

Presentation for PPAC 18.11.13 on the situation in Jordan

Following a reception at the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem with one of the assistant bishops, we received a mixed message. Regular and productive meetings are taking place between Muslims, Christians and Jews but nevertheless, many Palestinians are suffering from discrimination and are confined behind thirty foot walls. For Christians in Jordan, unlike the rest of the Holy Land, the so called "living stones" or descendants of the original Christians, the situation is stable and the numbers are not declining.

Refugees from the catastrophic civil war in Syria are imposing a severe strain on a small country. He felt that the great powers should not be arming either side in the war and that the only solution to the refugee problem must come through negotiations. At present there are 4 million refugees in surrounding countries, over a million in Jordan a small country with a population of only 6 million. Thousands more join them every day.

We were to meet an elderly nun from Syria who told us that the priest in her village had been shot by Islamists and they had told her that the nuns would be next if they did not leave. Next day they closed their house and three nuns made their way to Amman where they were taken in by the Rosary Sisters.

We visited a refugee relief centre run by CARITAS Jordan, in Mafrak close to the Syrian border and met some of the refugees attending for emergency relief. They included a woman with five children, all in light clothing and one still in nappies. We also met a woman with a two week old baby. There was a line of other mothers and children waiting, but no men. We were told that they had lost contact with their husbands, some of whom were fighting and others killed or imprisoned.

CARITAS Jordan is supported by several European CARITAS bodies but also received funding from the Jordanian government. The Catholic church because it had a presence on the ground including schools was being used to bring relief. This included classes for refugee children after normal school hours.

Amongst the relief given were, nappies, food vouchers, rent, and emergency medical and dental services. There was a lack of