



ANERA News

New Refugees in Lebanon

by Rami Azzam & Liz Demarest, ANERA headquarters staff

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Fighting in Syria has displaced nearly 85% of the Palestinian refugees living in Yarmouk camp, on the outskirts of Damascus. They fled with little more than the clothes they were wearing. About 37,000 people have flooded into Lebanon seeking refuge. But they carry with them the burdens and traumas of conflict – memories of kidnappings, the destruction of their homes, the deaths of loved ones.

When we visited Lebanon in January 2013, we went into Ein El Helweh camp to see for ourselves how the refugees were faring. We spoke to a woman who opened her home to family members who had fled the fighting in Syria. Now 26 people share her small two-room apartment. “You should see my neighbor’s house,” she told us. “She doesn’t have any furniture or mats left because she lent them all to us.” No work for the men. No work for the women. Just the generosity of other impoverished refugees to sustain them.

(continued on page 3)



ANERA News

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COVER PHOTO: The Oneissi family in their two-room shelter in Burj El Shemali refugee camp in Lebanon. Photographer: Ibrahim Dirani | ANERA

by the Numbers

■ Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon

Percentage from Damascus and its suburbs: **95%**

Percentage whose homes were destroyed: **53%**

Percentage who cite food as their highest expense: **86%**

Rate of adult male unemployment in Lebanon: **90.4%**

Percentage who suffer from chronic illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease: **50%**

Number of families with school-age children: **436**

Percentage of population represented by women and children: **74%**

Percentage who use one room as a shelter: **59%**

Quilts Give Warmth and More

ANERA's in-kind program is best described as a partnership. U.S.-based organizations like AmeriCares, Direct Relief International or Lutheran World Relief collect medicine or blankets or other needed supplies. ANERA then coordinates the shipping, importing and distribution of the donated goods to the Middle East.

Every now and then, we learn about someone who is a real personal connection to the partnership. Phil, a long-time ANERA supporter from New Jersey, contacted us recently to say his church was collecting quilts that would be sent to Lutheran World Relief. Phil was curious to know if ANERA might be one of the recipients of those quilts.

As it happens, ANERA is shipping quilts donated by Lutheran World Relief to our Lebanon offices right now. Blankets and hygiene kits are desperately needed for thousands of Syrian and Palestinian families who are fleeing the violence in Syria.

Phil is giving to his local Lutheran church and to ANERA. His support and that of so many others makes our in-kind program possible.

■ ■ ■ ■ Read more about ANERA's response in Lebanon on page 6.



Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon

A Needs Assessment

March 2013

Recognizing the challenges the refugees from Syria now face in Lebanon, ANERA conducted a needs assessment to help us and our partners meet the critical needs of an especially vulnerable population.

The results of this survey are startling and highlight the dire conditions of the refugees living in Lebanon's overcrowded and underserved Palestinian camps.

More than nine out of ten families have experienced some type of personal traumatic experience – a death in the family, physical trauma, kidnapping, and home destruction. Many families are living 20 or more persons to a room. Eight out of ten cite food as the most burdensome expense, followed by rent.



**Read our
Needs Assessment
for more details.**

www.anera.org/needsassessment

New Refugees in Lebanon (continued from page 1)



The refugees who were huddled there had only two hours' notice to leave Yarmouk camp and they fled with nothing. They slept one night in the streets of Damascus before making their way to Lebanon.

Life in Syria had been fairly good for this family. Palestinians in Syria had full civil rights and the cost of living was pretty low. Now, the family told us, they don't even know if their house is still standing. They consider themselves luckier than most, though, because they had a relative in Ein El Helweh and she generously has opened her home to welcome them. They sleep on borrowed mattresses and blankets, waiting and watching the news to see when or if they can ever go home. Meanwhile, they are refugees for a third time.

Two other women we met in Nahr El Bared refugee camp were living in a garage. They both had lost contact with their husbands when they fled Syria. One woman was Syrian, the other Palestinian. By

their side were four children, small, barefoot and huddled together against the damp cold of the unheated garage. The women struggled to hold back their tears as they described their loneliness and fears.

"Food...
water...
toilets...
clothes...
money...
heat...
stop the rain from leaking in."

We heard these lists from all of the refugees we met. When we asked what they might want beyond the basics, it was the first time they had stopped to think of anything other than how cold and hungry they were. "Going back," someone said, finally. He meant back to Syria, but the other implication of his words was not lost on anyone in that room.

