

IRAN

Freedom At Last! The majority of Iranians who apply to the UNHCR for asylum are turned down. It was only due to your prayers and God's blessing upon the petitions made by 2,500 of you that finally asylum status was given to some- but not yet all- of our Iranian brothers and sisters applying for asylum. They have lived a difficult existence for over a year now. They were given deportation orders back to Iran, which were never cancelled. At any time they can be arrested and deported. We have prayerfully sought through every way possible to avoid this happening. Finally the great day came for Sis Z and her daughter H to leave for USA. We all went round to her apartment for a moving meeting, and then to the airport, fully aware that she could be arrested by the border police and deported to Iran. One of our sisters went through the controls with her, paying funds as she did, and flew with her to Frankfurt, from where she flew to Miami and thence onwards to a temporary holding centre in Tennessee. Bro Steve flew down from Chicago area intending to meet her in Tennessee. However he had to change planes on the way, and there in the airport he met sis Z! This was intended only by our loving Father. He was able to fly with her on the last leg of her journey to Tennessee. The brothers and sisters from Bloomington ecclesia assisted by Mary and Jesse [whose steady help throughout this trauma has been wonderful] are arranging for her to be transferred to Illinois and join an ecclesia there.



Going to the farewell party in an apartment



Emotions at a high level in the airport as we said goodbye

We give earnest thanks to our Father for this blessing. This is an understatement. We need to pray earnestly on our knees in gratitude. More of our Iranian brethren will God willing be leaving soon but they all must run the gauntlet through the airport. We ask for your prayers for them. We must not forget, however, those who are still awaiting the UNHCR's decision, as they obviously will miss those who have left.

Further, we must remember in prayer our brother and three sisters who have just fled for their lives from Iran to Azerbaijan, where we are starting the UNHCR process over again. They are very very scared and we assured them of our prayers. We might add that the financial requirements for this work are very significant. We are having to pay air fares, flat rental, living expenses and make many payments to get our brethren out and to keep them safe, plus the expenses involved in visiting them and providing pastoral care. We are so very grateful to those who have contributed to all this. Clearly the blessing of God has been with us every step of the way and we are all left feeling unworthy tools in His mighty hands. To Him alone be the glory. We will be announcing another day of prayer once the next batch of Iranians arrive in USA, this time in thankfulness, and also in prayer for those of them who remain in the precarious refugee position and also on the run in Iran. These brethren and sisters are amongst the finest we have been

privileged to ever know in our wonderful brotherhood. They have brought out the best in our brotherhood and have focused all of us who know them on the need for a sacrificial life of cross carrying.

FURTHER PREACHING IN IRAN

We are seeing played out before our eyes an amazing Divine paradox- as the heat of persecution increases in this land, the more people are responding to the Truth, knowing full well the high price they risk paying for commitment. We continue in contact with increasing numbers of people here, and it is a credit to our Iranian brethren on the run in Turkey that they have done so much to help with translation and tutoring these contacts. Given the seriously deteriorating situation for our brotherhood in Iran, we are suggesting that contacts travel to a neighbouring country for baptism, or baptize themselves after a postal 'interview', to be confirmed by us whenever we are able to meet with them. The cost, effort and risk for people to leave Iran for baptism in a neighbouring country is significant. Four such contacts came to Turkey; one couple declined to be baptized, despite knowing the truth, having counted the cost and found it too great. Another couple, Z and K, counted the cost and decided to pay it, and so were joyfully baptized by us in Istanbul.

We travelled to Azerbaijan, and met up as arranged with two young men M and A; the Iranians on the run there spent 3 days carefully discussing and interviewing with these men and we had no doubt that they perceived what taking up the cross was all about, and know the Gospel. Their Bibles were well thumbed, although covered over so as to look like novels! It was with the greatest joy that we baptized them and then broke bread. We do earnestly pray for them as they return to Iran, especially as one of them was a work colleague of our brother N, who has had to flee Iran for preaching, and whose entire family and circle of friends are under suspicion.



Our brave new brothers M and A

Brother M has had to flee his home in Iran and is we understand also on the run but we have no more news. He obviously needs our prayers. As Iran braces for a full on conflict with the West over its nuclear armament policy, radical Islamic extremism is in the ascendancy at the moment.

