb attack, Dr Hallam appeared on BBC's [Newsnight](#) programme expressing her profound disappointment at parliament's rejection of a military strike against Syria.



Image: Dr Rola Hallam, Atareb Hospital, Aleppo on 26 August 2013, being interviewed as alleged victims from an incendiary bomb attack on a school in the village of Urm al-Kubra arrive (Panorama Saving Syria's Children, BBC One, 30 September 2013, <http://bit.ly/1wO3p2w>)

Dr Hallam's father is Dr. Mousa al-Kurdi. According to a 2013 [article](#) by Dr Saleyha Ahsan – the other Hand in Hand for Syria volunteer medic featured in 'Saving Syria's Children' [3] –

Dr al-Kurdi is “involved politically with the Syrian National Council”. [4]

In an [interview](#) for Al Jazeera Dr al-Kurdi passionately advocates for the Syrian National Council’s recognition as the “sole representative” of all Syrians and [relates](#) how, following his address to the Friends of Syria summit in Istanbul in 2012 – attended by Hillary Clinton – he personally told Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu “You’re not doing enough” and demanded of Professor Davutoğlu and several other foreign ministers present, including the US State Department’s Victoria Nuland, “either you defend us or you arm the Syrian Free Army to defend us – you have the choice”.

At a Save the Children event in London in November 2013 Dr Hallam [stated](#) that her father “is certainly not a member of the Syrian National Council; he is a gynaecologist, who like most Syrians has taken an interest in what’s happening in his country”.



## Syrian doctors speaks of horrors faced by civilians



Al Jazeera English - 49,622 videos

4,195

Image: Dr Mousa al-Kurdi, Dr Rola Hallam’s father, is interviewed on Al Jazeera soon after he addressed the Friends of Syria summit in April, 2012. (<http://bit.ly/1gal7vh>) Hillary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, is seen arriving at the meeting.

If Hand in Hand for Syria’s affiliations were not abundantly plain from the above, the Director of the BBC’s Editorial Complaints Unit has, in the course of [correspondence](#) about ‘Saving Syria’s Children’, observed that:

I think it was implicit that the charity was working in an area of Syria controlled by the opposition and would therefore be likely to share its aims and objectives (as opposed to supporting the Syrian government).[5]

However, should it be required, there is further evidence.

A nurse seen treating the alleged incendiary bomb [alongside Dr Saleyha Ahsan](#) in 'Saving Syria's Children' was subsequently photographed at Atareb Hospital wearing a [Hand in Hand for Syria tunic](#) and ostensibly tending to the injuries of a child "rebel" combatant. The [web article](#) which hosts the photograph overtly celebrates the fifteen year old's supposed [battle prowess](#). [6]

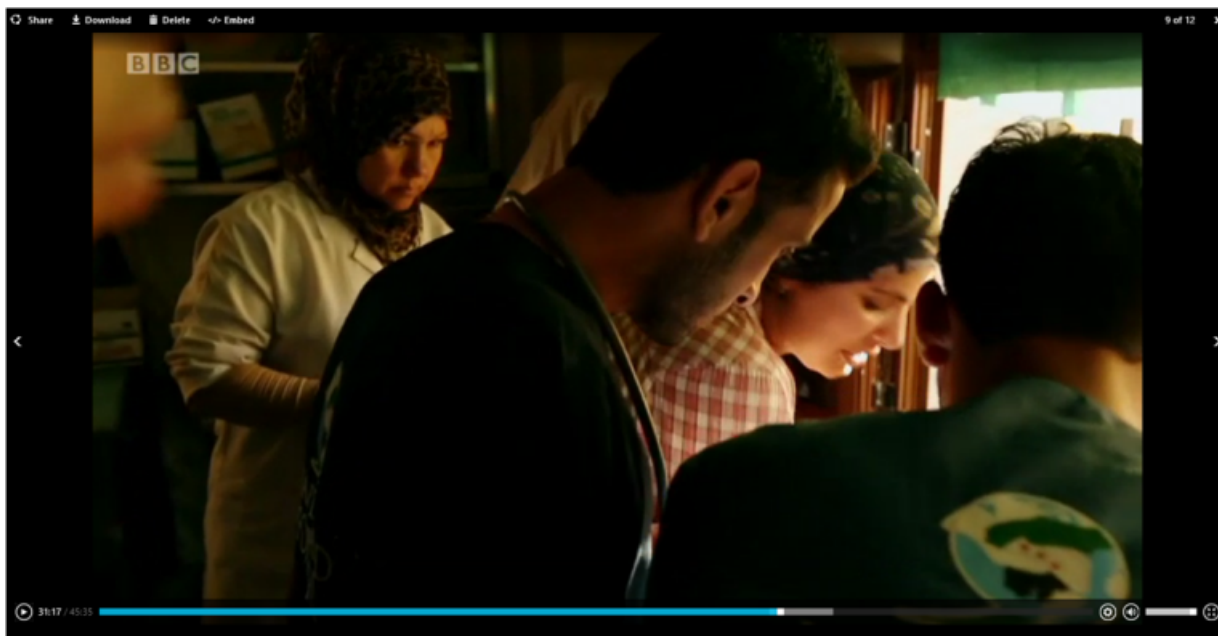


Image: The nurse on the left appears at 31:17 in Saving Syria's Children (<http://bit.ly/1wO3p2w>) in scenes filmed at Atareb Hospital, Aleppo on 26 August 2013. Dr Saleyha Ahsan is wearing the checked shirt.

