

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF THE WHITE HELMETS AND NO FLY ZONE MOVEMENT FOR SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

It is important to discuss the reason of the White Helmets' establishment and involvement in Syrian Civil War. There is a relation between the emergence of the White Helmets in Syrian civil war and the resolution for peace of the Syrian civil war. When the Syrian civil war happened in 2011, the growth of the world's attention has been getting bigger time by time. The attention of the International world is reflected on from the amount of assistance and the efforts to make an agreement to achieve peaceful condition or better situation in Syria. The development of some local NGOs in Syria is also the effect of the humanitarian crisis that happened in there. This chapter describes the peace resolution that had ever created to make a better Syria, the implementation of the resolutions done by the actors, the implementation that influenced NGO's world and the emerging of the "White Helmets".

A. The Emergence of The White Helmets As local NGO in Syrian Civil War

Syria becomes the place where the humanitarian crisis happens. As the conflict in Syria worsens, the Syria conflict turned to a civil war and it involved many parties. The regime of Assad should respond to the liberation of Syrian people was attacked by some of the parties. If the attack was launched by the regime, they have to be responsible. The Syrian people got increasingly heavy attacks and was bombed fifty times a day.

In early 2013, bombardment by the regime increased rapidly. At that time, the development of volunteers to create rescue group for the victim in conflict area increased significantly. Syrian Civil Defense that also known as the White Helmets is local humanitarian advocacy group in Syria that has more than 300.000 volunteers who work to save and

strengthen communities in Syria. It was formed in 2013 and the head was Raed Al Saleh. They formed volunteer center in short time since the situation worsen. They needed to forming individual, beginning communication with each, providing proper training and equipment in order to save more lives. The volunteer of Syrian Civil Defense came from many social background such as bakers, tailors, engineers, pharmacists, etc. The White Helmets has the vision to help the Syrian as the victim of civil war and hopes cessation of bombing and shooting that target civilians, for peace and stability condition. They commit to “*protect and assist for all*” and pledge “*to fulfill all missions with neutrality, impartiality, and humanity*” (Syrian Civil Defense, 2017). Their missions are to save the maximum number of lives to protect of all civilians regardless of religion, ethnicity or political orientation and not to allow deceptive political propaganda to distract them. Syria Civil Defense wants to support the extension of bridges of trust across their local communities, the reintegration of them, the rebuilding of their society and the reconstruction of Syria (Syrian Civil Defense, 2013).

The first group center formed and operated in Aleppo city, Douma and Al-Bab. The group had been formed by civilians. They searched for the people that become the victim of the battle, people under the rubble and injured people. They also buried the dead and secured them. The Syrian civil defense brought 25 members to get their first technical training in Turkey in March 2013 by Mayday rescue. They got basic training Urban Search & Rescue level 1 (USAR 1) and continued to next level USAR 2 that was specialized in medical training for first responders and then in 2015 the volunteers also got basic training level of UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) Clearance training (Syrian Civil Defense, 2013). This training taught the volunteers to identify dangerous munitions and to dispose of them safely. It also helped them understand that what they were doing was a set of activities defined as ‘civil defense’ tasks in international humanitarian

law. That is fit with their mission to help all in need regardless of religion or political affiliation.

According to the Syrian Civil Defense website, in 2014, they had an annual meeting and became a representative from across Syria. Since that moment they were forming an organization officially with a shared mission and national leadership. Actually, the Syrian Civil Defense taught that there were broken promises that had been agreed by some of the parties. The UN Security Council passed resolution 2139 in 2014. It is a resolution that contained agreement concern about banned chemical weaponry and humanitarian assistance. The participants of the agreement agreed to take some steps if the agreement was violated. After two years later, thousands of barrel bomb had been dropped and killed children and also civilians but the council did not act.

The assistance from The Syrian Civil Defense for the victims also has their partner in funding. Syrian Civil Defense was funded by some of the parties such as the government of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. The funding was spent on training, equipment and also other activities in helping Syrian people. The other international aid that supports their humanity action in training and also organization support came from Mayday Rescue and also Chemonics that provide training and equipment; advocacy and outreach; and organizational capacity building. The Syrian Civil Defense actually also welcomed individual funds around the world.

