



مؤسسة الأراضى المقدسة للصم

The Holy Land Institute for the Deaf

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“Indeed, in the same way he wants to be born these days, in your living room, in our everyday lives, in our hearts!”

In this edition:

Issa and Fadia with their children, from **Syria**



The deafblind boy Hamam from **Libya**



Hearing aids “from Deaf to Deaf” in **Iraq**



Deafinitely connected – God provides

Letter



"... and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." Luke 2:7

Dear **Friends**,

Perhaps you have asked yourselves what Christmas is like in a semi-tropical country where the weather is quite mild and the rare snowfalls come as a surprise. Pine trees don't like it here, the moon lies on its back and the stars seem to be all confused and in the wrong place. Many homes and especially churches will be decorated with plastic Christmas trees, colorful decorations and lights to brighten up the celebrations. The images of a stable with **Jesus' family**, the visiting **shepherds** and the **wise men** are prominent. But the sheep miss the typical fatty tails and long wool, the donkey has no black cross on its back, and the plow-ox looks like a cow although it was a buffalo. Somehow Father Christmas with his presents gets inserted as well, although no-one really knows where - literally and figuratively - he came from. We are left with an impression of a western celebration of an eastern feast.

Yet Bethlehem, where **Jesus the Messiah** was born, is so close. If, of an evening, we were to drive to the edge of our town we see Bethlehem's lights on the other side of the Jordan Valley, barely 20 km away as the crow flies. In those days Bethlehem was a hamlet of probably some 25 or so houses, inhabited by people who mostly carried the proud name of the tribe of **King David**. Every house or cave would have a guest room on the roof or besides the front door. Families vied for the honour of having their relatives stay with them in their guest room or "inn". A hotel was not needed for not staying with relatives was not an option and would be seen as an insult, just as it is today.

When the Roman Caesar wanted a census, everybody registered in his own village, town or tribe. Bethlehem would be "full" with an influx of people that included the more prominent families and leading personalities, who obviously would have the best guest rooms. **Josef** the Carpenter, with pregnant **Mary**, somehow had not been able to beat the traffic. They tried their uncles and cousins but there was no place for them in the "guest rooms", in the "inn", so to speak. Finally someone must have had pity on Mary and invited them into a typical, eastern, Bethlehem house. A large room or cave with an elevated platform to the side, of perhaps 2-3 feet high that was the sitting-, living-, bedroom. Another elevated platform functioned as kitchen and store. In summer the animals would be out but in winter the animals were kept on the lower level, as a kind of central heating. Imagine for yourself the chicken, sheep, goats, perhaps a buffalo, a cat for the rats, a guard dog, a donkey..., a food trough and plenty of straw.

When Mary's time came the lady of the house - Mary's aunt(?) - would have put plenty of straw on the floor and prepare a place for Mary, shoo the children and the animals out, put some straw in the trough for a cradle, and help Mary give birth to her first-born, Jesus! Just like **Mathilda**, Salt's old midwife, would have done. I would love to show you the "houses" in Salt that look exactly like this

Letter

and where Jesus Messiah, the son of Mary and Joseph the Carpenter, the son of David, the son of God, was born. Not in a stable, but in the sitting-, living-, bedroom. Indeed, in the same way he wants to be born these days, in your living room, in our everyday lives, in our hearts! That's the wonderful miracle of Christmas.

On behalf of staff and children, with every blessing and a Happy Christmas,

Brother Andrew

Lord Jesus,

You know what it means to be a refugee!

In Bethlehem you didn't have a home and after you were born you had to find refuge in Egypt because the authorities sought to destroy you. You lost all and became hungry and naked, thirsty and cold, a prisoner; like the people detained in a camp or imprisoned in their own minds. They took your cloak and perhaps all you had left were some people (family, friends, strangers?) who came by to help carry your burden and quench your thirst. And at the end you were again a refugee, when you were buried in somebody else's grave.

Lord Jesus, for God's sake, let us be among those people who bring comfort, food and water, and an encouraging word. Help us care for the little ones, giving them dignity and hope. And may we then hear the words softly spoken: "insofar as you did it unto these people, who are the least of my brothers, you did it unto me. Go in peace!" **Amen.**

General news

How we experience the war

Frequently people ask us how we experience the war in Syria and whether it influences our everyday lives.

