

# REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION MINISTRIES REPORT to Week of Compassion Board (for Oct. 2014-Apr. 2015)

from Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea



RIM's door is OPEN TO YOU!

*In late March, Syria's conflict entered its fifth year, and is the worst humanitarian crisis in the world--with nearly 4 million Syrian refugees currently in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, and 7.8 million displaced within Syria. Almost half of Syria's people have fled their homes in the past 4 years.*

*"We have only a narrow opportunity to intervene now as this potentially lost generation confronts its future."*

*(UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres)*

**Disciples Home Missions and Disciples Women leaders are currently in the region to learn and to help. Church World Service staff travelled with refugee experts to the region during January to gather information. As yet, the U.S. has only resettled 56 Syrian refugees—and we continue to advocate to welcome more.**

**The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is requested to resettle 8% of ALL refugees who enter thru Church World Service offices!**



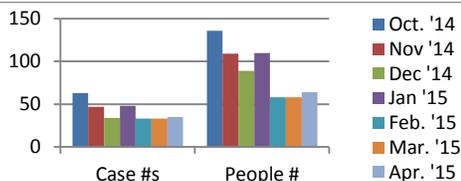
*Since the end of World War II, Disciples have resettled refugees in partnership with Church World Service & their 35 national refugee resettlement offices. (See locations on map.) Houston, Miami, Portland, and Jersey City are also Cuban Haitian Entrant Program sites. Per US State Department regulations, churches within a 50 mile radius of an office can officially help sponsor a refugee family—but EVERY Disciples Church can help provide "Refugee Hospitality Kits. Contact our Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at: [stanley@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:stanley@dhm.disciples.org) or 202-957-7826. " and other special needs!*

## Disciples-Assigned Refugee Arrivals and Engagement Report thru Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

### Case and Individual Numbers & Nationalities of Arrivals by Month for Oct. 2014 thru April 2015

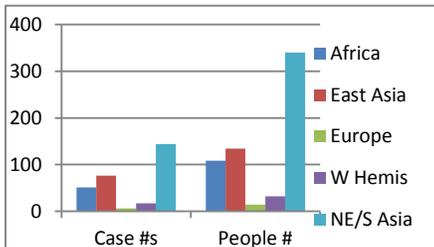


Syrian refugee children in Jordan.



Total Arrivals in the Period: 293 Cases, 624 People

**Highest Numbers of Refugees This Period Entered, in Order, Thru Offices in TX (118), NC (50), KY (46), CA (38), VA (33), IN (30), NY (27), OH (26), AZ (25), and GA (25)**



Refugee Arrival Nationalities by Region

**Top Nationalities of Refugees for Disciples this period were from Iraq (165) Burma (134), Afghanistan (85), Somalia (65), Bhutan (40), Syria (26), Congo**



New Refugees at Our CWS Office, Chicago

### Ongoing Refugee Support and Interpretation with Congregations

- The RIM office has prepared a presentation on Syrian refugee issues, as well as a Syrian refugee advocacy alert. This presentation has been most recently provided in April to a gathering of the Disciples Women of the Illinois-Wisconsin region, and is available upon request. The alert is posted at: [https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/DisciplesCWS-Syrian-Refugee-Action-Alert\\_04.07.15.pdf](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/DisciplesCWS-Syrian-Refugee-Action-Alert_04.07.15.pdf).
- Refugee sponsorship activities are encouraged through all RIM presentations. Examples of participating congregations include recent links of members from Gayton Road Christian Church with Iraqi women in



Richmond, VA., support of \$2,000+ from Central Rocky Mountain Region's Harvey Park Christian Church for refugees in the Denver area, supportive outreach and crisis care from members of Heart of the Rockies Christian Church in Fort Collins, CO.

- RIM continues to encourage congregations, regions, Disciples Women groups, youth groups, and Vacation Bible School gatherings to consider compiling "Refugee Hospitality Kits." See info. at:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Refugee-Hospitality-Kits.pdf>. As an example, the Great River Region of Disciples Women are encouraging their churches continue to develop Kits, and Seventh Street Christian Church in Richmond, VA. has delivered multiple kits to their local office.



Iraqi Refugees Enjoy Bike Donations in Denver, CO.

