



# Christian Freedom<sup>®</sup> International



AUGUST 2016

## IRAQI REFUGEES: THEIR FAITH IS STRONGER THAN EVER.

*"Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Hebrews 13:3*



# “OUR FAITH IS STRONG, BUT OUR NUMBERS ARE DWINDLING.”



➤ **PICTURED** // Certain parts of the makeshift refugee housing has been converted to meeting places for Church services and school.

➤ Thousands of Christians in Iraq have fled their homes in the Ninevah plains, Mosel, and elsewhere and live as refugees in Northern Iraq after ISIS invaded their homelands.

The survivors of ISIS' invasion have no idea if they will ever be able to return to their homes or if their homes have been completely destroyed. They left with only the clothes they were wearing and are in desperate need of food, clothing, medicine, and most importantly prayer.



“ ONLY WHEN YOU LOSE EVERYTHING, DO YOU FIND HIM. OUR FAITH HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRONG, BUT NOW IT IS STRONGER THAN EVER.



➤ PICTURED // Fernandez, 22, is bedridden and dying of cancer. He once enjoyed playing soccer in Mosel before ISIS invaded his hometown. Fernandez keeps a Bible at the head of his bed and reads it constantly now. He kissed it and said, “My Lord and Savior is with me, He is all I need.”



➤ PICTURED ABOVE // This common kitchen area is shared by more than 140 families. Privacy and separate accommodations are nearly non-existent.



CFI PRESIDENT JIM JACOBSON AT A REFUGEE CAMP CHURCH IN IRAQ

➤ Pray for the safety of our Iraqi brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us stand beside them during this desperate time of great need.



# ACROSS THE BORDER

*A Field Report (cont.)*

## HELP



## KEEP OTHERS INFORMED ABOUT the PERSECUTED CHURCH

## PLEASE

PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ALONG WHEN YOU ARE FINISHED READING IT.

### "I MUST HAVE LOOKED LIKE A BABY GIRAFFE..."

In the afternoons when the pastor's home became unbearable, Hsa Khu Wha, Moo Nay and I would walk down to the river. There was a large tree that extended halfway across the river and there were boards that created a makeshift bridge to cross to the other side. We would each choose a branch and sit, watching the day pass.

Below our feet, fish darted back and forth and mosquitos danced on the top of the water. Fallen flowers drifted downstream and occasionally got

caught on a rock. Trash dotted the edges of the shore and every few minutes a piece of discarded trash or two would float by. In the distance were mountains with green trees climbing all the way to the peaks.

Hazy fog from illegal burnings all over the country settled over the peaks and hung in the air. This place was beautiful and awful.

Everywhere I went, there was some new experience to adapt to. Toilets consisted of a hole in the ground in a small lean to behind every main hut or wooden home. Shower facilities are

nonexistent and the river is where all of the laundry and bathing take place. Everyone came down to the river at dusk and wore a sarong either around their waist (for a male) or tucked under their arms around their chest (for women).

First, they would wash their body and hair, followed by a dip in the river, all of this done while wearing a sarong and expertly navigating their way over slick mossy rocks. After this was complete, they would head back to the shore and place a dry sarong over the wet one, shimmy out of the wet one, and re-tuck the dry one in place.



### IT WAS A SCENE TO BEHOLD...

The sun dipping down below the mountains a chill starting to lace the air. Atop all of the rocks that were too large for the river to drown were leipias (butterflies) that all rested together in neat rows. I was enthralled at this phenomenon, the multiples of butterflies that gathered at this time specific time in this specific spot. Families came to the river together, and all the children ran naked and uninhibited as they all splashed around together in nature's makeshift bath. The women would take the discarded articles of clothing from their family members, beat them on the rocks, and scrub them hard to wash out the dirt and daily grime.

I walked cautiously barefoot over the slimy and mossy rocks in the river, accidentally slipping the first night and dunking completely in the river before I had even gotten knee deep. How did they DO this?! I was shocked at the way they hopped over rocks while balancing laundry baskets and shampoos and conditioners and soaps and toothbrushes and toothpaste and a small child. I must have looked like a baby giraffe and I noticed many of the women trying to hide smirks.

I had come to the village planning to teach, and I had prepared a lesson accordingly; a few Bible songs and children's stories for a younger audience. However, the next day there were about forty students, ranging anywhere from three years old up to about fifteen. "The lesson I prepared was aimed mainly for younger children..." I whispered to my friends as we walked to the front of the hut

that serves as the classroom, to the single chalkboard that stood waiting for me.

"It's okay, tharamu, just teach them what you have, they will be happy!" Hsa Khu Wa exclaimed and I turned to face the crowd. Eager, shining faces awaited me, staring me down as if I was a new and exciting exhibit in a museum. I started with a shaky voice, writing down the lyrics to "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" and having the children sing after me, line after line. It turned out that the children already knew the tune in Karen, and so this song was quite easy for them to pick up. I taught them some simple sign language to go along with the words and soon, the little shack echoed with all of our voices melding together as one. It was one of the most beautiful sounds I have heard in this world, all of their little voices and mine, singing praises to our Father.

*(To be continued, submitted by CFI Intern A. Bovitz)*

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