In fact, there is no violence, insecurity or disorder in Jordan because of the war in Syria. The situation here is stable and everyday life is going on without any problems, although Jordan took in about 750.000 Syrian refugees with approximately 178.000 living in the *Zaatari refugee camp* on the Syrian border (page 11). Many more live in the cities of Jordan, which has led to a shortage of housing and high rents as well as an increase in the price of food and the costs of daily living. Obviously Jordanians notice this even though the situation is safe and peaceful. Only when we meet a Syrian person who talks about his family and friends in Syria do we suddenly realise that the war is near.



The children go on their weekly walks, not realising that there is a war on



The married couple **Issa** and **Fadia** are both Deaf and work at the *HLID*. **Issa** trains Deaf apprentices to be painters while **Fadia** works as a kindergarten teacher. They have three children: **Julia** is 20 and hearing, **Jiana** is 16 and Deaf, **Jonny** is five years old and hearing. They have lived in Jordan for nine years already but originally they are from Syria.

Issa, with one deaf sister, and **Fadia** with two deaf sisters, both grew up in Christian families in Damascus. They met as children in the Damascus Deaf school and from fourth grade upwards they were classmates. Unfortunately Deaf children in Syria could not go further than sixth grade and until today they are not able to attend High school. After leaving school **Issa** worked as a carpenter and later as a painter. For a long time **Fadia** was looking for work until eventually a relative employed her in his hairdressing shop. They married and had two daughters.

Visit

One day, eleven years ago, **Brother Andrew** visited **Fadia's** aunt and uncle in Damascus, because her uncle was a volunteer Sign language interpreter for his sisters and her aunt wanted to start a ministry for

Deaf people in the Orthodox Church. Discussing the possibilities and the people who could help with a Deaf Club and a Sunday school, he heard about **Fadia's** deaf daughter, a bright little girl of 6 years. She did not attend any school because her parents wanted **Jiana** (right) to graduate properly and were wondering what to do. Brother Andrew suggested that, rather than to send **Jiana** to the *HLID* in Jordan all by herself, the whole family could come. There was work for **Issa** in the vocational training and for his wife **Fadia** there would be a teaching job. So two years later, the whole family moved to Jordan. To say good bye to their friends and relatives in Syria was difficult for them. Moreover to adapt to the less free and regarding clothing, etc. more conservative lifestyle in Jordan was difficult. But the parents emphasize that for them only their daughter and her education were important.

Interview

Three children

Meanwhile Jiana has become one of the top students who takes information in like a sponge. Her older sister **Julia**, who is hearing but grew up “Deaf”, is now the school’s Sign language interpreter as her mother tongue was Sign language. After graduating from High school it took time for Julia to find an opportunity to go to university because of the family’s finances, but she now studies English. Besides their work Issa and Fadia assist in the clubs, Chapel and Sunday schools. The family meanwhile grew larger with a clever little boy, **Jonny**, who is hearing. He has to go to a private school, because Syrian children cannot go to subsidized public schools, which is an additional financial burden for the family.

War

The family is ever so grateful that they do not have to live through this terrible war. The last time Fadia and her children were in Syria was in 2011. Now relatives and friends, including their two elderly mothers in Damascus, live in fear. While communicating on “Skype” with their



Fadia teaches Ali, who came to the school when he was already nine years old. He has a lot to catch up.



Issa instructs the two Mohammeds in spray painting

relatives the connection is often interrupted and people stop talking when there is shooting near the house. It breaks Fadia’s heart when she sees how strained they are. A relative of Fadia was shot and the flat of her mother is partly destroyed. Nevertheless they cannot possibly flee from the war because they do not want to give up their houses to the likelihood of wanton looting and destruction.

God guides

They had to go to a different country and leave family, relatives and friends, all to find a school for their young deaf daughter. But meanwhile they themselves became a blessing and asset to the school. One day they hope to go back to Syria, but not before Jiana finishes High school and university in Jordan. Fadia concludes by saying:

“We are grateful that Brother Andrew came to Syria so our family can now live here in Jordan. It was God’s wonderful guidance”.