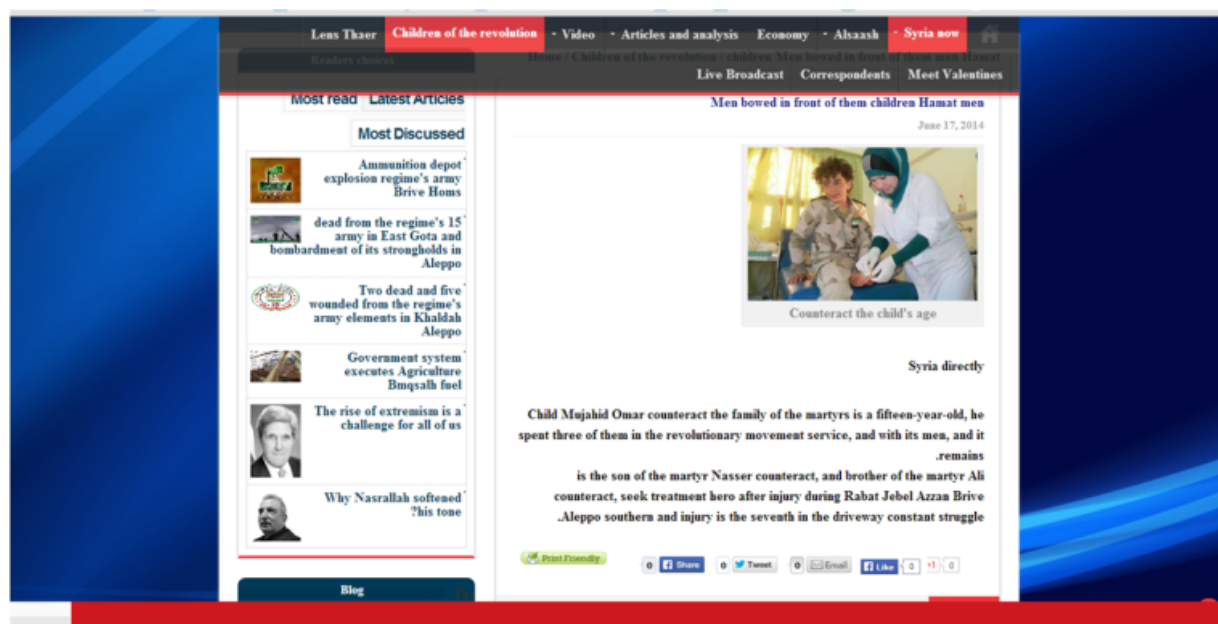


Image: This site boasts of the supposed fighting prowess of fifteen year old "Mujahid Omar".

It has been suggested that the Hand in Hand for Syria nurse appears to be of Central Asian, rather than Syrian, origin. A January 2015 International Crisis Group [Policy Briefing](#) observes

that “Growing numbers of Central Asian citizens, male and female, are travelling to the Middle East to fight or otherwise support the Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL or ISIS).” [7]

Many more questions about Hand in Hand for Syria are posed in a [dossier](#) compiled by peace activist Dr Declan Hayes and in two You Tube videos: [Inside the BBC's Uprising: Hand in Hand for Propaganda](#) and [WANTED: Evidence Hand in Hand for Syria is Really in the Business of Saving Lives](#).

#### Notes

[1] This Facebook account has since been [deleted](#).

[2] Mr Sahloul's bloodthirsty sentiments were “[liked](#)” on Facebook by Hand in Hand for Syria [co-founder](#) Fadi Al-Dairi. Along with Mr Sahloul, Mr Al-Dairi is listed as one of Hand in Hand for Syria's Trustees on the Charity Commission [website](#).

[3] Dr Ahsan is a former British Army Captain who served in Bosnia and now works as a freelance filmmaker, a medic and more recently as a [BBC presenter](#). Dr Ahsan is the subject of [this complaint](#) currently lodged with the corporation.

[4] “The Syrian National Council (SNC), which was set up six seven [sic] months after the uprising against the Assad regime erupted in March of 2011, was the biggest and most significant Syrian opposition group in exile until November 11, 2012, when it joined the broader National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.” <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48334>

[5] [BBC Editorial Complaints Unit Provisional Finding](#), 23 April 2014 (see p10 of [download](#)).

[6] Further images of the same child and others attached to the same militia unit can be found [here](#).

[7] It has been suggested that [other individuals](#) who feature in ‘Saving Syria's Children’ and in other footage from Atareb Hospital on 26 August 2013 also appear to be of Asian, rather than Syrian, origin.

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