

Healing Amid the Horror: Inspiring Stories Emerge From Iraq

ISIS has been moving quickly from the beginning, and its violence is especially felt in Iraq. This morning CNN reported that Kurdish troops had regained the Mosul Dam. This was a particularly dangerous post for ISIS to control. If the dam fails or gets blown up, it could flood Mosul and Baghdad and other downstream cities with the potential to kill many civilians.

Meanwhile, Iraq struggles to get solid leadership in place. Iraq's Parliament named a new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi. It seems everyone is holding their breath to see what is going to happen to Iraq and the surrounding countries.

No matter what happens, there will be people suffering. Many of the millions of refugees from Syria and internally displaced people in Iraq have nowhere to go. When they fled their villages, there was no time to pack necessities. And now many of their homes are destroyed.

Christian Aid Mission, your link to indigenous missions, hears disturbing reports from Iraq, but they also hear inspiring stories about something much bigger.

Tragedy and Revival

"Norya is a Syrian refugee who got saved in a camp in Iraq. She lost five children and her husband when a rocket fired by Syrian government forces toward the terrorists landed on her house causing their death. She sings hymns with us at our church group meetings."

Norya's story is one of several sent to Christian Aid Mission

by a native ministry leader working in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Those working with him spend the majority of their days sharing Christ with the destitute masses crowding the refugee camps.

The workers go from tent to tent, sitting down with frightened families who have fled ISIS, the merciless Islamic terrorist group that succeeded last week in purging all non-Muslims from every town and village in the Nineveh region.

Kurdish forces had been protecting the last remaining cities in the region, including Qaraqosh, the largest Christian town in Iraq, until last week when they abandoned their posts after a conflict with ISIS.

Arguably one of the most extreme and brutal terrorist groups in history, ISIS now controls a huge portion of the country. They have kidnapped, raped and sold women. They've beheaded children. On Aug. 11, a report emerged that ISIS had sliced a 5-year-old boy in half.

More than 200,000 people have escaped to the Kurdish city of Irbil, 55 miles east of Qaraqosh, with literally nothing but the clothes on their backs.

"Their homes and churches were burned to the ground," the ministry leader reported.

What would normally be a 45-minute drive between Qaraqosh and Irbil took the fleeing masses 12 hours.

More than 2 million internally displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees, also fleeing ISIS, are currently packed in the Irbil region. These have filled every building in the city beyond capacity, leaving thousands to live and sleep on the streets.

For those people without shelter, ministry workers organize "sleeping groups," where a large number of families gather together to sleep in one area for safety.

“The Lord’s hand is clearly upon us and protecting us from evil,” reported the leader. “Even though some of us are going through trials, we believe strongly that the Lord is taking us to another level of faith and a higher place of blessing.”

Akra

In the Kurdish town of Akra, some of the displaced are living in buildings originally built to hold Iranian prisoners during Saddam Hussein’s reign. Each bathroom is being shared by approximately 10 families.

Most of the others live in a refugee camp, and the only school is without a roof. It collapsed during the winter. The teachers asked ministry workers for help to replace the windows and roof, even with just a plastic tarp. The workers prayed with the teachers and shared the gospel with many of the students.

“Most of the refugees asked for food. They told us this was their primary need,” the leader reported.

As they were going from tent to tent in the Akra camp, gospel workers came upon Abu Mustafa, a 50-year-old man who has three girls with cerebral atrophy and whose wife was killed. Mustafa was blaming God for his tragic situation, but allowed the workers to read the Bible to him and pray for him.

“This is the first time, I feel relief,” Mustafa told the workers. “For three years, I couldn’t smile or feel safe, but now I feel differently. I have peace in my heart. Please pray for my girls. I believe Jesus can heal them and heal me from the inside.” He daily calls the workers to ask when they will visit him again.

Who Are These Workers?

According to multiple ministry leaders working among the internally displaced in the Kurdish region, workers are

plentiful.

In a conversation with Christian Aid Mission's Middle East Director, one ministry leader reported an "army of volunteers from local churches and house churches are ready and willing to help." These workers, he said, are all born again, evangelical believers with at least basic Bible training, most of whom he has worked with previously.

With funding wired from Christian Aid Mission, the ministries are easily able to buy supplies from local markets to distribute to the needy.

"Everything is available locally and could be purchased in a matter of hours and distributed within a few days," reported one ministry leader.

Typically, one group of workers is assigned with the task of purchasing the supplies and another group with distributing the supplies. Everything is overseen by the ministry leaders.

The greatest needs are food, clothing, mattresses, medicine, fuel for transportation, Bibles, and worker support.

"In addition to their need for prayer and spiritual strength from the Lord, the workers have personal needs. At the end of the day when they return to their homes, they have to take care of their own families," a ministry leader told the director.

Long after foreign aid agencies leave the region, these native workers will remain to continue their outreach to the many broken people, hungry for hope and truth.

"In a crisis like this, we are experiencing a time of revival and awakening everywhere," reported a ministry leader. "God is not just moving people geographically; He is moving in their hearts, as well."

The Needs

God is using native missionaries in Iraq to share the saving message of Jesus Christ with those who have been forced from their homes. But the needs are great! Gospel workers want to meet physical needs, as well as spiritual needs, and they require our help to do so.

One of the ministries Christian Aid Mission is assisting in Iraq sent the following request for funds, sufficient for two months of relief aid:

- Food. Two meals daily for 100 people at a cost of \$2 per meal: \$24,000.
- Clothing. Used clothing for women and children, especially those sleeping in the open air: \$5,000.
- Mattresses: A piece of foam covered with fabric costs about \$30. The need is for 400: \$12,000.
- Medication: The ministry would like to start a fund for people in need of medicine for diabetes, asthma, heart problems, blood pressure problems, and other health concerns: \$10,000.
- Fuel: To transport basic necessities to the refugees, especially those without any type of shelter. To run five vehicles a day for two months: \$15,000.
- Bibles: The ministry has exhausted its supply of Bibles. Thousands of people are hearing the gospel. Bibles, New Testaments, and children's Bibles for two months: \$30,000.
- Worker support: The ministry currently has 12 men and women who are working full-time without support. To provide each worker with \$600 per month for two months: \$14,400.

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