WORK ON THE IRAQI BORDER

One of our team made a trip to Van near the Iraq border where she was able to baptize H, a Kurd who has fled over the Turkish border from Iraq. He is already well advanced in his application for asylum and hopes to get to Australia soon God willing. He was a former leader of the outlawed Communist party but has since come to see that the only true Hope is in the Kingdom of God. We are hoping that his preaching- he has already distributed many copies of Kurdish and Arabic Bible Basics will result in more inroads being made into Iraq itself. Our sister reports that in Van "There are approximately 4000 refugees squashed into its overworked infrastructure and it is apparent in frequent power and water cuts. Everywhere one goes refugees are obvious.. iraqis, iranians, iraqi kurds, irani kurds all confined to a precarious existence in the town. To leave it without permission is difficult enough to be almost impossible once one has registered with the

UNHCR and to be found outside its borders without permission, means that if one is caught then deportation is almost inevitable. Many of them are in daily fear of arrest and subsequent deportation.. deportation orders are common and having ones ID renewed is a bit like a lottery.. who can tell if it will be today your number is up. It is necessary to sign twice a week with the police and every day huge numbers collect outside UNHCR to beg, plead and demand their cases be heard. Some of the restrictions seem so arbitrary.. for example, they have just banned women from riding bikes in the town which makes those of them that use bikes to get around now have to walk and to go to the twice weekly sign on from one end of the town to the other takes a lot of time. Altogether it is a despairing life for so many and some of them have been there for years, waiting, hoping and wondering if they will grow old and die there... We talked so much and he was eager to be baptized, but we had to wait for the water to come on again. Eventually by about midnight we had enough water, and he was baptized into the saving name of Jesus. And afterwards as we broke bread together I thought how much the Gospel is like an unending stream of fresh and pure water from which we can drink and not be thirsty. Sadly the two others who wanted to be baptized had left Van by the time I arrived. In the recent police round up and spate of deportations, one of them [an Irani kurd] was moved to another city and the other, an Iraqi Kurd left Van until things had settled in Van. We hope he will come back before too long – H spoke to him and he sent his greetings, and another visit is planned for later in the year when we hope he will be there.”

Our other Iranian brethren in Turkey are in contact with our new brother and they plan in a few days to do an online breaking of bread together. We hope soon to openly release our online breaking of bread website.

FURTHER PERSECUTION IN IRAN

Our married couple Bro N and Sis E, along with Bro. N’s sister, Sis. S, and Sis. E’s sister, sis. A, were betrayed to the religious police by a relative for their preaching activities. They fled for their lives with just what they stood up in, over the border to Azerbaijan. They contacted us as previously reported when they were literally on the street, and thanks to the hard work of an American sister we were able to get funds to them by Western Union immediately. They now have a small apartment to live in, but as we found with the other Iranians in Turkey, there is strong anti-Iranian feeling and refugees are abused and deceived all the time. We met the landlord who informed us that they had to move out by the 27th, so they are searching now for another place to live. The sisters of N and E are young- 18 and 20- and they are all very scared. They basically don’t go out of the flat at all, apart from Bro. N. We have contacted UNHCR and also the International Federation Of Iranian Refugees, whose very zealous Azerbaijan co-ordinator is a friend from Communist party days of our new brother in Van. They now have a formal interview with the UNHCR on October 1st God willing and we ask for your prayers for a sympathetic hearing. We have written to UNHCR and given them what we consider to be strong reasons to grant our beloved brother and the sisters asylum. It is increasingly clear, as we explained to UNHCR, that it is impossible for a Christian who believes and lives the “hope of Israel” to practice our faith in Iran. It may be that we will need to make another petition and go to Geneva again; we will keep you informed.

The sisters are so scared to the point of it making them ill, especially being in the apartment all day. It was rare to see a smile on their faces. Cindy was a great help to them, showing them how to play card games [a daring thing for Iranian girls to do!] and encouraging them to produce some illustrated children lessons as they are all quite artistic. We consider it a vital investment to get them a computer so that they can have some projects to concretely get on with, such as

typing up translations, scanning, and producing material for the internet in Farsi; as well as following through on producing Bible lessons for children. They read from the Bible Companion each day and we had some long and profitable discussions with them about the very essence of the Truth. If any can donate a usable laptop, please let us know.



C with the young sisters

CYPRUS

Seeing we were in Turkey we made a brief side trip over the Mediterranean to Cyprus, where it was our pleasure to interview and baptize LUZ ARAMBULO, a Filipino migrant worker whose family are already baptized in the Philippines. She hopes to return there some time soon God willing. She works very long hours and it is hard for her to get time off from her employer but she is very strong in faith and devoted to her new Lord and Master.