

# NZ Fire Service to train Syria's 'White Helmets' civil defence volunteers

Sam Sachdeva 14:38, Oct 26 2016



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NZ Fire Service's urban search and rescue team, pictured in training, is sending an expert to the Middle East to assist Syrian volunteers.

A Kiwi search and rescue expert is heading to the Middle East to train Syrian volunteers as they try to save lives in the war-torn country.

The NZ Fire Service is providing its services in a four-month training project for the Syria Civil Defence, better known as the White Helmets.

The group, founded by a British security consultant and nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, claims to have saved more than 62,000 people from bomb and mortar attacks in Syria.



ABDALRHMAN ISMAIL/REUTERS

Syria's White Helmets have saved people in the aftermath of attacks like this airstrike in Aleppo.

More than 140 White Helmets have been killed in action, according to the group's website.

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Internal Affairs Minister Peter Dunne said an urban search and rescue expert from the NZ Fire Service would head to Turkey and Jordan next month to share New Zealand's "globally recognised expertise" and train the White Helmet volunteers.



ABDALRHMAN ISMAIL

The White Helmets gather around a laptop in Aleppo as they wait the announcement of the Nobel Peace Prize.

"This secondment of a [Fire Service] training adviser is a welcome, practical and meaningful humanitarian contribution by New Zealand to the people directly affected by the appalling conflict in Syria," Dunne said.

Foreign Minister Murray McCully said the White Helmets had helped save "thousands of people affected by the ongoing violence in Syria".

"New Zealand has agreed to provide assistance with training to the White Helmets and this practical initiative sits alongside the work we are doing on the UN Security Council to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria and to push for an end to the conflict," McCully said.

The four-month training project will start towards the end of this month, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade contributing about \$100,000 of funding.

McCully said the Government had contributed more than \$25 million to help those affected by violence in Syria and Iraq.

**Stuff**