

# Texas Baptists respond to Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon

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Texas Baptists continue to work with ministry partners in Lebanon to make life more bearable for Syrian refugees and provide educational opportunities for refugee children—including learning about Jesus.



In Lebanon, a refugee boy from Syria reads as part of an educational program supported by Texas Baptists. Last year, Texas Baptists gave more than \$17,000 to help Syrian refugee families in Lebanon. Combined with gifts from other partners, Texas Baptists' donations helped buy 4,375 blankets, 1,235 mattresses, 200 stoves and 535 fuel vouchers, along with illustrated children's Bibles, for Syrian refugees, working through the [Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development](#).

"Our mission is to empower the church through educational and social ministry. The distribution to families is all done by the churches in Lebanon," said Nabil Costa, executive director of the society.

His organization chooses to “stay in the background” so the predominantly Sunni Muslim refugees recognize Christian churches as their benefactors, he noted.

“Grace and sacrifice are at the center of our faith,” he said. “These people see the difference. As Christians, we cannot help but love them, regardless of who they are.”



Texas Baptist

donations help provide winter survival supplies for refugees in Lebanon. The [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) reports about 1.08 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, but Costa estimates the total number is closer to 1.5 million—between one-fourth and one-third of Lebanon’s population.

He succinctly describes conditions in the refugee camps: “In a word—terrible.”

Refugees live in flimsy tents that offer little protection from bitter winter wind. Many possess only the thin clothing they wore when they escaped from Syria. While the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees provides

enough food for their survival, the distribution process strips the people of their dignity, he said.

“They are humiliated,” Costa said. “They do not feel loved or respected. ... Our No. 1 job as Christians is to love them. We pray for them and let them know we have a heart to care for them.”

Children appreciate the illustrated Arabic Bibles the society provides, and many of their parents—who are looking for ways to occupy their time in the refugee camps—also read them. A significant number have accepted Christ as Savior, and many attend church, he noted.

But receipt of winter survival gear or other assistance does not depend on how the refugees respond to Christianity, he emphasized.



1.08 million registered Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, many living in tents like these. “We do our job and show them love. However they respond, we know the Holy Spirit is at work,” he said.

In addition to providing winter gear, Costa’s organization wants to do more to give refugee children enhanced educational opportunities.

“We are working with students with special needs,” he said. “Some have behavioral issues and need counseling. There are 300,000 Syrian students in Lebanon. Many need to learn life skills and social skills.”

Costa hopes Texas Baptists not only will respond to the immediate needs of the refugees this winter, but also will consider sponsoring refugee children. For \$300 a month, a Texas Baptist family could provide the clothing, food and school supplies for a Syrian child, he noted.

In terms of winter supplies, \$578 provides a family with three blankets, two mattresses, one stove and fuel vouchers for four months, and \$248 provides two blankets, one mattress, one stove and fuel vouchers for a month. As little as \$68 can buy four blankets and a mattress.

“Now is the right time to live out our practical Christianity,” he said. “Now is the right time to show people our love by giving to help truly needy people, regardless of their race or religion.”

To learn more or to contribute to refugee relief, [click here](#).

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The second paragraph was edited after the article originally was posted to clarify the information.*