

Iraqi Christians Refugees in Peril

A fact finding team visited Amman, Jordan and Beirut, Lebanon between October 18 and October 24 to investigate the conditions of Iraqi Christians who have fled Iraq. Initially, the mission planned to visit Damascus, Syria also. Unfortunately, the Syrian government withdrew the visas for the mission just prior to the team's departure.

The purpose of the mission was three-fold.

- 1) To interview Christian refugees who have fled Iraq, their advocates, humanitarian NGOs assisting refugees, and government officials in order to understand and document the conditions that Christian refugees are living under, the issues related to not receiving legal standing in the countries where they have fled and the desired response to ameliorate any problems from the perspective of government ministers, NGOs and individual refugees.
- 2) To communicate to government officials in country the high importance that is focused on resolving this issue, expressing concerns for defending the basic human rights of Christian refugees, and communicating a willingness and commitment to be supportive of finding a just resolution to the refugee dilemma. The mission focused concern for the poor living environments, social and medical services, restrictions on employment, and educational opportunities of refugees.
- 3) To communicate to the Christian refugees that they have advocates that will assist them at all levels, political and humanitarian. Identify the kinds of assistance that will aid newly arrived Christian refugees and support longstanding refugees. The team sought to identify potential partners in building a network for distribution of assistance.

Background:

Twenty years ago the Iraqi Christian population was estimated to be 1.4 million. The [Department of State reported](#) there were almost 1 million in early 2003. U.N. sources claim the figure to be 700,000. Two years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, [it was estimated](#) that 40 percent of the refugees fleeing Iraq were Christian, deliberately targeted in Iraq. At least 25 percent of the Christian population has fled, according to conservative estimates, with some arguing a figure closer to one-half. These figures do not reflect an even larger number of those internally displaced.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Iraq now has the third largest displaced population in the world. It is estimated that refugees in Syria and Jordan alone total 2.2 million persons. Approximately 500,000 are Iraqi refugee children, with a child malnutrition rate of 28%. The UNHCR has referred over 8,000 Iraqis for resettlement to the United States. During the last fiscal year 1,608 refugees were resettled in the US during the 2007 Fiscal Year which ended on September 30, 2007, according to the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. This is 400 short of the annual goal of 2,000 which was a reduction of the initial goal of 7,000. The State Department has set a 2008 fiscal year goal of admitting 12,000. They have blamed the slow pace on problems between the State Department and Homeland Security.

The Mission Team

Governor David Beasley (SC 94-99), Chairman, Center for Global Strategies

Issa Matalka, Jordan Representative, Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights

William J. Murray, Chairman, Religious Freedom Coalition

Father Keith R. Roderick, Washington Representative, Christian Solidarity International

Kenneth R. Timmerman, Bestselling author and internationally known journalist

William Warda, Journalist and chairman of the Hammorabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO)

JORDAN

Governor David Beasley led the mission in meetings with high level officials and NGOs. The team met with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Security, and Ministry of Planning representing the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Ministry of Interior

Mr. Eid Al Fayez, Minister of Interior was joined by the Secretary General of the Ministry, Mukhimer Abu Jamous, Karim Naber, Investment Department and Naser Al Ramadin of the Minister's Office. The ministry of Interior reiterated that the Kingdom will continue to treat Iraqi residents as guests with utmost respect until the crisis in Iraq is over.

The minister noted that one half of his government's budget is debt repayment because of oil prices. He questioned why it was that the US should not help Jordan at a similar level to Egypt.

He said that his government, in response to a request by the Iraqi government, is facilitating the residency of Iraqis in the Kingdom. Iraqis seeking entrance into Jordan will be required to obtain a visa which is being prepared, but not yet implemented. The ministry argued that the government does not discriminate between religions or sects. The team raised concerns over reports that it had received from refugees that some Iraqis had been denied entry into Jordan to apply for US visas, in several cases even when they had appointments with the U.S. Embassy. The ministry's response was that, on principle, it does not deny persons who have appointments with the US Embassy temporary transit. The ministry noted that Ambassador David Hale had requested an additional 1,500 slots. Their request is that they need to know the names and where they are going prior to arrival, and also the exact date when they are expected to arrive.

The Minister of Interior noted that there is no International Office of Migration (IOM) in Baghdad, only in Jordan. The ministry would like assistance from Ambassador Hale in urging the US to create a secure site for the IOM in Baghdad. The State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) informed the team that IOM staffing is under the supervision of

the UN. Noting that IOM does have one international and one Iraqi national assigned in Baghdad, it said the US government is willing to assist in expanding its presence.

A Residency Tax is charged to those refugees who register with the government. It amounts to about \$2.10/person per day. William Warda noted that a request to reduce this amount was made previously and the amount was reduced. The teams asked the ministry to reduce the tax once again because of the terrible burden that it placed on the families of displaced refugees. The ministry said that it would consider it, but did not commit nor offer a reduced number. The ministry said that its policy toward expired residency was leniency.

The ministry believed that there was a lack of communication between the US embassy in Baghdad and the Jordanian government. They want to issue visas in Iraq but there is no Jordanian embassy in Baghdad for security reasons. The Ministry wanted the US to assist it by finding a site and providing security.

In an effort to resolve any issues of a logistical nature with the team, Mr. Al Fayez appointed Mr. Karim Naber to work with the team as it developed its findings so that a channel of communication could remain open. The team raised the issue of establishing, in cooperation with UNHCR, a provisional legal status for displaced residents from Iraq. The proposal is an example of the kind of effort that could generate on going discussions with the ministry.

The team raised questions concerning the closing of some Christian schools. The ministry reported that it never has closed Christian schools. When pressed further it was revealed that some schools had been operating unofficially and without permit and that these schools had been closed. The team shared reports concerning a number of students (78 of 300) enrolled in the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary of mixed nationality that had been deported. The ministry denied that sweeps of this nature had targeted Christian students.

General Intelligence Department (GID)

The team met with Ihasan Saladin Kasser, Director of the department's Foreign Affairs File, Drs. Motyen and Yousef, and Lt. Col. Ziad Botrous, Director of the File of Iraq.

The team raised the issue of sweeps of refugees and, in particular, the deportation of the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS). The team had information that an additional 35-40 students, some Iraqis, were banned. The department officials told us that no students were deported for attending any school unless they were illegal residents. People were deported because they violated residency and were working without work permits. Foreigners are issued two-week visas. Upon expiration, they must go to a police station to obtain three-month residency permit to work in Jordan legally. The officials revealed that only 137,000 have residency permits and that the government is turning a blind eye to no less than 400,000 additional refugees.

The department officials argued that Christians are not targeted whether from Iraq or anywhere else. However, conversion is the red-line that cannot be crossed because it creates security problems. The Jordanian government does not permit evangelizing.

The officials argued that there is no distinction. The team reminded them that even though the law does not make distinction, application of the law can discriminate. The team noted that perception is very powerful and that many refugees perceive that they are being targeted. It was suggested that the department address this concern and conduct real outreach to build confidence.

The department requested that the team raise the issue of having the US ambassador raise the issue with the Department of Defense concerning security for a Jordanian embassy in Baghdad. Ziad Botrous was also appointed to liaise with the team on problems that the Iraqi displaced encounter. Issa Mataalka will represent the team in this regard for the future.

The team raised the issue of sending back Iraqis looking for entrance Jordan from borders or airports after bearing the risky and load of way to the borders, by Jordanian authorities, so the team asked to make facilities to all Iraqi or do some exception to humanitarian cases or to the Christian whom not create any internal security fear for Jordan. The department officials argued that they cannot do any exception and the solution of this problems is by obtaining a Visa by some procedure and mechanism which are now under study, and it may complemented in the next few months.

Ministry of Planning

The mission met with Nasser Shraideh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Planning, Feda Faleh Gharaibeh, Director, Coordination Office for the Reconstruction of Iraq, and Marion Bataineh, Division head for Bilateral Relations with the US, Canada, and South America. The ministry has conducted a study of 6,000 refugees. It was found that 12% of those surveyed were Christian. The UNHCR has been using the number of 750,000 refugees in Jordan. He indicated that the report conducted by the Norwegian Research Institute FAFO was due soon. (Since this report was first written the FAFO has completed their analysis indicating that the number is between 450,000 and 500,000. This would mean that the Christian, Sabean, and Yedizis. Refugee population is between 90,000 and 100,000. Christians alone are between 67,500 and 75,000. (<http://www.faf.no/ais/middeast/jordan/IJ.pdf>)

The ministry made it clear that they had no intention of closing the borders. Priorities established by the ministry include education and health. In regards to education, the number of Iraqi school age children enrolled in public schools has increased from 15,000 to 24,000 this year. However, the goal was stated as 100,000 students or 15% of all enrolled students in Jordan. The US has contributed \$10 million and UNHCR, \$10 million to facilitate the increased number of students. (The State Department notes that USAID-Jordan was awarded \$10.3 million in 2007ESF funds to support education, water and health projects in areas affected by high concentrations of Iraqi refugees. The Department of State contributed \$39million to the UNHCR/UNICEF education program appeal.)

They do not want to create parallel structures of Jordanian and Iraqi students. Therefore, they will not open schools just for Iraqis or for Christians. Church leaders, prior to this meeting, told the team that certificates to operate church schools for Iraqi children were being refused and, if previously issued, were withdrawn. He said this was done after a decree from the King that Iraqi children could be educated in Jordanian schools despite their illegal status. The government does not want a "parallel" education system that treated the Iraqi children differently from others. (The

Chaldean and other churches want to educate the Iraqi children separately for heritage reasons and had complained to us of canceled or refused permits.) Secretary General Shraider said the churches could obtain permits if the premise was to educate both Iraqi and Jordanian children. He stated that there were 24,000 Iraqi children in the schools and the system was bracing for a total of 100,000 at a cost of \$1 billion per year.

When specifically ask if the Iraqi Christian children would be required to attend Islamic courses in the schools, he said no. He reiterated the tolerance for minority religions in Jordan and pointed out, as did the Minister of Planning, that while Christians are just 2% of the population, they have 12% of the seats in parliament. The Secretary General admitted that, even though it was the policy of the Jordanian government not to compel Christian students to attend Islamic instruction or observe Muslim holidays, it may be the case that individual teachers or principals were acting individually to do so. Conversations with Chaldean children at one of the church centers indicated that most of the children had been compelled to attend Islamic classes in the public schools that they were attending.

