

Mohammed Husnain
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Turkey x Syria refugees and orphans project

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Karim Home
ORPHANAGE



Report on charity trip to Turkey

Turkey x Syria refugees and orphans project

A diary of our visit

What are doing for our hereafter? With the busy lives we live balancing school or work with family life and maybe some 'me time' it can be easy to not think about how we can build up them good deeds for the next life. However, as Allah is most gracious there are ways for us to rack them up and one of them is looking after the orphans. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, "The guardian of the orphan and I will be in Jannah like this" and he raised his index and middle finger together. Looking after the orphans is a highly honoured act in our religion, coupled with the du'a of the oppressed which is extremely powerful there's serious potential for pages of good deeds. This is why the "Children of Paradise" initiative was launched, and this is one of the stories from it.

After months of planning as promised we visited Karim Home to support the Needs of the Orphans. The orphanage that was set up to house, protect and raise children who have been orphaned by the war in Syria or were abandoned by their parents. We sat down and spoke to the people who run the place and told them about us, who we are and what we do and they told us about how they run things. It was very clear from the start they care very deeply about the children and that this isn't a job that they clock off from at the end of the day, they're here 24/7 for them.



Then the kids came in one by one, warmly greeting us and capturing our hearts straightaway with their smiles that lit up the room. They told us with excitement about what they want to be when they are older. Doctors, pilots, cameramen, footballers - their reasons were centred on their experience of the war and wanting to protect others.



As well as being full of joy the kids are also hard working as they demonstrated by starting to put together some food packs before we arrived. Part of our visit to Gaziantep was to provide food packs to families in

need, where the man of the house had passed away leaving the widow to work and provide for the children or where families were just



struggling financially. In each of the food packs we have flour, cooking oil, rice, sugar, salt, lentils, pasta, chicken and meat to name a few. Each food parcel weighs around 40kg in the end with enough food to feed a small

family for three weeks. With each food pack we also gave an envelope which donors had sent as Zakat or Sadaqah. Syrians are treated like second class citizens here, sending money to a Syrian in Turkey is a complicated process and then for them to withdraw that money is even more difficult due to arbitrary financial rules.

Therefore the money given in envelopes will also provide the families with brief financial relief. In situations like this it is clear that zakat is more than a religious obligation, it is a form of social welfare which benefits communities.



We knew we were going to meet a lot of people because of the work we were going to do but we weren't prepared for the stories we'd hear. We heard from one girl about how she had to marry when she was 13 as her parents couldn't afford to raise her any longer only for her to go through a divorce and leave with her 3 children.

In another house we walked into an empty room, and noticed there wasn't any furniture so assumed the family had just moved in. Turns out the man has a blood condition which requires daily injections to manage and they had to sell the furniture in the house to pay for them. They have 3 children. Similarly another family depends on the mother to provide as the husband had an accident which left him with a shattered pelvis. They have 8 children, the eldest is 12 and is deaf and another child is mute. We met a man who worked as a nurse in Syria but is now bed bound due to a bone illness.



An elderly lady is the dependant of her children and grandchildren and works as a cook in a small kitchen to make ends meet. We met an elderly man who was shot by a sniper when he was in Syria and lost his eyesight in one eye and another elderly couple both in their 90's that still work to provide for their grandchildren as the parents were killed. We met many children who's lives were destroyed as a result of the shelling in Syria.

One of the case studies of children of war from Karim Home is the story of a girl named Fatima. A couple of years ago Fatima was walking down the

street in her neighbourhood in Syria when she was hit by shrapnel from a nearby bomb explosion. Her younger brother dug through dead bodies to find her barely showing sign of life, he pulled her out and took her to the hospital. Her wounds were so deep she lost one of her kidneys and the ability to have children. When she was well enough she travelled into Turkey with her brothers and was taken in by Karim Home, escaping a life of torture at the hands of ISIS or the Syrian regime. She is 19 years old now and still suffers from nerve damage and a heavily scarred body. Despite this she is incredibly resilient, demanding she be treated the same as the other children despite her condition.

On one of the days we visited a refugee camp near the town of Kilis which is right on the border with Syria. As we drove closer to the camp our Syrian driver told us about how fast his heart was beating. Memories of his life in Syria came flooding back but that's all

they will be, memories, as

returning to Syria means returning to oppression and the constant risk of being caught in between battles. Beyond the gates were 10,000 people, many of them had been there for over nine years living in containers. Nowhere to call home, nowhere to go.

Five men came out to take back food parcels for their families. Each face told a story of sorrow and struggles that words will never be able to articulate. The more time we spent at



the camp the more people came out so we couldn't stay long. On the way back to Gaziantep we looked back at the camp and as it gradually shrunk into the distance the feeling of guilt grew inside us knowing we can't help everyone. We'd soon be on our way back to our homes while those people would be stuck there, unknown to the world.

Later that day we went into Kilis to distribute the remainder of the food parcels and Zakat and Sadaqah. One of the boys with us, Aadil, grew up in Kilis so he had the chance to give back to the family he grew up with. We stopped off to open our fasts and then carried on well into the night delivering the last food parcel just after midnight.



The next day, our final day, we had some zakat still to give out as we had people donating while we were working. After this we went back to Karim Home to take some of the kids out for their first trip to the mall. One of the boys, Jamal, is wonderfully talented

particularly at football so we bought him a pair of football shoes and shoes for the rest of the boys that came with us. For the rest of the kids we bought sports equipment such as footballs, goals, and badminton sets and clothes.

Later that night we opened our fasts with Karim Home. Their warm hospitality made us feel welcome and like family every time we went there.



We opened our fasts, sat together and relaxed and laughed and then gave out their presents. Each child stood up smiling from ear to ear and excitement in their legs to get their gifts.

Karim Home faces long term uncertainty as the building is rented and in need of refurbishment. Our long term plan is to be able to provide a sustainable future by housing the orphans in a place of their own without the fear of being evicted at any time. As an organisation we have pledged £30,000 this year to help run the place. After speaking to the management team it became clear the best way to help them is to help purchase land on which they can build a purpose built facility tailored to the needs of the children, some with complex needs due to disabilities. If you would like to donate to this cause please reach out, the children need somewhere secure to live without the risk of being evicted and our 100% donation promise will ensure your donation goes straight to them.

We also hope to equip and support the children through high school and further studies, eventually seeing them through university. The children deserve an equal chance as any other child. With the support of our donors at AlAjar UK - inshaAllah we can make this dream a reality for these special children.

Our trip to Karim Home is one we will never forget, we came as 5 and gained 40 new family members in the children and the staff. The memories we made and their smiles are engraved on our hearts. We'd like to thank Abdul Wahab and Moeen for helping us in delivering the food parcels. Sister Elaph and her mother, the founders of Karim Home for having us and a special thank you to Sister Lubabah for being so good to us and orchestrating the visit.

Children are an amanah to you, nurture them with love and they will bear you fruit in the next life. May this be the start of a long lasting relationship which begins in this world and continues into the next.