- To ensure the best sharing of refugee needs between churches and our CWS resettlement offices, RIM's Director has engaged in 1 on 1 conversations with Regional/Area Ministers and with CWS office representatives throughout the months of January-April, 2015. In this period, the RIM Director held meetings with representatives from 8 CWS offices; from Miami (FL), Denver (CO), New Haven (CT), Lexington (KY), Columbus (OH), Palm Beach (FL), Chicago (IL), and New York (NY). She visited three CWS offices during the report period; in Richmond (VA), Houston (TX), and Chicago (IL); bringing a total number of offices visited to 12. Interviews with remaining offices will continue as time permits.

- In mid-April, historic new regulations on refugee co-sponsorship were established by CWS and two other faith based refugee resettlement entities, which now allow churches to commit to engage in assisting families by offering at least three of a range of "welcoming acts," including activities such as setting up an apartment, meeting a family at the airport, teaching English or Financial Literacy to a refugee, accompanying refugees to medical appointments, providing transport assistance, stocking a pantry, preparing a welcome meal, providing clothing, and offering a community tour! As of the time of this report, these guidelines are still rolling out—and our office is very hopeful that these new opportunities will infuse new life into church engagement with refugees!

- Interviews during the period were conducted, and ministry information was shared, by the RIM Director with twelve Regional Ministers from Arizona, NoCal/NV, Capital Area, IL/Wisconsin, Indiana, Kansas City, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Northwest, Virginia, and West Virginia, and with the Texas Area Minister for the two Areas of Bluebonnet and Trinity Brazos.

- Refugee and Immigration partnerships were strengthened with Disciples Women, as the RIM Director presented shared human trafficking/labor abuse and unaccompanied children and mother refugee concerns at the national leadership training of Disciples Women in South Carolina in January.

- Multiple "refugee encounter events" are planned for General Assembly this summer, to promote interest in refugee resettlement around the country. Columbus is a site of one of our CWS resettlement offices; so look for Iraqi Food Demonstrations at our RIM booth on Saturday afternoon, and watch and participate in our "Bhutanese Nepali Dancing" in a Saturday night after-session! See details at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/general-assembly/>.

- A "World Refugee Day Toolkit 2015" has been developed to help congregations understand the need for refugee support through advocacy, and to encourage their honoring of refugees in their communities. It is available upon request, and is soon to be posted on the RIM website, ahead of the June 20<sup>th</sup> World Refugee Day.

- RIM Director continues to serve as Co-Chair of the CWS Immigration & Refugee Program Committee, and attended and presented by request at the national "CWS Member Meeting" in Washington, DC in April.

- Disciples from the Montagnard community continue to talk and strategize regularly with the RIM Director to track and advocate against human rights violations of community members within Central Vietnam and Cambodia. RIM is in the process of developing a "RIM Advisory Board," to support our ongoing work and further engage churches.

- Also supported Southeast Asian refugee and new American communities by serving on the Board of SEARAC (Southeast Asian Resource Action Center).

### **Week of Compassion Refugee Emergency Assistance Provided through RIM**



In partnership with Week of Compassion, RIM continues to provide emergency assistance to Disciples-assigned families through support of the Week of Compassion's "Compassion in Action" Fund. Requests are often received through CWS refugee affiliate offices for cases where refugee families face extreme and unmet family, health, and mental health needs. Funds are provided to Refugee & Immigration Ministries by Week of Compassion at \$5,000/time, and then are

disbursed, if and as emergency needs require, from the RIM office. All disbursements to families indicate the support is given in partnership with WOC. Assistance during our report period has included:



- In February of 2015, refugee emergency funds were provided to assist a 29 year old Syrian man, Mr. Alsaleh, through the RefugeeOne office in Chicago, Illinois. (See RefugeeOne staff in photo with RIM Director above.) Mr. Alsaleh arrived into the U.S. last July without any contacts, family, or friends—and received refugee status as a result of his opposition to President Assad’s regime and subsequent threats to his life. As a police offer in his country, he was imprisoned, reported the toe nails were pulled from his feet, and was tortured for one and a half years. As a result, he has shown escalating symptoms of flashbacks, insomnia, hyper-vigilance, intrusive memories and a constant fear of being followed. All have impeded his ability to adjust to life in Chicago, and the severity of his fears have made it difficult to leave his apartment. WOC funds provided support for his March and April rent, and will likewise cover May rent as well.