According with the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office website, the United Kingdom supports the Syrian Civil Defense (The White Helmets) because of its partnership with Mayday Rescue. Mayday Rescue is known as the foundation from the Netherland. The United Kingdom gave their donation \$24 million, \$32 million, and \$24 million accounted since June 2013 until 2016. Its support is part of a coordinated international programme of assistance. It provided Syrian led-organization that needed training and also

equipment. Denmark had provided assistance \$10 million reported by the ministry of foreign affairs launches in stabilization support package to Iraq and Syria. The foreign ministry of Newzealand Murray McCully stated that they would provide assistance with training and contribution more than \$25 million of funding. Based on US AID Report, the United States also contributed around \$23 million since 2013 until 2016. The Netherland donated \$4.6 million for the White Helmets in 2016 announced by Minister Bert Koenders as Foreign Affairs in Hague. Germany, in their press releases until 23 September 2016, reported that they supported the White Helmets with more than \$7 million. The following is a general breakdown of some of the White Helmets funding, as of October 2016 (21Wire, 2016):

Table III.1 The White Helmets Donor Funding (21Wire, 2016)

Government	Country	Year	Dollar Amount
US AID	The United States	2014-2016	\$23 million
British Foreign Affairs	The United Kingdom	2014-2015	\$24 million
EU	The European Union	2015	\$4.5 million
Netherland	The Netherland	2016	\$4.6 million
British Foreign Affairs 2	The United Kingdom	2016	\$32 million
British Foreign Affairs 3	The United Kingdom	2016-2017	\$24 million
German government	Germany	2016	\$7 million
Danish government	Denmark	2016	\$10 million
Qatar	Qatar	2014	(undisclosed sum)
Japan	Japan	2015	(undisclosed sum)
New Zealand	New Zealand	2015-2016	\$23 million
Website donations		2014-2015	(undisclosed sum)
Jo Cox Fund	The United Kingdom	2016	\$2.4 million
		Total	More than \$154.5 million

The White Helmets has some of the partners and they have big contribution to Syrian Civil War moreover they operate in the battle areas directly. Therefore the White Helmets is an important actor because they faced the situation in battle and also know the need of Syrian people as the victim. When the international world noticed their big contribution in that condition. The White Helmets have been invited as the participant in International discussion or International forum to share what they knew and also to share information about what the Syrian people needs and use the opportunity to give a suggestion for minimizing the number of victims.

The Syrian Civil Defense (The White Helmets) appears in regional and international media to report the conflict that happens in Syria. The head of the White Helmets has been an outspoken advocate activist in against the bombardment of civilians. Since 2014, the White Helmets has involved in some of local or international peace in the forum United Nation Security Council and other international bodies until now. On 26 June 2015, UN Security Council Arria Briefing invited Raed Al Saleh as the head of the White Helmets to attend the Arria Briefing. In the Arria Briefing, there was special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura. He would brief the member of the council in politic track's consultation. The Arria Briefing was organized by France UN ambassador Francois Delattre and Spanish UN Ambassador Roman Oyarzun Marchesi. In this Arria Formula meeting, Raed Al Saleh stated that "the Security Council in the eyes of those suffering had become a non-Security Council" because it has not implemented its February 2014 resolution demanding an end to indiscriminate of weapons in populated areas, including barrel bombs (Defence, 2013).

The second invitation from United Nation to the White Helmets was in the Supporting Syria & Region Conference London event on 4 February 2016. In this conference, Raed Al Saleh said that "We are able to help and receive air drops if

there is the political will to save people whose lives are at risk. We have a lot of experience of delivering and distributing aid. This is a humanitarian issue. We will support anyone who helps stop the attacks.” In this conference, the White Helmets as the Syrian NGO has received a donation from some of the western governments that would commit highly for give their best to Syrian people (Defence, 2013).

