



ASIA/JORDAN - The director of Caritas Jordan: Syrian refugees are 250 000, of whom we give assistance to more than 50 thousand, and among children there is already "psychological emergency"

Amman (Agenzia Fides) - The number of Syrian refugees who have found refuge in Jordan has reached the threshold of 250 thousand. And if the conflict between Assad's government loyalists and rebels remains unresolved, it may reach half a million by April 2013. The data and projections provided to Fides Agency by the 38 year-old Wael Suleiman, director of Caritas Jordan, describe the humanitarian catastrophe that is likely to be triggered as a side effect from the atrocities of the civil war in Syria.

The latest report which has just been drawn by Caritas Jordan confirms that every day at least 4/500 Syrians fleeing cross the border with the Hashemite Kingdom. The average monthly arrivals in recent times has reached 12/15 thousand units. 75% of those welcomed in the camps and service centers are women and children.

In the largest refugee camp, that of Zaatari, the situation is explosive. There, in a desert area, almost 40 thousand refugees live in conditions below human dignity. Suleiman explains to Fides: "We told UN officials that the camp should be closed. The refugees, once entered, cannot get out. Now the setting up of another camp 22 kilometers from Zarqa has begun, which should be operational in early December, with the basic infrastructure that in Zaatari does not exist."

Just today, November 9, Cardinal Robert Sarah - President of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, sent by the Holy Father - meets in Beirut representatives of about twenty Catholic agencies working in the Middle East to coordinate the humanitarian efforts of the Catholic Church in the region. In Jordan, the 120 employees and 1,000 volunteers of Caritas provide direct assistance to more than 52 thousand Syrian refugees, with special attention to the weakest and children. "With the support of Caritas Poland - Suleiman explains - we are working on a project to address the psychological emergency of many children who risk becoming scarred for life due to the terrible things they have seen."

The commitment of Caritas Jordan on the front of the Syrian drama began in November 2011. Suleiman welcomes the Pope's initiative who sent Cardinal Sarah in Lebanon to manifest the closeness of the Holy See to the populations affected by the conflict in Syria. At the same time, the director of Caritas Jordan is disappointed that the visit of the delegation to Syria was not made, which was announced during the Synod. "The Syrian people," says to Fides Wael Suleiman "is waiting for someone who can at least bring peace. People are losing hope and waiting for someone to help them. And the Church in this respect can do a lot. I noticed when I accompanied Bishop Maroun Lahham in his visit to the camp in Zaatari. There, where only Muslims live, everyone approached the Bishop asking him to help them and especially to pray for them." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 09/11/2012).