- Also in February, refugee emergency funds of \$1,200 were given to provide rental assistance to an El Salvadoran woman named Maria Maribel Flores, and to her three children, teenage brother, and a grandchild. The funds were sent in response to a request from an immigration lawyer in the Bay Area of California who works as an immigration lawyer in partnership with the Oakland Peace Center and outreach of First Christian Church of Oakland. Maria’s husband had previously been deemed positive in a credible fear interview, and had been granted Temporary Protected Status. It was subsequently revoked. In late March, the family received word that the father has been granted a withholding of removal—and so continues to remain united with his family!

- In addition to the above grants, RIM and WOC continue our unique partnership with First Christian Church of Lynchburg, and their outreach to Hawa Bakhteyari, a local young adult young Iraqi woman who came to the US seeking asylum status after fleeing persecution due to threats received after her father’s murder and her public support for the freedom of young girls to not be required to marry at age 12 or 13. During the period of our report, the RIM Director accompanied Hawa on her asylum appointment, and **Hawa received final notice that her asylee status was granted in late March!!** In late Fall, the church celebrated Hawa’s accomplishments with the RIM Director preaching before a lunch program and celebration. The church has invested many thousands in education support for Hawa, which allows her to remain in the US as she continues to grow her English skills. The church donates these funds through WOC, and they are passed through RIM and paid out as necessary to support Hawa’s needs. They continue to help her develop her long term goals in the US.



Hawa (third from left, in front) with members of 1<sup>st</sup> Christian Church (Lynchburg, VA.) and supporters.

### **Unaccompanied Minor Children Crisis Response**

***At least 40% of last year’s arrival numbers of unaccompanied minor children are expected to come in Spring/Summer of 2015 again.***

RIM continues to consistently partner and strategize with WOC regarding the ongoing unaccompanied children’s crisis. As warmer weather has arrived, entrance numbers of children are anticipated to again rise, at great risk to the migrants. US policies during the time of this report have push to “externalize our borders” into Mexico and Central America; providing funding to programs aimed to keep the children from departing their homes. Yet, as root causes and violence continue to escalate, migrants are risking their lives seeking safety and protection in the US. RIM consistently partners with multiple faith communities to advocate for the protection of these migrants, and seeks constant opportunities to educate our Disciples congregations about root causes and current opportunities for actions to support them. Graphs below offer perspective on where 85% of the refugees are released to the care of a relative already in the US:

Top Placement States for 53,518 Children Released to Sponsors in FY2014



#### **US Counties Receiving 1,000+ Children in FY2014:**

Harris, TX 4028; Los Angeles 2949; Suffolk, NY 1600; Miami Dade, FL 1492; Nassau, NY 1446; Fairfax, VA 1373; Prince George’s, MD 1328; Dallas, TX 1196; Palm Beach, FL 1170; Montgomeriv. MD 1117

#### **TOP STATES for FY2015 ARRIVALS RELEASED TO SPONSORS**

thru March include: **California, Texas, Florida, New York, Maryland, and Virginia.**

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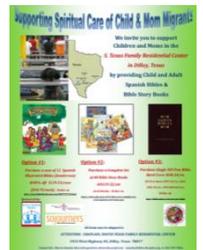
thru March include: **Maricopa, AZ; Los Angeles, CA; Harris, TX; Miami Dade, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Prince George’s, MD; Suffolk, NY; Queens, NY; Montgomery, MD; Fairfax, VA.**

RIM continues to encourage churches and individuals to **GIVE TO WEEK OF COMPASSION**, marked “Refugee Children Aid” to help Disciples continue to reach out, and to access multiple resources about the crisis at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/rim-resources/childrens-resources/>. (See “Arriving Children in Crisis”.) RIM’s “Top Ways” for churches and individuals to outreach to Central American child refugees continues to be updated in both general and geographically specific versions. This resource provides myriad opportunities for direct church engagement, and also provides links to partner national and global offices of the CC(DOC).

- RIM has likewise expanded its partnership with Disciples Women, to engage congregational groups in supporting the 15% of the children and mothers who are **NOT** released into the care of a sponsoring relative already living within the US. These children (and in some cases, mothers who accompany them) are placed, instead into ever-growing family detention centers. Increasingly, RIM is partnering with other faith communities, and providing leadership, in praying and advocating against this model of family detention. Family detention had disappeared from use by the US since 2009 when the “Hutto” family detention center in Texas was closed down due to human rights violations.

