



Relief &
Reconciliation
for Syria



THE COUNTDOWN

**Opening of our
First Peace Centre for Syria**
Help us to give the youth a future



Photo back and small photo top: flickr.com // With kind permission of the Syrian photographer and member FreedomHouse

— OUR CAUSE — Syria in Flames

More than two years have passed since Syrians started to demonstrate peacefully for human dignity and change. The violent repression of the movement has put Syria in flames. More than 80,000 have been killed, more than 5 million displaced, more than 2 million are refugees abroad. Violence has reached its worst levels and is still escalating. The use of chemical weapons comes only on top of daily air strikes and missile attacks against civilian targets.

The unique mosaic of Syria's religious communities is at risk in this excess of brutality. The revolution did not start as a confessional movement. Christians and Alawis are still amongst its leaders. However, many religious minorities are holding to the regime out of fear of what might come next. The deliberate deployment of sectarian militias has been succeeding in pushing the conflict towards the worst possible form of sectarian war.

The world stands idly by and watches how the nightmares of the past are unfolding again. The confessional rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites, which is affecting the entire Middle East, leads to further radicalisation on the ground. Ordinary people are sacrificed for the sake of geopolitical games, reminiscent of the Cold War. The most likely outcome will be a divided country, ethnic cleansing, and the spread of hatred to the entire world.

We do not want to remain indifferent when the most fundamental values of humanity are treated with contempt. We wish to keep the flame of hope alive: the hope for reconciliation, justice and peace. We are supporting those who want to heal the hatred and violence in the hearts of the youth, inside Syria and in its surroundings.





The First Peace Centre

Our newly established NGO »Relief & Reconciliation for Syria« combines peacebuilding with practical help. Under the joint authority of local moral leaders, we are trying to offer a future to the tortured youth. Some six months after the beginning of our campaign, we are about to open the first Peace Centre near the Lebanese border with Syria.

More than 1 million Syrian refugees have become stranded in Lebanon. Some of them have lost everything they had. The Akkar district in the North of Lebanon is itself the poorest region of the country and has been neglected by international assistance for many years. Today, it shelters the highest percentage of refugees in Lebanon. The poorest are welcoming the poor.

With the help of more than 850 individual donors, we will open the first Peace Centre in Bkarzla, a small village next to the district capital Halba. The Akkar is a mixed region where a majority of Sunnis is living side by side with Christians and Alawis. In this region, family ties have crossed the Syrian border for many years. It is the ideal place to create a model that could also work inside Syria.

Our Peace Centre is going to welcome the youth of different confessions and groups, both Syrian and Lebanese. We chose a building in a safe, natural setting to give traumatised children and adolescents the possibility to breathe. In our Peace Centre, they are receiving psychosocial and educational support as well as material help.

Please read the following pages to learn more about our work and please visit our website for more details on the first Peace Centre. We need your support for the last push before the opening of the Centre and to sustain its work in the future.

● OUR PEACE CENTRE IN BKARZLA



Both pictures on the top: The house of our first Peace Centre in Bkarzla, close to the Lebanese border with Syria and with a beautiful garden in a quiet, green area.

— OUR WORK —

Building Peace



Based on the many years of experience shared by our members in the fields of peacebuilding, humanitarian aid and interfaith dialogue, we have developed our own methodology. We wish to combine peacebuilding with practical help by fostering cooperation and trust between different communities. Three principles are guiding our action:

PEACEBUILDING ADDRESSING CIVIL UNREST HAS TO START AT LOCAL LEVEL. The social fabric of society cannot be rebuilt by any government or military power, only by those concerned on the ground. We are focusing on those areas where tensions or open violence has jeopardised the peaceful coexistence of different communities and groups.

PEACEBUILDING IS A MORAL CHALLENGE. The corruption of society through war and violence can only be tackled by its own moral forces. They have to strike the balance between justice and peace, between truth and mercy. We are including those who enjoy moral authority in their community: religious leaders and other representatives of civil society.