The International Committee of the Red Cross

The mission met with Kim Gordon-Bates, Deputy Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Raja'a Alawi, Cooperation Officer. The first focus of the ICRC is the Internally Displace Persons within Iraq. Even though Jordan has not signed the 1951 Convention, Jordan is still bound by international law in regards to the treatment of refugees. Overall, the Red Cross will donate 140 Million Swiss francs for expenditure inside Iraq. The ICRC will donate 10 million Swiss francs inside Jordan. In Jordan, the Red Cross is focused on the protection of prisoners, namely those imprisoned because they do not have legal residency. There is no clear figure of those arrested for the lack of legal status. Unfortunately, most Iraqi refugees do not have legal status in Jordan. As of October 16, 2007 the Red Cross had identified 50 individuals presently in detention for not having residency or work permits.

The Red Cross could not identify projects to address the unmet needs of Iraqi refugees at this time. Their goal is to develop small pilot projects to introduce micro-industries. They also want to organize projects on healthcare and education. The State Department has reported that they have provided more than \$4.5 million to NGOs and \$2.7 million to The International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent to expand health services for Iraqi refugees in the region.

The unmet needs that were identified included providing legal assistance for those arrested and facing arbitrary deportation, providing access to those who are incarcerated and advocacy for refugee rights, medication for chronically ill patients (heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer), financial and clothing assistance. (See Appendix I – Red Cross Assessment of Assistance and Gaps)

The Embassy of the United States in Jordan

The team met at the US Embassy with Ambassador David Hale, Phillip French, Affairs Officer, Christopher S. Hattayer, Political Section, Peter Melnak, Representative for USAID in Jordan, and Rema Bitter, US Consulate.

As the team questioned Ambassador Hale and other members of his staff, it became apparent that the Embassy had no outreach program to the refugees. No church had ever been contacted to learn about conditions and all refugees were referred to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees without any direct interview. (Since the mission met with the Embassy, it must be noted that Embassy staff has met for the first time with two centers assisting Christian refugees from Iraq. Ambassador Hale also met with the Chaldean Patriarchal Vicar at The Chaldean center recently. We learned that it is State Department policy, in regards to the refugees, to be vetted by the UNHCR regardless of their individual circumstances. One employee present made it clear, when asked, that "it is not my job to go to churches." There was no ombudsman to the refugee community and the lack of knowledge of conditions was rather appalling. The embassy relied entirely on the UNHCR for its refugee information which we found odd considering that this particular embassy is the central hub for intelligence gathering in the Middle East. Of all the agencies the mission dealt with in two nations, the embassy was the most callous in referring to the refugees and the least knowledgeable of the facts on the ground other than broad numbers that had been furnished to it by other agencies.

When Iraqis flee to Jordan, Jordan is considered the Country of Asylum. The US relationship to the refugees is by 1) UNHCR Referral, 2) Direct Referral through the Direct Access Program for former employees of the US in Iraq. There is a need for an NGO ombudsman to conduct outreach to the centers assisting Iraqi refugees. The team was not told by the ambassador or the embassy staff that there was one member of the staff, a Jordanian American Christian, who was assigned to the Iraqi refugees. The team learned of this during a follow-up meeting with the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration, Ellen Sauerbrey and Ambassador James Foley, Assistant for Iraqi Refugees. None of the Christian centers assisting refugees said that they had contact with this person, in fact, were very specific in noting that no one from the US embassy had visited them. Subsequently, PRM in formal comments in response to the provisional report noted that actually the US Embassy in Amman has two Refugee Coordinators, one for Admissions and one for Assistance, and a Refugee Assistant focused primarily on Iraqi refugees who routinely briefs the Ambassador, embassy staff, PRM, and visitors.

The team also raised the possibility that USAID partner with private schools to help get licensing. The team questioned, in the face of such a large moral obligation to the victims of the war in Iraq, that the State Department might consider suspending its rules of having the UNHCR as the primary processor of resettlement cases to the US and have this responsibility assumed by the US Embassy itself, or at least to broaden its scope of involvement in order to expedite the process. (See Appendix II) (http://www.kentimmerman.com/news/2007_1022_usembassy.html
http://www.kentimmerman.com/news/2007_1019_translator.html)

Biblical Institute for Theological Preparation in Jordan

The Rev. Ghassan N. Haddad, Director of the Biblical Institute and the New Testament Church in Amman, organized a meeting of Christian refugees and one Mandaean refugee with the team. Many of those present had worked directly with the US government in Iraq as translators. They indicated that they encountered obstacles because of bias against Christians by intake staff of the UNHCR and the inability to speak to anyone at the US embassy regarding programs available for resettling former US employees in Iraq or those with immediate family in the US. Iraqis who worked for the USG as interpreters/translators may be eligible for Special Immigrant Visas or they may be eligible for resettlement consideration under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program by initiating a case directly with the U.S. Overseas Processing Entity in Amman, IOM.

The mission also discussed accusations that the Jordanian government had expelled a large number of mixed-nationality, including Iraqi students of the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary. It was confirmed that indeed the students had been deported.

Patriarchal Vicar of the Catholic Chaldean Church in Jordan

The Patriarchal Vicar of the Chaldean Church, the Rev. Raymond Moussalli, arranged a meeting with refugees at the Chaldean Center. The team had an opportunity to speak with a number of refugees and at least 30 school age children. The Chaldean Catholic Vicariate takes care of 10,000 Chaldean Refugees from Iraq. The center focuses on education, health, psychological support for trauma victims and pastoral work. Volunteers distribute provisional food supplies for approximately 1,000 families every two months. Each box of food contains sugar, rice, olive oil, and other staples. Medicines are needed, especially for high blood pressure patients and those needing blood thinner.

Fr. Mousalli indicated that there was no coordination of humanitarian groups assisting refugees from Iraq. There is an UNHCR inter-agency meeting held each month, but there is not much opportunity for real exchange of concerns or solutions. In fact, when Christian organizations have raised concerns, they have been told by the UNHCR representative that they should not complain. Their impression is that the UNHCR really does not want to hear from them. The UNHCR does not maintain a refugee advocate to assist those who have been arrested for residency problems. The Center reported that people who have been detained can not have personal visits. The priests are not allowed access to the prisoners.

The Vicariate also said that the US Embassy staff has not been in contact with them or their refugees. The embassy is disengaged and ineffectual in regards to outreach to the refugee community and those assisting them.

The team interviewed at least 30 refugees. Many reported that they had applied for asylum resettlement one year ago, and many as far back as three years ago, with no adjudication being made by UNHCR. Most, such as Nadia Kamil Bahnem whose late husband was the General-Secretary of the Syriac Independent Movement and had been assassinated for speaking out for self-determination for minorities in the Nineveh Plain, had well documented fear of persecution. All of those with whom we spoke had immediate family members killed by Islamic extremists. Most had been threatened themselves, which precipitated their flight.

The reports of the attacks were appalling. Samir Dunha Audish lost two daughters in an attack when they returning from the Agricultural College near the Baghdad Airport. The autopsy report indicated that, between the two girls, they had been shot 70 times. One man's son was assassinated in front of his own home by such a severe small arms attack that his body was severed into several pieces.

Most of these refugees have family members in the US and the majority of these had family members who were either parents or children. No one at UNHCR had told them of the option to apply under the US family reunification program (Form I-130 available at www.uscis.gov). And, no one was able contact any member of the US embassy, being directed by Jordanian guards to go to UNHCR. These Iraqis could be eligible for consideration by the US Refugee Admissions Program through the P-2 designation for beneficiaries of approved I-130 petitions or as P-3s if their relatives entered the U.S. as refugees or asylees. The PRM has assured the team that they will inform the UNHCR of will ensure that UNHCR is fully informed of the eligibility of this group.

The Syrian Orthodox Church

Fr. Ammanuel Istifan Issa Al Bana operates a center for Iraqi Christian refugees through his church in the Ashrafia section of Amman. He is responsible for over 500 refugee families and operates a provisional assistance program for those who are newly arrived in Jordan. The team met with over 50 individuals to discuss their circumstances and their experience with the Asylum Resettlement process.

Again, the trauma faced by these refugees was tremendous. One woman, Vivian, lost four members of her family when her house was hit by rocket fire, including her fiancée. The day of the attack was her wedding day. She suffered disfiguring injuries but survived. Bohnan Tawfea Tuma, who had worked for a US contractor, was kidnapped and tortured. He had been hung by wire by his legs a year ago. The UNHCR refused to receive his documentation until the second attempt to file an application. In one case, the UNHCR instructed a refugee to apply for a visitor's visa at the US Embassy when actually his family in the US could have applied under family reunification. One woman's husband was kidnapped and the three kidnappers came back to her home, threatening to rape her young daughter, then raped her repeatedly. She has never heard from her husband again. Another man's daughter was nearly kidnapped after months of threats and abuse, targeted by neighbors because he was a Christian.

Manara Ministries and Messengers of Peace Association

The team met with Isam Ghattas, President of Manara Ministries and Fr. Khalil Jaar, director of the regional office for the Messengers of Peace Association and pastor of St Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church, to discuss their work with the refugees. Fr. Jaar had organized an assessment of the Christian refugees in and around Amman, Jordan in cooperation with two NGOs between March and April 2007. Those interviewed included clergy working with refugees, senior members of NGOs and staff, doctors at clinic specifically used by Iraqi refugees, teachers attending informal schools and their teachers, and a representative of a cross section of Christian refugees of various ages and gender. The number one difficulty identified by the assessment was the lack of legal status for refugees and threat of deportation. The lack of legal status prevented them from working. It is estimated that 80% of refugees do not have residency or work permits. Most men are staying home because of fear of being detained and deported. Most refugees are working far below their qualifications and only in short-term opportunities. The highest expenses were for rent, but many struggled to pay for water, electricity and medical costs. The majority of the refugees fled to Jordan with few or no assets (Only 5% of Iraqis left with assets that could be used to live on in Jordan.)

Health care was identified by Iraqi refugees as highly insufficient. Their illegal status prevents them from accessing the public health system of Jordan. There are some health clinics assisting refugees due to the refugees' limited access to the health system. The prevailing illnesses reported by these clinics are related to malnutrition, showing signs of serious nutritional deficiencies. Among adults, heart disease, arthritis and diabetes are prevalent. Many children are suffering from post traumatic conditions. A large number of children had been orphaned and were being cared for by other families. All the refugees interviewed have decrease by half the number of meals per day. Families are economizing on food by decreasing the number, quality and diversity of meals. Families consider essential food items to rice and bread. The families are must purchase bottled water because they consider tap water is considered undrinkable.

Fr. Jaar indicated that the Church is not doing what it should be doing. Church superiors are not engaged very deeply in the issue. There is a real need to engage the Church in the West to push the bishops in Jordan to become more active in providing assistance to the refugees.