Where did the graduates go?

It's exciting to follow-up on our graduates and see how they are doing.

The five girls of last year's Tawjihi-class (High School) passed their final exams this summer. Four of them are now studying. The fifth girl lives in Bethlehem and for her it is more difficult to get a place in College or University in either Jordan or Palestine. Unfortunately the three boys failed some of their exams. They are now preparing to re-take them

coming January. Two of them are doing this at home, while **Salah** (picture on pg. 8) works at the *HLID* in addition to his studies. He helps in the boarding house of the boys and in the Vocational Training. Also *HLID*-ex-students **Razan** (l.), who successfully concluded her vocational training last summer, and **Ala'** (r.), who passed her exams in 2011 and now studies Special Education, work at our Institute. They help in the deafblind unit and work as boarding house supervisors with **Ahlam** (picture p. 10) and **Ayda** (centre), who started as house mother in January 2013.



A new knowledge centre

During the summer holidays the functions of the school buildings changed to create a Knowledge Centre, where everyone can learn and use all the information that is available at the *HLID*.

This Knowledge Centre is part of "Knowledge Management" which we hope to introduce soon. It comprises a library for children and staff, class rooms for computer science for young and old as well as graphics, natural science, speech & language therapy, Sign language and



*Library teacher **Irina** next to **Samar**, teacher for the deafblind, who works with **Mohammed***

teacher training. The students enjoy the welcoming atmosphere of learning and also spend some leisure time there. To make room for it, the kindergarten moved to a different part of the building.

Smarter In 10 seconds

Knowledge Management (KM) is a new concept that is being used in administration and education. The idea is to organize rough data into information and provide access to it, so that through use, teaching and transfer this "dead" information becomes alive and transforms into "knowledge". Imagine rough data that is organized into a file and saved on a computer. Such a file is useless if there is nobody who can find it or turn on the computer. KM supports the school administration and helps students and staff extend their knowledge through access and creative use of information and communication with the world.

A second home for Hamam



In October the deafblind boy Hamam (7) joined the Institute. He is from Libya, where his parents looked in vain for a school for deafblind children.

They travelled to Jordan, where Hamam got a Cochlear-Implant (see picture on the right) with which he is able to hear artificial sounds and voices. This helps him a great deal, even though these sounds and voices are different from those one hears with the normal, natural ear.



In Jordan the parents heard about the HLID and our deafblind work. They visited our school and said that the school was a gift from God, as for them it is most important that Hamam has the opportunity to learn and develop. During the first few weeks, the parents and their other children stayed in a hotel in Amman and were able to care for Hamam over the weekends. Meanwhile they returned to Libya but Hamam remained here at the Institute. They can afford the expenses for the education and extra travel and willingly come the long way from Libya to see their son. Each weekend when the deafblind children go home a teacher of the deafblind unit takes care of Hamam. Hamam seems quite happy here and he handles



*Hamam with the night supervisors **Raghda, Nathalie and Sana** (f.l.t.r.)*



Hamam likes to fall asleep on the couch in the sitting room and being carried to bed.

the situation well. At the same time, and through the loving care of the staff and Deaf students, he is finding new people to relate to. They look after Hamam with warmth, love and kindness which, at this distance, the parents are unable to do.

Allah Kariem - God provides! Especially for those who are weak and small, and insignificant in the eyes of the world.

Hassan: from housefather to husband

For many years Hassan lived in the boarding house for boys. After finishing school he assumed the responsibility of housefather. He did a great job and he became an important person for students, a good friend for colleagues and volunteers and an appreciated assistant for Brother Andrew.

In June Hassan (right) got married and now lives with his wife in Jerash, a city that is a one-hour bus ride away from Salt. In spite of the distance we are glad that he continues to work as a carpentry instructor at the *HLID*. We are also very grateful to Hassan for his long and faithful work here and we wish him all the best and God's blessing for this new chapter in his life. From now on, **Salah** (centre), a Deaf school graduate, the Swiss volunteer **Rafael** (left) and the German volunteer **Simon** (p. 9) care for boys in the boarding house.



