

Winter 2019



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Dear Friends,

In this edition of our MEMO newsletter we hear about how Sudanese refugees are facing extreme racism and isolation in North Africa, why young Middle Easterners would choose their smartphone over their passport, and our prayer focus is for Sudanese refugees across the region.

Racism is a major issue in our world today. When I visited our work in North Africa earlier this year, I was astonished to hear stories of how Sudanese refugees are being openly racially abused across the region. They all had stories about how they were being ridiculed on buses, in public places, and at work. You can read more about this on pages 3&4.

I'm consistently reminded of all the people across the Middle East and North Africa who are in need of God's love and transforming power. Thank you for supporting our work across the region.

James Baldock
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Join MEM staff and advocates by doing a sponsored activity!

Next year some of our staff and advocates will be doing sponsored runs, bike rides, and swims, to fundraise for some of our life-transforming work across the Middle East and North Africa.

To find out more or sign up to do a sponsored event you can get in touch with our Development Manager Jess Davidson at jess@mem.org



Great to see you at New Wine & ONE Event!

We met several of our current supporters and many new supporters at our stand and seminar at New Wine and ONE Event this year. We hope that you were impacted by hearing about all the vital work we're doing across the Middle East and North Africa.

If you picked up your regular giving form to bring healing to traumatised children, you still have time to return it to us and support this vital work. The first 25 new regular givers will receive their MEM travel mug as a thank you, but we only have a few left so please respond quickly to claim yours.

If you'd like more information about this important work or to sign up online, you can visit mem.org/farah



“A male social worker came into my house and asked about my sexual relations with men - I felt very threatened. I kicked him out, but now I feel terrified to let people into my home.”

- *Atifa**

“They run after us and beat us for no reason; they also call us names and tell us to go back to our ‘filthy’ country (Sudan). I just run and never stop.”

- *Lamya**

“I’d rather we’d died in Sudan than come to North Africa. We are treated like dogs. On my way to university, on the bus, no Egyptian will sit beside a Sudanese person. We have no one to turn to; no one to rely on. They tell us things like ‘there’s no point taking a shower because we are dirty anyway’ and shout racist slurs in the streets towards us.”

- *Fazilah**

*Names and locations changed for the security of those mentioned.

Racism and Isolation:

Racism and
Isolation

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Sudanese Women

Sudan ranks third on the most neglected displacement crises worldwide. It is estimated that between 2 and 4 million refugees and migrants have fled Sudan, with most of them dispersing across North Africa. In Cairo alone, approximately 1 in 10 people are Sudanese, and this has triggered, along with some major societal issues, severe racism and isolation for Sudanese refugees and migrants.

Stories like Atifa, Lamy, and Fazilah's are not uncommon across North Africa. They highlight just some of the ways that Sudanese women are specifically abused and being traumatised. In many cases the male relatives have either died or stayed behind in Sudan, meaning that the women and children are left by themselves to cope with these issues.

Sudanese refugees are even overlooked when it comes to funding and assistance from NGOs due to the Syrian refugee crisis in recent times. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on bringing healing and restoration to these vulnerable women through emotional healing sessions, art & drama workshops, and seminars about human rights and racism.

Quick Facts

- » Being Sudanese makes them a second class citizen in North African countries. But being a Christian makes them a third-class citizen, ostracised by both indigeneous and majority-Muslims alike.
- » Egyptian authorities have arrested scores of documented and undocumented Sudanese and have kept them in inhumane detention conditions.
- » North African authorities have returned or threatened to return Sudanese back to Sudan, despite the likelihood that they will face persecution.

**Would
you
choose...
your
smartphone
or
passport?**

Imagine for a moment - **you are a refugee fleeing a country in the Middle East, traveling across countries and continents. If you could only take ONE; would you take your smartphone or passport?**

Most of us would probably opt for the passport, as we know that we would need to prove our identity and have a passport to travel between countries. However, a recent study of Syrian refugees has shown that most young refugees would actually choose their smartphone over their passport, and there's an important reason for this.

Although they understand the importance of a passport, they see their smartphone as the only window into the outside world. As a refugee they are cut off from most traditional methods of communication and when it comes to traveling across countries, they can become quite disconnected. Moreover, a lot of refugees from Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries have had most of their culture and communication controlled and vetted by oppressive regimes and governments.

The UNHCR (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has found that this type of connectivity is a lifeline for refugees. They are able to send and receive vital information, but it's also an opportunity to broaden their horizons and improve their own lives. Their findings are so conclusive that they are working at bringing 3G coverage to rural areas to allow for refugees in non-urban areas to have this same access to communication and online content.

