

# Refugee Responder

ISSUE 1

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**PART 1:**  
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**in-  
side**



**Graham Charkham writes “Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome that they should not let the world squeeze them into its mould, but rather allow the Holy Spirit to fashion their thinking’.**

We need to re-orientate ourselves and to address the challenges raised by the refugee crisis in the light of scripture rather than through any other perspective. The number of displaced people is growing and is already so large that it is tempting to look away rather than to risk being overwhelmed by what we might see, were we to take a closer look. This temptation to turn away and carry on as normal may save us discomfort and avoid the risk of being personally overwhelmed, but that course exposes us to deep damage. In turning away, we suppress and eventually numb ourselves to the compassion which once stirred us and which reflects the heart of God, whose love does not change.

Ponder this photo of a father carrying his child along the road in Greece. It speaks to me as a picture of how God regards each and every refugee.

The challenges presented by the overwhelming needs of vast numbers of displaced people, people who do not necessarily share our values, traditions or culture, are so complex that looking away and carrying on as normal is perhaps only natural. Fear is likewise an understandable response. The crux of the challenge is that we who seek to follow Jesus Christ are compelled to search for a response founded upon compassion rather than one fashioned by fear or self-interest. To do otherwise would be to ignore the words of Jesus and the consistent witness of scripture. This publication is designed to help us put ourselves in the shoes of the refugee and to see him/her through the lens of Scripture and to respond accordingly” ●

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‘Romans 12:2, With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.’ Phillips translation

## PART I:

# An honest look at how we see refugees<sup>2</sup>

**What do you see when you look at this picture? Are the people waving in friendly fashion or are they making aggressive gestures? Do you see people in urgent need of your help or do you see a threat, or perhaps both?**



**The Syrian Civil War is now 5 years old and its devastation is unimaginable. Take time to digest these pictures. They do not show the full horror of war, as that would be too traumatic but they show enough to allow us to understand why people are now on the move.**

Look carefully above the head of the man who walks towards you in the photo below and you can make out the front door of a flat. Above that there is another front door. These were once the homes of people like you and me.

In 2015 over 69,000 unaccompanied children sought refuge in Europe<sup>3</sup>.

Whilst the refugee camps in the countries surrounding Syria offer relative safety, life in the camps is bleak<sup>4</sup>. Children are particularly vulnerable.



Conditions in these camps can be desperate. To remain in the camps is to accept an indeterminate period with one's life 'on hold'. Little wonder that those with initiative who are healthy enough are willing to take desperate measures in the hope of finding refuge in Europe •

**This man's reaction to the devastation is the same as yours or mine would be. 5 years ago he would never have dreamed that this could be him.**

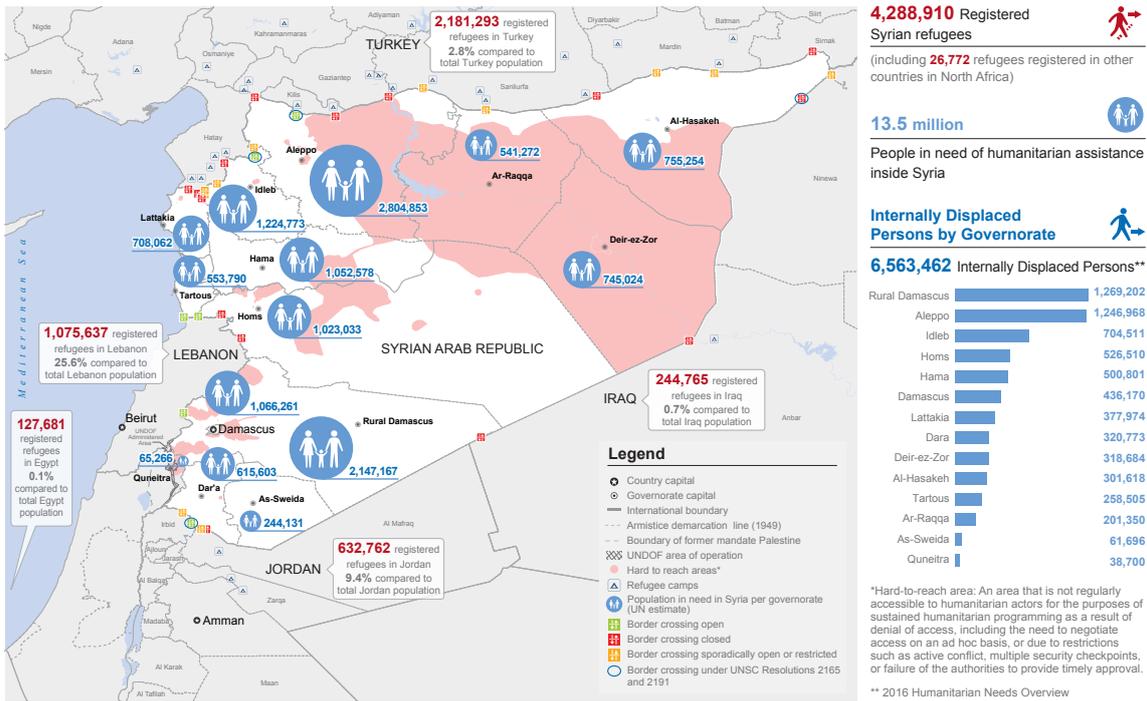


<sup>2</sup>A note about terminology. "Refugee" refers to someone who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution on at least one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. (See [http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/international\\_refugee\\_law.php](http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/international_refugee_law.php)).