Asma' and Tamara in Boston



Tamara (left) and Asma' on the Perkins campus

On September 10th Asma', the Deaf teacher for deafblind children, travelled to America to study special education for the deafblind. Her friend Tamara from Switzerland, who worked as a long-term volunteer among other things in the deafblind unit, is accompanying her as a Sign language interpreter.

They are living in Boston next to the big campus of the *Perkins-School for the Blind*, the leading institution for deafblind children. Besides attending

lectures on special education for deafblind children, **Asma'** is extending her pedagogical skills in the *Perkins-School* by observing teachers and deafblind children during classes. Each week she works eight hours in the boarding house of the deafblind children, where she has great benefit from her experience working with deafblind children at the *HLID*. Asma' had to learn the American Sign Language, and with Sign Language lessons and much practice she built up a good vocabulary. **Tamara** is the only Sign language interpreter for Asma' and as such she is always with Asma'. The course will take until May 2014 and is financed by the *Perkins-school*. The *HLID* ex-students **Ala'** and **Razan** (picture page 6) and volunteer **Nathalie** (picture page 7) from Switzerland help to fill the gap Tamara and Asma' left behind.

Staff & volunteers



Joshua is doing better

Past summer, **Joshua**, the head of the Vocational Training, had surgery to remove an internal cancer, and to prevent possible spread he had chemo-therapy. At the end of October he and his wife **Dineke** were happy to come back to Salt. We thank God for his mercies. **Allah Kariem - God provides.**

Be a volunteer at the *HLID*

Because we are an institution that employs both Deaf and Hearing; Muslims and Christians; Jordanians, Syrians, Egyptians, Europeans and Americans it is very important for us to stress that we all - especially Arabs and Western people - are equal. We want to overcome prejudice, look into other people's lives and try to understand each other better.

Because our employees get relatively low salaries, our volunteers usually get something similar because of support (friends, organizations, accommodation at the *HLID*). Where then is the volunteering? Almost everyone engages in voluntary or unpaid work. Parents' associations, ministry in the church, or bringing my own kids to bed after a workday. Thus we expect our longer term volunteers to carry out their regular assignments but voluntarily and happily do something extra which may not be required of local staff. Indeed, we see ourselves as a big "Deaf" family where everyone has an assignment and helps to contribute to the contentment of all. This is not so much a matter of working hours but of attitude.

We have five new volunteers. **Nathalie** (picture p. 7, Swiss) helps the deafblind night-duty team and **Finn** (2nd f.r., German) took over the care for deafblind

Hazem. Amrei (left) and **Simon** (2nd f.l., both German) help on the playgrounds, in the boarding houses and with the administration. **Patrick** (r., Deaf, Dutch) is doing his final study assignment by researching and designing the new Kreimeh-Centre buildings. He teaches drawing and graphics as well.



Obviously we are also very grateful for the short-term volunteers who use their own holidays to come, and often achieve an enormous amount of work. We also thank all the volunteers in Europe, USA and elsewhere who voluntarily and freely give of their time, energy, work and money to support us somehow.

May God bless you all richly!



*Long-time friends: **Nellie, Ria Kolsters, Nico, Br. Andrew, Tonny and Gerrie** (f.i.t.r.) in Madaba*

from the city of Dordrecht in the Netherlands, where **Brother Andrew** grew up. They made themselves popular by baking pancakes, followed by a slideshow about Br. Andrew's younger years. Next we welcomed the Deaf pastor **Janne Rissanen** and his team from Finland. In November **Yvonne** (NL) helped us prepare our 2014 **Golden Jubilee**.

Apps and Pancakes

Last summer two Stanford students, **Abhi** and **Amy**, came all the way from California to develop an APP to simplify the recording of hearing test information. The research took place at the **HLID** and the Kreimeh centre. This fall, **Ria Lammers** from the Netherlands came to help in the office. Shortly afterwards we had a **group of friends**



*Pancake-fun: **Ria Kolsters** (2nd f.r.) with **Ahlam** (I.), domestic supervisor **Ghada** (3rd f.r.) and the girls*

S.T.R.I.D.E.