Manara Ministries works with 75 volunteers that have organized a six month project, providing 1,600 families with bi-monthly distribution of provisional food packages that include staples such as rice, bread, olive oil, and some canned goods. The ministry does not receive funding from UNHCR because of the requirement to assist Muslims as well as Christians. The focus is upon Christians. This is a condition of the UN in order to enter into an agreement for funding refugee projects. The team asked whether this is a condition that is asked to be agreed to by Muslim NGOs before receiving funding. The ministry was told by the UN representatives that they could not put conditions on Muslim organizations. Both NGOs felt that there was a good deal of discrimination by UNHCR against Christians. Some UNHCR staff told several NGOs representatives that they have felt negative repercussions from superiors for showing too much attention for Christian refugees. Manara Ministries identifies only with humanitarian issues and is not involved in human rights advocacy.

Caritas

The team met with George Akl, Caritas Jordan Project Director, and Gaby Daw, Project Officer, to discuss the programs that they are administering for UNHCR. Last year the organization assisted 3,000 persons and, this year, 5,200 refugees. The UNHCR distributes funds to The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) who then distributes to Caritas, its primary implementing partner. The level of its assistance is approximately 1,000 Jordanian Dinar/year with 50 JD/person for emergency cases. Caritas told the team that 80% of the funds are distributed to Muslims and 20 % to Christians. It was estimated that their budget needs for the year will be 5.2 million JD, but they hope to receive 3 million JD. A large portion of expenses are devoted to medical assistance project.

UNHCR Representative, Peter Janssen – Senior Durable Solutions Officer

Peter Janssen, the Senior Durable Solutions Officer for UNHCR, explained to the team that the UNHCR has three goals: reparation, local integration, and resettlement. Iraqi refugees constitute the largest urban refugee problem in the world (Not assigned to refugee camps). It is estimated that only 50,000 Iraqis have registered with UNHCR as of this date. UNHCR has referred 4,700 refugees to the US for resettlement and 1,800 others to other countries.

Being a member of an ethnic or religious minority is a category taken into considered, but just one of many. The team was told that the majority of staff of the Jordanian UNHCR office are Muslim, but there were Christian intake officers. The staff has grown from 30 to 100 this past year and training has not been sufficient. There are three flows of intake process: Lawyers' Inquiry, No claim for Resettlement, and Resettlement Referral.

The team raised concerns of many Christian refugees that they were being discriminated against, files lost or documentation to substantiate claim not collected. This was denied. When specific names of individuals were raised as implicated by a number of refugees, the suggestion was repudiated as being absolutely unfounded and ludicrous. However, the representative did admit that earlier inquiries concerning the individuals named had been conducted. The representative denied that there was a culture of bias in the office, yet said that he believed that the Christians were more well organized, had more Western NGO support and were living better

than Muslim refugees. Since one of the criteria considered for referral is present condition of the refugees, this attitude reveals a serious disadvantage to Christian refugees. Discussion about this issue tended to substantiate the perception that a bias against Christians did exist and was adversely working against their claims for resettlement.

It must be noted that following our meeting with the embassy, Ambassador Hale made an inquiry to UNHCR who reported that while 15% of UNHCR registrants are Christian, Christians compose 30% of the referrals for resettlement made by UNHCR to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Considering that the total Christian population of Iraq is between 2-4%, the statistics reveal that there is a disproportionate number of Christians who have fled Iraq compared to their total population. Even though the State Department has used the 30% referral rate among Christians as evidence that discrimination does not exist, it has not taken into account that these referrals represent the clearing of early cases at a time when the registration rate of Christian refugees with UNHCR in the region was much higher than the actual number of Iraqi Christians in asylum counties at present. For example, in 2005 Christians registering with UNHCR in Syria was nearly 40%. Again, the team is reporting the observations of Christian refugees and the centers that it met with in Jordan. The team has promised to provide the names of 8 -10 refugees who have reported their difficulties so that the US Embassy can review the process with UNHCR.

Additional Meeting with Refugees

The team met with thirty Christian refugees at the home of Telkaif Wadhah Gewargis Dallo, the former Mayor of Telkaif, who fled Iraq after receiving numerous death threats (two failed assassinated attempts). Again, the level of violence suffered by this group was severe. In listening to their cases, the issues involving the non-engagement of the US Embassy, perceived discrimination by UNHCR, and lack of knowledge about options available for resettlement through US Direct Access or Family Reunification was high.

LEBANON

The team met with US Ambassador Jeffery Feltman, William Grant, Minister Counselor, Mohammed Motiwala, Consular Officer responsible for the Iraqi refugee portfolio at the home of Roger and Alice Edde in Byblos. In comparison to the discussions with the embassy in Jordan, those in Lebanon were refreshingly constructive. The ambassador and his staff were interested in the refugees' condition and expressed a desire to be more engaged in assisting them. They expressed openness to ways in becoming more effective in facilitating the process for resettlement. However, we learned that the first time that a member of the embassy staff had met with the Chaldean bishop, Michel Kassarji, was earlier that same day when a member of the political section had visited a special exhibition about the refugees. The Chaldean Center was convinced that the visit had occurred because we were scheduled to meet with the embassy.

As in Jordan, the UNHCR is responsible for the referral process of refugees to the US for resettlement. Again, there was no formal outreach to the NGO community assisting refugees in Lebanon. There were no instructional pamphlets available to the refugee community outlining options and procedures. And, there was no ombudsman to assist refugees with problems arising in the Lebanese government.

Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Sfeir

The team met with Cardinal Sfeir, patriarch of the Maronite Church and the principle leader of the Christian community in Lebanon. Cardinal Sfeir expressed interest in knowing more about the refugee problem and was open to supporting Iraqi Christians in Lebanon. There was not a formal program of assistance or formal liaison with the Iraqi refugee community. The team also met with Bishop Masloon, Maronite bishop of Europe.

UNHCR

Stephanie Jaquemet, Regional Representative for UNHCR, has been head of the office in Lebanon for only a few months. However, reports from the refugee community and NGOs assisting them, indicate that he is quickly turning around the office to be a more effective advocate of the needs of the refugee community. The team found that he was sensitive to the concerns for the Christian refugees. He was well aware of problems in the office, perceived by the refugees as bias or discrimination. He said that their best estimates are that there are between 25,000 – 50,000 Iraqi refugees in Lebanon. Of that number approximately 20% were Christian (60%-70% Chaldean Catholic). The majority of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon are Shiite. They are primarily in areas controlled by Hezbollah. UNHCR has had less success registering this group because of the availability of social services and security by Hezbollah.

It was reported that deportation is not as much of a problem as arbitrary arrest and detention for violation of residency. Through UNHCR intervention, 20% of such detainees were released after several months. Arrests by the Lebanese government have increased during the past four months (tripled). This is believed to be the result of the response to the Fatah al-Islam uprising which has precipitated more check-points and sweeps in general. It is estimated that there are 500 persons in detention. At least 200 persons are in prolonged detention. The Lebanese government recognizes that these detentions are a growing problem and is willing to dialogue with UNHCR about it. Presently, the UNHCR is negotiating with the government to be contacted by Lebanese security when those registered for the asylum program of UNHCR are arrested, so that they can be released. The State Department has reported that Ambassador Feltman has also requested a meeting with the Lebanese government to discuss the detention of Iraqis who are not in status.

It was the opinion of the director that the Lebanese are tough on illegal parents, but liberal on refugee children. Sending children to school is not a problem except financially for refugee families. UNHCR has assisted 1,800 children.

UNHCR notes that between 10% - 20% of those who apply are truly vulnerable and, of this number, it can only resettle approximately 1% - 2%. In Lebanon it has referred 450 individuals to the Department of Homeland Security who has rejected 32% of these cases. The reality is that most refugees who apply are not going to be accepted. UNHCR is hopeful that Patriarch Sfeir will play a greater role in coming to the assistance of the Iraqi refugees.

Catholic Relief Services and Caritas

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) works with Caritas for the distribution of funds from international agencies. The team met with Melinda Burrell, Country Representative for CRS, and Najla Chahda, Director of Caritas Migrants Center and members of their staff. Caritas has 12

social workers who make daily visits to the prisons and inform UNHCR of new refugee detainees. It was their opinion that UNHCR is not reacting quickly enough, but that it has improved since Stephane Jaquemet has become the director. As of October 2007, 147 Iraqis had been referred to UNHCR for action and 129 from retention centers.

Caritas has made requests to the Prime Minister for consideration of a policy not to arrest refugee without legal status, but he has not responded. The government grants work and residency permits if the refugee can find an employer sponsor who will post \$1,000 bond and \$250 for each member of the refugee's family. The window of opportunity for refugees to apply for this residency is only about three – six months of the year. Caritas has requested a larger period for registration. This is a process of regularization, but the high cost of bond discourages employers from sponsorship. It is renewable once a year. Caritas wants to have the policy with a more open registration time frame. Work permits are provided through the Minister of Labor and Residency by Minister of Interior. Caritas has been able to assist about 270 families with the funds for regularizing their status.

Caritas program activity in Lebanon is more developed than in Jordan. It has three priority areas, health care, humanitarian, and legal assistance. It indicated that having more engagement by the US Embassy would help resolve many issues with the Lebanese government.

Chaldean Catholic Church of Beirut

The team met twice with Bishop Michel Kassarji, the Chaldean bishop of Lebanon, Said Akhrass, Chief of Chaldean Youth League, General Michel Kasdano, member of Chaldean High Council, Father Joseph Malkoon and Antoine Makim, Chief of Chaldean High Council. The church is serving 6,000 Refugees, approximately 95% are Chaldean. Most of the refugees are centered in the Sadel Bouchrieh area of Beirut. They have received \$160,000 from the UNHCR for all Iraqi refugees to be used for school scholarships (75% to Christians and 25% to Muslims). Refugee children must attend private schools because of their parents' illegal status. Tuition costs run between \$400 - \$500/student/year. The church also took care of the needs of 5 children who were raised by other families because both parents were held in prolonged detention for over 6 months. The bishop indicated the importance of providing provisional residency and for a working permit for 3 – 6 months that is renewable. Political insecurity continues to be an obstacle to policies by the government to provide for provisional residency, work permits and visas.

The center does distribute food assistance to families. Last year 6,000 boxes were distributed to Christians and Muslims. The staff indicated that Caritas gives more assistance to Muslims than to Christians. Twenty-five per cent of students in Christian schools are Muslim and this ratio is increasing. The government is not giving any more licenses; however, the Bishop has obtained a building permit for a Chaldean village to be constructed. It also would like to license a special Chaldean School for the refugee children. This is related to a desire of the Chaldean community that resettlement outside of the region would be detrimental to the future of Christians in the Middle East. They want to encourage 80% of the refugees to settle permanently in Lebanon to strengthen the Christian presence in Lebanon and ensure that the country remains a model of Christian-Muslim coexistence. Politically symbolic was the elevation of the Chaldean Patriarch Emanuel III Delly in Iraq to Cardinal by Pope Benedict during the time that the team was in Beirut. Unfortunately, we were not able to arrange a meeting because the Cardinal could not extend his schedule in Beirut.