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/7366/Asylum\\_in\\_Europe\\_Mar\\_2016\\_.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/7366/Asylum_in_Europe_Mar_2016_.pdf)



## Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 30 November 2015)



<sup>4</sup>In January 2016 a House of Commons Select Committee report reported that the proportion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon living below the poverty line had increased from 50% in 2014 to 70% in 2016. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmintdev/463/463.pdf> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/syrian-refugee-crisis/written/22859.pdf> "11. Whilst refugee camps in the region may offer temporary respite from the atrocities and attacks that children have fled, this does not mean that living conditions in either these camps or the host communities which many children and their families live in are at all appropriate. Often the children who have fled the conflict find themselves faced with devastating instability, poverty and desperation. Massive numbers of children and their families are in need of basic supplies, shelter, food and protection

PART 2:

# What Does The Bible Say On The Subject?



NURSING REFUGEE MOTHER, IN SHOCK

**Listen to the stories of the refugees who have fled from Afghanistan or Syria and hear what they have endured on their travels and you cannot but be struck by the relevance and humanity of the words penned so long ago in the book of Deuteronomy: “[The Lord God commanded his people] You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there.” [Deut 24:17]. The unique vulnerability of the refugee was recognised and people of God were not to take advantage of it. They knew what it was to be exploited as a foreigner in a strange land and God forbid that they put anyone else through that experience. “[The Lord your God] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.” (Deut 10:18. See also Psalm 146:9).**

**“ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.**

The strangers who came to live with the Children of Israel were to be treated humanely because of their vulnerability. They were to be respected and not exploited. The sojourner was given the full benefit of the law, including a day of rest on the Sabbath. There was not one rule for the stranger and another for the people of Israel [Ex 12:49, Ex 23:12, Num 9:14, 15:15-16, Lev 24:22]. The sojourner received a share of the people’s offerings. [Dt 14:29, 26:12] and was not to be used as cheap labour or exploited. Scripture explicitly warns that the Lord would hold the people of Israel accountable for the treatment of the stranger<sup>5</sup>.

Jesus’ story of “The Good Samaritan” [Luke 10: 25-37] is so striking that it diverts our attention from the conversation which immediately precedes it.

<sup>25</sup>... a lawyer stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> [Jesus] said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> And [the Lawyer] answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” <sup>28</sup> And Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

Jesus affirms that loving one’s neighbour as oneself is a matter of life and death. Like us, the lawyer is daunt-

ed by this demand and seeks to find wiggle room by restricting those he must regard as his ‘neighbour’ so that he can put up a fence between himself and those outside who are not his ‘neighbours’.

Jesus is having none of it, and dismisses the lawyer’s weasly question with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The encouraging thing is that when we first hear the story of the Good Samaritan our hearts are warmed by the generosity of this anonymous traveller and by his kindness. He alone of those who chanced upon the half-dead casualty was willing to interrupt his journey, put himself in danger and to take the man to a place of refuge and provide for his ongoing care. We can find imaginative and plausible excuses for those who passed by. The road was notoriously dangerous. It was not unknown for there to be ‘sting’ operations on this road: fake casualties posing in the hope that someone would slow down and make himself vulnerable to robbery. The casualty was ‘half-dead’: i.e. probably beyond help so why interfere? The passers by were in a hurry and did not wish to become ritually unclean by touching a corpse etc. etc.

Tellingly, we instinctively want to cheer the Samaritan on and we hope that that would have been us. Perhaps this reflects the deeper truth that as we listen to Jesus’ story and as we consider how we might wish to respond in a similar situation, at some level the Holy Spirit is willing us to respond compassionately and we sense the justice of this, having ourselves experienced the compassion of God the Father and the love of Jesus<sup>6</sup> ●



<sup>5</sup> [Lev 19:33, Jer 22:2-5, Mal 3:1-5]. It is not entirely clear how far the sojourner was required/expected to conform to the norms/laws of the people of Israel. Some degree of ‘buy in’ was undoubtedly required but the sojourner was not required to be completely assimilated to all the requirements of the law: for example he was not required to conform to the dietary laws of the people of Israel (Deut 14:21 but contrast Dt 31:12).