Other invitation for International Forum came from UN Security Council special envoy Staffan de Mistura on 26 September 2016 and Atlantic Council on 27 September 2016 in Washington DC with the White Helmets’s partner Mayday Rescue. The White Helmets always has their own way to make the International world see them and by that way, they would like to inform about what is happening in Syria by making a documentary film. The film was directed by Orlando von Einsiedel, produced by Joana Natasegara. The film released in streaming service Netflix on 16 September 2016. The film won as the best documentary nomination for 89th Academy Award. The response to the documentary film was heartening. This film also gives different perspective of people in stereotypes about what moslem people be like. As their purpose to give information about the condition of civilians, it could bridge between Syrian civilians to the global citizen.

B. Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2139

Since the conflict in Syria in March 2011, the wholesale slaughter of civilians, the indiscriminate bombing of civilian neighborhoods, the withholding of food and medicine from civilians, obstacle on humanitarian relief agencies from bureaucratic, attack that targeting medical and rescue workers needed immediately to be stopped. Some of the parties were flouting blatantly the Geneva Conventions, the laws of war, and international humanitarian law. Demanded all of the parties that involved in Syrian civil war called United Nations Security Council to release peace resolution for life-saving

resolution for Syrian civilians. The peace resolution 2139 was drafted by Australia, Jordan, and Luxembourg. It was called humanitarian assistance for Syrian civilian to stop cruel and shameless attacks on civilians by using chemical weapon.

On Saturday, 22 February 2014, The United Nation Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2139 at UN headquarters in New York. This was calling on Syrian parties to stop attack against civilians, sieges on populated areas, to allow the humanitarian assistance to be delivered, not to rob of food and medicine for civilians, to enable the evacuation of civilians, to respect toward the principle of medical neutrality, and to unhindered humanitarian access for UN agencies and its partners.

In this council, the members of UN Security Council agreed that the implementation of the resolution 2139 would be reported to the council every thirty days. The first report toward resolution 2139 from UN Security Council would be released on 24 March 2014 or so it would be clear whether or not attacks on civilians have ceased, sieges lifted, and United Nation humanitarian personnel going where they want to go in Syria. In these cases, the successfulness of implementation was determined by Assad regime whether or not there was compliance toward the agreement had been agreed.

The condemnation was mentioned by the council concern about the widespread violations of human right and international humanitarian law by Syrian authorities. In this council, all of the parties were persuaded to involve in the conflict sieges of populated areas including Aleppo, Damascus, rural Damascus and Homs. Actually, this resolution lacked an enforcement mechanism because it avoided a veto from Russia and China.

The content of Resolution 2139 is specific demands and strong recommendations to end the premier (to date) humanitarian abomination of the 21st century, here as follows (United Nation Security Council, 2014).

1. *Strongly condemns* the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by

the Syrian authorities, as well as the human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as all grave violations and abuses committed against children in contravention of applicable international law, such as recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape, attacks on schools and hospitals as well as arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, ill treatment and use as human shields, as described in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2014/31);

2. *Demands* that all parties immediately put an end to all forms of violence, irrespective of where it comes from, cease and desist from all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights, and reaffirm their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and *stresses* that some of these violations may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity;
3. *Demands* that all parties immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs, and methods of warfare which are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, and *recalls* in this regard the obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances, and further *recalls*, in particular, the obligation to distinguish between civilian populations and combatants, and the prohibition against indiscriminate attacks, and attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such;
4. *Demands* that all parties, in particular, the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations

humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need through the most direct routes;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of this resolution by all parties in Syria, in particular paragraphs 2 through 12, within 30 days of its adoption and every 30 days thereafter, and upon receipt of the Secretary-General's report, *expresses* its intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance with this resolution;