The question was raised about how many Christians are being served reciprocally by Muslim organizations such as the Red Crescent and Hezbollah. There was the expression of the need to establish a truly Catholic NGO supported by the Church and not secular organizations or the UN so that there is freedom to assist Christians first. The Assyrian Orthodox Bishop of Lebanon oversees a much smaller number of refugees. He indicated that the problems that face the Chaldean Christians are applicable to his community as well. The question of vulnerability as the result of irregular status and access to health care and education are primary concerns of his ministry also.

Refugees in Lebanon

Approximately 30% of those refugees that the team interviewed in Lebanon had worked for the Coalition. Nearly 60% had relatives in the US. The refugees had first fled to Syria, then to Lebanon. Again, the intensity of violence targeted against them because of their Christian religion was appalling. One family, whose husband served in the Iraq Army, was threatened by phone calls demanding that the family give one of their four daughters in marriage to a Muslim. Not long after the phone calls, their daughter, Viviane, 15, was kidnapped while returning from school. When the expected phone call came from the kidnappers, the mother asked how much they wanted in ransom. The response was, "We do not want money; we just want to break your heart." A week later their daughter's naked body was thrown onto the street near their home. She had been repeatedly raped, her body mutilated and face disfigured. Another man had been kidnapped for one week but released after his wife paid ransom of \$20,000. A stranger who had brought his car to be repaired, noticed pictures of Jesus and the Blessed Mother hanging inside of the mechanic's garage, generating the remark, "I see that you are a Christian, a Crusader." A day later he was shoved into the trunk of a BMW by four gunmen and driven away. He said that he was not physically tortured but that he had to listen to the recitation of the Quran 24 hours a day for seven days as part of an indoctrination process. He received a call 12 days later by the kidnappers, accusing him of contacting the Americans. They promised to kill him. He and his family left for Syria the next day. Another man lost his leg in a car bombing that killed his brother. Each of the families had suffered a significant loss and had fled threats and violence against them solely because they were Christians.

Meetings with Lebanese Christian Congress and the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce

The team met with members of the Lebanese Christian Congress and the American Lebanese Chamber of Commerce. Several businessmen were already engaged in sponsorship of Iraqi Christian refugees. The mission encouraged a broader obligation to assist the refugees and, in private conversations with many of the members, explored ways to bring this about.

Executive Summary, Findings and Recommendations

Twenty years ago the Iraqi Christian population was estimated to be 1.4 million. The [Department of State reported](#) there were almost 1 million in early 2003. U.N. sources claim the figure to be 700,000. Two years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, [it was estimated](#) that 40 percent of the refugees fleeing Iraq were Christian, deliberately targeted in Iraq. At least 25 percent of the Christian population has fled according to conservative estimates, with some arguing a figure closer to one-half. These figures do not reflect an even larger number of internally displaced persons.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that Iraq now has the third largest displaced population in the world. It is estimated that refugees in Syria and Jordan alone total 2.2 million persons. Approximately 500,000 are Iraqi refugee children, with a child malnutrition rate of 28%. The UNHCR has referred over 8,000 Iraqis for resettlement to the United States. During the last fiscal year 1,608 refugees were resettled in the US during the 2007 Fiscal Year which ended on September 30, 2007 according to the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. This is 400 short of the annual goal of 2,000 which was a reduction of the initial goal of 7,000. The State Department has set a 2008 fiscal year goal of admitting 12,000. They have blamed the slow pace on problems between the State Department and Homeland Security.

A fact finding team visited Amman, Jordan and Beirut, Lebanon between October 18 and October 24 to investigate the conditions of Iraqi Christians who have fled Iraq. Initially the mission planned to visit Damascus, Syria also. Unfortunately, the Syrian government withdrew the visas for the mission just prior to the team's departure.

The purpose of the mission was three-fold.

- 1) To interview Christian refugees who have fled Iraq, their advocates, humanitarian NGOs assisting refugees, and government officials to understand and document the conditions that Christian refugees are living under, how severe; the issues related to not receiving legal standing in the countries where they have fled; the and desired response to ameliorate any problems from the perspective of government ministers, NGOs and individual refugees.
- 2) To communicate to government officials in country the high importance that is focused on resolving this issue; expressing concerns for defending the basic human rights of Christian refugees; and expressing a willingness and commitment to be supportive of finding a just resolution to the refugee dilemma. The mission focused their concern for the poor living environments, social and medical services, restrictions on employment, and educational opportunities of refugees.
- 3) To communicate to the Christian refugees that they have advocates that will assist them at all levels, political and humanitarian. Identify the kinds of assistance that will aid new Christian refugees and support longstanding refugees. The team sought to identify potential partners in building a network for distribution of assistance.

The Fact-Finding Team consisted of the following: Governor David Beasley (SC 94-99), Chairman, Center for Global Strategies; Issa Matalka, Jordan Representative, Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights; William J. Murray, Chairman, Religious Freedom Coalition; Father

Keith R. Roderick, Washington Representative, Christian Solidarity International; Kenneth R. Timmerman, Bestselling author and internationally known journalist; and, William Warda, Journalist and chairman of the Hammorabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO)

The vast majority of Iraqi Christian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon are living in poverty and has suffered violence against them or their immediate family. Within this refugee population, exists an undetermined number of 'Extremely Vulnerable Persons' (EVPs). The source of income for the overwhelming majority of refugees is illicit temporary part-time work by them, their children, or contributions of family members abroad. We were told by a social worker posted in Syria that the poverty and unemployment are so great that many thousands of women have been forced into prostitution in order to support themselves and their families. Fear of being arrested and deported is an overriding pressure that plagues these families in both Jordan and Lebanon. Post-traumatic stress is common among all age groups that the team interviewed.

Interview of refugees and NGOs assisting them reveal a perceived culture of bias within the UNHCR offices in Jordan and, up until the recent change of administration, in the Lebanese UNHCR office. This is adamantly denied by Jordanian UNHCR representatives, who claim that a large number of those referred for resettlement are Christian. The office admits that Christians are a particularly vulnerable and targeted minority which is given consideration, but that there are other groups which are as vulnerable, persons who have survived violence or torture, women at risk, elderly and those with serious medical conditions. UNHCR argues that consideration is given to the entire situation of the applicant. There appears to be a belief that Christians in Jordan are more organized and have more resources assisting them through the NGO communities, and therefore better off than other groups. This false perception seems to work against Christians in the referral process. The fact that most of the Christian refugees interviewed were victims of violence or torture, many are women at risk, would argue for a higher priority for Christian asylum claims. It is too easy to deny allegations that files were lost, documentation refused, and the negative tenor of interviewers once it was discovered that the applicants were Christian. Minimizing the refugees' complaints by calling them baseless does not convince the team that the UNHCR office does not discriminate. Arguing that these concerns are merely the expression of refugees being caught in limbo is a callous observation.

The office in Jordan has experienced a rapid increase of staff from 30 to 100 during the past year. By the admission of administrators in the Jordanian office, there may be a need for more training. The staff is comprised of 30 international staff and 70 Jordanian nationals. It is revealing to note that Imran Riza, Representative of the UNHCR office in Amman, in referencing the countries of origin of staff, lists members who are Kosovar. Kosova has not been recognized by the international community as a separate country.

In Lebanon, the UNHCR office appears to be moving in positive directions. It has a much smaller population of refugees to work with, but it has initiated positive steps to negotiate on behalf of the refugees with the Lebanese government. It has also reflected openness to efforts to engage the NGO and refugee community providing more information on the process and procedures. Such efforts will build confidence and lead to a more positive relationship between the UNHCR and the refugee community.

The team questions why the US State Department has "outsourced" responsibility for refugee asylum adjudication outside of its jurisdiction to the UN. The team is well aware that UNHCR has been given the mandate for refugee determination. It is the understanding that the President of the United States has expressed his desire to see the expedited resettlement of

refugees from Iraq, especially those who have worked in support of Coalition forces. The Embassy in Jordan blames the UNHCR for the bottleneck in expediting resettlement referrals. Yet, the Department of Homeland Security's Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) has processed under one-half of the 11,000 Iraqis referred to the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) in the region. The Direct Access program to the USRAP, available to direct-hire employees or the U.S. Mission in Iraq and translators/Interpreters working for the US government or US government contractors, is designed to benefit refugees who have directly supported the US in Iraq and who would meet the definition of an EVP case. And yet, a large number of these individuals were directed to the UNHCR for the asylum resettlement program. Following the mission, the US Administration announced that it would begin accepting refugee applications directly from an estimated 100 US Embassy employees and their families, thus shortening the longer process through UNHCR. This fast track direct access excludes thousands who worked for private contractors and aide workers who will still have to work through the UNHCR process. The State Department notes that the US Embassy in Baghdad is referring Iraqis with a US government affiliation, including contractors, directly to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. It reports that embassy referrals are not limited to direct-hire embassy employees. Interpreters, most of whom are contractors, are also eligible for resettlement consideration by initiating a case directly with the IOM in Amman.

The team was pleased to learn in a follow-up consultation with Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration, Ellen Sauerbrey, that the State Department in December 2007 would be sending letters to sponsors who had applied for their family members who are refugees under the P2 immigrant visa process for family reunification that those family members would now be eligible to be interviewed directly in the country of asylum for refugee resettlement. The team also learned for the first time that an embassy staff member, a Jordanian American Christian, was assigned to oversee Iraqi refugees. The team was not told this by the ambassador or the embassy staff during its visit. The team learned of this during a follow-up meeting with the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration, Ellen Sauerbrey and Ambassador James Foley, Assistant for Iraqi Refugees. None of the Christian centers assisting refugees said that they had contact with this person, in fact, were very specific in noting that no one from the US embassy had visited them.

Most of the individuals that the team spoke to believed that the UNHCR was the only opportunity available to them. They were acting on the instructions provided to them by the Jordanian guards at the embassy who directed everyone to the UNHCR. The inability to speak to anyone at the US embassy was an obstacle in having their claims expedited. And, UNHCR staff's failure to direct these individuals into the appropriate program either through direct access of family reunification has exacerbated the resettlement for a large number of refugees in Jordan.

