Iraq Letter 8
August 17, 2014

Dear all,

After eleven days, it feels like we are on the same day we left. Some people are still in the streets, others are still in the parks, and some take refuge in schools. People are desperate to find a place to stay; even construction sites, unfinished buildings, private event halls, and basements are inhabited. A lot of people are living in unfurnished apartments, and homes, with sinfully high prices. People in the houses are sleeping on the floor, because they cannot afford to buy furniture. Some were fortunate to find a place to stay with relatives, in houses overloaded with people. On top of everything, refugees are running out of money, as they cannot pull money from banks, neither can they find jobs to work.

The disaster is overwhelming, and we are unable to comprehend it all. Our church leaders assured us that the Kurdish army would protect us. But they pulled out suddenly, from several towns in the plain of Nineveh and we had to make a quick decision to leave. In no time, most people directed themselves to Erbil, the closest city in Kurdistan. The city is packed with people, more than 75,000 people fled to it. That is apart from people who went to other cities like Kirkuk, Zakho, Sulaimania and Akra.

There is enormous lack of supplements, food, water, clothes, medication, housing, and money. And Erbil cannot accommodate all these people. However, we are doing what we can. All sisters, who are able to work, leave every morning, until evening, trying to help people settle and provide some food, with the help of the church and refugee centres.

We cannot rely on the central government as it is in process of forming and it is unable to protect the minority. Additionally, so far it seems like there are no serious actions against the ISIS by the world government. People lost confidence in everything, in government, in Kurdish protection, in church, even in the international military forces. Therefore, 90% of people want to leave. However, that is not easy at all, as so many of them have no passports or travel documents. The other choice people have is to stay, but this is even more difficult. Winter is coming, people cannot stay in the street, their children need to go to school, and they need jobs for living.

We need to serve people and we would like you to help us with that. There are so many people in refugee centres, who are receiving nothing, and we would like to help them with food, medication, clothes and other things. To do that, we need financial help.

As for us, as a community, we left nineteen places of ours, which include convents, schools and orphanages. Moreover, we have learned that our convent and the orphanage we own in Bartila have been taken by the ISIS. Also, our convents in Mosul and in Tal Kaif were taken (including school and kindergarten).

Sisters are scattered everywhere and we need to gather, at least in two communities in Duhok and Ankawa. In Ankawa, we have a piece of land, and we are thinking of buying caravans. Things might improve, and we might be returning for a while, however, we do not think it will be safe in the future. That is why we would appreciate any kind of help you might be able to offer.
Thank you so very much, and please remember the Iraqis in your prayers.

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