

Fleeing from poverty and war: the life of migrant, displaced and refugee families, a sign of values and hope in the midst of fragility. The challenge of dialogue among cultures

For us, today marks the 18th of September! Another regular date! But this same date marks the day number (1095) since the Syrian conflict started, day (17155) on the Palestinian immigration, day (3895) for many of Iraqi Refugees and the (62) days since the Iraqi Christians were forced to leave their homeland! The list could even go longer...

Since its establishment, in the beginning of the 20th Century in 1921, Jordan welcomed the families who fled from the Levant region and Iraq because of the unstable political situations in the region that time. Since that time, Jordan has received many of the displaced and refugees who came looking for a secure place where they can find peace, tolerance and dignity.

Welcoming refugees to Jordan practically started in 1967 with receiving the Palestinian refugees that followed in the year 1973 because of the Arabs- Israeli wars. Jordan continued after this to support the displaced Lebanese in the years 1975 and 1982 as a result of the civil Lebanese war.

And after the first Gulf War (1990- 1991) Jordan started receiving the Iraqi refugees which peak was in 2003 and continued till this date in particular and unjust behaviors and extremist groups that forced minorities in Iraq to leave especially the Christians.

Caritas Jordan Response towards the Syrian Refugees needs in Jordan

The Syrian crisis has gone through three major junctures since erupted three years ago in March 2011: it started as a spontaneous and peaceful popular uprising, which was dealt with by force; the uprising was militarized as opponents also restored to violence.

Caritas Jordan has employed its charitable and voluntary efforts to reach out and serve those, who all of a sudden, found themselves living in another country, under paucity of resources and in destitute. It directly and efficiently responded to emergencies and supported refugees. In this regard, it has delivered many types of assistance including distribution of food and non-food items in response to the Syrian crisis.

As the crisis marks its third anniversary, 400-1,000 Syrians continue to cross into Jordan, fleeing the war in their country. Some 611,000 are now registered with UNHCR and more than 200,000 Syrians are expected to cross into Jordan this year according to Andrew Harper, the UNHCR representative to Jordan, adding that no schools or hospitals are being built through the help of the international community to help Jordan mitigate the impact of the crisis.

Almost 80 per cent of the Syrian refugees in Jordan live among host communities and not in camps, according to official figures released by the refugee camps' administration, while around 125,000 refugees are camp residents. As for the age category of the Syrian refugees, 80 per cent of them are less than 35 years old and 40 per cent are under 11. The economist concluded that the refugee burden places pressure on education, health facilities and infrastructure, including water and sanitation, in addition to exacerbating unemployment with Syrians taking over Jordanians' jobs.

The harshness of life is still featured in the stories of many Syrian refugees whom destiny denied to live the basic rights of life!

Hind Abu-Saif, a 38-year old Syrian mother of eight children, age between 3 to 18 years old, escaped to Jordan in October 24, 2012.

"I had no choice that day but to run away with my kids... this scene will be imprinted in my memory and unfortunately my kids' for ever! Says Hind. "a group of armed people broke in to our home in Daraa', took by force my husband, Khaled, outside on the doorstep. They interrogated him, bit him really hard on the head and then shot him dead!" These people then burnt the house and thank God, Hind managed to run away with all her children.

Hind and her children escaped to Jordan to go first to a refugee camp, "Zaatari". They stayed there for four months! "I prefer to go back to Syria rather than staying in this Camp!" says the eldest son, Mohammad 17 years old. And for the eldest girl, Manar, 18 years old, was the same opinion since they suffered from cold and dust there. "I had to find a way to escape from the camp considering the harsh conditions there and the critical situation of my 5-year old daughter, Taghreed, who suffers from Epilepsy and needs regular treatment and attention that was not provided inside the camp," adds Hind.

With the help of a charitable person who helps the "martyr's families" and since Hind's family is considered one "Now my concern is the education of my kids! Their father wanted them to get good education and my goal in after her husband was killed back in Syria, Hind found a house in Amman area for (160) JOD per month plus (38) JOD electricity and water bills.

"I am now the responsible of this family, I have to think about how to support them. I have a big family but what to do! I had no idea." Says Hind "but God leaves no one! And my spark of hope came when the neighbors where I am staying told me to go to Caritas Center."

"I want nothing but for God to protect my kid, he is everything & the only one left for me now" says Humaira with eyes filled with tears that didn't stop for minute during the visit that Caritas Jordan's field team paid to Humaira's shelter!

Humaira Al-Ali, a 36- year old Syrian mother, escaped from Hamaa' in January 2014 after the death of her husband, who was killed due to the armed conflict in their country.

With her sister, her brother in-law and her six children, Humaira with a miracle, left Syria and arrived to Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, in October 2013, where they couldn't endure staying there for more than one day because of the harsh living conditions in the camp.