Then in the wake of last summer’s arrivals, a family detention center was opened in Artesia, New Mexico--where Week of Compassion provided initial funds for Religious Services Materials; including Bibles, song books, and other worship items. During the time period of this report, the initial Artesia, NM center was closed, and contracts were issued to private prison companies (Correctional Corporation of America and GEO) to run two family detention centers in Texas (in Dilley and in Karnes City). The Dilley Center is slated to become the largest, with a capacity of 2,400 mothers and children. In late April, Dilley completed its second phase of expansion and now houses more than 1,000 women and children (many of them transferred from the previous Artesia Center). The Karnes facility holds over 500 women and children as it continues to expand. Another family center is located in Berks, PA.

- Week of Compassion has provided assistance this Spring to support a **BIBLES AND BIBLE STORY BOOKS PROJECT** to aid the mothers and children in Dilley. See the flyer online at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Dilley-Spanish-Bibles-and-Books-KidsMoms-4815.pdf>. RIM also continues to support the **“ANGEL TO ANGEL” CARDS OF CARE PROJECT** for women and children in the detention centers. See here for more information on this exciting project for church connection: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Angel-to-Angel-Project-DISCIPLES-Call-for-Letters-EnglishFINAL4815.pdf>. A Spanish flyer is also available.
- RIM’s Director travelled to Dilley and Karnes City in April; leading a visit with the Chaplain and an interfaith prayer vigil at the Dilley Center which were sponsored and supported by Week of Compassion and Disciples Women. (See pictures of events and both centers below.) Disciples clergy from Austin and Phoenix participated, and many engaged in “solidarity prayers” and vigils throughout the country—including one at the Disciples Center, Indianapolis.



Dilley Meeting with Chaplain, April 22



Dilley Prayer Vigil Pictures, April 22, with Disciples Clergy from Austin, TX, & from AZ and DC



Angel to Angel Cards of Care Made by Disciples Women in the Great River Region for Dilley Moms and Kids in Detention

Pictures of the Dilley detention center (Dilley, TX), in late April following Phase 2 of Expansion. The facility is planned still to more than double in current size—to hold 2,400 moms and kids!

- RIM’s Director likewise participated in San Antonio with the “Interfaith Welcome Coalition” of 50+ faith partners, which engages in ongoing hospitality, advocacy, and visitation/legal assistance for the mothers and children especially within the Karnes Center. They are expanding their work to link with women and children in Dilley. The group emerged in Fall of 2014, and are a wonderful model of partnership education and ministry outreach to assist the refugee families. (See pictures below.)



Leaders with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition in San Antonio, TX, prepare for upcoming actions to assist the welcome, legal, and visitation needs of migrant moms & kids in nearby centers.



Immigrant Detention Center in Karnes, Texas, run by GEO Prison Group



Transport Near Harlingen, Texas

- RIM remains interested to continue to work in partnership with our congregations and Week of Compassion to help meet critical and most often unmet legal assistance needs of the refugees. Most are deemed eligible for asylee status while in detention due to the persecution, human trafficking, and violence they have endured in their home countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. However, the bond amounts for the women and children to be released are set at amounts up between \$1,500 to \$12,000. Amounts are varied frequently, and such levels are often prohibitive without community support, leaving them women and children in prolonged detention despite their worthiness for release. One way Week of Compassion offered partnership to meet such needs was last Fall, when WOC and the Capital Area Region’s North Chevy Chase Christian Church partnered to provide \$1,500 each in a project we called the “Third Tithe”. An explanatory article can be found at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/news/news-2014/september-2014/disciples-support-legal-assistance-central-american-children-fleeing-violence/>.
- The RIM office continues to track the very small scale “in country” Central American Migrants (CAM) program established in Early 2015, targeted to assist up to 400 Central American migrants. Thus far, logistical requirements for in-country travel (i.e. requiring children to travel at great risks to their home capital cities four times), DNA testing requirements, and costs have been frequently prohibitive.
- Disciples will be invited to write Angel to Angel cards to migrant mothers and children in detention at General Assembly.

