

Hand in Hand for Syria: Their Unaudited Accounts Raise Even More Moral Probity Questions.

By Dr Declan Hayes

Hand in Hand for Syria, as previous articles such as this lengthy one http://www.taigs.com/Syria/Hand-in_Glove.pdf in this folder <http://www.taigs.com/Syria/> explained, is a very controversial British-based charity, linked to hard-line Syrian rebel extremists, that has some very hard questions to answer about its finances.

Not only do those very serious questions remain unanswered but their only “accounts” submitted to the Charities Commission, covering the period 20 December 2011 to 31 October 2012, lead to further questions and more concerns as to whether this group is, as has been claimed, hand in glove with the Syrian rebel terrorists. Going through their short submitted summary accounts, all of the concerns voiced in that earlier document are upheld as these accounts do not seem to be worth the paper they are written on, let alone the £4,000 that was supposedly paid to manufacture them:

- The first page tells us these are unaudited accounts. No reason is given as to why the opaque Hand in Hand group did not have their accounts audited and why they spent a whopping £4,000 procuring an unaudited and therefore essentially worthless summary.
- Line three of page 3 tells us that the “charity’s trustees consider that an audit is not required”. There is no explanation as to why these colourful trustees arrive at that surprising conclusion; it is not as if these characters can be simply taken at their word.
- Although the same page goes on to say that explanations will be sought for “any unusual items or disclosures”, the short and pricey report does not list any such items or disclosures. Given the nature of the work Hand in Hand for Syria purport to perform and the countless anomalies alluded to in our earlier report, the fact that there are no such items is very strange.
- The same page then explains that, unlike an audited report, this report does not purport to give “a true and fair view” but, on the whole, it just confines itself to the barest statements they feel will be acceptable to the Charities Commission. On the face of it, that is appalling value for £4,000.
- Page 1 of the report proper tells us that Dr O Gabbar is, in addition to the original three, also a trustee. Our earlier report cited a number of others who were cited as trustees or directors as the need arose. There is no explanation as to why they are so cavalier in designating the others as directors or as to why Dr Gabbar’s was not given to the Charities Commission at the time the other three names were submitted.
- The same page also tells us that the “trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error”. The report then says that “substantial risks exist in operating inside Syria, especially in those areas controlled by government forces”. This is an extraordinary statement. Whatever one thinks about the Syrian government – and the Hand in Hand for Syria people have made their sympathies to the terrorists very plain – there is some form of accountability in “those areas controlled by government forces”. As the kidnappings and executions of aid workers in rebel-held areas make plain, there is no such accountability in the rebel-held areas Hand in Hand for Syria primarily operate in.
- It is likewise extraordinary that the report lists no forms of financial or logistical risk; although such factors should be central to a report such as this, they are not even mentioned. It seems the only risks they fear are the risks of being found out by keen-eyed auditors, police or investigative journalists.

- The same page also makes plain that Hand in Hand for Syria work primarily in the medical field. They have claimed to operate expensive hospitals and advanced medical units all over Syria on the relatively paltry budget the following pages summarise.
- Page 4 of the report proper tells us that, for the period 20 December 2011 to 31 October 2012, Hand in Hand for Syria claims to have raised £472,163 in cash and kind, of which they expended £373,346, with the remaining £98,817 being carried forward. There is no mention of monies held in euros, Syrian pounds or Turkish lira, an extraordinary “oversight”, given the locus of their work.
- They claim to have spent £18,397 (=£14,394 +£4,003) or 3.9% of the total generating this amount. Assuming the figures are true, that seems remarkably efficient for a new organisation, assuming, of course, this unaudited figure has not just been plucked out of the air.
- They claim a further £4,000 was spent on governance costs, on their financial report in other words. One would imagine that an audit could have been conducted for the same amount as most other charities with less revenues seem to easily manage to get their accounts audited.
- Page 5 tells us that £83,317 was kept as cash in the bank. Although charities often keep such amounts in their accounts, one wonders why, given the gravity of Syria’s situation, Hand in Hand for Syria did not use that money for emergency relief.
- Page 6 tells us that motor vehicles will be depreciated at a rate of 100% over a year. Given how acute the need is for ambulances and the other support vehicles they had claimed to have brought to Syria, it is incredible that they would completely write off vehicles after less than a year. This is truly unusual.
- The same page also tells us that gifts in kind are reflected in the accounts at their fair value. This is important as Hand in Hand for Syria sent a large number of valuable convoys to Syria.
- Page 7 tells us that wages and salaries were a paltry £2,000. If they trying to tell us they coordinated all that aid on less than a shoestring, then they must be truly incredible.
- The same page tells us that they spent £19,500 on vehicles and wrote them all off after six months. That they would give away valuable vehicles after only six months is likewise incredible and needs to be fully explained. Given the amounts of ambulances and other vehicles they claim to have acquired, much more detail is needed to explain why their vehicles cost only £19,500, which not even buy one road-worthy second-hand ambulance.
- Page 8 tells us that the trustees raised £40,894 before Hand in Hand for Syria was formally established. The trustees should explain why others felt compelled to give them such this large amount of money and if other organisations such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood helped them establish themselves. It is hard to believe that a disparate group of individuals could raise the large sums Hand in Hand for Syria has got and get the huge amounts of publicity Hand in Hand for Syria has garnered without a major ideological organisation or a major ideological benefactor backing them.
- The previous report showed who those ideological backers were – seasoned terrorists who are banned on security grounds from entering a number of countries, including Britain.
- Page 9 tells us that gifts in kind only amounted to £10,300. Are Hand in Hand for Syria seriously telling us that the huge aid convoys they took to rebel-held Syria were only worth that amount and that it cost next to nothing to bring those convoys from Britain to Syria?
- The same page tells us that they spent £336,152 on charitable activities, including £74, 502 on “medication”. Yet their website boasted it had state of the art facilities, including neo natal units and kidney dialysis units a few miles from the Syrian front lines. Hand in Hand for Syria must explain these anomalies and where the financial figures are for those hospitals

and the hundreds of staff they employed and the expenses of giving their Syrian operatives further training in Turkey.

- The same page tells us transport and shipping amounted to only £132. That being so, the costs of bringing their huge convoys from Britain to Turkey and Syria must be accounted for elsewhere. Hand in Hand for Syria must account for this to the police, to the Charities Commission, to their benefactors and to the people of Syria.
- Bank charges were £2,297. As most banks allow charities to operate for free and money transfers could not account for that, especially as the trustees' families are reputed to be in the shadier side of money transfers and so would be expected to know how to minimise such costs.

Summary: The police, the Charities Commission and investigative journalists must hold Hand in Hand for Syria to account if, as seems the case, they have misled their donors and the peoples of Britain and Syria. Hand in Hand for Syria has been able to get great national and local publicity in Britain, they have claimed to have raised millions of pounds and they are not accounting for it properly. They are doing this in an environment where genuine charity workers have been kidnapped and murdered by the Syrian rebels Hand in Hand for Syria willingly work closely with.