

Art of Living and IAHV Response to Iraq Refugee Crisis

Since the early stages of the ISIS insurgence in Iraq, over 1.5 million Iraqis have been internally displaced or forced to flee across borders for their safety. The Art of Living and IAHV team has been working to bring relief to refugees and internally displaced people (IDP). From its base in Erbil, the team has brought relief in the form of food, water and hygiene products to 5 different camps, each camp sheltering 550 Iraqi families. IAHV has reached more than 2,000 families. Additionally, three Kurdish Members of Parliament who recently participated in IAHV's TLEX training in late June 2014 also came to the aid of refugees visiting the camps, meeting refugees and assessing their needs and distributing relief items (see below photos).

The living conditions of the refugees are extremely poor. In Duhok there are 100,000 refugees, and only one small camp. Most of the refugees are not living there but on the streets or in unfinished buildings because the camp is in terrible condition. It is very unhygienic; there are no blankets, coolers or food. There are no bathrooms or toilets. The children are all getting skin disease because of the unhygienic conditions.

Currently, they lack even the most basic items for survival, such as food, clothing and hygienic kits. They are in a very poor psychological state. One such example is of a refugee who had 37 people in the family taken by ISIS. Thousands of women are abducted, gang-raped and sold in markets. Duhok needs additional camps with conditions that meet basic human needs to be lived in.

The IAHV team also went to Mount Sinjar to visit the camps where Yazidis have taken refuge. Two graduates of IAHV's Community Leadership Training program interviewed Yazidi families to document their plight and need for immediate aid in these two brief videos. One of the graduates and her father, Bareza, are taking much needed action to aid the Yazidis with their Foundation:



<http://youtu.be/Yv3ZIJ5Uul>



<http://youtu.be/QFjDpKNrknM>

Below are images from various camps the IAHV team and Kurdish Members of Parliament have visited and distributed aid:



Aid material being distributed in the first camp near Erbil



IAHV Program Director, Mawahib Shaibani, discussing aid distribution



Program director Mawahib Shaibani and teachers with children in Baharka camp in Erbil



Refugees at the Erbil Camp



The former Khazir camp, now a war zone



Food distribution at Mosel camp



Food distribution in Mosel camp



Art of Living and IAHV volunteers collected more than 6,000 toys to be distributed to the children in the camps



One of our Art of Living volunteers with the donated toys in Duhok camp



Children after receiving the toys in Duhok camp



Trucks of water distributed at Sinjal Mountain



Volunteers distributing water



A small girl with a pack of water at Sinjar Mountain, where food and water were distributed