



Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine Of Siena, Iraq.  
Erbil, Ankawa

April 10, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Since Christmas we have been living very stressful times not only because of the death of four of our elderly sisters in a very short period of time –due to stroke (brain attack) but also because of the hardship we are still living and experiencing with our people.

It is true that there has been progress in our condition in terms of housing for the Interior Displaced People (IDP); those who were in Ankawa Mall (unfinished building) are moving to the caravans in the coming days. Nonetheless, living in caravans is not without difficulties. Each caravan has two rooms (each 3x3 m<sup>2</sup>) joined by a common bathroom. There will be a family in each room and there are about 480 families. In a way, this might sound a better solution. However, living in one room increases problems and tensions among the families. Most men are jobless which provokes conflict even within the same family and the victims of the conflict are usually the children. Therefore, we had decided to rent a house and convert it into a kindergarten, which was inaugurated few days before Palm Sunday. This was possible because of your good-will and your efforts. We are working on opening another kindergarten in Kaznazan where there are 800 families in that area, suburb of Erbil; there, we have three sisters living and working with IDP. We have rented a house for that, and it will soon be furnished. The families are thankful and happy for this initiative.

As for the aids we provided to the IPD, we distributed winter indoor clothes for parents and adults in the family. Thanks to your efforts and donations, the project was successful and we were able to cover not only IDP in Erbil but also in Sulaymaniyah and Akra. The cost of the project was more than \$400,000. Another finished project, which was supported by the Pontifical Mission, was to provide people with milk, diapers for children and soap in order to treat scabies that have been spreading because of the unhealthy environment the IDP are living in (common toilets and lack of water). Beside that we were able to purchase towels and distribute them.

For the time being, we are working on a new project, which is to provide summer indoor clothes for teenagers – we are trying to find a seller that will supply us clothes with a descent price. We are hoping to start this project with the beginning of May.

Some of our sisters started preparing the children for the first communion. There are 400 children in five different camps in Erbil. We are hoping to make it a special occasion by providing them with what they need during their preparation period and their special day.

Having been effectively involved in these projects and accompanying the IDP in the camps, plus the inconvenience of living in caravans, sisters are truly exhausted. The convent also is



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very crowded (there are about 40 sisters in the convent). The sisters need some rest. Therefore, we decided to send sisters to Lebanon to rest for a short period of time in our convent over there. This will be a good time for the sisters to rest and come back refreshed to continue their work with IPD and to be ready for more projects that serve the IPD in terms of education for the coming school year.

We are grateful to all humanitarian organizations and people of good-will which are willing to help and are always ready to help.

Thank you for your prayers and support, may the risen Christ raise us from our humiliation, displacement and vagrancy. May Easter grace and blessings be to you all.

Sr. Maria Hanna OP

And the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena –Iraq.