



Franciscan Music Center for children in Damascus 2019

Project promoted by Association pro Terra Sancta

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Context

Since 2011, Syria finds itself in the midst of a conflict that is every day more cruel, and while many have managed to flee there are even more who are still there. They face ever-increasing difficulties: continued attacks which destroy everything, great difficulty in finding food and other necessary items, the main cities have become ghost towns, those who leave their home in search of food sometimes never return. Now in its sixth year, the conflict in Syria is the largest and **most complex humanitarian crisis in the world**, with no end in sight.

According to UN data the total estimated death toll **from 2011 to March 2018 had risen to 500,000** reducing the average life expectancy of 14 years, from 70 to 56, and 1,9 million people are injured. Moreover, more than 8,3 million Syrians have been displaced inside Syria, with 5 million people live in besieged cities and hard-to-reach areas, and more than 5,5 million have fled the country to nearby countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Kuwait, and a few hundred thousand have fled to more distant countries like Germany, Sweden and Greece and have become refugees. **More than 12.2 million people in Syria need humanitarian aid, including 5.6 million children** (UNOCHA, Syrian Center for Policy Research-SCPR).



More than 117,000 have been detained or disappeared since 2011, the vast majority by government forces, including 4,557 between January and June 2016, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Torture and ill-treatment are rampant in detention facilities; thousands have died in detention.

The Islamic State and the former Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, which changed its name to Harakat Tahrir al-Sham, were responsible for systematic and widespread violations, including targeting civilians with artillery, kidnappings, and executions. Non-state armed groups opposing the government also carried out serious abuses including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, using child soldiers, kidnapping, unlawfully blocking humanitarian aid, and torture.

Damascus

Until the beginning of 2018, Damascus has been one of the few relatively safe cities where the fighting was limited in rural areas. For this reason thousands of internally displaced people moved to Damascus to find a safe refuge, settled in the city center and started to rent a house. In this respect, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said: *"The number of men, women and children who fled after seven years of war in the capital Damascus, the threshold of five million people. A lot of families in Damascus have one room as a shelter, they are dependent on food aid and they do not have enough food for the whole family."*

Beside the dramatic situation due to the war and the international embargo that have impoverished the population, Damascus has broadly increased its population,. The city is overcrowded, the goods are overpriced, there are not job opportunities or fully functioning educational and medical services.

At the beginning of 2018, the situation in the city has become more and more dramatic. A fight between the opposition armed forces and rebel groups, controlling the eastern area of Damascus called Goutha, and the government army broke out causing thousands of dead and several thousand injured people; almost all of them were civilians including women and children.



Nowadays the security situation has improved. The fighting and the launch of mortars and missiles stopped. People are trying to restart their life and children return to school. Despite this, a great concern for children remains. Most of them present post-traumatic stress disorders such as bedwetting, loss of speech, aggression and substance abuse, and are in need of psychological support.

Franciscan Music Center

At the beginning of 2018, Fr. Raimondo established the “Franciscan Music Center”, a small school music for children at the Shrine of the conversion of St. Paul in Al Tabbaleh monastery. This centre was born with the collaboration of Mr. Pierre Haddad who is a piano player and the director of Harmony Center for Music Education in Damascus. He has an excellent experience in his field and has good relationships with other music schools. Both of them were determined to do something for children through the music and they involved other musicians in this project.

Opening a school music in Al-Tabbaleh neighbourhood, one of the poorest and more densely populated of the capital, aims to allow poor children to learn music. Most of the families living there cannot afford to make their children to do extra-school activities. In particular, music school in Damascus are very expensive and no one can afford the necessary equipment (musical instrument, stand for instruments, stand for notes and musical instrument closet).



At the moment, the school is inside the Franciscan convent and includes two rooms where children attend lessons, and one room for the secretary and where there is a big closet for storing the musical instruments. Many lessons are also held in the church of the convent due to space limitations.

Project

The present proposal intends to support this school that is a positive environment where the children can discover their passions and follow their unique abilities. For these children living in Tabbaleh’s neighbourhood, attending this school is one of the few opportunity to strengthen their growth, their education and build their future. Moreover, most of them present post-traumatic stress disorders such as bedwetting, loss of speech, aggression and substance abuse. So, playing music has a great role in reducing their trauma because it helps children to express themselves, stay together in a trustful place and have fun while learning.

At the moment, 37 children are attending the school but more than 40 children would like to join the courses. Indeed, many families from nearby poor neighbourhoods such as Dwelaa, Kashkoul and Jaramana

have requested to send their sons. This school represents one of the few place that can help to steer the children away from delinquency.

For this reason we want to increase our support to Franciscan Music Centre to enhance its own activities and to make the school able to accept the new requests. The need is: covering part of the running costs; buying new instruments (as no one can afford to have its own); renovating three rooms where the lessons can be held.



Project duration

6 months. From Jan 2019 until June 2019.

Overall objective

Supporting the Syrian population, in particular children affected by the war.

Specific objective

Supporting children of Damascus by offering a place, the Franciscan Music Center, where they can discover their passions and follow their unique abilities. The aim is strengthening the growth and the education of this risky generation in a positive environment.

Beneficiaries

48 new students which are added to the 37 school students.

Activities

1. Organization and management of music lessons divided in 2 courses for beginners and experienced players. The lessons are twice a week and for each hour and a half lesson there are two students.
2. The purchase of music instruments (piano, violins and guitars) in order to have enough for all students.
3. Renovation of three rooms within unused spaces of the convent for the Franciscan Music Center. Two rooms are already in use but it is proposed to extend the centre with three new classes.

Budget

INTERVENTION	UNIT	COST PER UNIT	TOTAL
Semi-annual salary of teacher	4	€ 60.00	€ 1,440.00
Purchase of a wall piano	1	€ 5,047.60	€ 5,047.60
Purchase of violin half size	1	€ 66.70	€ 66.70
Purchase of violin big size	1	€ 119.05	€ 119.10
Purchase of guitar half size	1	€ 49.50	€ 49.50
Purchase of a guitar big size	1	€ 110.50	€ 110.50
Stand for notes	4	€ 13.90	€ 55.60
Musical instruments closet	1	€ 200.00	€ 200.00
Machines for heating	4	€ 66.50	€ 266.00
Renovation works and Painting	/	/	€ 400.00
TOTAL			€ 7,755.00

Way to donate by bank transfer

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REASON OF BANK TRANSFER: Music Center in Tabbaleh