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16-17 AUGUST 2014

BRIEF SUMMARY OBSERVATION REPORT

of YAZIDI REFUGEE CAMPS in SİLOPİ-CİZRE-MİDYAT

On the 16th and 17th of August, 2014, the activists of the HRFT Care for Caregivers Programme made a study visit to the places where the Yazidi refugees from Shengal is residing at the moment. This visit was aiming to give psycho-social support training to the network of caregivers who take care of the Yazidis, to make a baseline assesment, and to provide urgent psychological support.

The observation report of this study visit has been written by the visiting team, which is composed by: Psychiatrist Murat YALÇIN, psychiatric resident Naci OLAM, psychologist Muharrem AYDIN, psychologist Şiyar GÜLDİKEN, psychologist Sema YÜCEDAĞ, psychologist Bijer DOĞAN, psychologist Ömer YAVUZ YETİŞ, psychologist Ömer AKBA, psychologist Mahmut PAKDEMİR and social worker Ümit ÇETİNER.

On Saturday, the 16th of August, Silopi camp of approximately 700 Yazidis (who are staying in tents and houses of Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) and Cizre Industrial estate of about 850 Yazidis (who are staying in insufficient houses) have been visited. Although measures such as chlorination of water has been taken, because of the sewer system that runs in front of the houses and extreme-hot weather conditions, risk of contagious disease is observed. Furthermore, we have been informed that due to the deficiency of coolers, daily life for children and elderly people became very difficult; however there are no problems related to the requirement of food and drinking water. Also the mobile health care vehicles of municipality are providing service all the time, in turns.

On Sunday, the 17th of August, Midyat camp that approximately 1500 Yazidis and 3000 Syrian Arabs are residing has been visited. We have been informed that there is information processing and staff capacity to register almost 300 refugees per day, and communication tools are being gathered and given back after the necessary measures are taken.

Note: The number of reported refugees in this report changes daily.

As a result of our interviews and observations with the Yazidi families, it has been understood that they are experiencing difficulties with washing their clothes; the tents they live in are insufficient; basic requirements in the markets are insufficient (except food); the given card limit (80 TL/month-person) to meet their expenses is not enough; and educational places and play grounds for children hasn't been established yet.

Our findings on the psychological states of the families we had interviews exposed that; they have severe anxiety and are in the shock phase; most of them are showing signs of acute stress. Furthermore, anxiety, feeling of insecurity and worthlessness, helplessness; signs of hatred, anger, guilt and shame are the other findings that you can read in details in our report.

Feelings and behaviors that the Yazidis present to cope with the trauma comes out as; the need to stay together and get information from the people who left behind; the will to emigrate to Europe and make plans about it; to ignore the possibility that their relatives might be dead; the need to repeat that what has happened has nothing to do with Islam; to mention that it makes them feel good to get support from volunteers and people from the neighboring villages; to express their gratitudes for YPG; lamenting etc.

In the course of giving support; it has been observed that both officials and volunteers are doing their best to give support, however there are some handicaps that might cause psychological troubles:

- Some of the officials, volunteers and visitors are violating the privacy of refugees by getting in to their tents without asking for permission, by taking photos of them and by making press statements in the camp.
- Even if their intentions are good, officials and visitors are sometimes crossing the line with their questions and causing retraumatization.
- The fact that there is no regular and reliable flow of information is causing an increase in the present level of anxiety and shock.
- Even if their intentions are good, some of the expressions that are being made to Yazidis contain political and moral judgements.
- It has also been observed that the caregivers sometimes trying to support the Yazidis by comparing the loss and brutality with their own.

In consideration of all these observations and interviews; the brutality of war and the barbarian aspects of the violence that Yazidi people has faced deepen the traumatic destruction. It's obvious that this major trauma will trigger the impacts of historical slaughters and traumas, and make it harder to hold on to life for Yazidi people.

We are aware of the fact that the most important component to disburden the trauma is being able to return to the routines of life. Yet, it doesn't seem possible in near future. Silopi camp isn't appropriate both physically and psychologically. Conditions in Midyat camp are relatively better, however they don't feel free and have the concern that they are becoming distanced from their own social solidarity areas and that the privacy of their families is violated. Cizre camp also made us think about the same handicaps. In the re-established Yazidi villages in Midyat and Batman, it seems that life partially returned back to its routine in the sense of both physical and psychological conditions. Therefore, it seems that their level of anxiety is lower than the Yazidis in other camps. According to our observations we might say that it's accomplished by providing a private and independent living space; a stronger social support because of the other nearby Yazidi villages and help developing their feeling of belonging and coherence.

Our suggestions for the present situation are;

- Centralizing the coordination of physical and social support systems; establishing a regular registration system; assessing and planning the present pecuniary and human resources.
- Maintaining information to Yazidis as often and clear as possible on each step of providing service by using hopeful and realistic sentences.
- Creating secure places and showing sensitivity to their privacy. If they need to enter peoples residing areas, the officials and volunteers should introduce themselves first, ask for permission to get in and make the visit with just a few people.
- Assessing the requirements of health care and providing continuity of this service. Also, assessing and following the psychological situation, and planning psycho-social support programmes within this scope.
- Assessing the disabled and elderly people, and also the ones with chronic disorders; meeting the requirements according to these informations and ensuring the continuity of these services.
- Planning the appropriate activities for the children.
- Having events to help adults to return to their routines of life (by the time they gain their abilities back, they might become active in the social support network for the others)
- Assessing the professions and abilities of refugees (teacher, doctor, constructor etc.) and let them participate in the work according to their fields of interest

Best regards,

HRFT Care for Caregivers Programme Yazidi Refugee Camps Study Visit Group