

Peace Mail

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OFF PEAK
AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 7

act for peace
reduce poverty | protect refugees
prevent conflicts | empower communities



Map: BBC News

Support for Iraqi refugees during these tragic times

Prior to 2003, Christians formed only 4% of Iraq's population, but now constitute 30% of Iraqi refugees. **act for peace** is supporting an emergency assistance project to help many of the refugees who have fled to Syria. The project is being implemented by The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) who are cooperating with and coordinating local church partners, church related organisations and Muslim communities in Syria. The project will:

- Enable 1,500 Iraqi families to obtain essential hygiene and health kits at a cost of \$50 each.

- Enable 500 young men and women to receive vocational skills training which will help them to be self-reliant in the years to come, at a cost of \$250 per student.
- Provide health and HIV awareness programs for 400 Iraqi women and children living under these dire circumstances for \$50 per family.

These modest investments in restoring people's dignity gives them new hope! Thank you for your gifts. Your support greatly assists the MECC and cooperating churches in securing the integrity of displaced Iraqis in their communities.

act for peace (formerly CWS) is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).



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THANK YOU VALUED SUPPORTERS for your gifts, which enable support of project partners like The MECC. Thank you for your generosity, especially those who have chosen to increase the amount of their regular giving. All gifts over \$2 are tax deductible.

Please e-mail your feedback and suggestions to hgraham@ncca.org.au or phone to freecall **1800 025 101** and ask for Howard or Jordan. We love to hear from you and to pass on comments to project partners.

Please keep sending contact details of potential **act for peace** supporters and we'll send them information about how they can help. If you are not yet a regular giver and would like to become one, please send your contact details and gift. Be assured of a warm welcome!

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Iraqi Refugees Find Helpful Christian Friends in Syria

Dear valued supporter

I am the Director of the Syrian Office of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) Relief Program. Several churches are working together to meet the needs of people whose world has changed so dramatically and who now fear that they have no home to return to.

I'd like to introduce you to two of the students in our Vocational Educational Program:

Aifa Sami Kroumi, a 25 year old student, is registered in our Business Administration and Small Business Ventures Course. There are six people in her family, including her mother and siblings Ban, Atiaf, Aifan and Lolita. Aifa says, "We were living in Baghdad when my brother Aifan was kidnapped and beaten, receiving blows to his head with pistols. His nose was broken by the beating, but he was able to escape. Then, after two months had passed, my brother Simon and my father were kidnapped, and they killed my father. As for my brother, up until now we still do not know anything about what happened to him. Because of that, we left Iraq, for the protection of my sisters and my brother Aifan. Life is very difficult in Syria because we do not have anyone to look out for us."

Aifa says her Business Administration and Small Business Course has been of great benefit and she sincerely thanks the MECC for giving her the opportunity to gain this knowledge. "The course has also given me the chance to get away from the difficult circumstances of everyday life, as I feel responsible to look out for my sisters. I'm very keen to participate in the English course, as well as the course in Women's Hairdressing. Our family have no desire to return to Iraq because of the bad memories."

Student Ra'id Asa'ad Abd al-Hussein is one of seven children. Ra'id and her brother, Mohamad are registered to attend our summer course. Ra'id, says, "the educational methods and the institute are good and I hope to return for further courses". Ra'id's family came to Syria on the 6th of September 2006 following the murder of the father's mother and the forceful possession and subsequent burning of their house. This sad chain of events occurred because the father worked as a translator for American forces. The family has no wish to return to Iraq because they fear kidnapping and murder, even after peace has been secured.



MECC

Ra'id Asa'ad (left) and her family

Before the war in Iraq, these students and their families lived comfortably and expected to live fulfilling lives. Apart from the trauma that all of our students have suffered, there is the shock of suddenly having only the clothes and few possessions with which they managed to escape. We provide health, hygiene and other services, but our vocational courses really help to restore meaning and purpose to life. Thank you for helping us to give a sense of purpose and hope for a better future to these good people.

Samer Laham

Director MECC Syrian Office and Relief Program

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