In discussing the refugee issue with the embassy staff and listening to the experience of refugees and the NGOs assisting them, it is clear that the embassy needs to be more engaged. The inaccessibility of consular staff has undermined confidence in US intentions and moral obligation to those who have supported the US in Iraq, often at their personal sacrifice or the sacrifice of members of their immediate family.

Regularization continues to be the most serious problem facing refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. In Jordan the lack of a provisional registration and work permits for refugees creates an environment of fear. The cost of the Residency Tax of 2.10/day/person for those who have

registered, even though it has been reduced once, is prohibitive for most families and discourages registration. In Lebanon, the government's registration program requiring sponsors to put bonds of \$1,000 and \$250/person is prohibitive and discourages potential employers from entering into sponsorship of refugees. Again, the result is fear of being arrested and deported. In Lebanon there is a growing problem of prolonged detention of refugees arrested for violating residency and work permit requirements.

Recommendations

1) All efforts should be made to resolve the Christian refugee problem in a way that encourages this population to remain in the region. The governments of Iraq and the US should facilitate anchoring the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac community in their ancestral region of Nineveh Plain. Establishing local administration as per Article 125 of the Constitution of Iraq and security governed by the civil leadership of these communities will be an important step forward in facilitating this goal. The United States administration and Congress should endorse such a proposal and assist in providing security and economic development.

2) The US government should urge the Iraqi government to focus more on the security status of Christian and other minorities. The Department of Defense should work with the Iraqi government to create and train local police units that are assigned to their home communities in the Nineveh Plain and in Christian neighborhoods of the larger cities.

3) The State Department should reconsider the role of the UNHCR as the vetting institution for Iraqi refugees. The US Embassy and its consular section should be the primary agent of the adjudication of asylum claims and Iraqi refugee resettlement. The war in Iraq and its refugees are the responsibility of the United States. The US had a moral obligation to attend to the vulnerable and innocent victims who are products of the conflict. It is a political decision to allow the UN to determine who is worthy for referral, to which programs and determining whether or not what activity in support of the US mission in Iraq qualifies the person as Extremely Vulnerable Persons (EVP) for the Direct Access program. This policy should be re-examined by the State Department and the appropriate Congressional committees with oversight of State Department operations.

4) The US embassies in Jordan and Lebanon should assign an ombudsman to liaise with the local governments concerning refugee issues. The ombudsman should be an active advocate on behalf of the refugees who temporarily reside in the country of first asylum.

5) The US embassies of Jordan and Lebanon need to be more engaged in the refugee problem and community. Perception of neglect by the US government and UNHCR is a major factor eroding the confidence of the refugees in the resettlement process. The Embassy would serve US interests better by engaging in a major program of outreach to the refugee community and to the NGOs that are assisting them. It would be quite helpful for the embassies to develop a template flyer or brochure outlining the process and criteria for resettlement programs, particularly for Extremely Vulnerable Persons (EVPs), to be made available to the Jordanian guards who have the first, and many times, only contact at the embassy with refugees. It would be helpful for embassy personnel to regularly work with the centers assisting the refugee community, especially the church centers that are usually the first contact for newly arrived Christian refugees in country. Additionally, the embassy should work with the White House Office on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives on ways to provide assistance to Church-based NGOs to support their humanitarian programs.

6) USAID should explore programs to provide tuition assistance for refugee children to attend private schools, as well as assisting with the funding for public schools in Jordan and Lebanon.

7) The US government should engage the government of Jordan to develop a provisional residency and work permit for refugees providing a sponsor is found. In lieu of requiring the residency tax, it may be more preferable to have a bond posted that will not be an undue burden on either a potential sponsor to provide or discourage individuals or employers from providing. When the minimum wage established by the Jordanian government is \$400/month, \$2.10/day/family member can be prohibitive. In Lebanon, it is suggested that the US government encourage the Lebanese government to lengthen the window of application for residency and work permits to the entire year. It is also recommended that the present bond of \$1,000 and \$250/family member is burdensome and discourages registration. Advocacy by the US government to reduce this amount would be extremely helpful.

8) US NGOs should be encouraged to partner with NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon to support their provisional humanitarian assistance to refugees. In addition to food and rent support, education and health care are the primary concerns. Funding of tuition assistance in both countries will do a great deal to encourage refugee children to be enrolled. The donation of clinics and medical supplies, including medicines, would be especially welcomed. The State Department has reported that it is funding nine separate NGO's education programs which support tuition assistance for Iraqi students.

9) Religious leaders in the US should take a more active role in support of Christians in Iraq and those who have fled to other countries for asylum. The Christian leaders of the churches in Jordan and Lebanon should encourage their clergy and laity to assist Iraqi Christian refugees by providing legal advocacy, humanitarian assistance, and sponsorship. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops should lead the way in establishing Catholic NGOs whose primary mission is directed to Christians in need and whose funding is independent of secular sources such as the UN and USAID.

10) Western governments who have made pledges for assisting the host countries of refugees should be pressured to follow through with the disbursement of funds to support the growing humanitarian problem.

Appendix

Appendix I – International Red Cross Committee Internal Assessment of Assistance and Gaps on Aiding Iraqi Refugees in Jordan (See PDF Attachment 1)



Red Cross
Assessment in Jordan

Appendix II – US Department of State Fact Sheet of Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Iraqis (See PDF Attachment 2)



State Department
Fact Sheet on Displac

Appendix III – Unedited notes by Kenneth Timmerman, Page 18 -26

Appendix IV – Assessment of Displaced Christians from Iraq conducted by the Messengers of Peace Organization

Appendix III

*****NAMES OF REFUGEES ARE CONFIDENTIAL*****

Refugees Stories –

Unedited notes by Kenneth R. Timmerman

Oct. 2007 – Erbil, Iraq – Amman, Jordan

Any reference to this material should read: “Unedited notes by Kenneth R. Timmerman”

Tuesday, Oct 16, 2007 – Erbil, Iraq

Pastor Youssef Matti is a 52-year old Assyrian geologist, originally from the Ninevah Plain area around Mosul. For many years he worked for the North Oil company under Saddam.

In 1992, he came to Erbil and became the 1st Evangelical minister in the region, working with the Servants Group from the U.S.

During Saddam’s time, regime thugs burned his bookshop. He was personally shot at. Then in 2000, Nichevan Barzani gave him an edict, saying that no one could arrest a Muslim who decided to become a Christian, as Matti had done.

During Saddam’s time, he traveled to the United States six times, getting visas from the US consulate in Istanbul. “They were always delivered on time,” he said. He would go to the U.S. to get aid for Christian communities in Iraq.

But after the liberation of Baghdad, he was told to get his visa in Amman and that he now needed a security clearance to travel to the United States . “Even with a letter of invitation from family members in the United States, they told me in Amman that I still needed a security clearance,”

He got a visa once, four months after his ticket and invitation had expired, in 2004. So now, when he wants to travel to the U.S., he gets his visa through Istanbul.

“The problems are specific to [the U.S. embassy in] Amman,” he said.

Today Matti is building schools in northern Iraq for displaced Christians. He has a school in Soleymaniya, one in Dohok, and another in Erbil. He accepts children when they turn four years old, and begins by teaching them English. As they progress in the schools, he sees the children come to Christ.

“The U.S. embassy in Amman is afraid Iraqis will go the United States and stay,” he says. “But I’ve been to the United States ten times. I have two daughters in the United States. One of them is studying medicine. I don’t want to stay there. I just want to visit.”

Youssef’s sister lives in the Daura neighborhood of Baghdad with her two daughters. Islamist militiamen came to her house just before midnight recently, and handed her a flyer ordering her to leave her house by morning. “They told her to leave everything behind, or else they would kill her. She called me at midnight, and asked me what she should do? I said, ‘Leave the house. Give everything to them. Get out with your life.’”

I asked Youssef Matti if he would like to see a Christian governate established in the Ninevah plain, as some have been proposing.) He was luke-warm to the idea. “What about families who come to Christ in Tikrit? Or in Erbil?” he said. “If you empty these areas of Christians, it’s like having food without salt.”

Instead, he believes that each governate should do something to protect the Christians in their midst.

Until now, he adds, Prime Minister al-Malaki has “done nothing” to protect Christians, although Iraqi president Jalal Talebani and foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari have both been supportive.

His preferred option is for each governate to have its own militia (police force), and each governor must tell them that the Christians are “not Americans, but Iraqi patriots.”

In pure numerical terms, far more Sunnis and Shias work with the Coalition forces than do Christians. “But Christians are seen as pro-American because of their religion,” he says.

“We have no guns, no militia. We sit, pray and worship – and they call us dangerous! Why?” Matti wonders.

He has met with U.S. generals and U.S. chaplains. They have been supportive, and said they stand by the Christian community. “But U.S. troops can’t leave their bases, so their presence doesn’t provide any practical support.” He warns against Christian emigration several times, and says that the Kurdish Regional Government has been supportive of the Christians.

“The best solution is to anchor Christians in their communities, rather than emigration,” he tells me several times.

Like many people who have stayed behind to work in Iraq despite the killings and the widespread insecurity, Youssef Matti was an early supporter of the liberation. But now, he is beginning to have second thoughts.

“During Saddam’s time, the regime killed people and buried them in mass graves. Today, the terrorists are killing people and throwing them in the street. “How is this different?” he wonders.

“Under Saddam, the threat came from Islamists in Iran. Today, the threat comes from Islamists in Iraq. This is better?”

Nevertheless, Pastor Matti is grateful to the U.S. chaplain who began helping him in 2004, when Matti went to him with plans to build a school for Christian children near Kirkuk. The Chaplain got a series of \$10,000 grants approved on the spot, and then wrote up a larger proposal and got Gen. Sanchez to approve a \$500,000 grant to build a school. "I tell my American friends, part of your tax money is in my school," he says.

Tuition money from students pays their overhead costs, but he could never have raised the capital to actually build the school buildings without the money from the U.S, and for this he is especially grateful of the U.S. support

Thursday, Oct. 18, 2007 – Amman

[Dinner with Pastor Ghassan Haddad, of the New Testament Church, and a group of Iraqi pastors]

Ibrahim N--, 30 , is a Syrian Orthodox translator, who shows us his folder of citation letters from three separate U.S. units in Iraq. Despite many visits to the U.S. embassy here in Amman since arriving in Jordan nine months ago, he has been unable to get an appointment with an embassy official.

The problem begins right at the gates. The Jordanian security guards tell Iraqis to go to UNHCR. When they arrive at the UNHCR office, the Jordanian employees there view them with suspicion and contempt.

"They treated me like a dog who had betrayed them as Arabs because I had worked for the Americans," Ibrahim says. "They treated me as if I were a spy. I told them I fled after I found my name had been posted on a target list in a mosque. They asked, what kind of mosque, Sunni, or Shia? When I said, Sunni, they gave me that look and spoke to me very harshly."

