

### **Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan Nov. 2003**

We've previously reported significant interest in Kurdistan, an area which straddles Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. The 17 million Kurds have no independent homeland and live under opposition from the Governments of the countries where they live.

A visit was made to a brother who had fled Iraqi Kurdistan in fear of his life. It was a great joy to interview and baptize his ever so sincere brother-in-law, H. H is the eldest brother in his family, and we hope that the rest of his adult siblings, who are already studying Bible Basics, will also respond to the Truth. These are long term refugees, who have been living in despair for several years already.

Our new brother H is the son of an outspoken critic of the Iranian clerical regime who was sentenced to death along with his whole family. They have been living in the refugee shanty towns for some time now, supported only by what their families back in Iran can send to them. This income decreases over time, as things get harder in Iran, and as the years go by of not having seen each other.

The UNHCR are flooded with many thousands of cases especially given the situation in Iraq, and it is taking years for the applications to be processed. There is little provision of education; volunteer teachers teach the children but with no textbooks or other teaching aids. There are literally thousands of people stranded in this situation. The places where these folk live are really very tragic; their plight seems largely forgotten.

In situations like this one inevitably has to assess any possibility that people are being attracted to us for hope of getting some benefit. We consider that our new bro. H is not in this category; his whole attitude was without doubt sincere and there was never any hint of wanting material help. Indeed, he is hoping to finally receive asylum in Australia within the next 9 months.

Further, our brother already baptized here, has had his financial support which he once received from his family severely damaged because he informed them that he had converted to Christianity. It was a joy to quietly break bread with our two beloved brethren.

We are in touch with another group of 5 Kurdish refugees who have demonstrated a clear grasp of the Truth but are not yet ready for baptism. Further, another excellent contact whom we believe is likely ready for baptism has now been deported back to Iraq proper. The police round up people regularly in the shanty towns and deport them, as the situation is so out of order. Our contact, N, is in touch via mobile phone and is now living near Kirkuk, Iraq proper. We would like to visit him but getting visas is impossible and the borders are almost closed. The only possibility is to cross through the mountains, as many of our contacts and brethren have had to do, but this would need some preparation.

We ask for your prayers for N so that somehow we might be able to meet and interview him. And there are many many more potentially like him, driven by the tragedies of their lives to reject their traditional Islam and come to the Truth.



*Breaking bread*



*The mountains towards the Iraqi border through which our brethren and contacts have had to cross.*

### **Iranian Update Nov. 2003**

A British sister has now spent around a month with our Iranian brethren still awaiting asylum in the West, in both Turkey and Azerbaijan. We have reported previously on the positive reception received by the UNHCR in Azerbaijan and are very happy to be able to tell you that these four have now been granted refugee status. It is very rare for decisions to be reached so quickly and we thank God they have been so blessed. However, we have no way of knowing how long resettlement will take and they still need our prayers. The sisters and brother there now have a laptop thanks to your generosity and are using their time wisely in translating and developing Sunday School material in Farsi. We are now working on a feasible possibility of getting our Br B & Sr. M out of Iran, where they have been on the run for some months.

We ask for your prayers that this latest initiative will work. Preaching in Iran continues, and two contacts, R and K, crossed over the border to Turkey where they stayed for some days being interviewed and having more teaching about the Truth. They were baptized in a child's paddling pool in the apartment the other brethren are living in. Our prayers go with them as they return to Iran. The true brotherly spirit between our brothers, the way they have of praying one after another, their enthusing with the contacts over the doctrines taught in Bible Basics, all leave a deep and encouraging impression upon us.

Of course they have their problems, having been in frustrating waiting for so many months, with so many uncertainties. But the spirit of loving fellowship in the apartments where they have spent their sojourn will remain with us as the greatest proof that indeed, the Truth we have is really the Truth.

