

Dear friends and supporters,

Many priests, religious and socially committed people in Syria approach us to plead for quick help for people who are increasingly faced by famine. The humanitarian situation in Syria has become very depressing. Living conditions are much worse today than they were even during the years of war. As a priest, I must pass on this cry of the needy and the desperate calls of my confreres in the hope that they will be heard by people of good will.

The effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic are affecting people almost everywhere in the world. In Syria, where the need was already dire as a result of the long years of war, resources have become even scarcer. It is now a question of pure survival of those people who, despite all the hardships, have remained in their home country and are now eagerly waiting for a chance to rebuild their country step by step.

In addition to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the situation is exacerbated by the embargo that is still in place on the part of the US and the Western countries, the economic crisis in neighbouring Lebanon and the recent catastrophic explosion in Beirut on August 4th. The currency has lost more than 30% of its value within a few weeks. Many shops and factories had to close abruptly to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Food prices have tripled since the beginning of the Pandemic.

The health system is malfunctioning because of the devastating war. Poverty, the high rate of inflation and unemployment – all of this complicates people's lives and exposes them to famine. How can someone feed a family of five with a monthly salary of the equivalent of € 20? We are talking about someone who still has work. How much worse is the situation when someone has completely lost the job – which often happens – or had no job at all even before the crisis?! Unfortunately, the Syrian state can hardly provide social assistance. The Red Crescent is offering aid packages here and there, on a rather sporadic basis.

I want to turn to you with this appeal for help. To you, who are not indifferent to the suffering of Christians in Syria, in the hope that you will spread this appeal among your friends. We can do a lot for Christians and also for their humane mission by sensitizing the people around us here to the plight of the people in Syria. This is basically the voice of Christ, who looks at people's needs and calls on us to take action. A very large number of the people in Syria today need help for food, medicine, and rent.

The Foundation *Korbgemeinschaft – Hilfe für Syrien* is currently trying to alleviate these needs with the help of friends and benefactors in Europe and of many volunteers in Syria. It would be nice if we could work hand in hand to keep the “basket of charity” filled, so that many hungry people can be fed. We deeply trust in the grace of God and in the generosity of the people of good will. Only this grace can rescue people.

I rely on your support and I pray for all of you that the Lord may bless you and give you health and protection from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Attached please find a separate call for donations which I kindly ask you to pass on to friends and/or to display it in your parishes according to your discretion. Please note that there is one version for Germany and one for Austria, the difference being the relevant bank account details for donations. May God reward you for your compassion!

I wish you all a pleasant and relaxing summer time, despite the various Covid-19 restrictions.

I remain united with you in prayer,

Your Fr. Hanna Ghoneim