<sup>6</sup> I am reminded of Romans 5:7 “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”

PART 3:

# A Call To Action ?

## *Pray.*

**Until peace and stability return to Syria and the Middle East those who have been displaced cannot return home. Praying for peace is therefore imperative. To keep up to date with what is happening sign up for a weekly prayer email from [Open Doors](#)<sup>7</sup> and/or [Tear Fund](#)<sup>8</sup> and see their respective [prayer](#)<sup>9</sup> [resource](#)<sup>10</sup> pages which contain a wealth of information.**

*Heavenly Father,  
you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love.  
We thank you for opening the hearts of many  
to those who are fleeing for their lives.  
Help us now to open our arms in welcome,  
and reach out our hands in support.  
That the desperate may find new hope,  
and lives torn apart be restored.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord,  
who fled persecution at His birth  
and at His last triumphed over death.  
**Amen***

*Almighty and merciful God,  
whose Son became a refugee  
and had no place to call his own;  
look with mercy on those who today  
are fleeing from danger,  
homeless and hungry.  
Bless those who work to bring them relief;  
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;  
and guide the nations of the world towards that day  
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.***

## LOOK BEHIND THE LABELS AND DEVELOP COMPASSIONATE EYE FOR THOSE SEEKING REFUGE.

See this moving video of European tourists in Greece talk with refugees  
[www.theislandofalltogether.com/english/](http://www.theislandofalltogether.com/english/)

## TEARFUND<sup>11</sup>

Are providing humanitarian help in Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

## OPEN DOORS

The churches in Syria and surrounding countries provide shelter and humanitarian aid to all who seek it, regardless of creed and Open Doors supports them in this as part of its global mission to the persecuted. For more details download 'Freedom of Religion and the Persecution of Christians'.

## SAMARA'S AID<sup>12</sup>.

Samara's Aid operates under the auspices of "Feed the Hungry", a UK charity. Please see their web site for details of current appeals and contact Amanda Clegg ([amanda@thecleggfamily.co.uk](mailto:amanda@thecleggfamily.co.uk)), Helen Brecht ([helenput@hotmail.com](mailto:helenput@hotmail.com)), Sarah Mackenzie ([sarahkate5@me.com](mailto:sarahkate5@me.com)) or Christina Wood ([christinawood@talktalk.net](mailto:christinawood@talktalk.net)) for details of appeals being organised by St. Stephen's Church.



# Respond

See the following page •

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/forms/emailsSignup/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.tearfund.org/en/about\\_you/pray/?gclid=CKq61Y7b\\_ssCFQ4TGwodamsHTA](http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_you/pray/?gclid=CKq61Y7b_ssCFQ4TGwodamsHTA)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/pray/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://onevoice.tearfund.org/>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.tearfund.org/en/2016/01/what\\_help\\_are\\_we\\_providing\\_in\\_the\\_middle\\_east/?d=1](http://www.tearfund.org/en/2016/01/what_help_are_we_providing_in_the_middle_east/?d=1)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.samarasaidappeal.org/>

# We need your help

Accommodation is urgently needed for refugees. If you have a flat or house you might be willing to rent out please email [refugeeresponder@gmail.com](mailto:refugeeresponder@gmail.com).



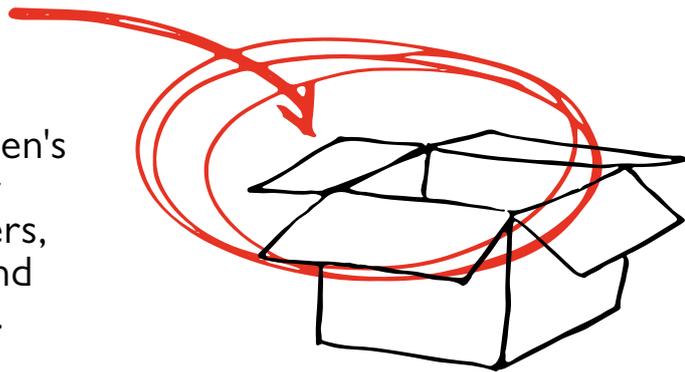
You can also follow us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/refugeeresponder](https://www.facebook.com/refugeeresponder)

To express an interest in helping refugees or if you have any questions please email [refugeeresponder@gmail.com](mailto:refugeeresponder@gmail.com) and one of the St Stephen's Refugee Responders Planning Team (Sheila Akao-Okeng, Graham Charkham, Amanda Clegg, David La Bouchardiere, Colin Matthews and Helen Brecht) will get back to you.

st.stephen's  
twickenham

## Gift day

On Sunday 8 May St Stephen's is holding a gift day for our Global Engagement partners, which includes Tearfund and its work with the refugees.



**Open Doors**

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

Please make **cheques** payable to *Open Doors* or complete **your card details** below:

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Surname\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Address\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Date DD / MM / YYYY

\* Mandatory (essential to complete your request)

Please enter your email and telephone number if you're happy for Open Doors to contact you in this way. We won't pass on your details or send you mail if you decide you don't want to receive any more information.

Please send me information on making a regular monthly gift for my persecuted church family.

The amount of my gift for Christians facing persecution is £ \_\_\_\_\_

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Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make every pound you give worth an extra 25% to persecuted Christians**

**As a UK taxpayer<sup>1</sup>**, I would like Open Doors to treat all donations I have made in the past four years and in the future, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.

<sup>1</sup>I confirm I have paid an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that will be claimed on my donations (currently 25p for each £1 I give), together with those made to other charities, in each tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.