



REFUGE: This group of faith and secular community members organized in June 2014 to bring 3 families (6 adults, 18 children) of Syrian refugees to Winnipeg. It is working with Westworth United Church and the United Church of Canada, a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) with the government of Canada.

Background: Millions of Syrian refugees live in camps outside their country, especially in Lebanon and Jordan. With the Syrian civil war entering its fourth year, the plight of many people is desperate. When the Canadian government agreed in July 2013 to resettle 1,300 refugees by the end of 2014, it said it would take responsibility for resettling 200 "extremely vulnerable" Syrian refugees while another 1,100 would be privately sponsored. While refugees sponsored privately may take as long as 5 years to arrive in Canada, working with a SAH expedites the process, though it may still take as long as 12-18 months.

The families: Three families of refugees escaped from Syria and are living 8 or 9 people to a shack in Beirut, Lebanon. These families have experienced deprivation and trauma. They have close relatives who have been killed or incarcerated and are therefore targets of the current regime. They cannot legally work in Lebanon and survive on meagre aid from the UN. Each family consists of a mother, father and young children. The oldest child is 15 years and one child has a prosthetic leg following an injury sustained during a demonstration early in the troubles. These families are close relatives of a Canadian citizen who lives in Winnipeg.

Financial support: REFUGE must be able to support the families for 12 months, providing basic needs of food, shelter, etc. Because privately sponsored refugees are granted permanent resident status upon arrival in Canada, they will be eligible for a Social Insurance Number, Manitoba Health Coverage, Pharmacare and family doctor services. For this group of 24 people, REFUGE must raise \$120,000 to support the settlement process. Pledges to date total just over 100,000. Approximately \$90,000 of this has been donated. An additional \$15,000 to \$20,000 is needed.

Other support: When the refugees arrive, REFUGE will provide support for housing, food, clothing, and furniture. They will also provide guidance and mentorship, and help with transportation, school enrolment for the children, English classes for the adults, orientation to Canadian culture, Winnipeg weather, shopping, and essential services.

The Canadian government is under increasing pressure to remove barriers to Syrian refugees coming to Canada. REFUGE is optimistic that these families will arrive in Winnipeg soon. Donations and volunteers are needed to support their settlement in Winnipeg.

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