

Iranian Brethren, January 2008

Greetings from Turkey!

My name is Brother Scott visiting here from America to spend a few weeks with Duncan and Cindy Heaster and at this time to be involved in the work of assisting those brave few in Iran who have converted to the real Christ from Islam. Once again I find myself in awe and amazement of the works that our God Yahweh is doing in the lives of many people around this globe. The true Gospel is going out, people are risking their lives for the sake of the cross of Christ. I hope to convey my observation of the goings on here.

Brother Duncan and I arrived at the airport in Istanbul on Jan. 30. There we were met my Brother A and M to baptize another Iranian named Masoud Ariaeirad from Iran. Brothers A and Masoud are seeking asylum through the United Nations on the basis of their religious persecution in Iran. A few years ago Bro. A converted from Islam to Christianity through study of the Bible Basics book distributed through Carelinks. Upon conversion to Christ a few years ago, he met Duncan and Cindy in Istanbul to baptize him into the faith. Bro. A returned to Iran only to receive the harshest treatment from family, friends, and the religious police in Iran. Fearing for his life he escaped to Turkey and lived for a short time in the safe house that Carelinks supports and funds. Now he is living in the town the Government have assigned to him, but he has no income and no support at all apart from what we can give him; and he has to fund his own accommodation, everything.

Because of the influx of so many people escaping to Turkey for political and religious asylum, the Turkish government makes it very hard on these refugees. Bro. A, having no family, no home, and no income was assigned to live in a small town in the mountains of Turkey until the U.N. process is completed. The Turkish government does not allow people who are not citizens of Turkey to be employed, own property etc.. Bros. A and Masoud along with other such brothers have been supported by Carelinks and various other brethren who understand the situation here in Turkey.

While in this small town Bro. A meet M. , who studied *Bible Basics* and then was baptized in Jesus' name.

In Iran, conversion from islam to any other religion is a crime punishable by death, both for the person and for the person who converted them. Our brethren gave us pictures of the whippings some received merely for involvement in Christianity, even tho they'd not converted to it; and also a picture of the Iranian religious police arresting a woman on the street for being dressed in a too Western manner. These pictures are displayed on Iranian TV as warnings. So for our brothers to decide to be baptized is a huge risk and sacrifice for them.

Giving up house, family, career and Islam for the gospel of Jesus is an incredible testimony of the faith and hope these brethren have. Brothers A and M only have each other now. They break bread, pray together, and do the daily Bible readings together each day. We were impressed by the way in which they had translated their English language Bible Companion into Farsi and were keen to read the chapters for the day with us. It's great how enthusiastic they are for the Hebrew roots of our faith and how well they read and discuss the Old Testament, with an evident respect for the Jewish people. It's hard to appreciate how radical this is for those raised under sharia law in Iran!

One of the requirements for staying in Turkey while applying for U.N. asylum is that they must check in with the police everyday. This limits them on their options. They are in a sense prisoners of the system. They cannot go back to Iran or they would surely be killed. They cannot work or hold a job legally. They have no one but each other and the hope of freedom. They have been living in broke down house with a broken down heating system for 18 months. We gave them welfare support and were able to pass on to them hot water bottles, kindly donated by Mary-Jane and Paul from North America.

On to our new brother in Christ MD. MD arrived shortly after Duncan and I arrived at the airport. We met him with the other brothers and proceeded to the safe house in Turkey. MD was a friend that M and A had taught the true Gospel to on the internet. As I understand it M (now in Turkey) had known MD (Iran) prior to leaving Iran a few years ago. Over the course of time MD (Iran) became convinced that Islam was not the way for hope and salvation. MD (Iran) came to faith in Christ and after being convinced in the Scriptures and in his heart. The desire to be obedient to the Word of God and be baptized in Jesus name was his only goal.

While we were in Ukraine at the Winter Bible school, Duncan would be getting text messages from this brother as he was trying to cross the Iranian border into Turkey through the mountains. This fellow had been trying for a week to get into Turkey to meet us so he could be baptized. When all attempts failed to travel overland he flew in on faith. Faith that someone would help him pay for his plane ticket. This shows us the urgency and conviction of this man to be obedient to the word of God. He literally is risking his life for the gospel. If the authorities were to ever find out why he came to Turkey he would suffer horribly.

We arrived at the safe house and filled the rubber duckie kiddie pool tub in the kitchen. We dismantled a vacuum cleaner to make a hose and funnel for the water. Public baptisms in Turkey are not safe by any means. Just as Poland is very Catholic, Turkey is very Muslim. The town is literally covered with Mosques. The call to prayer is played all over town on the loudspeaker and women in burqas are everywhere.

This method of finding enough water, may seem a little crude but what other option is there? How else can a baptism be done when there is no tub?

We could not hinder this man to be baptized. I am reminded of Cornelius in Acts 11. This brother had the faith to believe. Who was I that I could stand in God's way? (Ac. 11:17) Our faith was mutually encouraged. He was so eager for his salvation and identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Who were we to stand in God's way? So having given a good confession of faith, I baptized him into Christ.

The safe house is occupied by a brother named H. Here is another testimony of faith. Brother H escaped from Iran , fled to Turkey and was baptised. He has no where to go and no place to live. He cannot go back as he would likely be tortured, imprisoned, or worse . He works as he can to pay for living expenses. He has family in Canada but cannot go without proper documentation. If he gets caught here in Turkey he would be sent back to Iran. This brother lives in fear and isolation. He has no friends or family. There is a dear English sister who drops in as she can to help and give what aid and encouragement as she can, and it was an honour to meet with her briefly on our trip in Turkey.

This is just a small portion of the goings on here in Turkey. The gospel of Christ is reaching to people all over the globe. My dealings with all these brothers is just a glimpse of God moving in

the earth through Carelinks and Bible Basics and the quiet work done by a very dedicated group of brothers and sisters I've met. The need is great.

The work Carelinks is doing here takes both time and money. They support refugee brothers with a monthly allotment for food and shelter until they can get asylum through the U.N. They also helped to pay for brother MD's fare to Turkey and back to Iran so he can be baptized in safety. The safe house is another place they support for brother Ht to stay until he can get someone to help him with immigration.

The safe house is an important asset for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the earth. There have been many Iranians baptized there. It provides a secret meeting place for converts to assemble in safety as they proceed through Turkey to a more tolerant country.

An appeal and a plea. Please consider supporting the work with the Iranians here in Turkey. If it were not for the faithful support thus far this work would not be happening as it is. There is a greater need as many requests for help and baptisms are coming in but not enough funds or people to carry them through. I witnessed this personally just sitting with Duncan and Cindy at their computer and reading the emails coming in and the discussions going on.

Thank you for your time. Again I am humbled and honored to witness the power of the True Gospel and the real Christ.

In Christ Jesus,
Brother Scott
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RWANDA and MOROCCO

We have contacts in these African countries eager to be baptized. If anyone is interested in making a trip to them for this, or financially supporting someone else to, please get in touch. You could either go there alone or perhaps with other volunteers. Both countries are interesting and have plenty of tourist interest if that's what you're interested in additionally.

Also, a French translation of Introducing Bible Basics is now available at <http://www.carelinks.net/French.html>