

Azra Mann on September 23rd, 2015

Today, we went to the refugee park to hand out clothing. The people swarmed around my 2 cousins (Eldin Zekic & Mirza Zekic) and I. The suitcase, containing adult jackets and sweaters was quickly made empty. Some took items, and quickly hurried away, while others hung around; just watching us as we tried to connect and communicate with families. We went from tent to tent looking for children, most of them were sitting inside tents (looking exhausted). We would motion for the mothers to come and select items for their children. They were grateful and appreciative of everything.

What we noticed- people took only what they needed. They basically changed out of their clothes (which were dirty, and smelled really bad), and threw them away. They have no access to wash their clothes.

There was a huge garbage container at the park, full of clothing! It was explained by one family that the refugees couldn't carry much with them. As soon as clean clothing was made available, they got rid of their old stuff. It made perfect sense, as (i emphasize), their clothing smelled really bad. Some have been travelling for weeks, with no access to showers.

Today,

When I asked a mother, what her child (a 4 year old girl, named Zahra) needed, she said socks and underwear. She said that her child had been wearing the same pair of underwear for weeks. (We are buying them underwear and socks tomorrow).

When we left a suitcase for a family, a 2.5 year old boy climbed in and wanted to sleep in there. His mother put down her own jacket at the bottom of it, to make it soft, and let him sleep.

Adults are looking for shoes, and have showed us the shoes which they have been walking on (the soles of the shoes were very roughed up, and on some you could actually see holes at the bottom, from all the walking).

They use their phones, as a means to connect to their families in other countries, to find gps locations, as well their online forums where the information is allegedly passed on where to go for help, which country borders to ignore, and which areas of the borders they could penetrate.

We are also hearing stories of some people taking advantage of the refugees vulnerability. They are being charged \$3.00 euros to charge their phones, stores are short currency changing them (if one euro is 120 dinars, they will convert it for 90 dinars- this actually happened at the restaurant where I purchased the food the first night). On a good note, a couple of fast restaurants opened up, right by the park, to cater to refugee's halal food demand. (On a bad note, one of these restaurants was the one currency scamming them).

I have met a lot of extremely helpful people, one of which is Lejla H. Alomerović! She provided me with a lot of direction and insight on the situation, and their commitment as to how we can make our hostel/shelter a success!

If you have any questions about what we are trying to do, or anything at all, please p.m. me.

I will definitely be busy until Friday, and then I fly back (but I will do my best to answer all of the questions upon my return to Canada).

In the meanwhile, I ask people to continue to donate! Until October 5th, all of our fundraising will be doubled. Please don't wait for someone else to do it, every dollar counts, and they need your help. Refugees need our help.