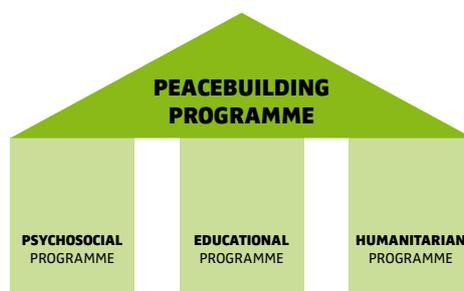
PEACEBUILDING RELIES ON MUTUAL TRUST. Trust, in return, grows with deeds more than with words. We are uniting moral authorities around a tangible cause: the future of the youth in need. They are invited to form a local Steering Committee for the establishment of a Peace Centre: a house serving as open space for young people of different communities.

In our Peace Centres, experienced teachers, psychologists and social workers will offer individual and social activities, skill training, courses and material support. Building peace is hence the overarching objective governing our work, which is supported by three pillars of our daily activities: psychosocial support, educational support and humanitarian aid.

All activities will be decided in co-decision between us and the local Steering Committee. Several personalities have expressed their readiness to become members of the first Committee: the Sunni Mufti of the Akkar and other sheikhs, some of them from Syria, the Maronite Archbishop, the Orthodox Metropolitan, local NGO leaders and also one Alawi notable.

Preparations are under way for the opening of a second Peace Centre in the Bekaa border region. We want to operate inside Syria as soon as access becomes possible, but the Peace Centres in the Lebanese border regions are not supposed to be limited in time.

Programme Lines



Under the umbrella of the Peacebuilding Programme, providing for the institutional set-up and the basic infrastructure of our work, the daily activities in the premises and surroundings of our Peace Centres unfold in three operational Programme Lines.

1 THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PROGRAMME

includes the nomination of a house psychologist, specialised in working with youth suffering from post-traumatic disorders. Under strict peer supervision, he or she offers individual and group therapy and referrals to the most vulnerable children and adolescents. He or she also supervises the social assistants who are doing outreach work and who organise recreational, cultural and sports activities, both for children (7 to 12) and adolescents



2 THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

includes the offer of fast-track foreign language courses and tutorials to prepare Syrian refugees for the Lebanese curriculum, which is partly taught in French and English – a main obstacle to school enrolment for Syrians. Following a regional job market assessment, we will also offer vocational training. Life skills modules (non-violent action, environmental awareness, hygiene and computer training) will be integrated into all courses.



3 THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME

provides practical help to the youth and their families and serves as a first contact point. In close cooperation with national and international organisations, we are responding to those needs that have so far been neglected. Our assessment has identified hygiene and first aid kits as the most urgent problems in the often informal refugee settlements. We are working on short-term distributions and long-term infrastructure solutions.



Peacebuilding is fully incorporated into the daily work of the aforementioned programme lines. An advocacy and conflict transformation strategy, to be implemented together with the local Steering Committee, will address community-based tensions in the region. Inter-religious dialogue and non-violent training modules will be integrated into all other activities.

Following our set-up period, and due to the voluntary efforts of our unpaid members, we have now established an annual budget for up to two Peace Centres in Lebanon. Besides legal and banking fees, we have almost no administrative costs; more than 90% of all donations will directly benefit those in need. Please visit our website for details on all programme lines.

— OUR BACKGROUND —

Who we are



Friedrich Bokern
*Political Analyst,
Chairman (Beirut)*



Paula Iwanowska
*International Lawyer,
Treasurer (Stockholm)*



Giacomo Profili
*Political Analyst,
General Secretary (Brussels)*



Lise Rasmussen
*Theologian,
Board Member
(Copenhagen)*



Eva-Maria Lika
*Scholar in Islamic Studies,
Board Member
(Berlin)*



Zeina Merheb
*TV Producer,
Board Member
(Beirut)*



Jasna Zajcek
*Journalist and Author,
Board Member
(Berlin)*



François Le Forestier
*NGO Worker,
Board Member
(Paris)*



Evangéline de Bourgoing
*Journalist,
Board Member
(Paris)*



Aymeline de Cartier
*Psychologist,
Board Member
(Brussels)*



Katharina Hoffmann
*Lawyer,
Board Member
(Vienna)*

We started as a group of friends who had all worked in Syria or neighbouring countries. Established on 2 January 2013 as international NGO under Belgian law, »Relief & Reconciliation for Syria AISBL« counts today about 100 individual members, organised in 12 national chapters. Besides the international branch, the Lebanese group has also achieved an independent legal personality.

