

Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Erbil



Humanitarian Relief Programs

Ankawa Humanitarian Committee (AHC)

2014 - 2020



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Introduction:	4
Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil's Humanitarian Response	6
1. Humanitarian Emergency: Food, Shelter, Medicine and Pastoral Care.	7
2. Seeking Donors (Conducted by Steve Rasche and John Neill)	9
3. Shelter	10
4. Food Distribution program (Directed by Fahmi Babaka and Dildar Kaka)	13
5. Pastoral Care	14
6. Health Programs	17
7. Education	22
8. Syrian Refugee Crisis (Directed by Fr. Shwan Kakona and Lito Articono)	27
9. Transitional Assistance for IDPs in Erbil, Iraq	30
Founding Ankawa Humanitarian Committee (AHC)	32
AHC Mission Statement	32
Financial needs, Now and the Future.....	32



Introduction:

In August 2014, the hatred of *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria*, known as *ISIS*, brought about the displacement of over half a million people the Ninewa Plain and Mosul in Northern Iraq/Kurdistan. They implemented a systematic campaign to empty the region of religious and ethnic diversity; Christians, Turkmen, Yazidis, Shabak, and others faced genocide, murder abductions, and persecution. Women were passed around as sexual slaves and/or coerced into marriage; children were forcibly recruited as *ISIS* combatants. Many of the minority communities fled to overseas camps or to the diaspora, with the majority left becoming internally displaced people (IDPs). While some were able to flee to relatively safe areas, others have since resided in highly volatile and economically unstable regions. By the end of 2015, 18 months after the *ISIS* onslaught, the International Organization for Migration IOM had recorded 175,000 families displaced from the Ninewa Plain, of whom 32,000 were still within the governorate itself. The Duhok governorate hosted 74,000 families while Baghdad, Erbil, Karbala, and Najaf each hosted around 13,000 families. Patterns of displacement have emerged whereby linguistic, religious, and/or ethnic affinity determined the choice of area of displacement. Minorities sought protection in regions where they could feel safe within the community; nearly 75,000 Christians fled to the Christian sub-district in Ankawa, Erbil. While minorities of the Shi'a faith sought refuge in governorates such as Karbala and Najaf, Yazidis from Ninewa Plain mostly relocated to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) or Kurdish-controlled parts of northern Ninewa. Those who could only go to camps were effectively divided according to their ethnic and/or religious belonging.





Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil's Humanitarian Response

The IDPs who fled to Erbil and specifically Ankawa had to flee their homes in the middle of the night and were not able to take any of their belongings. *ISIS* burnt their homes, they stole their possession, they destroyed precious photographs of their lives and ancestors, and they took away their lives, livelihoods, and education for their children.





People were left with nothing but the clothes they were wearing in the sweltering heat of August. Their futures had disappeared. All of a sudden, they were refugees dependent on the charity of others. They had nothing, no extra clothes, food, water, hygiene, and medications. They were stripped bare by the hatred of others. Their lives were daily being eroded by homelessness, wearing the same clothes and not being able to even take a proper wash. They lived through anxiety, trauma, and the overriding fear that their futures in Iraq were destroyed forever.

The immediate response of the *Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil* was to seek international aid, from the Local and International agencies. This and other great actions from the community and its volunteers saved up to 13,000 families from a humanitarian crisis.

The activities conducted by the *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* to alleviate the suffering of the IDPs are briefly described in this booklet.

1. Humanitarian Emergency: Food, Shelter, Medicine and Pastoral Care.



As mentioned earlier, the IDPs did not carry anything when they were displaced from their areas of origin. The *Archdiocese* began to prepare immediate basic needs like water and food for everyone who sought shelter in its premises. Volunteers from the Ankawa community rushed to the churches to make this possible.

The immediate response of the *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* included:

- a. Providing shelters, which included opening all church buildings and other private centers that were opened based on *the Archdiocese's* request.
- b. Distribution of mattresses.
- c. Distribution of water and three meals a day.
- d. Opening a small field medical clinic with the help of a team of volunteer doctors who addressed basic and medical emergencies, in addition to the distribution of chronic medication.