Humaira managed to escape from the camp and found a tent at Al-dleil area in Zarqa city. The tent had nothing in it, Humaira was starving each day to protect her kids and provide them with anything to help them survive this miserable life that they have never chosen to live!

"One of these days in the tent, it was really dark in the evening and the kids were afraid so I had to light a candle to bring in some light" explains Humaira. Unfortunately in the middle of the night, this candle caused a fire that spread all the over the tent and 5 kids died of suffocation and only one; Mouhammad 10 years old survived. She lost her five kids between 2 – 11 years old.

After this tragic incident, Humaira went to look for her sister and her brother in-law where she found them staying at a small farm where they worked to support themselves. They gave Humaira and her son a small room to live in and help with any work she can do in the farm.

Humaira is a mother among many other Syrian mothers who didn't choose to leave their homes, or their lives or even their Kids! However, Humaira insists that she needs nothing but for her son to live a normal life if she still has any right to choose and to Dare to survive!

Caritas Jordan helped Humaira and her son to find a shelter and pay the rent, in addition to providing them with food & non-food vouchers...

Hussein Bashir is a 10-year old Syrian boy who approached Caritas Center asking for help.

Caritas staff was overwhelmed by Hussein who has been taking the responsibility of his family including his blind father and 7 siblings with a 4-year old sister who suffered from diabetes.

They lived in a small house with 120 JOD per month. "I and my younger brother go out in the streets daily to sell biscuits in order to provide our family with food" says Hussein. "I heard our neighbors talking about a Center that helps needy people, so I thought that I come and ask help for my family".

Caritas field team paid a visit to Hussein house and provided them with blankets, mattresses, a heater, food voucher a month with a (40) JOD amount in addition to covering the house rent for at least 3 months.

Hussein the 10-year old who is supposed to be now, like any regular child in his age, to be enjoying his time at school, or playing around with his friends or at least just sitting home safe, is now the Man of the house whom the crisis in his country obliged him to grow-up too soon and endure the harshness of life!

People of Peace forced to leave

Caritas Jordan has received and welcomed more than 500 Iraqi Christians out of an expected 3000 persons, fleeing their homes running away from the atrocities committed by the extremist DAESH militant.

More people are arriving on daily bases until we reach the target of 3000 persons. So far Caritas has managed some makeshift shelters in the local churches' halls, school stages and yards.

Naghama a 41-year old mother arrived to Jordan on August 14, 2014 with her husband Kamal, 48 years old, and 2 kids; Noura 12 years old and Nawras 9 years old. *"We had no place to go. We were given no choice but to leave against our will... what is our guilt that we had to leave in this way, our kids had to live such experience. We are people of peace and this is happening to us!"* says Naghama who is now staying at the Melkite convent hall in Marka area with 40 persons of those who escaped to Jordan from Mousil city.

"I have nothing to live for now but my two sons and this is the only reason that obliged me to escape. I would rather stay there in my beloved Mousil regardless of the threatening," adds Loai Jaber, a father of 2 boys; 17 and 13 years old.

Loai is now staying with other 80 refugees in Melkite Church hall in Marj Al-Hamam area. Dalia Sabbah and her husband Safwan have 2 boys and are expecting a new baby girl within a month. *"I cannot stop thinking about my due date, but I keep just praying and in faith that God will help me"* says Daila.

Safwan lived a terrible experience to take his family and his pregnant wife to be safe here in Jordan *"as all the families who had to come to Jordan, we had no choice but to escape since we didn't want to live under injustice or to convert to Islam against our will in order to stay in our country"* explains Safwan.

They were given a 3-day notice to leave or they will be killed. All Christian families in Mousil left with nothing at all. The 19th of July 2014 was the last day for the Christian families in Mousil to leave or to be killed!

"We were not allowed to take anything with us, neither money, nor clothes, nor gold, nor any kind of belongings! They took everything and we were thrown out of our country because we are Christians!" says In'am a 50-year old woman who arrived to Marj Al-Hamam area with some of her relatives.

Our Lady of Peace Center is also one of the main places receiving Iraqi refugees and it now has around 80 persons. There you could meet Nadira a 35-year old mother who also escaped with her husband Nashwan and 3 girls; 8 to 3 years old. Nashwan was injured in his leg in the day they had to leave since he was running trying to get his wife and daughters out of the house safe and sound. *"Back in Mousil I had a lovely home filled with toys and clothes for my girls. Now I have nothing for my girls to wear but the clothes they had on when we left Iraq"* says Nadira, *the three girls used to go to schools, Nashwan had his own shop. We lost it all."* Nadira's mother came with them, she is 75 years old, with w tearful eyes she says, *"I have never seen such a thing in my whole life! This is not what religion is, we have lived in Iraqi all religion together safe, happy and in peace. In this age I was obliged to leave my country, my homeland"!*

Caritas Jordan continues to secure the shelters, transportations, meals and medical services. Nonetheless more help and concerted efforts are needed to address the

pertinent needs in shelters especially that winter is around the corner and different sectors.