Our members combine a rich expertise in peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, interfaith dialogue and other relevant fields. Many of us have worked with the UN, the EU or with international NGOs. Amongst us, you will find committed Christians and Muslims of different confessions, as well as agnostics or atheists. How different we might be – we are united in our hope for peace.

As a peacebuilding initiative, we are neutral in political terms, not affiliated to any government or party, but we are not neutral in our values. We are trying to contribute to a free and inclusive peace, based on democracy and human rights. For ourselves, we adopt the principles of non-violent action, but we do not judge those who are fighting in defence of their beloved.

We underline our impartiality in the delivery of services to those in need. Our aid is impartial and not based on nationality, race, religion, or political affiliation; it is based on need alone. Neutrality does not imply ignorance or indifference. We will stay neutral in the attempt to facilitate dialogue, but we will not shy away from denouncing violations of fundamental human rights.

Please visit our website to learn more about the values and principles that we have defined for our work and about our internal governance. We choose to be fully transparent and we will publish all programme lines, reports and donations.

OUR NATIONAL CHAPTERS

Austria
Belgium
Denmark
France
Germany
Ireland
Italy
Lebanon
Sweden
Switzerland
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom



Our Peace Supporters

More than 800 individuals from around the world have supported us so far with a personal donation. Several fundraising events have been organised between Ireland and Dubai. The Frauenkirche Dresden, itself a memorial of dictatorship and war, dedicated a Sunday collection to our cause. We are very grateful for this overwhelming support.

The former President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, agreed to grant his honorary patronage to our NGO, together with a number of Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament from all major political groups. Jerzy Buzek had been chairman of the first national congress of the Solidarity Movement in Poland in the 1980s – a herald of freedom and peaceful change!

HONORARY PATRONS



Jerzy Buzek
Former President of the European Parliament



Gianni Pittella
First Vice-President of the European Parliament



Isabelle Durant
Vice-President of the European Parliament



Othmar Karas
Vice-President of the European Parliament

*Do you want to become our peace supporter and make a contribution to our project? Every help counts!
ou can make a bank transfer or a donation via credit card or Paypal on our website.*

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN ...



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... for the opening of our first Peace Centre is running. The rent is starting from 1 July and we have started first distributions of humanitarian aid in its surroundings. Now we need to push to the final straight in our fundraising campaign. Almost 22.000 euros have been collected so far; we need 8,000 more to guarantee the sustainability of our work over the next months.

Every help counts, as small as it might be! Please join the ranks of our supporters and help us to keep the flame of hope alive. With your contribution, we can make a difference against the nightmare of violence and hatred that is devastating Syria today. Please make a donation through our website or contact us to become a member or volunteer in the field! You can donate for free from any part of the world if you have a credit/debit card or a bank account. The most efficient way for us is to make a direct transfer to our Belgian bank account, indicated below. But you can also visit our website and pay directly by credit/debit card or Paypal.

As long as our official registration is still in process, all funds will go through the bank account our Secretary General opened exclusively for our campaign. He made a declaration that all assets of this account have to be used for »Relief & Reconciliation for Syria«.



**Relief &
Reconciliation
for Syria**

OUR BANK ACCOUNT IN BELGIUM:

Bank: BNP Paribas Fortis

Name: Giacomo Profili

IBAN: BE91 0016 8453 8776

BIC/Swift Code: GEBABEBBXXX



www.facebook.com/relief4syria

Thank you!

www.reliefandreconciliation.org