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PRESS RELEASE

LWF Leaders Urge Member Churches to Advocate for Syrian Refugees

Additional support needed for refugees who risk hunger and starvation

Younan and Junge Underline “Desperate Situation”

GENEVA, 11 December 2014 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President and General Secretary have jointly urged LWF member churches to actively advocate for additional support to sustain Syrian refugees who currently face “the risk of hunger and starvation”.

“Without additional support, the food delivery programs can only be sustained until the end of January 2015,” LWF President Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge stated in a joint letter to LWF member churches today.

“It is with dismay that we have been following news about social debate and policy developments in several countries, which instead of keeping a focus on how to protect refugees and to welcome the stranger, seem to be more concerned about protecting borders,” Younan and Junge wrote to the LWF member churches.

“We write this letter to you in order to ask you to intercede for Syrian refugees by advocating with your respective governments for greater solidarity so that the international community meets its obligation to protect refugees.”

The LWF leaders asked the churches to intercede for the refugees by advocating with their respective governments to scale up financial support and to increase the number of

people to be accepted for resettlement, asylum and family reunion beyond countries neighboring Syria.

Younan and Junge noted the “astonishing generosity to protect refugees” by countries that neighbor Syria, including Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, which all together host over 2.6 million Syrians. The LWF Department for World Service is active in both Jordan’s Za’atri camp and host communities as well as in Iraq.

The LWF leaders also asked churches through their specialized ministries to protect and support refugees living in their respective countries, and to continue their assistance towards LWF’s work among Syrian refugees.

They reiterated churches’ role in promoting the document “Welcoming the Stranger,” which was jointly developed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and faith-based organizations including the LWF to underline the role of faith communities in welcoming displaced persons. The document which the LWF Council adopted in June 2013 and which was subsequently sent to the member churches for study, affirms the “duty to act with love toward those in need, regardless of their religion, gender or nationality.”

In this Advent season, the LWF president and general secretary note that, while Lutherans around the world prepare to celebrate Christmas, food aid to Syrian refugees had to be cut due to lack of funding.

They invite the churches to consider the Advent and Christmas seasons as an opportunity “to speak relevantly to situations of forced migration and exclusion of refugees around the world today.”

More information about support towards LWF’s emergency response for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Iraq is available at <http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/emergency-northern-iraq-crisis> and <http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/emergency-syrian-refugees-jordan>

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