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ASIA/JORDAN - Imminent opening of a second refugee camp in Syria; the director of Caritas Jordan "in 2013 there is a risk of mass exodus"

Amman (Agenzia Fides) - In the coming days the second UN camp to welcome in Jordan territory refugees fleeing from Syria will be opened. This is confirmed to Fides Agency by the director of Caritas Jordan, Wael Suleiman. The new facility is located twenty kilometers from Zarqa and can accommodate 45 thousand people and priority will be given to women and children.
"The camp of Zarqa," explains Suleiman "will help relieve the situation that has arisen in the camp of Zaatari, located in the desert, where the cold and the promiscuous conditions worse day by day, the spread of diseases that primarily affect children and the elderly" . Even in the new camp Caritas will animate educational programs especially for children.
The number of Syrian refugees in Jordan is fast approaching the portion of 300 thousand. Every day, between 500 to one thousand fugitives cross the borders with the Hashemite Kingdom. And on the basis of what the Suleiman and other operators say, the worst is yet to come: "The situation in Syria worsens, and the conflict may soon involve massively densely populated area of Damascus and its suburbs. At the beginning of 2013 a mass exodus from those areas could erupt. And that with Jordan is the easiest border to reach for those who want to escape."
The director of Caritas Jordan recorded a symptomatic clue in this regard, the UN so far funded three-monthly assistance projects. Now, loans are calculated over a longer period, from six months to one year. "Everyone knows that the refugees cannot return soon in their country, even if the war ends. Syria is destroyed, and to reconstruct the conditions of a possible coexistence it will take years. Perhaps decades. "
Suleiman also confirms that in Jordan there is the phenomenon of rich Arabs from the Gulf Countries to recruit "child brides" among the ranks of the Syrian refugees. But points out that the prevailing culture in large sections of the population, this practice is perceived as a form of charity: "some time ago," says the director of Caritas "a wedding in the area of Zaatari was celebrated. The bride was a girl of no more than fifteen years of age. And everyone was happy. The rich stranger that married her was considered by all a benefactor."
Among the Syrian refugees, some of Christian faith have found work at the operational facilities of Caritas Jordan. "For them, Christmas is round the corner and many will live this moment with a broken heart," notes Suleiman. "Just yesterday," adds the director of Caritas Jordan, "one of them said to me: with the work I do with you, I find myself assisting some who supported the rebels. I was against the rebels. Because of them I was forced to flee and the lives of my whole family was devastated by suffering and hardship. But in doing so I feel I really live the Christmas season. Helping those who I should consider as enemies." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 21/12/2012)

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