At one point, he saw a poster outside the U.S. embassy informing people who had worked for the Coalition of a priority resettlement program, so he went back to the UNHCR. "They told me, 'there are millions of people like you,'" and never allowed him to meet anyone at the US embassy.

He has now been in Amman for nine months, and has yet to meet an American from the embassy.

Ibrahim has an older sister who is a U.S. citizen. His mother has a green card. But because he is supporting another sister here in Amman, IOM has told him he has to continue applying through UNHCR. "They treat us like we are juxst beggars," he says.

[Note: I've told Ibrahim's story separately and with more detail [in Newsmax.](#)]

Romeo, a friend of Ibrahim's, had been an Iraqi soldier for 19 years. After the war, he signed up to work for Dyncorps as a local-hire guard. He was assigned to the Eagle Hotel, then the Baghdad hotel, and finally to the Novotel, as bombs ripped into each of his previous assignments.

"The terrorists would follow workers home to identify them," he said.

He has been in Jordan for two years now. He can not work. He has no legal status, no green card. "Nobody can go to the US embassy directly," he says. UNHCR told told him to fax or email his documents to the IOM, which is supposedly in charge of expediting cases of people who have worked for the Coalition.

He did so three months ago and hasn't heard back.

Other Iraqis at the dinner tell us they believe the UNHCR has deliberately destroyed documents they have given them, favoring Muslim asylum seekers over Christians..

Pastor Salam Bea Georges first applied for UNHCR refugee protection in 2005. Just today, he went back the UNHCR office in Amman. They told him they had lost his file.

His brother worked for the Coalition for two years. The Sunnis came to his house and said, 'You are a Christian, a *kaffir* [infidel]. You work for the Americans, so you are a traitor.' Terrified, the brother fled Iraq and found refuge in Sweden.

Dr. Jalal [last name withheld for security reasons] had been the head of the physics department at Basra University. He now runs a church in Amman that pastors to Iraqi refugees. His sister was kidnapped three months ago. "But because our family name appears Sunna, they didn't kill her outright, as they would have if they had known she was a Christian or a Shia. Instead, they asked for ransom, and we paid. \$50,000."

Dr. Jalal also provided documents to UNHCR three years ago in support of his application to go to the United States. He had been working for a US contractor on a project to enhance local governance in Basra, and gave the UNHCR letters from his employer and other certificates. He went back there recently and they told him that they had no trace of his file.

Since 2005, Pastor Fuad Maher Daoud of Baghdad has traveled to Amman five times to apply for a visa to visit the United States to attend a religious conference. Each time, he was refused. For each application, he was required to pay a \$100 visa application fee. (The visa fee may sound like a tangential issue to Americans, but to an Iraqi who earns \$200 to \$300 per month, and has to pay the equivalent of several months salary just to travel to Amman, the sum is significant).

Pastor Maher had been invited to the United States by Worldwide New Testament Baptist Missions in Kings Mountain, NC. For his fourth application, Danny Woodian came to Amman from North Carolina to support his application, but the US embassy wouldn't meet with them. (The embassy insisted on meeting Woodian separately).

Another pastor told us a similar story of being repeatedly turned down for a visitor's visa to attend a religious conference in the United States by U.S. embassy personnel in Amman. During one trip to the embassy, he and Pastor Maher were told again that they were "not qualified" for the visa by embassy personnel, because they were pastors. In front of them in the line, 14 Muslim women were given visitor's visas one after another. This caused Pastor Maher to remark that perhaps they should become Muslims if they wanted to go to the United States.

Pastor Haddad told us that he also had been turned down repeatedly by the U.S. embassy in Amman when he sought a visitor's visa to attend a religious conference in the United States. In his case, it took the personal intervention of Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, where the conference was being hosted, to get his visa approved.

Oct 19. 2007 – Amman

[Visit to the Chaldean patriarchy with Father Raymond Moussali]

Father Raymond has identified ten refugees willing to tell us their stories, and has asked them to meet with us one by one. All had worked for the U.S. embassy in Baghdad or for U.S. contractors in Iraq. All fled Iraq for their lives and continue to live in fear in Amman, where neither the UNHCR or the U.S. embassy will help them.

Nazarit Krikor, a 49-year old Armenian from Baghdad's Ghadir neighborhood, has been in Amman for three years and two months without work or legal residence. He lives off of

Father Raymond's charity. He and his family are afraid to go out into the streets because they could be arrested, even though he has a UNHCR refugee-status document.

On June 7, 2004, four terrorists gunned down his wife, two other women, and their driver in Saddoun square in Baghdad. His wife had been working as a translator for the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

"I went to the UNHCR here in Amman, but they wouldn't listen to my story," he told us. He has been waiting for over three years to get an appointment with a U.S. embassy officer. UNHCR has rejected him three times for resettlement in Australia.

Nahidah Kamel Bahnam, 52, and her three children have UNHCR refugee papers. Her husband was the general secretary of the Syriac Independent Gathering Movement in Karakosh, an activist group that lobbied for the establishment of a self-governing Christian area in the Nineveh Plain. Because he was involved in what his wife called a "humanitarian struggle," he never traveled with bodyguards.

One evening he gave an interview to a Kurdish television network, asking for a Christian police force to keep order in Assyrian/Chaldean areas. As he was driving home after the program, he was forced to swerve because of a fresh hole in the road. When he slowed his car to avoid the obstacle, terrorists came out of hiding and gunned him down. It was Nov. 22, 2006.

The Bahman's daughter was living in Southfield, Michigan when her father was killed, and came to Iraq for the funeral. The rest of the family fled to Jordan, hoping to join the daughter in the United States shortly thereafter. After she registered with the UNHCR in Amman, Mrs. Beahman was told that her case had been referred to IOM for resettlement. But since June 17, 2007, she has heard nothing.

Emad Albert Yousif, 53, fled Iraq after his son was brutally murdered on July 4, 2006. Islamist terrorists rammed his son's car as he was driving to work, firing more than 120 bullets into his body. The gunfire was so intense that it severed his limbs, Mr. Yousif said.

But the murder of his son was just the beginning. When the family went to the cemetery to bury the body, terrorists began following them. They lived in the Saydiyah Haj al-Shahab neighborhood of Baghdad.

Four days later, Islamist terrorists tried to murder Mr. Yousif's wife while she was out with another son. She worked in the Green zone in the inspector general's office of USAID. The militias then called Emad Youssef and told him to leave his house immediately or he and his family would be killed. "They told me to leave everything – leave my house, everything we owned," he said. "They gave us five hours to leave." When Emad and his wife and son arrived in Amman a few days later, all they had were the clothes on their backs.

His wife then applied at the US Embassy in Amman for resettlement. She showed them documents from her employment with USAID in Baghdad, and said she had a brother who lived in Detroit. At the embassy, she was told to go to UNHCR. Until now, they have heard nothing.

Zina George Banno, 46, fled Iraq during the final months of Saddam's regime, after two of her brothers were tortured by the Baath Party. Her aunt, Samira Elias Thomas Zara, managed to emigrate to Sacramento, CA, with help from the Chaldean Federation of Detroit. Until now, however, the UNHCR has refused to help Zina, who is single, even though her aunt, now a U.S. citizen, has sponsored her for immigration to the United States.

Samir Dunha Audish, 51, had two daughters who worked for a U.S. contractor. The pair were murdered on their way home from work near the Baghdad airport during a terrorist ambush on Aug. 18, 2004.

Mr. Audish's son, who also worked for the coalition, was supposed to have been in the car with his sisters, but had taken the day off by chance. When the son went to the morgue to

reclaim his sister's bodies, he was chased by insurgents who shot at his car. "He had to flee by running house to house," Audish said.

Audish fled Iraq on Oct. 17, 2005, after militiamen from the Shiite Mahdi army of Muqtada al-Sadr came to his home and ordered him to leave within hours or be killed. "I went four times to the U.S. embassy in Amman, but the guards in the reception area kicked me out," he said.

Oct. 19, 2007 – Amman

[Meeting with a group of refugees at the Syrian Orthodox Church]

Fehmey Sawa, a 47-year old carpenter, showed letters from Islamist groups in Baghdad warning that anyone who worked with the Americans would be killed.

Bahnam Tawfiq Tuma, 42, worked for ECC International in Baghdad through an Iraqi subcontractor as foreman on a construction project. He was kidnapped on Nov. 6, 2006 by gunmen wearing Ministry of Interior uniforms who burst into his company's headquarters in Baghdad. The gunmen threw him into a waiting car. After a ten minute drive, they switched cars and threw him into a trunk and drove for another hour, when they bundled him inside to a dark room.

For seven days, they hung him by his feet from the ceiling, beating him constantly. He still walks with a cane from the abuse. For all of that, he considers himself lucky.

He never saw the face of his kidnapers, who accused him of betraying Iraq by working for a US contractor. His family paid a \$15,000 ransom, at which point his kidnapers blind-folded him, drove him out to a deserted area near the Daura area south of Baghdad, and set him free.

He flew to Amman on Nov. 28, 2006, shortly after his release. When he went to the UNHCR, they refused to take copies of the documents he had showing his employment with ECC. He said he waited more than five months for the UNHCR office to get back in contact with him. (Indeed, the refugee certificate he showed us was only dated May 20, 2007).

Suad Mansour Odish, 51, came to Amman in late November 2005 with a twenty-four year old daughter who had worked for an American contractor in Baghdad.

On Nov. 15, 2005, Mrs. Odish received a phone call from a Muslim group, saying they had just kidnapped and murdered her 24-year old son. Their real target had been her daughter, they said. They took the son when they couldn't find her and killed him.

Despite registering with UNHCR in Amman, Mrs. Odish has never been referred to the United States embassy for an interview.

She believes the problem was the Muslim case workers at the UNHCR, who told her they had no interest in examining the documents she tried to show them.

Jihan George Abdulahad, 37, came to Amman with her four young children, one of whom had been badly burned in a car accident and needed urgent medical care.

She had relatives in the U.S. and should have been a candidate for immigration to the United States under family reunification procedures, but no one at the UN office ever told her that.

When Mrs. Abdulahad went to the UNHCR office in Amman, she was processed by a female Shiite intake officer from Lebanon, who was wearing Islamic head covering.

"Her name was Hannan Hamdan. The first question she asked me was, what is your religion," Mrs. Abdulahad said. "When I said I was a Christian, she wouldn't even look at any of my documents. She said she would call me later to set up an appointment."

Five months went by, and the UNHCR never called, so Mrs. Abdulhahad went back to their offices in Amman and asked to the case worker again.