People from different religions and ethnic backgrounds rushed to help in every way possible, from providing water and meals, to donating money, to volunteering as field assistants.

As tragic and dreadful were those first days of IDPs in Erbil, they also showed how the whole community could come together as one, proving that in times of crisis, each individual can help to ease the sufferings of others.





2. Seeking Donors (Conducted by Steve Rasche and John Neill)

The *Archdiocese* envisioned that seeking help and assistance from national and international donors will require actual raw data and details about the number and vulnerability of IDPs. Therefore, *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* created a database for the IDPs and their needs in order to convey that message.

All the information was taken manually and converted electronically. It was an immense task but the young volunteers from Ankawa worked day and night were supervised by Fr. Salem Saka and Fr. Rayan Atto to achieve that goal.

Creating an accurate database reinforced greatly the *Archdiocese's* senior advisers (Steve Rasche and John Neill) efforts in reaching out to donors and getting international support to help the vulnerable IDPs.



3. Shelter

3.1. Rental Programs (Directed by Fr. Shwan Kakona)

Housing and shelter remained a critical need for 13,000 families most of whom had no money. During the first phase of the displacement, most IDPs stayed inside churches, unfinished buildings, camps, and schools provided by the Kurdistan government.





Transferring the families to more private shelters was deemed to be necessary, *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* in cooperation with international NGOs set up two rental programs, run by *Fr. Shwan Kakona*.

The first of the two rental programs was able to support more than 9,000 IDP families from Nineveh Plain. The rent was covered fully by the *Archdiocese* and it lasted for three years.

The second program was based on covering a percentage of the IDPs' monthly rental cost. Total number of beneficiaries was close to 4,250 families. With this program, the *Archdiocese* provided \$100 - \$150 per month per family.

It meant that up to some four generations of families were living together in one house, but it was better than living outside in tents or up to 20 people living in one room. Dignity and some semblance of living again, was brought to people.



3.2. McGivney House in Erbil (Directed by Steve

Rasche)

The *Knights of Columbus* assisted in the construction of *McGivney House*, a 140-unit apartment building that provided housing for displaced families in Iraq.

McGivney House gave shelter to over 110 displaced families originally from the Nineveh plain. Special units were designed for the elderly who were left without care in the aftermath of the onslaught from ISIS.

For hundreds of IDP families in northern Iraq, uprooted from their homes by Islamic State militants in 2014, the opening of *McGivney House* in Erbil offered a promise of a new beginning and allowed these IDPs to once again have a dignified living in their homeland.



4. Food Distribution program (Directed by Fahmi Babaka and Dildar Kaka)

As soon as some sort of shelter was provided for the IDPs who were staying in churches and unfinished buildings. The *Archdiocese* established a food Assistance program that was greatly supported by *Aid to the Church in Need* and *Knights of Columbus*. The food packages were distributed on a monthly basis, including items such as cooking oil, rice, grains, meat, and vegetables. The cost of each food package was held steady at \$60 per month per family. This program lasted for one year and a half, through which 150,000 food packages were distributed to the IDP families.





5. Pastoral Care

5.1. Surviving the Emotional Trauma

The 2014 crisis had a big impact on the psychological well-being of the IDP families and their children specifically. As a way to overcome their psychological distress, young volunteers organized multiple activities for the IDP children which included dancing, sport games, singing competitions, and movie nights. The volunteers also arranged different talent shows based on various age ranges. In addition, several sewing workshops were held for IDP women.

Moreover, the volunteers organized multiple hymns and praying events for the IDPs led by choirs, giving them spiritual comfort during the times of crisis.

Many private and international donors were interested in supporting the psychological well-being of the IDP children, assisting them in providing toys and building playing areas.

The above-mentioned activities along with the support of private and international donors were the bases to the creation and establishment of the *Center Self in Need*.



5.2. Center Self in Need (Directed by Fr. Douglas Bazi)

The hatred of *ISIS* scarred the IDPs, not just physically, but caused immense emotional trauma. The *Archdiocese* established care centers for traumatic stress, providing psychosocial counseling free of charge to thousands of IDPs, focusing especially on the needs of women and children.