### **National Farm Worker Ministry Support & Farm Worker Actions**



- The RIM office continues to staff our historic Disciples partnerships with The National Farmworker Ministry. In this report period, the RIM Director was requested to join the Executive Committee of the NFWM, and likewise was appointed to serve as Chair of the current Executive Director Search Team for the organization.
- The NFWM Board met in late January in Florida, enabling members to tour and learn further about the Fair Food Campaigns of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. (See photos above.) A first ever “action opportunity” will be provided to General Assembly participants to engage in a fair food action by requesting Wendy’s corporation (with national headquarters located in Columbus, OH) to sign on to the Fair Food Campaign. Wendy’s remains the only of the “US top 5” fast food companies which has not signed on. See more information and sign up to participate at: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/refugee-immigration-ministries/general-assembly/>.
- NY City Disciples Pastors Rev. Dr. Alvin Jackson and Rev. Luis-Alfredo Catagena have again been requested by national Farmworker rights groups to give faith support for farmworker rights at the May meeting of Phillip Morris International’s shareholder board in New York City.
- Disciples and other faith partners continue to be encouraged to support the rights and protections of tobacco field workers (both adults and children) by signing faith letters to Reynolds Tobacco and Human Rights Watch, and other periodic campaigns.
- RIM invites Disciples to participate in the National Farm Worker Ministry’s key campaigns and partners; including support for the actions of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, the United Farm Workers, the Equitable Food Initiative, the Sakuma Berry Farms Campaign, and the Campesinos’ Garden Project. The summer board meeting will be held in Washington State, to provide further education about Sakuma Farms campaigns for farm worker justice.

## Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries Support



- RIM participates actively as our Disciples representative on the Board of SWGSM. In its April meeting in Los Fresnos, Texas, Director Feliberto Pereira reported especially about the growing number assistance with bus passes to join relatives in the US and other ministry needs.

• Feliberto toured the Board around the US border with Matamoros, Mexico; showing the bus depot to which he is called to assist multiple times each week. (See pictures on left.) He shared records of migrants, their cultures, and needs assisted week by week; at an average cost of \$225 per individual. (See photo on right.) Though most migrants assisted are currently Cuban, they likewise include El Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Africans, and Mexicans. Due to the increased arrivals of Cubans and others in this season, he anticipates the need to request additional Week of Compassion refugee assistance funds in this year. The RIM Director is currently preparing a specific graphing report of his outreach, to be available early May.

- Director Pereira expressed great appreciation for the support of Week of Compassion grants which assist him in meeting critical refugee needs as above, and which also assist with the ongoing distribution of rice and beans throughout multiple border communities and projects.

## Faith Related Immigration Advocacy



• Throughout the time period of this report, RIM has worked to strengthen our Disciples network for immigrant rights within the denomination and built faith partnerships to support permanent and humane solutions to immigrant needs. Campaigns during the past six months have heightened participation in support of the Administrative Action announced by President Obama last November, but with implementation of its DACA and DAPA provisions currently being blocked in the courts. The Executive Actions could help additional immigrants who entered the US at a younger age, as well as parents of citizen children, to gain eventual legal status. Court rulings are anticipated in the coming weeks or months.

- RIM helps educate church members and law makers about immigrant rights, and assists in advocating against efforts to restrict such rights. In the absence of any current immigration reform legislation, RIM continues to gather stories of impacted Disciples related immigrant families to “put the face” on immigrant concerns.
- RIM’s Director (together with our Immigration Legal Counsel) will offer training at General Assembly for congregation members in how to assist immigrants in their area to access possible benefits of Executive Action, as they are allowed to go forward.

## Additional Special Partnerships with Week of Compassion



- RIM continues to appreciate the joy of partnering as often as possible to share in the interpretation of WOC’s work. In January, RIM presented to church leaders in Richmond, VA. at a WOC projects event. (See left photo.)



- In April, RIM partnered on a display table to mutually interpret the work of RIM and WOC at Washington, DC’s annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days Conference. (See two right photos.)



Please contact the RIM Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, at [sstanley@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:sstanley@dhm.disciples.org) or 202-957-7826 to engage together in advocacy priorities, call upon us to encourage your local immigration and refugee work, and come alone or with a group to join our ministries and visit our office in National City Christian Church, 5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, D.C. For legal immigration assistance, also contact Tana Liu-Beers, at: [tana@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:tana@dhm.disciples.org) or at 317-289-1407.