Two Palestinian Refugee Families from Syria:

The Kheirs

“We spent eight years building our house in Syria. We lived well there, but in the last two years everything changed,” Ahmed laments. The scariest moment, he says, was hearing mortars raining on their area and not knowing where they would land. They fled for their lives to a nearby neighborhood. He went by their house to salvage some of their belongings, but everything was destroyed. When mortars started landing in their new neighborhood, they had to run again.

“We left with the clothes on our backs,” Ahmed says, repeating the most common refrain heard among the Syrian refugees. The family left Syria on January 14, only days after his wife Dima gave birth through a C-section.

“I went to the hospital three times before that, thinking the baby was coming, but I wasn't able to give birth because I was so anxious from the shelling,” Dima says.

Baby Moataz is their only son, but Ahmed feels no optimism for him. “On the contrary, my girls brought us luck. When Malak was born we bought our first car. And when Rosol was born we had enough money to finish building our house. They had a peaceful childhood,” Ahmed says.

“Moataz was born during war. He has no future.”



From War to the Squalor of Lebanon's Camps



The Oneissis

Mohammad and Alaa are living with their three young children in the Burj El Shemali camp in southern Lebanon. They fled from the Yarmouk camp in Syria in February. Mohammad's mother was sick when they arrived and died in Lebanon. Her hospital bills came to \$4,700. They still owe \$1,700, but they have no more money and have no electricity, running water or gas for cooking.

Mohammad spends his days searching for work, patching up holes and worrying that the snakes and insects infesting their shelter will bite his baby girl.

“Yesterday I sold one of our blankets to buy diapers for the baby.”



How ANERA is Responding in Lebanon



The majority of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon's camps didn't have time to think about what they would need to get them through the uncertain times that lay ahead. They had to leave fast.

Most have no possessions and now live in a country where they lack both legal protections and job prospects.

So far, the international community has focused little attention on the special challenges confronting these 37,000 refugees, but we are working to change this.

ANERA brought together 50 local and international organizations at the end of March 2013 to discuss the needs assessment we just published (see page 3) and to stress the need for an urgent and well coordinated response – from food and shelter needs to education and psychosocial needs.

For years ANERA has been delivering donated medicines and other supplies through our well-established network of local partners in Lebanon's camps. We are working with them now to get Palestinian families from Syria the supplies they need.

We are delivering nearly 25,000 quilts and 1,200 baby blankets, so families can stay warm when wind comes through the cracks in their ramshackle shelters.

We are distributing more than 14,000 hygiene kits along with extra soap, toothbrushes and towels, so families can stay clean and healthy. 14,000 more hygiene kits are on the way.

We are giving school kits to more than 5,000 children, so their transition into new schools is eased and the little ones have crayons to play with. Another 7,000 kits are on the way.

We are getting 1,700 baby care kits into the hands of families with infants, so they have changes of clothes and diapers available. Another 980 are on the way.


We are passing out vouchers to 4,000 refugees, so they can select for themselves the clothes and food that they need.

And, as always, we are providing clinics and hospitals with millions of dollars worth of donated medicines and supplies, so medical staff have what they need to treat their influx of new patients.



A special **thank you to ANERA's amazing in-kind donors:**

AmeriCares, Direct Relief, Lutheran World Relief, TOMS Shoes and UMCOR.



You can help during this crisis in Lebanon.

Refugees from Syria
rely on the generosity
of other refugees
in Lebanon's camps who
already live in poverty.

Add your hand
to theirs.

Your donations allow ANERA to respond to many of the critical needs described in this issue of ANERA News.
Use the enclosed envelope to make a donation or donate at www.anera.org.



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Explore our completely
redesigned website:
anera.org

Save the Date!

**ANERA's
2013 Annual Dinner**

when
Friday evening, October 4

where
Renaissance Washington, DC
999 Ninth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Reservations for the event can be made on ANERA's website after July 1.

New Refugees in Lebanon



from the desk of
Bill Corcoran, President

Dear Friend of ANERA:

The Syrian crisis is in the headlines almost every day. So is the dramatic plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing for their lives. Among their numbers is a group whose condition is especially dire: Palestinian refugees.

This newsletter highlights the conditions of this vulnerable population that is seeking refuge in the chronically overcrowded refugee camps of Lebanon. ANERA's comprehensive survey of the situation shows a critical shortage of food, medicines and basic supplies, like blankets, clothing and hygiene items.

Thanks to your generous support, ANERA and our partners are responding to those needs.

Many families now find themselves displaced for a second or third time in their lives and fear their refuge in Lebanon may not be so temporary. Our hope is to make their lives as comfortable as possible until they can safely return home.

Gratefully, *Bill Corcoran*