

The Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia is helping the Migrants

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The Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia is helping migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other Asian, Near East, and African countries, as they pass through Serbia. For the past three years, brothers and sisters from our Union have been doing this occasionally as refugees from these countries have been passing through Serbia. But in the last several months, the refugees have come in the hundreds and thousands. The situation has become desperate, especially since Hungary closed its borders.



A few months ago, our Union decided to do more to help the refugees, and we issued an appeal to the churches. Several churches sent volunteers while others sent food, water, and other items.

Let me share the stories and photos from a recent experience. First Baptist Church, Belgrade, sent a group of 7 volunteers who spent 2 days (14-15 September) at the border

crossing Horgos II between Serbia and Hungary. Here is what one of the brothers wrote after they returned:



"Sunday evening we loaded the church van with the stuff our brothers and sisters recently brought for the refugees. Very early Monday morning, we hit the road toward Stara Moravica, where there is one small Baptist Church. There we met brother Zoltan and we went shopping. We filled the van with water, food, and personal hygiene items and then traveled on to the border with Hungary.



"At the border we found refugees -- women, children, men -- who were arriving in short intervals ... by buses, taxis, on foot. They were all tired, with swelling feet. Some had plasters on their legs or arms; some had scars on their faces. Babies were being carried by their mothers or fathers. That day, about 1200 people arrived at the Horgos II crossing. We distributed what we have brought.



"The next day we went to the border again. It was on this day that the Hungarian government closed the border with Serbia completely. That caused panic and a great mess. People were trying to cross the border by force, but they were returned (sometimes even brutally). The worst situation was when part of a family managed to cross (although immediately arrested) while other family members stayed on this side!

"We continued to distribute water, food, and hygiene products. After we had spent our reserves, brother Zoltan phoned Baptist brothers and sisters in Hungary. They invited us to come to a Baptist church in Hungary, near the Serbian border, to pick up supplies. The Hungarian authorities allowed us to pass. But after loading the van and returning to the border, the guards at the border had changed. The officials did not recognize that we had a valid reason to enter Hungary and bring the items back without valid papers. It took brother Zoltan's help to convince them to allow us to return.



"According to our estimate, we left behind 3000 refugees at the border crossing when we returned to Belgrade. Many new refugees had been arriving. Some went to nearby forest (probably attempting to find a new way to cross). Others pulled out small tents and started to prepare for the coming night."



Since the border closing, most refugees have been transported to the western Serbian borders with Croatia. In the first 48 hours after the border closing, this was more than 11,000 refugees. Because of this, Croatian authorities closed their borders. They said this was temporary in order to manage the first wave of refugees. However, this has caused political tensions between Serbia and Croatia, and now, Serbian citizens cannot travel to Croatia. Thousands of refugees are also arriving from Macedonia as the borders with Hungary and Croatia are closed. This situation is tough and tensed. We need help.