

Hell Has Arrived in Syria

***Note from Messiah's Mandate Ron Cantor:** Moti Cohen recently had the opportunity to go to Jordan with a team from Israel made up of Jewish and Arab believers. His report from Jordan is quite powerful.*

Hell on Earth

A few hours ago, I arrived in Israel after visiting Jordan, and I am still trying to digest what I have seen there. The evil in the Muslim world is overwhelming. What is happening in Syria unveils its true face. Yeshua said that the thief comes in order to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), and Syria is a clear example of this.

The army of Assad is wiping out city after city—both the Islamic rebels and Assad's army kill everybody in their way—and the victims are mostly found among the innocent: children, women who have been raped, people murdered in front of their family, old people who are tortured. For millions of people, hell has arrived in their land. Over 3 million refugees have fled Syria, 1.5 million of which escaped to Jordan.

The City Fhes

We traveled to Amman as a group of nine Israelis—seven Arab Israeli pastors and two Messianic Jews. Our first stop was in Fhes, a half-hour away from Amman. There are tens of thousands of Syrian refugees in this town. In the refugee camps, which have been set up near the Syrian border, there are tents where the refugees receive food and medical care. The problem is that the camp is already full, and there is no possibility to enter it. Therefore, thousands of families go to other Jordanian cities.

In Fhes, I saw Syrian children living on the streets, begging

for money. Most of the families manage to rent an apartment in one of the poor districts. Sometimes a family of 25 people—parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and their children—live in one apartment. The apartments are unbelievably overcrowded. In some of those we visited, there was no furniture, only mattresses with bags of clothes next to each one. There were no tables, chairs or other furniture. In some cases, more than one person slept on the same mattress.

At the beginning, I didn't understand why there were so many mattresses in the distribution center. But after having visited people in their homes, I understood that the children, the old and the sick are spending most of their time on the mattress, and therefore it was important for us, among other things, to provide families with mattresses.

The Story of Yussuf

One of the families we visited was the family of Yussuf, a 30-year-old Sunni Muslim, married with two little daughters. He told us that he grew up in the Syrian part of the Golan Heights—an area very close to the Israeli border. Before the war broke out, this part of the Golan Heights was populated by Sunni, Shiite, Alevi and Druze Muslims, as well as Christians living peacefully side by side. After the war broke out, there was a split, and all these groups started to fight one another.

Yussuf told us that he was a Sunni, raised to believe that Israel was the biggest enemy of the Arabic people. However, at a certain stage of the war, the situation in the Golan Heights became so difficult that he and his family started to hope that Israel would interfere and occupy the whole of the Golan Heights. He understood that the Israeli government is much better than Assad's regime. Assad's army completely destroyed the city Yussuf lived in. They bombed, leveled and burned everything.

Many people that Yussuf knew are now dead—including family members and close friends. Yussuf shares a one-room apartment with his wife's family in Fhes. We gave them food, mattresses, diapers, cooking pots, baby food, clothes and games. The family of Yussuf was very thankful and said that the believers who help them give them a lot of comfort in the difficult life situation they are in.

The Story of Muhammad

During one of our visits, we met Muhammad, a 17-year-old boy who was shot in his knee by the Syrian army while fleeing from Syria to Jordan. Injured, he managed to cross the border and was treated by the Jordanian medical workers, who finally let him join his family in Fhes. All these things happened only two weeks before our meeting, and when we visited his family, he had to leave in the middle of the meeting in order to go to work.

We asked him how he managed to work with such a serious injury to his leg, for we noticed that the entire knee was covered by sutures. He looked at us sadly and said that there was no other way. Eleven people lived in the house, and only he and two of his brothers could work. He explained that the refugees didn't have a working permit, so they had to work many hours for small amounts of money. He works in a restaurant 10 hours a day for only six dinars, which is the equivalent of \$.

Before Muhammad left for work, we asked him if we could pray for him, and he agreed. We prayed for healing for his leg, and of course for the healing of his heart from all the hatred and anger he harbored in his soul. We prayed for the whole family, that the Lord would give them comfort in all the pain they were going through, and we invited them to come to the local church.

The Story of Aida

In another visit, we met a lot of young widows with children. Most of the women were between ages of 18 to 22. Aida was one of them—a widow at 21, with two little girls. When we visited her family, she didn't say a word and didn't stop crying. We saw the sadness and the pain in her eyes. To be a young widow is a tragedy, but to be a young widow in the Muslim world is even a greater one.