(Salt Training and Resource Institute for Disability, Etc.)

Opening of a laboratory in Iraq.

The 24th of September was a great day for the **HLID/STRIDE** representative Ms. Baydaa (centre) in Baghdad and for **STRIDE's** work in Iraq. In the **Amal-Institute for Deaf children** in Baghdad a new laboratory for the manufacture of earmoulds was opened.

The facility provides the institute itself and six additional schools with hearing aids. The two Deaf earmould technicians **Hind** (r.) and **Iman** (white overall, back) as well as hearing aid technician **Mohammed** (l.) - all trained in Salt - have begun their work there. Everyone is very happy with this new centre and ask for two more centres. Laboratory equipment and training were financed by **CBM - Germany**, with whom we agreed on common aims and projects. We all hope that the required budget for training in the whole region for the next three years will be approved.



A new playground for Kreimeh

Our Kreimeh community centre in the Jordan valley is growing and more and more children are finding their way there.

After a year of intensive work, a relationship of trust with parents and community has been established. At the moment 22 Deaf, blind, physically or mentally disabled children visit the centre. They are between 3 and 14 years old. Some of them are taught in the centre and some are getting ready to be integrated into public schools and can hopefully go to a regular school soon. To help more children a home visiting programme is being implemented and a Community



Hearing Aid Programme "HEARING EXPRESS™" is being developed in collaboration with *WWHearing (World Wide Hearing Care for Developing Countries)*. A playground was added to the centre. The equipment was made by our Deaf trainees of the Vocational Training in Salt and paid for by the **Dababneh family** from Jordan. This was a great opportunity for our Deaf boys to contribute something to disabled and very poor children.

News from the Za'atari-refugee camp

In December 2012 the NETWORK of the Institute with several other disability-specific local organizations bought two barracks to establish a small CBR-Centre in the Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees.

Children with disabilities and elderly people alike are welcome and receive help according to their need. Recently the centre was expanded with three more barracks for a Kindergarten and other educational programmes. **Sabri** and the **NETWORK's outreach team** can be proud of its work this past half year. They helped over 300 people and families. Word has spread about the good work and the centre is very busy as there are still many more people who need help. This school year we hope to be able to provide rehabilitation and assistive devices for some 1000 people with disabilities and some 200 children will receive education, which they so badly need. We are very grateful for the help of the Syrian volunteers. Thankfully the work with Syrian refugees in Jordan does not need to be financed by the *HLID*, but is paid for with special donations from *Christoffel Blind Mission (Germany)*, *Said Foundation (UK)*, *Episcopal Relief and Development (USA)*, *British-Jordanian Friendship Association (UK)* and various others.



Some of our Staff of the **NETWORK** team with the **Syrian volunteers**

School, children and students

Hearing among Deaf

Our Institute offers Inclusive Education (IE) for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing as well as for Deaf children with co-occurring disabilities, such as deafblindness, physical or cognitive disabilities, neurological or learning disorders, cerebral palsy, aphasia ... Last spring an especially rare child came to our school. Ala is eleven years old and is ... hearing! Ala's mother is Deaf and his father is deafblind due to advanced Usher syndrome and his parents could not anymore take care of him. Up till now, Ala's older sister Do'a took care of him but recently she got married. Because of their difficult financial situation the family was searching for an affordable boarding school for Ala. Auntie **Yousra** and Uncle **Amjad**, past students of *HLID* and his father's siblings, encouraged the family to send Ala



Ala's uncle Amjad is Deaf and has severe Low-Vision. He is an employee at the Institute.

to the *HLID*. Because our school is bilingual (Arabic and Jordanian Sign language) Ala has no problem following classes. Initially it was difficult for Ala to get used to the new environment and to be a hearing person among the Deaf. He now experiences the isolation and loneliness that Deaf people so often feel in a hearing society. But he is also learning and living that Deaf people are perfectly normal, not better or worse nor smarter or less smart than hearing people. And that is definitely gain!



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