“Hannan refused to talk to me,” she said. “But I saw Muslims get approval to relocate to the United States on the first day.”

We asked for a show of hands among the initial group of 20 refugees at this meeting to see how many had experienced problems with Muslim intake officers at the UNHCR. All twenty immediately raised their hands.

Ayad Haweel, 29, worked as a translator and cook at the US embassy in Baghdad from 2003 until 2006. “The Islamists gave me 48 hours to leave Baghdad, or else they said they would kill my two-year old daughter,” he said.

Haweek showed us a certificate signed by an embassy official attesting that he had worked on contract at the embassy since the summer of 2004. He came to Amman on Sept 26, 2006. After registering with UNHCR, he was referred to IOM in June 2007, and met with DHS “circuit-riders” shortly afterwards, but is still waiting for their response.

Amin Starfan Esho, 45, owned a CD store in Baghdad that was burned to the ground by Islamists. They told him they would kill him and his wife if they didn’t leave.

Oct 20, 2007 – Amman

[Dinner at the home of Wadah George Dallo with a group of Iraqi refugees]

[Note: I reported the story of Wadah George Dallo in Newsmax on Oct. 22, 2007]:

Wadah George Dallo, 36, an Assyrian Christian, was installed as mayor of Tall Kayf by U.S. forces shortly after the liberation of Iraq. Tall Kayf is a Christian city in the Nineveh plain north of Baghdad.

Mayor Dallo worked so effectively at reorganizing the local government in his area that he was given several letters of commendation from Taskforce Battle Force of the 101st Airborne Division, then commanded Lt. Gen. David Petraeus.

After two assassination attempts in 2004, Mr. Dallo fled to Amman with his family.

“At first, I was afraid to say I had worked for the coalition,” he said. But in February 2006, he applied for asylum with UNHCR.

One letter he gave to the UNHCR commended him for “meritorious service to the soldiers of Task force Battle Force during operation Iraqi Freedom.” Another called him “a true and trusted friend of the coalition forces in Iraq.”

Despite three return visits to the UN office to inquire about his case, Mayor Dallo never received any indication that it was being reviewed.

After President Bush announced that Iraqis who had worked for the Coalition would receive “direct access” to U.S. immigration officers, Mayor Dallo learned that an American team was visiting the International Office of Migration (IOM) in Amman to conduct interviews.

Mayor Dallo then went directly to the IOM office, but they told him he had to go back to the UNHCR for a referral. “They said that the UNHCR had to send my file over, but they never did,” he said.

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Alyxin Yako Yaldo, 56, worked for a US contractor in Iraq. Her husband was kidnapped and tortured, but when the kidnapers phoned with their demands, they told her they really had wanted to get her.

Her mother is a US citizen who lives in Detroit. They filed for family reunification five years ago with US CIS, but have never heard back.

William Danial Shleman, 39, used to live in Daura, just south of Baghdad. He came to Jordan on Jan. 3, 2005, with his wife and three sons, after receiving multiple death threats from Islamist groups. He first went to the UNHCR in Amman on March 8, 2005, but has never heard back from them. He and other refugees told us that they believe it is because they are Christians.

Appendix IV

Assessment of Displaced Christians from Iraq conducted by the Messengers of Peace Organization

Summary of participatory assessment on education with groups

CS Unit conducted participatory assessment on education in October, coordinated by Messengers of Peace . We had 10 groups of girls, boys, women and men. Following is the key findings from the group discussions with female groups.

Introduction

The main objective of the group discussions was to find out more about tendencies among Iraqi children related to Education. We wanted to know more about the reasons for children not attending school. Among those attending, we wanted to know where they were registered, how they found it and how they manage to cover the fees.

In general the discussions we conducted showed that the majority of the Iraqi children do attend school. It was reported that some children were not enrolled at schools, but the reasons given for that were not unison. Before the agreement with UNHCR and the Government was in place they all claimed to have difficulties enrolling in Public Schools. As a result of that many of them were enrolled in Private schools. All the groups agreed that after the agreement it was not a problem to register per se, but some of those who already had been out of school for a longer period faced difficulties registering, because they didn't meet the required level. The majority of the Iraqi children we met through the discussions were registered at private schools. Though they explained that by not being able to register at Public schools before the agreement with the Government, it was also mentioned that the quality at Public schools was poor and that Private school was reflecting their religious background. For those not attending school post the agreement with the

Government, it was said that it was their own choice not attending school, since the opportunity now was there. The majority of the children we met through the discussions that were not registered at schools gave Resettlement as the main reason for not attending. Since they were not intending to stay on in Jordan, they did not see reasons for going to school here. Though it was commented that Iraqis are discriminated and as a result of that Private schools were preferred it was not reported any discrimination by the children attending Public School, on the contrary.

GIRLS

1. Protection risks

(1) Discrimination and harassment

Many participants irrespective of their ages claimed that they have been subjected to discrimination and harassment both at school and in community.

Example: a) At some schools, some teachers as well as Jordanian students allegedly told Iraqi children that they did not like Iraqis. They blamed Iraqis for deteriorating living conditions in Jordan, such as inflation.

b) Other Iraqi girls claimed that they have been harassed outside school, in their own neighborhood. Some were harassed because they were Iraqis, but also many were harassed because they were Christians.

(2) Lack of access to formal education in the past several years

Many girls and women claimed that they earlier had difficulties registering at Jordanian schools because of lacking residency. Post the agreement some had tried to register at public schools, but been rejected because they did not meet the required level or simply because the school was already full. Others expressed difficulties in attending since they were placed together with pupils younger than them in classes below what their age indicates.

(3) Lack of financial resource

Pre the agreement with the Government it has been a financial issue sending children to school. Post the agreement there are still many children attending Private school, thus not covered by the agreement. Many of the attendants in the

groups received assistance from Care and Caritas EVI – project, but not sufficient. They all expressed difficulties covering the school fees and additional equipment.

(4) Lack of legal residency

All adults in the groups reported difficulties because of lacking residency and work permission, as inability to improve their financial situation and inability to provide their children with a stable future and prospects. They all reported to have psycho social problems in relation to their situation as depression, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

2. Capacities within the community and solutions proposed by groups

(1) Having Jordanian friends

Some girls have Jordanian friends who support them at school and in community. This was a tendency noted especially among the children attending Public Schools.

(2) Vocational training centre

Some go to vocational training centre to learn English and computer skills. Others are undertaking non-formal education provided by Save the Children.

(3) Strong bonds in ethnic and religious community

The girls reported to have good friends and sought support in their own community, ethnic and religiously. They also share information about support from organizations as Care and Caritas.

3. Solutions suggested by the groups

(1) Social activities for Iraqis to interact with Jordanians

Many Iraqi girls and women expressed that they would like to have some social and recreational activities with Jordanians that could improve the relation between them.

(2) Better coordination between UNHCR and government authority/ and other agencies

Some parents suggested that UNHCR coordinate more with government authority to better implement the new agreement with the Government. It was also suggested to improve the communication between HCR and other operating agencies and in between agencies to coordinate assistance more adequately.

(3) More financial support

Financial support also to those registered at Private schools.

(4) Resettlement/ Residency

It was a common agreement in all groups that if they couldn't have legal residency, Resettlement was the only durable solution.

(5) Community Centers/ Meeting place

It was suggested to have more safe spaces for all Iraqis to meet. Activities proposed to improve their situation were various, as more non – formal education, computer classes, income generating projects and sport activities, also for women.

4. Urgent follow-up action

(1) Creating space for interactions between Iraqi children and Jordanian children

As suggested by some groups, it seems important for UNHCR to create more space for Iraqi children to interact with Jordanian children. Having network with Jordanians seems to provide many Iraqi children and their parents with psychosocial relief as well as physical support.

(2) Responding to financial needs and emphasizing on informal/non-formal education.

Even after the agreement with the Government, there are still girls not attending school. UNHCR should explore possible means to integrate them into informal/non-formal education with financial assistance.

BOYS

(1) Discrimination and harassment

Many participants irrespective of their ages claimed that they have been subjected to discrimination and harassment both at school and in community.

Examples:

- a) At some schools, some teachers as well as Jordanian students allegedly told Iraqi children that they did not like Iraqis. They blamed Iraqis for deteriorating living conditions in Jordan, such as inflation.
- b) Other Iraqi boys claimed that they have been harassed on streets. Some were harassed because they were Iraqis, but also others were harassed because they were Christians.
- c) Some men between 26 and 50 expressed that they do not want to send their children to public school because the Jordanian students from public school in their neighborhood threw bottles on to their children on streets.

(2) Lack of access to formal education in the past several years

Many boys and young men claimed that they missed going to school for several years. Even if they try to get registered at public school, they have been rejected by public schools allegedly because they were too old or simply because the school was already full. Others feel very embarrassed when they sit together with much younger kids in class.

(3) Lack of financial resource

Many of the participants claimed that they do not have enough money to send their kids to school. Some of them are not aware of services provided by CARE or Caritas.

(4) Child labor

Some boys cannot go to school because they are working to financially support their family.

(5) Fear of deportation

Boys between 14 and 20 often feel insecure to walk around on streets for fear of being deported. Even younger boys are worried about deportation of their parents and their elder brothers.

2. Capacities within the community and solutions proposed by groups

(1) Having Jordanian friends

Some boys have got Jordanian friends who support them at school and in community. The facilitator noted that more and more Iraqi boys are willing to interact with Jordanians than before (When the facilitator met the same boys in March this year, they did not want to have any direct contact with Jordanians.).

(2) Vocational training centre

Some go to vocational training centre to learn English and computer skills. Others are undertaking non-formal education provided by Save the Children.

(3) Saving for school fees

Some parents claimed that they changed their life style to save money for school fees.

3. Solutions suggested by the groups

(1) Social activities for Iraqis to interact with Jordanians

Many Iraqi boys and youths expressed that they like to have some social and recreational activities with Jordanians.

(2) Better coordination between UNHCR and government authority

Some parents and young single males suggested that UNHCR coordinate more with government authority, particularly with police, to provide better protection for them.

(3) More financial support

Given that CARE provides financial assistance to a limited number of families, many parents hope to have financial support to send their children to school.

4. Urgent follow-up action

(1) Creating space for interactions between Iraqi children and Jordanian children

As suggested by some groups, it seems important for UNHCR to create more space for Iraqi children to interact with Jordanian children. Having network with Jordanians seems to provide many Iraqi children and their parents with psychosocial relief as well as physical support.

(2) Responding to financial needs and emphasizing on informal/non-formal education

As noted, many boys are not integrated into public school or private school for financial reasons. Therefore, UNHCR should explore possible means to integrate them into informal/non-formal education with financial assistance.

