

Charity Commission inquiries

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CATEGORY:

[ARTICLE](#)

Al-Fathia Global hit the headlines in March after *The Sun* published an article on its front page showing a volunteer of the Worcester-based charity posing with two masked gunmen. At the time, the charity said that the story was a 'scandalous farce'.

The Charity Commission has been monitoring the charity since 2013, but was prompted to open an inquiry on 21 March 2014. The inquiry will look into:

1. whether the trustees are effectively discharging their duties under charity law, with particular regard to the proper accounting of the income and expenditure of the charity and management of the charity in accordance with its governing document and the law; and
2. regulatory issues in connections with reports in the public domain alleging inappropriate links between the charity and individuals purportedly involved in supporting armed or other inappropriate activities in Syria.

Al-Fathia Global's charitable objects are to relieve sickness by providing free clinics for people in Northern Pakistan and providing humanitarian aid in areas disrupted by conflict or natural disaster.

The inquiry into Al-Fathia Global was swiftly followed by the opening of an inquiry into the aid charity Children in Deen on 14 April 2014. The charity had confirmed to the press that one of its volunteers who had travelled to Syria in a convoy organised by the charity had carried out a suicide attack at a Syrian prison.

An inspection of Children in Deen's financial records raised serious regulatory concerns about the trustees' management and administration of the charity. The inquiry will look specifically into financial transactions involving its overseas operations in Syria and elsewhere.

The inquiries into Al-Fathia Global and Children in Deen follow two further inquiries in January.

In light of the recent inquiries, the Charity Commission organised free workshops for charities working in Syria. The workshops covered trustees' duties in high-risk environments, monitoring and accounting for charitable funds, working with partner agencies, and travelling to and sending aid to Syria and the surrounding areas.