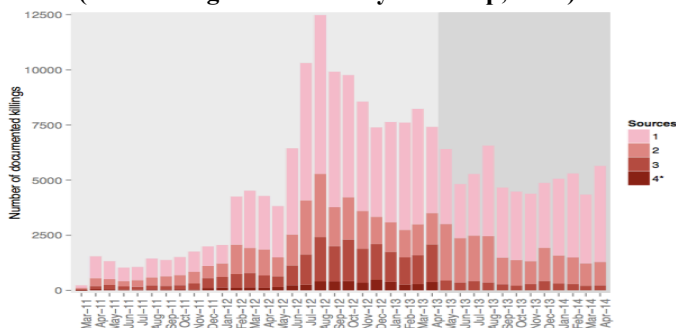
Two months later after resolution 2139 was passed the situation in Syria indeed changed. However, it did not change for better. On 30 April 2014, the United Nation Security Council released the report of the implementation of resolution 2139. The violence further intensified over the past months. Human Rights Data Analysis Group updated the death data in Syria in August 2014. This data combined four of sources CSR-SY (the Syrian Center for Statistics and Research, SOHR (the Syrian Observatory for Human Right), SNHR (the Syrian Network for Human Right), and VDC (the Violations Documentation Centre). These data actually documented death from March 2011 to April 2014. These data reflected the result of the implementation of UNSC resolution 2139 in Syria. The data covered from March 2011 to April 2014. (Human Rights Data Analysis Group, 2014)

Table III.2 Time Period Covered by Each Source
(Human Rights Data Analysis Group, 2014)

Dataset	Period Covered
CSR-SY	March 2011–April 2014
SNHR	March 2011–April 2014
SOHR	March 2011–April 2013
VDC	March 2011–April 2014

The following data death by month by number of sources (March 2011 – April 2014):

Figure II.1 Documented Killing by Month and by Number of Sources
(Human Rights Data Analysis Group, 2014)



Notes:

- Source 1: the Syrian Center for Statistics and Research,
- Source 2: the Syrian Network for Human Rights,
- Source 3: the Syrian Observatory for Human Right,
- Source 4: and the Violations Documentation Centre.

From these data sources, since the resolution 2139 was passed by UN Security Council from February 2011 until April 2014, the data showed the death toll decreased the resolution in March, but in the next month, the number of killing was increasing higher than in February.

The statement of Secretary-General presented the report about resolution 2139. He stated that “there has been little progress since my last briefing on the delivery of urgently required medicines and supplies to hard to reach areas. We need pragmatic and sustainable arrangements which result in substantially greater cross-line and cross-border access, particularly to besieged location. By his statement and from the report, it could be concluded that the implementation of resolution 2139 was actually still far from the expectation (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014).

At this point, there was a question which appeared from some of parties, “what can the Security Council do about that

situation?” Since Russia and China tried to oppose the adoption of the resolution under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Moreover, the resolution 2139 was weak from any punishment in noncompliance and there was no guarantee that Assad regime and Syrian opposition would not continue to violate the laws of war.

In Friends of Syria Conference in London on 15 May 2014, Secretary of States John Kerry stated that the United States was actively considering how the international community could make good on its humanitarian promises even the UN also had a sensitivity to the sovereignty of its member states. The form of the disappointment of some of the parties. The counties of the “London 11” is also the member of Friends of Syria. They decided to join in communiqué. This communiqué is aiming to complete the removal of Syria’s chemical weapons; and steps up efforts to deliver humanitarian aid across borders and across lines irrespective of the consent of the regime based on resolution 2139. They are also have been supported by 30 respected lawyers and experts of international humanitarian laws and also NGO’s.

On 15 June 2015, NGOs were united to urge UN Security Council to stop air attack in the populated area. They asked the UN Security Council to use the resolution 2139 to establish a mechanism to expose indiscriminate attacks by any side against civilians, including barrel bombs, and to give clear consequences for violators.

C. Proposal of No Fly Zone Policy

Since the Syrian conflict appeared in March 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians have been killed. They were killed by the regime's is air attacks dropping conventional bombs, chlorine chemical weapons, and barrel bombs. Over half of the civilians are women and children. When United Nation Security Council passed peace resolution 2139, it was the demand from all of the parties but the fact was really out of expectation in a negative connotation. The implementation of resolution could not give good impact to

the Syrian condition. Moreover, there was no certain sanction to the parties that could not and would compliance toward resolution 2139. Those disappointments led some of the parties to call on the UN Security Council to enforce its own resolution to end barrel bombing. The largest portion was killed by the regime by air attacks.

