

Lutheran federation to assist Syrian refugees in Jordan

News

August 29, 2012

August 29 (ENInews)--The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said on 29 August that it is joining efforts to respond to the growing influx of Syrian refugees in Jordan who are fleeing fighting between government and opposition forces in their home country.

On 28 August, the LWF signed a memorandum of understanding with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO), the agency mandated by the Jordanian government to manage and coordinate assistance to Syrian refugees in Za'atari refugee camp, according to a news release from Lutheran World Information, the LWF's news service.

The LWF will provide shelter, camp management, psycho-social support and education services in the camp, which is located near the city of Mafraq, some 70 kilometers from the Syrian border. The LWF humanitarian response will be part of an appeal by ACT Alliance, a Geneva-based organization that coordinates relief and development work by churches.

An on-location assessment in mid-August by the LWF's Department for World Service (DWS) affirmed the increasingly difficult situation for refugees there, LWI reports.

"What has been seen and experienced on the two visits to Za'atari camp by our colleagues and through speaking with refugees and major actors on the ground has convinced us that the humanitarian situation of the Syrian refugees is indeed very precarious," said Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, DWS director.

On 17 August, ACT Alliance noted that the deteriorating situation in Syria was generating massive internal displacement and flows of refugees into neighboring countries.

A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) briefing on 23 August stated that there are now 61,000 Syrians who have registered as refugees in Jordan after fleeing the conflict between Syrian government and opposition forces in Syria.

The Jordanian government estimates that there are 150,000 Syrians in Jordan.

"In Jordan, a record of 2,200 people crossed the border [on 23 August] and were received at the Za'atari camp," said Adrian Edwards, a UNHCR spokesperson. "This brings the total number of Syrians who have been received in Za'atari camp to more than 14,500." He noted that further arrivals were expected.

The Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of the LWF, said that he appreciated the efforts of the JHCO and other agencies, and pledged to assist in expanding the camp's basic services so that the Syrian refugees could settle into a safe and secure routine.

"The LWF has a long history and longstanding expertise in refugee camp management and service delivery in places such as Kenya, Chad, South Sudan and Nepal, as part of our ongoing Christian commitment to those in need, no matter their background," Junge remarked.

LWF President Bishop Munib A. Younan, who presides over the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, expressed his deep appreciation to the Jordanian government and those of its neighbors for welcoming the Syrian refugees and providing space for the camps.

"We pray for a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict in Syria, for we believe that violence will only bring more hatred and revenge that the Middle East does not need at all. But in the meantime we are thankful that the LWF is called to offer its diaconal services in such a difficult situation in order to alleviate human suffering," Younan said.

Both Junge and Younan appealed to communion member churches worldwide to support the effort.

The LWF, based in Geneva, is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition with 145 member churches in 79 countries, representing more than 70 million Christians.