

A Report on the Refugee Crisis affecting the Middle East and Europe, especially Germany

Since 2014 the number of refugees fleeing to Europe from war and persecution in their native countries has steadily increased. After German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, indicated publically that her country would be willing to take “all the refugees”, the number of people attempting to reach Europe has exponentially increased. What was a flow of people has almost overnight become a flood. Most of these fleeing ones have made Germany their destination of choice. The refugees are mainly from Syria, but also come from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, the Balkans, and north and equatorial Africa.

When the refugees enter Germany, they are placed in large facilities with capacities of up to 3,000 people. Many of these initial “camps” are former military bases and the conditions are very basic, even harsh. Access to these camps is difficult because of a necessary security presence. If they are granted asylum, the refugees are then placed in smaller, housing projects of 150 or 200 people. Even though conditions in these projects are improved, the refugees are still in much need and they do not know what the future will bring.

In 1991, Brother Lee, in *The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, said the following, “Because of the present situation in the world, there needs to be an appropriate direction for the Lord's move in His recovery today. We should not think that the present changes in the world situation are meaningless. The Lord is not only the Creator of the universe but also the Ruler of the entire world.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, learned this lesson. He came to know that he was not the ruler of the earth but that the unique God, the One in the heavens, is (Dan. 4:28-37). There is the rule of the heavens on earth. Whatever happens in the world situation must be something of the Lord. When we see the many changes in today's world situation, we have to wake up. Our eyes need to be opened. We should exercise our spirit to say, “Lord, what do You mean in all of these changes, and what concerns us in all of these changes?”(pp. 7-8)

A number of the co-workers in the Lord's recovery, considering the flight of so many peoples, and Germany's unprecedented willingness to take them, suggested that this could indicate a major move of the Lord in His economy. Consequently, they asked a team of brothers from America and Europe to go and “scout out the land”. In September, these brothers traced the routes of the migrants from their native countries into Europe.

In October of 2015, continuing on from the first scouting trips, several brothers spent some days scouting and researching the situation among the migrants in Germany. This was followed this month by another trip with a larger team of saints further assessing the situation and “experimenting” with different ways to reach the refugees for the Lord. This report covers the October and November trips.

In October, three teams of two brothers each from the UK, with the aid of some local saints, visited refugee camps in the cities of Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Mannheim, and Karlsruhe. In all the camps we found that the people were very needy and eager to talk about their experiences. Despite the significant language barrier, we were able to get an impression of some of their stories, and speak a little about the Lord and our purpose in visiting them. We were also able to give out a limited amount of gospel material. This trip mainly connected us with the local saints and brought them into the burden for the refugees. It also opened our eyes to the vastness of this field of labor, and opened our hearts wide to these downtrodden ones who are desperately needy in body, soul, and spirit!

In November, a team of 14 saints visited Germany for 10 days with different sub-teams visiting the churches in Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart, as well as some saints in Munich. We also visited many “camps” of refugees in these and other cities. This time we were joined by Arabic and Farsi (Persian) speaking saints from the US and UK. This greatly enhanced our ability to communicate with the refugees, allowing us to more fully hear their stories and allowing us to speak the Lord into their situations.

On the November trip, we visited refugees who had already been registered and given medicals in the larger processing centers. These ones are now waiting for their travel permits and residency documents. In most of these interim camps, security is low or non-existent allowing us relatively easy access to the refugees. Again, we met people who had risked everything to get away from war and persecution in their native countries. Most of their stories were extraordinary. We could not help but be touched by their desperation, fortitude, and stoicism in the face of death, robbery, deception, persecution, and maltreatment, and the loss of family, friends and homes. Many told us harrowing stories of the dangers of their journey from the Mideast to Europe; traveling long distances in dangerous conditions, some capsizing in rubber rafts, or beaten by police or gangs.

We met one 63 year old man who had travelled from Syria to Algeria and on to Libya. There he attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea in a small boat twice before being picked up by a naval vessel which brought him to Italy. From there, he first tried to get into France, then Norway, before finally being accepted by Germany. He was accompanied by his wife and three children (aged 22, 20, and 13). His eldest son (aged 24) had been robbed and killed a year ago trying to reach Germany.

In the same camp, we met a 24 year old civil engineering student who, with his 20 year old sister, and 12 year old brother, had walked for 43 days from Syria to Germany. We also met a young, Iraqi Kurd whose father and seven uncles had been killed by the old regime in his country. He fled his TV station job because some of his colleagues were killed and he himself had received death threats.

Despite their pitiful stories and the harsh conditions, the people are most appreciative of our contact with them and they welcome friendly visitors. Within minutes they invited us into their living quarters for coffee, tea, and snacks, soon to be followed by a meal. We were deeply touched by their warmth and hospitality. Additionally, as terrible and tragic as these events are, they have caused these refugees to question the very meaning of human life and rendered them very open to hear the gospel of salvation.

Our prevailing impression is that “the fields...are already white for harvest” (John 4:35). In a sense, you just have to stretch out your hand into the harvest and it is filled with grain! Because of their sufferings and loss, the refugees are in desperate need of all the care that can be offered to them, and they are wide open to hear the gospel. On this visit, we had ministry material printed in Arabic and English, and Farsi (Persian) and English. Because we had Arabic and Farsi speakers with us, we were able to preach the gospel to a number of refugees who openly prayed with us to receive the Lord. As of today, eight have definitely received the Lord and we have over 100 “warm doors” who are desirous that we return and visit them.

In addition, we are standing with and encouraging the local German-speaking saints in their outreach and follow-up with these desperate and seeking peoples. There is a very great need for many saints, especially those with some proficiency in Arabic, Farsi, or German, to pay an extended visit or migrate to Germany to participate in this move of the Lord.

In conclusion, for many years, the Middle East has been virtually impenetrable to the preaching of the gospel due to the persecution, and even the killing of Christians by radical Muslims. Instead of sending martyrs into the Middle East, the Lord has removed and scattered its peoples into Europe where they can hear the truth of the gospel and be saved in an atmosphere of relative freedom and tolerance.

This removal from their native lands and culture coupled with the persecution and suffering the refugees have experienced has made them question the meaning of human life and caused them to be wide open and ripe to receive and trust in a better Life.

Surely the ways of the Lord are higher and His wisdom is far greater than that of men (Rom. 11:33-34). It seems that the Lord is presenting His recovery with an opportunity to cooperate with Him in His economy comparable with His move into the former Soviet Union a generation ago. May His people show strength and take action (Dan. 11:32) to match Him in these last days.