The *Center for Self in Need* in Erbil was opened in September 2015 for IDPs who needed psychological help to process their traumatic experiences (including domestic violence brought on by men not able to provide for their families and children). In 2017, the *Center* started offering advanced psychological level courses.

One of the *Center's* core activities was initiated in April 2016 and focused on offering help and support for children with special needs. This initiative worked with IDP children from the camps in Ankawa and other parts of Erbil.





6. Health Programs

6.1. Medical Assistance **(Directed by Dr. Saveen Oghana and Dr. Rami Al-Hurmuzi)**

Responding to the health crisis facing the IDP community, *H.E. Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda* launched several healthcare institutions, including the *St. Joseph Charity Clinic (SJCC)*, a non-profit day clinic that was launched in summer 2014 with the help of volunteering medical doctors and specialists.





The *clinic* started providing its free continuous medical care and medications to the IDPs in a small room (just 3mx3m) located in *St. Joseph Refugee Camp* (at St. Joseph Cathedral). And thus, it was named *St. Joseph Charity Clinic*.

The *Clinic* was visited by international donors, including the “*Malteser International*” and “*foundation de Mérieux*”. These two donors financed the construction of a new building for *SJCC*.

The clinic moved to the new location on 31st of October 2014, and the official opening ceremony was held on the same day.

The staff consisted of volunteers: nine Specialist Physicians, ten General Physicians, five Pharmacists, three Nurses (who joined the staff from the *Sisters of the Holy Cross*, India) and three medical college students who helped with sorting medicines, data entry & other tasks.

The *Clinic* received IDPs and other patients 6 days a week.





6.2. Chronic Medications Program (Directed by the Sisters of the Holy Cross)

The construction of the new building for the *Clinic* was finished on 31st of October 2014, a few weeks after that, a new program was adopted by *Saint Joseph Charity Clinic* to distribute the Medication for IDPs suffering from chronic diseases on a monthly basis.

The *Clinic* provided medication for chronic diseases like (Hypertension, Diabetes, Heart Diseases, Epilepsy. etc.). Certain vulnerable IDPs suffering from cancer were supported by covering their medical expenses.

In the first stage of registration for the new program, about 1000 IDPs registered to receive their medication. By the end of the registration process, *SJCC* had a database of over 2800 patients receiving their medical assistance on a monthly basis free of charge.

In late 2017, and after the liberation of Mosul and other parts of the Nineveh plain, the program continued to provide the registered beneficiaries with the necessary medications.

The *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* was later able to expand the program to include some Syrian refugees and local retired people from the city of Ankawa. The registered number reached 2233 beneficiaries (1968 IDPs, 120 Syrian refugees, 145 retired people of Ankawa).

Starting in May 2017 till the last day of the *Clinic*, the program was funded by *Hungary Helps*. The distribution of chronic medication on IDPs and vulnerable people continued till the end of Dec/2019 due to lack of international funds.





6.3. Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil implements COVID-19 related emergency activities:



After three months of total lockdown that was imposed by the government to limit the spread of the virus, public facilities reopened their doors for the people, and life resumed with adaptation to the new situation. COVID-19 cases continued to rise with the lockdown's lift, due to lack of awareness of using masks and sanitizers, and the community's limited access to such protection materials due to lack of money.

The *Archdiocese* therefore reached out to mosques, churches, and Directorate of Rural Education to distribute masks, hand sanitizers, hand sanitizer stands with electronic dispensers and printing materials for COVID-19 awareness.

A total of 600 boxes of non-medical masks, 170 boxes of hand sanitizers, 10,000 COVID-19 awareness brochures and 20 hand sanitizers stands were distributed.



The *Archdiocese* was
Scholars Union-Erbil
Chaldean H.E. Archbishop Bashar Warda





personally meeting with the head of ISU-Erbil branch *Sheikh Niaz Raghieb Naqshbandi*, along with the medical staff from the *Archdiocese*. Together they discussed and encouraged the coexistence and fraternity of Christians and Muslims together through hundreds of years in this land. In this all shall continue to help one another and prosper as one society of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. The two also talked about community and religious leaders coming together to guide and instruct the worshippers of following the Ministry of Health guidelines to self-protection and controlling the spread of the pandemic.

