

Syrian refugees : the suffering continues



Le foyer d'hébergement pour requérants d'asile La Pinède, à Conthey en Valais, sous la neige. Photo: Voix d'Exils

In the past two years, a lucky number of refugees from Syria were able to escape from the horrific conditions in the war torn nation. Most of the refugees ended up in countries like Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and some hundreds made it to Europe. In January 2013, Turkey is having 150'000 registered refugees followed closely by Jordan and Lebanon.

In the first week of January 2013, the temperatures of Middle East started to fall, and, in the second week, it started snowing and raining heavily and this has added another stress on the already stressed refugees in camps made out of tents with not proper winter clothing. Images of shaking bare-footed children walking on snow and water in refugee camps give the real conditions and suffering happening to those who have been able to flee the two years old war.

In September of 2012, the United Nation ambassador Angelina Jolie visited a camp in Jordan and the journalist's cameras that followed her, as a renowned actress and movie director, informed more to the world about the suffering of Syrian refugees. In one of her press briefings, she said "the amount of innocent children that have been reported dead, the amount of innocent children I've met here who are wounded and unaccompanied – with their parents being killed and now they're on their own – it's impossible to imagine any mother

standing by and not stepping up and doing something to prevent this » Such words from someone who visited the camps reflect the situation that needs not only to be aware of but to be acted on.

The Syrian refugees face not only cold and poor housing but also the camps in Turkey near the border with Syria have faced fire outbreaks leading to loss of lives. There are efforts by the United Nation Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Red Cross to provide what they can. Many children, especially those who were injured during the war, still need better medical care and feeding.

A few months ago, when I wrote my impressions on Switzerland, I included the challenges of my first winter and then the proper housing given to refugees. Now, on looking at what is taking place with the unfortunate Syrians, who are sleeping in unheated tents with hardly nothing to cover them, I come to appreciate more the unending efforts of the Swiss towards the refugee care.

In Switzerland, during the first 6 months of 2012, 777 Syrian refugees applied for asylum. In September, 36 refugees arrived in Bern and were granted asylum and resident permits immediately. With changes on Immigration laws in Switzerland, the Syrian Refugees have to be directly recommended by the UNHCR to confirm their vulnerable conditions.

With Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, swearing to continue fighting what he called terrorists, and the rebels also determined to overthrow him, it seems the world is going to continue watching refugees running out of their country to save their lives.

Marcus

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