

# **CBF helps support safe passage of Syrian Christians to Belgium**

June 15, 2016

DECATUR, Ga.—Four years into a multifaceted response to a humanitarian emergency, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship continues efforts to serve Syrian refugees through field personnel and ministry partners in five countries.

CBF sent \$20,000 to Belgium-based field personnel Janée Angel to facilitate the safe passage of 90 Syrian Christians seeking asylum in Belgium.

## **Working in partnership with Belgium-based NGO**

Angel worked in partnership with Gave Veste, a nongovernmental organization based in Belgium that is helping churches and Christian groups meet refugees' needs. Since 2013, CBF has contributed more than \$110,000 toward Syrian refugee relief.

“Since a person cannot be considered a refugee until they leave their country, Syria’s poorest have been unable to get out due to a lack of funds and know-how,” Angel said. “This way allows some of those who are still trapped in the war a way out.”

## **Scope of the problem**

More than 5 million people have fled Syria since the outbreak of civil war in 2011, seeking safety in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Europe. Millions more have been internally displaced as the violence continues and living conditions worsen in Syria.

In 2015, more than 1 million people sought asylum in Europe, marking the largest influx of refugees to the continent since the conclusion of World

War II.

### **Offering 'Backpacks for Life'**

Over the past 11 years, Angel has lived in Belgium and worked with Arabic-speaking people alongside her husband, Hary Khano, a native of Syria and church planter. Together, they lead the only Protestant Arabic church in Belgium outside Brussels, one of just three Protestant Arabic churches in the entire country.

Outreach to refugees and immigrants has been a vital part of their ministry in recent years, and Angel, with the support of Cooperative Baptists, has responded to the Syrian refugee crisis, welcoming newcomers to Antwerp with "Backpacks for Life"—bags filled with toiletries and other necessities, water bottles, snacks, gloves, scarves, hats and chocolates.

### **Family members in Syria**

For Angel and Khano, the war in Syria is part of their daily reality, as 20 members of Khano's family remain trapped in Syria, living in dire conditions despite the couple's persistent efforts to help them escape.

"They go without electricity for much of the day," Angel said. "They walk miles to get fresh drinking water each day. The price of food has gone up so much that they can't even afford a pound of meat. And, of course, living with the daily threat of dying has done nothing for their emotions."

Members of Khano's family will be part of the group of 90 Syrian Christians who make their way to Belgium in the coming weeks and months through the efforts of Gave Veste and Angel. Once in Belgium, the asylum seekers will receive assistance adjusting to their new life, language and work.

"Every step has to be organized, planned and prepared for," Angel said. "There has to be a welcome once they get here. They have lived through

hell for years and are worthy of rest and peace.”

### **Welcoming newcomers**

Angel and Khano’s church will create a welcoming committee that hosts meals and special events for newcomers.

“We want to give them a place to heal and be loved,” Angel said. “Working together as the body of Christ is what will make this happen.”

It is a privilege to serve Syrian families, CBF Global Missions Associate Coordinator Sam Harrell emphasized.

“Refugees are not nameless faces,” Harrell said. “They are people with families and friends and many who love them and are concerned for their welfare. What a privilege for us to be able to play a part in safe passage away from harm, reuniting families and friends with their loved ones, and, with God’s help, being instruments of hope for a future.”

CBF Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter expressed gratitude for the partnership with Angel.

“We are so grateful to partner with Janée as her daily ministry blossoms into an extraordinary moment of hope and transformation,” Paynter said. “The families blessed to make this trek toward an unknown future will be greeted with hope born of Christ-like care. We are so fortunate to be part of a fellowship being the presence of Christ.”

### **Funds still needed**

Angel and her European partners need about \$79,000 to provide Syrian families with transportation out of the war-torn country, food, shelter, hygiene items and other necessities during an anticipated nine-month period. With CBF’s contribution, they still need nearly \$60,000 to ensure the safe passage and relief for all 90 Syrian Christians.

Churches and individuals wishing to contribute to this effort may give online [here](#) or mail a check payable to “CBF” with Acct. 17030 in the memo line to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 102972, Atlanta, GA 30368-2972.