In the Muslim world, a widow is a burden, and many times the family tries to make her marry an older man so that she will stop being a burden to the family. Aida lost her husband two years ago, when the Syrian army entered their village and simply executed all the young men, including her husband. It was sad to see her little daughters—ages 5 and 3—and to know that without a father to protect and to take care of them, they were exposed to a very difficult life. We pray to God through Yeshua, that He might show them the way, how to find in Him their hiding place from all their pain.

The Story of Rana

One day, as we were visiting refugee families, an elderly woman whose name was Rana approached us. She asked us to pray for her son, who has been missing for about two years. All she knows is that before the war broke out, her son was a soldier in the army of Assad. When the war began, he joined the rebel side. Now he is missing, and she doesn't know whether he is alive, injured or dead. Although the chances of him still being alive are very slim, she continues to believe her son is still alive and will return to her one day.

During our conversations with the Syrian refugees, we saw there was a high percentage of people with missing family members. These people don't have peace day or night for lack of knowledge about what happened to their loved ones. We prayed along with Rana, that God would give her an answer concerning what happened to her son. Who knows? Maybe there will be a happy end to this story.

The Story of a Pastor

When we arrived in Jordan, we met a certain pastor. He felt in his heart a calling from God to minister to the Syrian refugees. He told us that in the 1980s and 1990s there was a devastating war between Iraq and Iran. During this war, over 1 million refugees passed the border from Iraq to Jordan, and the congregations in Jordan had the opportunity to minister, to help and to bring the gospel to the refugees who came from Iraq. The pastor told us that at that period, hundreds of refugees came to the Lord Yeshua. After the war ended and they returned to Iraq, many of them founded congregations, which brought good fruit to the kingdom—leading many Iraqi families to Yeshua.

This testimony gives hope to the believers in Jordan who work with the Syrian refugees. We want to believe that through this joined ministry between Israeli Messianic Jews and the Israeli Arab Christians among the Syrian refugees, many of them will give their lives to Yeshua, return after the war to their home country, and spread the gospel among their friends and families. Let us continue to pray that this ministry will bring good fruit unto the Lord.

Irbid

On our last day, we were in the city of Irbid, an hour and a half from Amman. We turned one of the main rooms of a congregation into a distribution center and invited a hundred refugee families to come and receive items, including food, clothes, games for the children, diapers, baby food and more.

The circumstances in Irbid are very hard. Almost 600,000 refugees live there. From a sanitary point of view, it is a disaster. The government cannot handle all the waste on the streets, so the refugees burn their piles of waste. The local population abuses the refugees. A member of the congregation told us that his landlord is trying to get him out of the

apartment in order to rent it to Syrian refugees, the reason being that while he pays 50 dinars a month, Syrian refugees pay between 250 and 300 dinars a month.

Two or three refugee families share one apartment and are ready to pay a lot of money in order to not to live on the street. Jordanian citizens also rent them apartments, which are uninhabitable—such as shops, stores and industrial buildings. The Jordanians continually increase the prices and threaten to throw the people on the street if they refuse to pay.

Additionally, there is human trafficking, which I call “prostitution with a religious seal of approval.” There is a Muslim law that allows a man to marry a woman for a week or two, then to divorce her and return her to her family. The sheikhs and the rich people in Jordan try all the time to seduce refugee families with money. Mostly it is the case with older men who are trying to get young girls, whose ages many times do not surpass 14 or 15. The Syrian families are sometimes in such difficult situations that they agree to sell their girls for money.

Pain and Hope

The pain of the families is great. There is no family that has not lost loved ones. We saw a lot of widows and orphans, mothers who lost their children, people with missing body parts. Many refugees are injured. The war in Syria is a full-fledged catastrophe. We saw hatred and anger in their eyes. Everybody there is talking about revenge. When they speak about Assad and his army, there is murder in their eyes.

During our visits to families, we spoke with them about forgiveness and faith in Yeshua—that forgiveness and faith can set us free from all anger and purify our hearts from it. We hope that the humanitarian aid and our common prayers will lead them to the love of Yeshua and to the ways of God.

I returned to Israel with a lot of pain because of the sufferings these refugees have to go through. But I also returned with a lot of hope, knowing that just as there were many new believers after the war between Iraq and Iran, so also the war in Syria will unveil the evil and the lies of Islam, and many people will understand that God sent His only begotten Son to die for them, so that they may live.

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