Resolution 2139 banned on barrel bombing and usage of the chemical weapon during battle or attack. However, the regime and certain parties dropped the barrel bombing and also a chemical weapon to attack through the air. This is kind of attack that impossible to avoid by the civilians and also the rescue workers. The victims of the war increase significantly. The permanent members of United National Security Council; France, The United Kingdom, and the United States were against the air attack that had been done by Assad regime and also Russia. The United States Secretary of State John Kerry suggested the idea of proposing No Fly Zone in United Nation Security Council on 1 October 2015. When the United States proposed the idea of No Fly Zone, The United Kingdom, and France, the international organization and NGOs also were calling for No Fly Zone policy for Syrian civilians (Movement, 2015, p. 1).

According Harvard, No Fly Zone has its definition “A no-fly zone ... is a three dimensional airspace by which the Belligerent Party restricts or prohibits aviation in its own or in enemy national territory” (The Program of Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research Harvard University, 2009). The No Fly Zone policy is an area or territory where flying is not permitted. It is such zone concern in military context. It is demilitarized zone in the sky and prohibited the military aircraft operates in that region. There are some reasons for establishment of a no fly zone policy. It can stop the attack by aircraft, gives relief to the people that have been attacked, and can be combined with other actions to close the border if there are harmful activities. The no fly zone in Syria becomes a good policy option to minimize the number of victims in Syria. Since there is clear sign on how long the Syrian war

might go on and how Assad might be defeated. Those questions made the world thinking about the possibility of intervention.

Tactically, the establishment of a No-Fly Zone would eliminate the use of barrel bombs from helicopters and gravity bombs from aircraft against civilian populated area. Barrel bombs are filled with shrapnel or Chlorine gas and dropped on the civilian populated area. Elimination of Assad's air attack that used of barrel bombs would immediately decrease civilian deaths caused by barrel bombs and gravity bomb. The Assad regime committed to end the conflict by negotiated with all of parties, and did participate in the Geneva II conference, however in reality, Assad control his participation in peace talks to legitimize and extend his own rule. If the United State, France, the United Kingdom with Syrian No Fly Zone movement committed to negotiate end to the conflict in Syria in truthful way, it could give impact to Assad and his external supporters to recalculate politically.

The United State, the United Kingdom, and France were united in "London 11" Friends of Syria with Germany, Italy, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt in order to convey their purpose to against the violation toward Syrian civilian. They held communiqué on 15 May 2014, in London. In these meeting, they agreed to support moderate opposition National Coalition, its Supreme Military Council and associated moderate armed group. They were also Assad regime for their terror to their own people, removal of Syria's chemical weapons and also deliver humanitarian aid. In the other hand, a no-fly zone action to stop Assad's air attacks can be legally justified as a humanitarian intervention according to the standard set out by the United Kingdom Government in 1998 and reiterated in 2013 and 2014 (Government UK, 2014).

The no-fly zone needed a big cost. When Syria implemented this policy, they had to detect the violators, provide big budget, and always ready to take action against them all hours, day, or night. They must always be ready to patrol sorties. The duration patrol sorties could extend eight to

ten hours. The other cost would be spent on Air refueling, airborne radar, and ISR aircraft. In fact, the military action always carries a risk especially in war area it can harm for civilians and also the military personnel. Despite the fact that it could not solve the war however no-fly zone could decrease the number of victims.

Since Assad regime launched air attack brutally, the White Helmets as the side which always in the battle area knew a lot of things that happened on their calling for the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone. The White Helmets as local Syrian NGO with their partner vocalized their demand was to stop the chemical attack and barrel bomb by implementing a no-fly zone in Syria by uniting with other NGOs and the UN Security Council permanent members (the United States, the United Kingdom, France) to do advocacy process to realize peace and better condition in Syria.