

God's Transforming Power in a War-Torn Muslim Nation

Amid heart-breaking devastation and suffering in war-torn Syria, God is working in powerful ways. **Muslims are coming to Christ** and lives are changing forever through experiences that you will not see in the secular news headlines.

What began as a series of protests against political oppression in March 2011 increasingly resembles a full-scale civil war. Living conditions in parts of the country deteriorate by the day and people find it almost impossible to find work. Those who haven't sought refuge in neighbouring countries are barely surviving in desperate conditions.

With more than one million Syrians forced from their homes, the need for relief aid amongst displaced families provides Operation Mobilization (OM) with countless opportunities to assist in a variety of ways.

Over the past few years OM has helped establish a dozen small fellowships in Syria. While foreign workers no longer serve in the country, local believers from the fellowships are distributing relief aid to needy communities. By helping meet the families' needs in practical ways, these believers live out their faith, which in turn leads to countless opportunities to share the gospel.

Local believers regularly visit displaced families, bringing food packages and heating oil to help them survive the harsh winter in dangerous conditions. Rare and exciting opportunities have opened within the Kurdish areas. Astonishingly, believers have been given permission to show Christian films openly in more than 300 villages and a number of schools. And God is clearly at work: since the beginning of the uprising in Syria, house group meetings have doubled in

size.

The loving actions of local believers have significantly impacted recipients of the aid relief. Ali*, one such man, is a father to five children and has attended church regularly since receiving monthly food packages.

One day he visited the pastor of the local church around lunch time. He was too embarrassed to join the pastor and his family for lunch, so the pastor bought him a chicken to take home to his family. On his way home, Ali remembered his neighbours, who were struggling to survive. In a compelling demonstration of the transformation in his life, Ali chose to give the chicken to his neighbours.

God has also powerfully worked in Ahmed's* life. The father of six children, Ahmed felt increasingly helpless as he failed to find work to support his family. One daughter had cancer and urgently needed medicine, but the family had no money.

Desperate, Ahmed decided one night to hang himself. As he put the rope around his neck, he heard a strong inner voice say, "What will happen to your children? Who will take care of them when you are gone?" Ahmed broke down and wept. He felt guilty and told the story to a local pastor the next day. The pastor shared what Jesus has done and how much He loves them.

Ahmed started to cry and asked God for forgiveness. The pastor prayed for the child with cancer. Later, when Ahmed took his daughter to the doctor, the blood tests showed no trace of cancer in the little girl's body. The faith of this family is spreading, and a number of other family members have also come to Christ.

The situation in Syria is devastating, with unfathomable amounts of suffering. Yet God, in His great wisdom and mercy, uses this otherwise painful situation to draw people to Himself.

*Name changed

*A student at Sydney Missionary & Bible College, **Rachel Morris** has exchanged a hot Australian summer for the frigid winter adventure of a journalism internship in the Near East. Rachel is excited to experience just a little of all God is doing for His glory in this part of the world.*