Group: Men

Subgroup: (Sex: M Age group: 18 – 40) **No. of people:** 10

Facilitators: Dr. Abdel Noor & Michael

Date: 27 June 2007

Theme: Education Location St. Mary of Nazareth Church (Messengers of Peace) **Country:** Amman, Jordan

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action

-Materialistic / Cost of living	-No work & no work permit	-Community network	-Resettlement	-Resettlement	-Access to an education system
-Residency	-High cost of living	-Taught themselves their mother tongue language thru society infrastructure	-Guaranteeing the enforcement of proper implementation of human rights	-Education	
-Health	-Illegal stay in COA		-Education & schooling	-Employment	
-Psychological problems	(the feeling of living in jail)	-Father advised his daughter to take on haircutting lessons as opposed to education			
-Illegal work		-Church schooling			
-Deportation		-Role play			
-Fear					
-Threatening					
-Absence of free will					
-Detention					

Group: Boys

Subgroup: (Sex: M / Age group: 13 – 17)

No. of people: 10

Facilitators: Dr. Abdel Noor & Michael

Date: 28 June 2007

Theme: Education Location St. Mary of Nazareth Church (Messengers of Peace)

Country: Amman, Jordan

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Education rules -Fear -Residency -Stationary needs -Uniform at schools -Schooling -Materialistic needs & costs -Deportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Costs -Police Arrest -People teasing -Effectiveness of the UNHCR Refugee Certificate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Study -Exchange books between different age groups depending on grades -Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Marriage to a foreigner with the intent of resettlement -Schooling -Work -Illegal immigration -Effective UNHCR Refugee Certificate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Traveling & resettlement -Education & schooling -Living in stable conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -following up with the procedures of the UNHCR

-Refusal on behalf of Jordanian authorities to grant entry into the Kingdom					
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Group: Girls Subgroup: Sex: Female Age group: 12 - 18 No. of people: 12 Facilitators: Merna (Messengers of Peace), Megumi and Mona (UNHCR)

Date: 21/10/2007 Theme: Education Location: Country: Jordan

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Self esteem, Capacities within the confidence and community strength	Increase Solutions proposed by understanding within subgroups host community	Increase understanding Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Response to Urgent discrimination Follow-up action
Discrimination	religious and ethnic minority	Using school administration,			
Harassment		complaining on	Encouraging		

- verbal and physical assault	Lack of awareness among the local population	mistreatment. Debating at school	patience and brotherhood More debates, at schools Dialogue between communities		
Financial difficulties Loneliness Boredom Forced religion classes	Lack of residency	Jordanian friends Religious bond/unity Family abroad supporting financially	Confidence building		Educating teachers In public school, solve problem of religion classes
	Poor quality at public schools Difference in curriculum Poverty and lack of income, lack of meaningful	Non formal education, attending make up classes Church program, computer classes			

	activities Desire of Resettlement, don't see the purpose of attending school while in Jordan.	and Classes in Assyrian language			
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Group: boys
(CS)

Sex: Male aged 14-17

No. of people 8(5 out of schools) Facilitator: Joseph

Date: 21/10/07
Peace

Theme: Livelihood & Education

Location: Amman / Messengers of

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being to old to enrol in schools - Having no residence permit due to Jordan regulations - schools refusing to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they saw themselves as unable to deal with this - some times they have to work even illegally to support their families, one was working in a hair beauty saloon, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding safe place for the family - Getting residence and work permit - Getting financial support Getting access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Residency - Protected from deportation. - integration into schools. - Legal working permit - financial problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referring to CARE - Approved test evaluation so they can be integrated into schools. - Educational or vocational

	<p>registered Iraqi children, some without clarification for the reasons.</p> <p>- lack of financial support</p>	<p>and one had experience in electrical air conditioning & heater devices but could not for due to illegal statement</p>	<p>to school or vocational centers</p>		<p>system for those who falls in the gap of age.</p>
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Group: men
Dr.Zegar

Sex: Male aged 26-50

No. of people 8

Facilitator: Michael, Raed,

Date: 24/10/07

Theme: Education

Location: Amman / Messengers of Peace

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial disability, was one of the most important points. - Lack of support for private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of financial support and further expectation that even the NGOs supporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they used to save money which had affect on their way of living to educate their children. - Some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting financial support - Getting access to school or vocational centres - coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Residency - Protected from deportation. - integration and support into private schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referring to CARE and caritas - Further financial support

<p>schools and refusal of their children for attending public schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discrimination at schools to certain degree for their children and even at streets for themselves - Some afraid from deportation 	<p>them will stop that since integration into public schools is allowed, also they could not afford to educate all their children because of high educational fees in private schools, and they refuse to integrate them in public schools because of the low level of education, and since they will mix with other Jordanians who lack manners in the public schools and they</p>	<p>psychological relief attached in themselves as no residency been removed as a basic document for integration of children into schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some times they have to work even illegally to support their families, - some used to attend some educational private centre (schniller school) but they not getting any kind of benefit from, - they do have Jordanian friends for their children since some were in private schools 	<p>between the UNHCR and private schools cause they completely refuse that their children been integrated into public schools.</p>	<p>- financial problems.</p>	
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	<p>mentioned that usually the children in the public school used to throw bottles and other things at our centre where we use to have some support lessons in Asyriac, computer and English languages, so who would you expect us to send our children to such schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- discrimination faced by their children.- some of the children supposed to have	<p>so there is a cultural interconnection and further accommodation in between both communities</p>			
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	<p>evaluation examination but the school refused to do that for them or even listed them in the waiting list.</p> <p>- another case used to have 4 girls at college and primary educational age and they are out of education because of lack of financial support</p>				
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Group: young men

Sex: Male aged 17-26

No. of people 9

Facilitator: Raed, Dr.Zegar

Date: 25/10/07
Peace

Theme: Education and livelihood

Location: Amman / Messengers of

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack financial support - depression as a result of no work permit. - Lacking of financial for acquiring higher studies - Discrimination against them in the streets. - The fear of being deported - Some students paid their school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disability to get any secured job since they are not allowed to work in the country having no residency or working permit. Even if they take the risk of working illegally, and they were caught by the ministry of labour they have to pay a 100 jds fees which will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working illegally (although they get very low payment) for short terms because they don't always get paid on time or get fired by the employers for unknown reasons - try to work with trusted people that they know through their connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting financial support - try to solve the issue for allowing Iraqis studying in public universities as a second step after solving the issue of the schools. - getting support for them to have a claim on their employers ensuring salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Residency - Protected from deportation. - integration in the work force. - financial support. - refunding the schools & books fees for those who paid them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referring to CARE & ministry of education. - Further financial support if not supporting them getting secured jobs.

<p>fees and books before knowing that they are not supposed to pay according to the new agreement with Jordanian government. And when they asked for refunding their schools didn't answer..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some have brothers and sisters not attending school because of financial statements. 	<p>very difficult for them to pay, and the employer has to pay also which discourage any employer to employ any Iraqis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - even if they try to work under the mentioned risks, they face the risk of getting under paid at the end of the working period or not getting paid at all, and where they face many insults from the employers and the work environment since they have no legal claim for their rights that they should get from the employers, which 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - finding Iraqis companies operating in Jordan and working with them. But they are not many. 	<p>payments on time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination between UNHCR with a governmental party if possible to reduce the pressure of continuous search for residency so they can look more freely for jobs. 		
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	<p>doesn't solve their financial problem issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- having no link to public universities which are more affordable than the private ones.- being always chased by police for their residencies which limits their movements in searching for a job and mingling in the society.				
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Group: children

Sex: Male aged 8-14

No. of people 8(two out of school)

Facilitator: DR.Zegar

Date: 28/10/07

Theme: Education

Location: messengers of peace venue

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two out of schools - teasing by other students against Iraqi's students. - one child in school is subjected to verbal abuse by the student (one been beaten by his colleagues) . - brothers and sisters, some have 5, 1,1 not at schools, the other sisters and brothers are working to support the family. - fear of deportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having no residence permit - lack of financial support. Sometimes they receives transfers from abroad. - the rest in private schools and one in public school. The two out of schools faced by rejection from the school to register them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they have Jordanian friends, one principle tried to make Iraqi children integrate with Jordanian children via threatening the Iraqi children by dismiss if she does not see them walking with Jordanian children - some of them met before in a previous assessment and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing financial support despite their parents are working illegally. - willing for having further activities with Jordanian is not anymore a problem for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Residency as they are afraid to go out. - Protection for their parents from deportation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CARE is providing support for only few of their families. - further financial support.

<p>for their parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one in public school with his sister and they are fine, no teasing, no discrimination only the school made them pay the uniform fees for 15 JD. - discrimination at schools by Jordanian teachers - some mentioned medical problems, as they used to see doctors at the JRC but several times medications been prescribed with out paying attention for their allergies, so they were prefer visiting a private doctor in their neighbour hood 	<p>because its full, and the other left without clarification for the reasons.</p>	<p>they were refusing to have any kind of direct and indirect contact with Jordanians, but now they do have Jordanian friends</p>			
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<p>and they pay more.</p> <p>Some were attending schniller schools in their area, but they are not having and educational or vocational benefit from it.</p>					
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Group: youth
Raed, Dr.Zegar

Sex: Male aged 14-20

No. of people 11 (9 out of schools) Facilitator: Joseph,

Date: 29/10/07

Theme: Education

Location: Amman / Messengers of Peace

Protection risks/ incidents	Causes	Capacities within the community	Solutions proposed by subgroups	Most important issues to address as expressed by persons of concern	Urgent Follow-up action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot attend schools (3 at university age). - residency. - No work permit - Discrimination at streets only. - Some afraid from deportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of financial support further on to continue their education. - rejection from the public schools for registration due to lack of space and some tried nearly all the schools in their neighbourhood. - two were at school but the school is asking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 cases attend the care and save the children non formal educational program, the rest did not know that Care even exist, another two cases registered in public school and they do have Jordanian friends and there are no problems faced by them at all, three cases attends the Jesuit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting financial support - residency and work permit - resettlement - protection from deportation, and for the moment no one is willing to return back to iraq. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Residency - Protection from deportation. - work permit - financial problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some been asked to be referred to care.

	<p>them for paying the registration fees, books and the uniform.</p> <p>- most of them afraid of the future and lack of stable status.</p>	<p>centre for lessons in English, computer & religious lessons.</p> <p>Two cases used to work to support their families and they changed work several times.</p> <p>- they do have Jordanian friends.</p> <p>- some spending their times in hanging around, playing computer games.</p>			
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