

THE PEOPLE'S CONVOY: Frequently Asked Questions

The People's Convoy sounds great. Tell me more.

The People's Convoy is a crowdfunding project to send a 'People's Convoy' with essential equipment to rebuild and restock a children's hospital in Syria. The convoy will set out from the UK on 17 December. It will go via France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. On arrival at the Turkish border with Syria, it will hand over the aid to the Syrian medical association, Independent Doctors Association, who will take it on to Aleppo.

This is aid from the people to the people. It is both practical support and an important message of solidarity for Syria's heroic doctors and nurses who continue to fight to save lives in the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

It is also a message to our leaders that they must take real, international action to stop the systematic targeting of healthcare workers and hospitals.

Where will the hospital be built and by who?

The aid in the convoy will be used to refit a children's hospital in the countryside north of Aleppo. It will be built by the [Independent Doctors Association \[IDA\]](#) who were running the last children's hospital in Aleppo City before it was bombed and destroyed.

IDA was founded by a medical committee of Syrian doctors from Aleppo in June 2012 as a response to the humanitarian needs in areas outside of government control in Northern Syria. By the end of 2016, IDA will be providing nearly a million people in the Aleppo governorate with medical services. IDA has a total of 470 employees working in Aleppo governorate, its headquarters in Gaziantep, Turkey and office in Kilis, Turkey.

IDA will re-open the Children's Hospital in a safer area where humanitarian needs are also very high, the Northern Aleppo countryside that has recently been liberated from ISIS. This area has been suffering from a particularly high influx of internally displaced people since the start of 2016. It is an area of high humanitarian need with no specialised paediatric hospital. The target number of beneficiaries for the new paediatric hospital is 185,000 people, 33% of those are under the age of 12 years.

How much money do you need to raise?

We are looking to raise £91,432 GBP which will cover the equipment, the cost of the build, and the essential haulage costs. The cost of the accompanying convoy, and the additional costs incurred as a result of travelling overground from the UK, will be met privately, ensuring that money donated by the public will only be used to pay for the direct aid.

Where will the funds actually go/who will manage the money?

The donations from the website will be processed by [Hand in Hand for Syria](#), 'Hand In Hand for Syria' which is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1145862). All funds raised by the public will be used to purchase equipment or directly transferred to IDA for the building work.

How do you know it won't go to rebels or terrorist groups?

Independent Doctors Association have a track record of receiving international aid from European governments and international organisations to deliver life-saving medical care to civilians in Syria. They are non-partisan and not involved in any way in the fighting. This aid is purely humanitarian and will go towards helping innocent civilians caught up in the conflict.

What if you don't raise this amount, will the convoy still go ahead?

The funds we are looking to raise from the public are essential for the convoy to go ahead. We are confident that people in the UK want to help. If we fail to meet the target by departure date we will buy as much equipment as we can afford and keep fundraising whilst it is travelling to cover costs of the rebuild. Finally, if we still don't meet our total we will transfer the funds we have to Independent Doctors Association who will make great use of it in their life saving work.

What if you raise more than you need?

We really hope to find ourselves in this situation. If this happens then all money beyond the target will be transferred to the Independent Doctors Association. The areas in Aleppo they serve have huge humanitarian needs and the funds will be put to very good use.

Why are you taking the equipment all the way from London? Surely this raises costs, and is not very efficient?

Great question. Two reasons:

Firstly, yes this is in part a practical act of humanitarian assistance but it also a symbolic and political act of solidarity. We have chosen to bring the aid from London, with a high-profile send off from a central location, to draw attention to the suffering in Syria and the lack of constructive action from the British Government and wider international community. We will also be hand delivering to the Syrian partner carrying messages of solidarity from the British public. The costs of the convoy are being covered by private individuals and organisations - not a penny of public donations will go towards the convoy.

I thought Aleppo was under siege. How will you access it?

The east of the city of Aleppo is under siege from the Syrian government - this is the part you are seeing in your daily papers. However, the surrounding countryside of Aleppo is also an area of great humanitarian need with a high number of internally displaced people and daily bombings.

Is this legal? Don't you need regime permission?

Yes, this is perfectly legal, we don't need permission to send aid into Syria from Turkey. Our humanitarian partners on the ground in Syria are used to this - they have done this frequently.

Is this safe? If not, what are you doing to help make it safer?

Discounting the usual risks of any road travel, it is safe to travel across Europe to the border between Turkey and Syria, which is as far as the convoy will go. There is an experienced logistics crew managing the convoy's journey, who will put all the necessary safety precautions in place, including ensuring the drivers observe the legal limits for time behind the wheel, and mandatory rest. In Syria itself, the risks are obviously higher, but the organisations we are working with are experienced, know the situation well, and will not take any unnecessary risks. They will only travel with the aid when judged safe to do so.

Isn't there a danger that hospitals you rebuild will just be bombed again? And if so is there anything that can be done to protect them?

Yes, there is a very real danger that the Syrian Government and its ally Russia will attack this hospital as part of their systematic targeting of healthcare facilities. However, it would be unconscionable to say because of these attacks we won't even try to build hospitals to serve millions of people in need.

The conduct of the Syrian regime and its allies, including Russia, is in breach of international humanitarian law and must not be tolerated. The UN and other international governments with leverage need to do more to prevent these attacks on hospitals and medical workers. Failure to do so is a derogation of their responsibility to protect civilians in conflict and threatens to undermine the norms and rules of law that we all depend on for our peace and safety.

Can anyone join the convoy? If not why not?

The convoy is a gesture of solidarity from UK and international citizens to the people of Syria. In that sense, anyone is welcome to join for some or all of the journey, as long as they are able to cover their own costs and provide their own vehicles. There may be some space available on an official convoy vehicle for people with a particular skill or objects to donate. The decision on this will be taken by the logistics managers and will take into account security, costs, and other factors.

Who is on the convoy?

The convoy is led by a Syrian, British, and Syrian American Doctors, all of whom have experience working in Syria and other conflict zones.

- Dr Rola Hallam, consultant Anaesthetist, Founder and CEO of CanDo.
- Dr Zaher Sahloul, Founder and Executive Member at American Relief Coalition for Syria, a coalition of 14 Syrian American Diaspora humanitarian organizations helping millions of Syrians and Syrian refugees.
- Saleyha Ahsan, an emergency medicine doctor and freelance journalist and filmmaker, who was the first Muslim woman to graduate from Sandhurst as a British Army Officer.

It will also be accompanied by Paul Conroy, a freelance photographer and filmmaker, who was injured in Homs in 2012, in the same attack that killed war correspondent Marie Colvin of the Sunday Times