

IRANIAN REFUGEES: SEPTEMBER 2004 UPDATE

Carelinks Christadelphian Ministries continues in daily contact with our Iranian refugee brethren. Our workers have recently made trips to visit them in Turkey and Azerbaijan, and we are following up with UNHCR, IOM and other international organizations wherever and how ever we can. We do seriously ask for your prayers in this work. The situation is that 3 members in hiding in Azerbaijan are hoping any moment to be given leave to depart for Canada, as they already have the basic agreement from UNHCR in place. Another 2 there, our young married couple who suffered so much when they were tortured and imprisoned in Iran, are still going through the painfully long UNHCR process. The nervous stress of the refugee life is beginning to tell and they really do need our support.

Our brother R, who is one of the 30 or so brethren still in Iran, was recently imprisoned and beaten but is now 'free'. There are another 8 bre & sis from Iran hiding out in Turkey at this time. Two of them, including the brother who is a painter and who offered to do portraits, have been granted full refugee status and have been accepted for emigration by a Western country. We're extremely grateful to both our Father and the UNHCR for this. The others are not faring so well. Some have had their cases closed by UNHCR and are under threat of deportation back to Iran, where as we understand it from them, some of them have death sentences awaiting them. Others have been offered deportation to northern Iraq. With Iraq in the state it is, this hardly seems much of an option. They work illegally where they can to try to get money for survival but we are having to support them. It's especially tragic to see their children suffering. They remain strong in faith, and the knowledge of God's love and the eternity with Him in the Kingdom which we await is clearly a burning, vital daily experience for them. They are reading using the Companion and breaking bread, so you can think of them reading with you.



Photo: Bro. H , threatened with deportation to Northern Iraq, with his Bible Companion

Despite the evident threat, we are pleased to report the baptism of sister C, wife of Br. H; and also brother M, and sisters Z and Y. There is, we believe, no economic motivation behind these conversions. They don't exactly get a lot of support from us anyway. They have left comfortable middle-class lives in Iran, to suffer affliction for the sake of our Lord, and are truly sharing in His sufferings, as symbolized in baptism. They recognize they'd be in a far better, safer, more comfortable position to drop their Christianity and be nominal Iranian moslems back in their homeland.



Photo: Interviewing of Brother M before his baptism



Photo: Blowing up a child's paddling pool in an apartment. This is what we used for the baptisms [The problem is getting the water out afterwards, without flooding the place].

We're also pleased to report the baptism of brother F, a long standing contact from Bosnia, who has been living in Turkey, and who himself faces problems relating to Moslem persecution. He too needs our prayers and we shall maybe report on his case in the next few months, God willing. He surely needs our prayers.

On another note, the young daughter of one of our Iranian refugee sisters who got to America is sick. She is in intensive care at the moment. The following is a self-explanatory update from Bro. Steve Johnson:

"Hedi had her major leg surgery on August 19. A complication developed during the following three weeks while her legs were in casts that caused a lot of skin around the incisions (which are twelve to fifteen inches long, one on each leg) to die. Hedi was having a procedure done yesterday to remove the dead skin when she had a heart problem in the operating room. (I wasn't able to learn from Zari the exact nature of the problem or the exact condition of Hedi now.) She is now in intensive care and apparently stable. Zari called to ask for our prayers for Hedi and so I wanted you all to know and perhaps ask others for their prayers for Hedi and Zari".

More positively, we're delighted to be able to tell you that our brother Naizghi, who has been on the run for some years, having passed through Eritrea, Sudan and Libya on his way to Italy, has been granted permission to stay and work legally in Italy for at least a year. Given the large number of asylum applicants being refused and deported, we are jubilantly thankful to our Father and also to the Italian Government for this decision. It is indeed some sort of miracle, given the large numbers of applicants being refused. Hundreds of people are arriving daily in Turkey and Western Europe, seeking asylum due to the turmoil in many countries at the moment, and the problems created by Islamic fundamentalism. Only some of them are accepted by the nations they arrive in, and we give thanks for our brother's positive acceptance so far.