

Humanitarian Crisis in Syria: OLAF Detects Fraud and Misuse of EU Funds



News

Thomas Wahl

On 24 March 2020, OLAF reported that it closed investigations in January 2020 that revealed [fraud by beneficiaries of a rule-of-law project in Syria](#). The EU had funded a UK-based company and its partner in the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates with a total of nearly €2 Million, in support of a project to deal with possible prosecutions for violations of international criminal and humanitarian law in Syria. OLAF investigators discovered that the claim to support the rule of law in Syria was false; in fact, the partners were committing widespread violations themselves, including submission of false documents, irregular invoicing, and profiteering. OLAF recommended that the competent national authorities in the UK, the Netherlands, and Belgium recover almost the entire contractual sum and consider flagging the partners in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System database.

On 7 February 2020, OLAF informed the public that it had closed an [investigation into the misuse of EU funds](#) provided to a well-known NGO for emergency assistance in Syria. The OLAF investigation detected a fraud and corruption scheme being carried out by two staff members of the NGO who siphoned taxpayers' money away from the humanitarian crisis in Syria and into their own pockets and those of their collaborators. OLAF also revealed significant shortcomings in the way in which the NGO had administered EU money. OLAF recommended the recovery of nearly €1,5 million from the NGO.

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