The pandemic has affected and continues to affect everyday life of everyone, regardless of religious and ethnic backgrounds. All families are being hit financially and this rebounds very badly on the minorities where livelihood programs of any significance have not been initiated since the crisis. In these times, unity and mutual understanding helps a community to survive. The *Archdiocese* will always work to provide comfort and aid for the local community. The generous donations of *Catholic Relief Services (CRS)* and other international donors will always help the *Archdiocese* carry out that goal.

7. Education

Education is vital to bring hope to the IDPs, and it was the goal of *H.E. Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda* to ensure the continuity of educational career of these people.

Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil launched several educational institutions, including: building Educational Schools, hosting Hamdaniya University in Erbil and building the First Catholic University in Iraq.

7.1. Building Educational Schools for IDPs.



With the generous donations of international donors, *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* built four schools in Erbil city dedicated to the IDP Children from 2014 until 2017. Two of which are still operational and are devoted to the IDP children whose families are currently residing in Erbil.

The schools were open to students from the IDP families of various faiths and ethnicities, building the goal of diversity and coexistence among the young individuals. They are being helped to pursue their education and their future goals.

The *Archdiocese* is financially supporting over 35 per cent of the 844 pupils at the four schools: 231 IDPs and 69 refugees from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

7.2. Hosting Hamdaniya University of Mosul in Erbil.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the central government of Iraq instructed the management of Hamdaniya University, which was previously located in the Nineveh Plains, to close down its doors and move to an alternative location. *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* helped by providing them with land in Ankawa to construct the university building, with the help of overseas aid.





The first phase of the building was dedicated to construct 24 classrooms, computer labs, and 14 administrative rooms for the lecturers and the management of the university. The rooms were fully furnished in addition to the installation of ACs and a generator for the complex. During the first phase, the building received 1,300 students, 56 university instructors, and 80 administrators.

The second phase of the project included the construction of eight additional classrooms and a multi-purpose hall in addition to parking lots, the installation of a second generator, and additional services required for the university.

7.3. Establishing the Catholic University in Iraq.

In 2014 the evil of *ISIS* not only destroyed Iraq but deprived hundreds of thousands of young people their education. The *Catholic University in Erbil (CUE)* was founded in December 2015 to give back to these young people their right to education and hope.



For a community that lost many of its people along with its homes, jobs, and money, *CUE* provided a sense of safety, normality and belonging. It continues this mission today under circumstances where *ISIS* has been defeated, but displacement and uncertainty continues for many. *CUE* is a statement that, out of tragedy God



can provide an answer for hope and the future. *CUE*, while it maintains a catholic identity, welcomes students of all religious and ethnic backgrounds to learn in an environment of mutual respect, coexistence tolerance, and academic excellence, promoting quality, dignity, and justice. *CUE* is a key structure in keeping Christianity in Iraq.

CUE presently has nine departments and 124 students. The *Archdiocese* is financially supporting over 60 per cent of the 124 student fees at *CUE*.





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8. Syrian Refugee Crisis

is **(Directed**

by Fr. Shwan Kakona and Lito Articono)

Since 2011 and the outbreak of war in Syria, Syrian refugees have been a part of Erbil community. However, they remain vulnerable and their situation have not improved throughout the years. A lot of them sought shelter in Erbil to apply for immigration with *United Nations*, while others tried to adapt and integrate in the local community of Erbil.

The *Archdiocese* has and continues to help Syrian vulnerable refugees through different programs that vary from giving monthly food baskets to providing chronic medications and distribution of cash assistance.



The most recent program implemented by *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* to help Syrian refugees was done through donations from the *Aid to Church in Need* from a major contribution by the *Archbishops of Austria*. Through this fund, the *Archdiocese* responded to the call of nearly 500 Syrian refugee families who remain extremely vulnerable due to the economic crisis and then to COVID-19. The cash assistance program included giving \$100 for 500 households for 5 months, which lasted from March until July 2020.





