

Iraqi refugees experience abundant life

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FORT WORTH—For Nabeha and her daughter Hanin, the most painful part of immigrating to the United States was leaving their family behind in Iraq.

“Always, I’m thinking about our family—my sister, brother, nephews, nieces,” Nabeha said.

Like many Iraqi refugees, Nabeha worked as a contract translator for the U.S. Army, helping military personnel communicate in Kurdish, Arabic and Persian. Every month, Nabeha reported to Joint Base Balad for duty and occasionally braved missile attacks from militant fighters.

But when terrorist outfits began threatening the safety of her daughter and husband, she sought the special immigration visas to which she and her immediate family were entitled.

Before departing for their new home in Fort Worth, however, Nabeha’s American colleagues gave her one piece of advice: “Look for the churches. They will help you.”

Reaching out to refugees

That’s how Nabeha and Hanin met Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel Karen Morrow, who was hosting a block party at the family’s apartment community in 2010. For 10 years, the CBF Offering for Global Missions has supported Morrow as she shares abundant life with refugees and immigrants resettling in Fort Worth.



Before Nabeha (left) and daughter Hanin (right) departed from Iraq to their new home in Fort Worth, they were advised: “Look for the churches. They will help you.” (CBF Photo)

Nabeha, who already spoke English, shared Morrow’s calling to help refugees attain education, housing, health care and beloved community. So, she asked for Morrow’s partnership in reaching out to refugees in southeast Fort Worth.

“When refugees come to the United States, they don’t know English, how to get legal documents, how to get their children into school or even which grocery store to go to,” Nabeha said.

“So, I always help and advise other people. They contact me about everything—jobs, food stamps, how to apply for Medicaid—and I help them and answer their questions. And if somebody needs help speaking English, I go to the Social Security Administration office with them. I do all of that, and so does Karen.”

Morrow and Nabeha also started a Bible study for a small group of Iraqi women in Nabeha’s neighborhood. Once a month, the group meets in

homes to share their experiences of patience and forgiveness and the faith that God will care for their families. Nabeha and Morrow even host a baby shower each time a member of the group is expecting.

Mostly, the group focuses on the example of Jesus, Nabeha explained, who revealed God's unique love for vulnerable people.

"Our Bible study has taught me patience, and that God is always there to take care of you," Nabeha said. "I have faith that God is going to always take care of my daughter. This I understand from the Bible: Always trust God. God is always there, giving life to people."

Along the way, Nabeha and her family have also learned to be cared for, Hanin explained. Shortly after meeting Morrow in 2010, Nabeha's husband endured surgery and an extended stay in the hospital, despite not yet having a vehicle or driver's license. Morrow drove them to and from the hospital every day. She also helped Hanin enroll in school and adjust to American academics.

Comfort in hard times

A year later, Hanin was diagnosed with a nonmalignant brain tumor. Morrow accompanied the family to periodic checkups, as doctors monitored the tumor's growth over several years. Eventually, Hanin required surgery and chose to visit her extended family in Iraq before the procedure. While in Iraq, Hanin's escalating symptoms forced her to undergo surgery there. But surgeons were unable to remove the full tumor.

As a result, the tumor is growing again and Hanin will require another procedure in the U.S. to prevent brain damage. Until then, she balances her grief and fear with the constant love of family and the many prayers they offer for her safety.



When Nabeha (right) and her daughter Hanin (center) met CBF field personnel Karen Morrow, she shared Morrow's calling to help refugees like herself in the Fort Worth area. (CBF Photo)

Now a senior in high school, Hanin plans to attend the University of Texas at Arlington and continue on to medical school. She said friends like Karen Morrow have not only helped her family survive in the United States, but have illuminated her own capacity to comfort and heal a hurting world.

"Karen has been a great help to our family's life," Hanin said. "If not for her, we wouldn't have had so many opportunities here. She has helped me with school. She has helped my parents figure out life here in getting settled. She has helped us meet new people and get so many different sources of help. And she's just been a really good friend to me and my mother.

"She's given us comfort in hard times and made sure we know that it's okay to have struggles here, especially considering how different the United States is from Iraq. We'd be very lost without her."

View a related video [here](#).

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Karen and Frank Morrow were CBF field personnel serving with Kurdish refugees in Germany beginning in the mid-1990s. He previously was pastor of First Baptist Church in Covington.