

*"if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4:11*

Every month, City of Refuge receives heart wrenching pleas for assistance from desperate people who were forced to flee due to persecution, civil war or armed conflict.

There are very few safe havens for refugees, many who have struggled to survive in hostile 'host' countries for 10 years or longer. Significant number of refugees live in cities where they hope to earn some money to support themselves in spite of high local unemployment rates. Urban refugees may have access to medical and educational facilities provided by the national infrastructure, but this poses a serious burden on the economy and leads to xenophobia in the host society.

Most refugees are forced to live in camps, with minimal housing, meagre food rations, no opportunity to work, only elementary education for their children and limited security and health facilities. Regrettably, living conditions for millions of refugees in many camps has recently deteriorated, due to the increased numbers of people desperately looking for relief from the severe famine in the Horn of Africa.



*A quote from a refugee, " Our lives in the camps are far worse than you can imagine. We live in an open prison, far away from justice and humanity. We talk, but our voices are never heard. We move, but only inside a cage. We have many skills and talents, but we are denied our chance to maximize our potential. We are chained to a life full of stress and despair. We are arbitrarily beaten or detained by police within the confines of the camp.*

*We lack the ability to freely express ourselves or have control over the decisions affecting our lives."*



People in these camps were once productive citizens in their home country before war caused a massive upheaval in their lives. They worked as nurses, accountants, university students, dressmaker, pastors, church planters, mission directors, teachers, computer technicians, farmers, business administrators, painters, librarians, stay at home mothers, mechanical or civil engineers, truck drivers, or tradespersons .

Ordinary people, targeted by the governing regime simply on suspicion of being a Pentecostal Christian, or of supporting an Opposition party or a rebel movement; or because they 'illegally' left the Eritrean military which requires unlimited service from its citizens. In the Congo, people are often targeted due to their ethnicity, or due to actions of a member in their extended family, and sometimes simply because they look like a Tutsi. In the Middle East, Christians feel more vulnerable to attacks due to the recent state of lawlessness. Wars have changed, it used to be two armies fighting each other, facing off on a field, away from the civilian population. But since the 1970s, most wars are now internal armed conflicts, not one country against another country's army.

As the nature of warfare changes from the clash of national armies to savage internal conflict, women and children often become prime targets. This has made rape a very useful form

of war.. Besides the obvious devastating effects on women and children, it has very powerful psychological impact on the men in the community, humiliating them because they can't defend their women and children.

Religious freedom in Eritrea is widely considered to be the worst in the world, with only 3 officially recognized churches, the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Followers of all other faiths are regarded as unpatriotic and are subject to harassment, imprisonment, torture and death at the hands of the authorities. Pentecostals and certain non-Lutheran Evangelicals are systematically targeted.

City of Refuge reaches out to Christian refugees, many who have been stateless for more than a decade and have no other hope of being resettled to a safe country. This ministry of mercy, under the direction of Emmanuel Free Reformed Church and authorized by Citizenship & Immigration Canada, submits Permanent Residence applications on behalf of refugees. A sponsorship allows the refugee to be interviewed overseas by Canadian Immigration officials to determine whether they are eligible for resettlement to Canada.

**1612. Nairobi (1)** Young **Congolese** girl gang raped and left for dead. She fled DRC and lives in Kampala where she also experienced threats to her life. She speaks French & English.

**#1738 Cairo (5)** Husband and wife are **Eritrean** and have 2 young daughters and a 1 year old son. He became a Pentecostal believer in 2001 and was arrested and detained by the government for 6 months in 2003. He and his wife served in the military for 7 years before 'deserting' early in 2011 and fleeing to Khartoum, Sudan.

**#1742 Pretoria (3)** Husband was arrested, beaten and threaten with death for exposing that boys as young as 14 were being conscripted into the **Congolese** army . He fled to Namibia in 2003. He met his wife in the camp after she arrived in 2007. She and 3 other nurses had been captured by rebels and were forced to be their sex slaves. She managed to escape after 8 months. Speak French & English

**#1746 Pretoria (1)** Male was born in **Burundi** in 1979 to a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother. His mixed ethnicity caused his persecution. His family fled to Tanzania in 1994 but 18 months later they fled again, this time to the Congo where they were placed in a Refugee camp. When the civil war erupted near the camp, the family attempted to flee back to Burundi. They were ambushed and only he and his three brothers survived the attack. The brothers managed to cross to Tanzania but later a grenade attack on the camp forced the brothers and others, to flee into the forest where many

were killed by tigers. He became separated from his brothers and has never seen them again. He decided to flee to Namibia in 2002. He speaks French, English and Portuguese.

**#1751 Pretoria (7)** Husband was born in the **Congo** of Congolese parents but looks like a Tutsi. He was constantly threatened with arrest and death by fellow citizens, so he fled to Namibia in 2000. He met his wife in the camp and they have 3 daughters and 2 sons. His wife is a survivor of sexual violence prior to her arrival in the camp. He has a Bachelor Degree in Economics and has worked as a teacher and accountant. The UNHCR has granted them Convention Refugee Status. He speaks English and French.

**#1755 Pretoria (5)** Husband was born in the **Congo**, to a Rwandan father and Congolese mother. In 1997, the conflict in Rwanda spilled over the Congolese border, killing many Congolese of mixed ethnicity. In 1998, the government arrested him, claiming it was for his own protection. He spent 2 years in prison before being released through a bribe. He immediately fled to Namibia and was placed in the Osire refugee camp. He met his wife, also of mixed ethnicity; Congolese father & Rwandan Tutsi mother, in the camp. In 2000, she and 3 siblings were taken by Congolese soldiers, along with many other people of Rwandan descent to a detention centre. She was selected by a Chief and taken to his home to be his 'wife'. This 19 year old girl suffered sexual based violence and was 7 months pregnant when she finally managed to escape. Her child has a learning disability and requires special education. She has been diagnosed as HIV positive. The couple also have 2 children. Husband has a 3 year university degree and has worked as a teacher and a civil engineer. They speak French & English.

Private sponsorship of a refugee is only possible through the faithful and generous response of churches who are prepared to partner with City of Refuge. Prayerfully consider how your church can support this mission of bringing hope and healing to refugees. Pray for peace and reconciliation in Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda and Sudan. Pray for strength and courage for persecuted believers living in constant danger. "And the King will answer ' inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' Matt 25:40b

We receive many thankful messages from refugees. *"It is with tears of joy and hope that we have received your message. It is indeed so profound to us, may the Lord reachly bless you and guide you for all what you are doing to us to come out of this misery. Again God bless you."* and *"May the peace of the Lord be with you in abundance I don't really have exactly what to say , May God Bless you for starting to be the Solution to my problems as a refugee."*

**For more information** or other short profiles of refugees, contact **Heddie Driegen** at [refugee.efrc@msn.com](mailto:refugee.efrc@msn.com) or 604 530 1819.