9. Transitional Assistance for IDPs in Erbil, Iraq

Since the right to return in July 2017 many IDPs were not able to return to their areas of origin due to many reasons including insecure areas of origin, lack of employment and destroyed properties. They stayed dependent on the charity of the local community, but even the local community suffers from unemployment. USAID funded Transitional Assistance program through which The *Archdiocese* and CRS worked together to help around 2,800 IDP households in Ankawa and Erbil.

The *Archdiocese* with the help and management of CRS provided multi-purpose cash assistance of \$150 per month to targeted households for nine months to help meet their essential needs.

The project's criteria included IDPs that are from persecuted religious and ethnic backgrounds. Helping minorities from Nineveh plain and Mosul city to live in dignity in areas of displacement or return to their areas of origin.

The implementing partners also used this program as a research project to understand key barriers faced by religious minority IDPs, as well as the effect of cash and information on decision-making, and looking for opportunities to learn and to successfully cope with the future.





Founding Ankawa Humanitarian Committee (AHC)

In Feb 2020, *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* Represented by *H.E. Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda* founded *Ankawa Humanitarian Committee (AHC)* as a legal representative NGO to carry out the *Archdiocese's* humanitarian work and reach out to national and international donors.

AHC hopes to expand on the *Archdiocese's* activities to reach all vulnerable people that struggle to survive in Iraq.



AHC Mission Statement

"In a fragile and traumatized community, humanitarian and developmental work becomes an undisputed need. AHC is directed towards every area of need of Iraq's community: from economic poverty, education, equal rights, female empowerment, IDP and Refugee support, social cohesion and coexistence. We will address the long-term humanitarian challenges Iraq has faced for many decades with accountability, compassion and long held Christian values. To build a community, where each citizen is able to participate fully in the life of their country." (Mission of AHC, 2020)

Financial needs, Now and the Future





All of the above support contributed to providing the *IDPs* with adequate accommodation, food, health care, education, and pastoral care. It also contributed to reviving the economic life of the IDPs in Erbil.

The financial support also contributed to providing job opportunities and helped create small businesses such as groceries, household utensil shops and market stalls. The IDPs did not want to be a burden on the local economy but rather a support amid the ongoing economic crisis.

Table 1 contains a list of the donors who supported the *Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil* to carry out the relief programs. It should be pointed out that some of the donor societies also sent sums of money to support these programs.

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Table 1: List of International Donors

1	Aid to the Church In Need
2	Knights of Columbus
3	Italian Episcopal Conference
4	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
5	Caritas Italy
6	Nazarene Fund
7	Rottenburg– Stuttgart Diocese
8	Caritas Ambrosiana Rubrica
9	Oeuvre D Orient
10	Fondazione PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions)
11	Missio – Aachen
12	CNEWA – Pontifical Mission
13	Iraqi Christians In Need
14	Katholische Zentralstelle, Fürer entwicklungshilfe E. v.
15	Chaldean Diocese in Cairo
16	Misereor
17	Caritas Essen



18	Malteser Hilfsdienst E.V. Kalker
19	Apostolic Nunciature to Iraq
20	The Congregation of the Holy Most Redeemer
21	Catholic Relief Service CRS
22	Ordensgemeinschaft der Armen Fran
23	World Vision International (WVI)
24	Schweizerische Kapuzinerprovinz
25	Tearfund
26	Caritas Slovakia
27	Anba Abraam's Coptic Charity
28	Comunita' di Sant' Egidio
29	Father Ragheeds Fraternity
30	Mssio London
31	Heilige Thomas Apostel (Holland)
32	Gift of Holy Father
33	The Chaldean Mission – Denmark
34	Danmission Strandger
35	Association for the promotion of Faith



36	Mar Aday Kaldeiska Kyrka
37	Hungary Helps
38	Mennonite Central Committee
39	Christuskirchengemei NDE
40	The Archdiocesan Development fund of the Catholic Center Australia
41	Caritas Liban RUE
42	Maffeis Ivsn via Doss del Sabion
43	Zentralat Orientalischer Christen in Deutschland E.V Stefan George Ring
44	Solidarite orient ASBL
45	Support International E. V. Z. HD.
46	St. Tomas Chaldean Catholic Church USA
47	Sicomoro Parrocchia San Fruttuoso in Monza
48	Donation from Australia to Sr. Basima Ibrahim Pertus