

Karlsruhe, April 15, 2014

Cast away in no man's land

As the big refugee camps for Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan are often the focal point of media-attention, the numerous smaller camps in neighboring countries are easily overlooked. An emergency-pedagogic team of the Friends of Waldorf Education visited two of those smaller camps in the autonomous region of Kurdistan-Iraq from March 29 until April 11 2014. On this assignment the Friends were once again supported by Germany's Relief Coalition.

The Friends of Waldorf Education have already worked in remote refugee-camps in various regions of the world. The world in general barely noticed these camps, which is why the present assignment in two small refugee-camps in the autonomous region of Kurdistan-Iraq is all the more important to the Friends. During this assignment, an emergency-pedagogic team of the Friends of Waldorf Education offered emergency-pedagogic relief to children and adolescents in the refugee camps. This 'first aid for the soul' will help their process of assimilating the traumatizing events they experienced and thus, in the long-run, help avoid post-traumatic stress disorders.

At first the Friends planned to work at the Gawilan refugee-camp, however the security situation in the camp, which at present is a complex one, hindered them from entering the grounds. In view of the tense situation at Gawilan, the team transferred their resources into smaller camps and successfully carried out their assignment at the new locations.

The emergency-pedagogic team was welcomed into a school in the Kawergosk refugee-camp. Here, **the Friends of Waldorf Education** cooperated with the Norwegian NGO **Norwegian Refugee Council**, which already organized arts- and sports- programs for school-children at the Kawergosk camp. During the second week of the assignment the team was offered to work at a child-protection center at the Basrma refugee-camp. This camp is located in the mountains and is run by the Kurdish government. Only a few NGOs operate here. Most of the 750 families in the camp came from rural regions in Syria and already lived in humble conditions before they had to flee their homes. In cooperation with the pedagogues at the child-protection center, about 150 children and adolescents received a trauma-pedagogic counseling. Many of the children showed obvious trauma-induced symptoms. Violence-prone behavior, speech disorder, or even a loss of speech, and visible injuries are proof of the horrible experiences which they were exposed to in their home-countries and on the flight.

The children and the co-workers at the child-protection center received the emergency-pedagogues' workshops, such as experiential education and art-therapy, with enthusiasm. Many local educators voiced their strong interest in continued emergency-pedagogic trainings.

Besides working at the camps, the Friends also used this assignment to lay the ground for a long-term engagement in the region: Important links were established with the UNO, with which the Friends already have an ongoing partnership, and with the Kurdish government. In close cooperation with both institutions the Friends could lay the ground for further assignments. The Friends plan to carry these assignments out in a bigger network, which will include various refugee-camps in the region around Erbil.

Clara Krug
Public relations for Emergency Pedagogy
Phone: 0721-354806 183
Fax: 0721-354806 180
E-Mail: c.krug@freunde-waldorf.de
Homepage: www.freunde-waldorf.de

*The **Friends of Waldorf Education** are worldwide sponsors of a free education system. Since 1971 they advocate Waldorf education and the freedom of education systems. Since 1993 the office in Karlsruhe organizes and supervises international volunteer services, worldwide. Since summer 2011 it is possible to fulfill a 12-month civil service in anthroposophic institutions through the association.*

Since 2006 the Friends of Waldorf Education are active in the area of emergency pedagogy. Following the outbreak of a war or a natural disaster, they worked with psychologically traumatized children and adolescents in Lebanon (2006), China (2008 and 2013); Gaza (2009-2013), Indonesia (2009), Haiti (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2010), Japan (2011), and Kenya (2012-2013).



Freunde der Erziehungskunst is a member of **Germany's Relief Coalition**, a union of German relief organisations that can provide rapid and effective aid in the case of large catastrophes and emergency situations abroad.