



# Serge and Beate Klarsfeld and the Syria Civil Defense to Each Receive 2019 Museum Elie Wiesel Award

01.11.2018 | JCR

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – During the 2019 Days of Remembrance, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will confer its highest honor, the Elie Wiesel Award, to Serge and Beate Klarsfeld and the Syria Civil Defense, commonly known as The White Helmets.**

Given the urgency of a world where Holocaust denial and antisemitism are on the rise and where the situation in Syria remains dire, the Museum has decided to make an exception and grant two Elie Wiesel Awards next year. The awards will be presented at the Museum's annual Tribute Dinner on April 29, 2019.

Established in 2011, the Elie Wiesel award recognizes internationally prominent individuals whose actions have advanced the Museum's vision of a world where people confront hate, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Elie Wiesel, the Museum's founding chairman, was the first recipient of the award. Engraved on the award are words from Wiesel's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "One person of integrity can make a difference."

"Elie Wiesel said indifference always 'benefits the aggressor – never his victim,' said Museum Chairman Howard Lorber. "After World War II, when many in Europe wanted to avoid discussing their culpability during the Holocaust, the Klarsfelds refused to remain silent and sought to bring Nazi perpetrators to justice. Today, as the Assad regime ruthlessly targets its own citizens, the White Helmets risk their lives to save their fellow citizens. The courageous actions of all the honorees are the embodiment of Elie's warning about the perils of indifference."

Serge and Beate Klarsfeld have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in the cause of Holocaust remembrance and singular leadership in combatting the impunity of perpetrators of the Holocaust era and advancing Holocaust memory and education. Serge played a key role in the prosecution of high ranking Nazi officials and French collaborators including Klaus Barbie, René Bousquet, Jean Leguay, Maurice Papon, and Paul Touvier. Beate Klarsfeld boldly confronted former Nazis serving in the West German government, and Serge Klarsfeld conducted path breaking research on child deportees and the Holocaust in France and Romania, including documenting the stories of thousands of French Jews sent to the gas chambers. The Klarsfelds have aggressively campaigned against antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East, and to confront massacres elsewhere, such as Sarajevo and Burundi.

At enormous risk to themselves and their families and in the face of horrific attacks by the Syrian government, the White Helmets have courageously saved lives and delivered critical services to a desperate population. The White Helmets is a volunteer organization comprised of people from all backgrounds – bankers, tailors, engineers, pharmacists, painters, carpenters, students, and many more – that operates in parts of Syria and Turkey. They conduct search and rescue operations in response to bombing and gas attacks, medical and other evacuations, and essential service delivery including reconnecting electrical cables, providing safety information to children, securing buildings and more. They are the largest civil society organization operating in areas outside of government control. The volunteers save people on all sides of the conflict. Their motto is "To save one life is to save all of humanity." To date, 204 members of the White Helmets have been

killed while saving more than 114,000 lives.

A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Its far-reaching educational programs and global impact are made possible by generous donors. For more information, visit [ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org).

{newsItem.description->f.format.html()}