More than ever, young people across MENA are searching for truth. They are wanting to hear new ideas and thoughts about how life could be different for them. The thought that this window into the rest of the world could be cut off by losing their smartphones is catastrophic because they value this window to give them hope about how their lives could be.

...Continued on next page.

This is just another reason why media is vital for reaching MENA with the Gospel message of hope and transformation. Media is easily accessed through smartphones and religious belief is often one of the things that young Arabs search for truth about, due to their strict Islamic upbringing.

With over 170 million smartphone users across the MENA, digital media is the ideal tool to reach all demographics of people. Whether it's refugees in search of a new life, young Arabs looking for answers about faith, or people asking questions about Islam - the answers are now in their pockets, but the media must be accessible and available online.

We create visual media that is distributed and used through Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, websites and many other platforms for people to easily find them. We also create media for organisations operating in the region to reach certain demographics, such as refugees, persecuted Christians, isolated women, and Muslim seekers. Our media is created by Middle Easterners for Middle Easterners, which is paramount when it comes to creating effective video content that is culturally relevant to those consuming it.

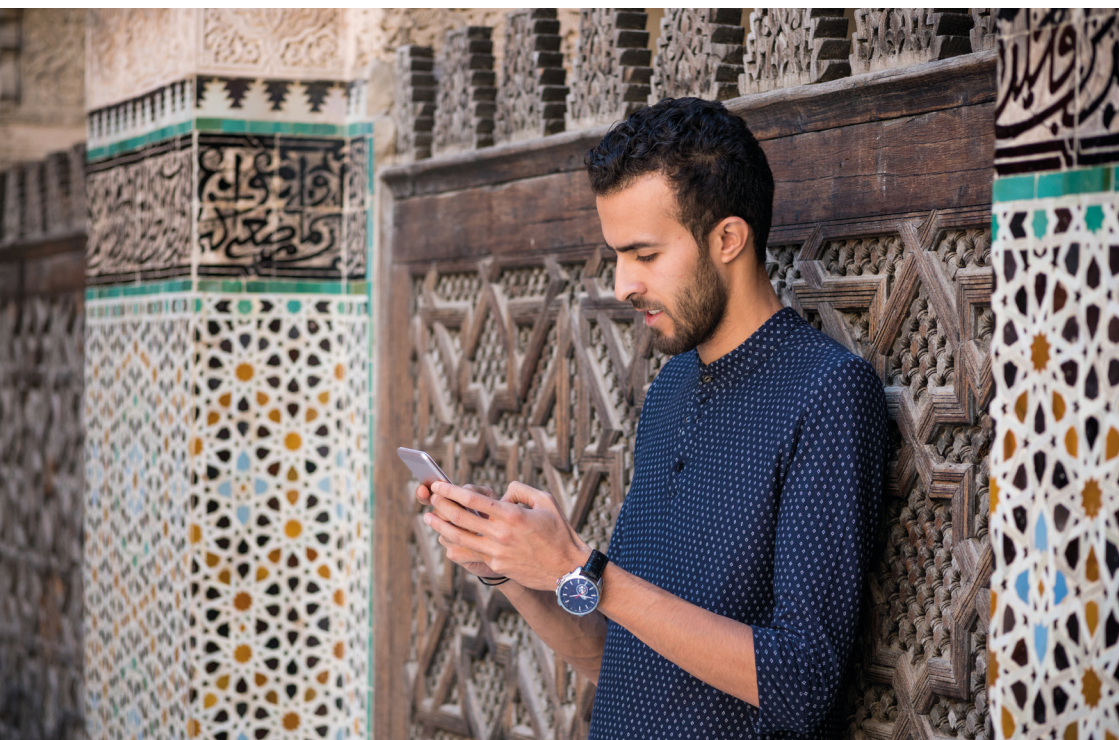
Short Updates on Projects

- » 28 young Arabs trained in directing, script writing, editing, and filmmaking in Syria through our *Future Leaders* project. We have also trained 7 Yemenis through our *Future Leaders* project this year.
- » 11 young Sudanese church leaders trained in areas such as filmmaking and sound engineering through our *Web TV* and *Future Leaders* projects.
- » 5 episodes of *Got IT!* completed so far this year, with another 7 to be completed by the end of December.
- » 2 episodes of *Life in the Desert* completed, with two more to be finished by the end of the year.

Examples of this include *Got IT!*; short animations created to answer popular questions about the Christian faith and challenge misconceptions, *Animating the Action Bible*; animated Bible stories in the style of the Action Bible, and *On Bended Knee*; short videos created by believers from a Muslim background (BMBs) to share prayers and stories of God moving through the people of the Gulf.

It is vital that as we look to the future of the region and continue to move people towards faith in Jesus Christ, we persist in producing creative and culturally relevant media. An unprecedented number of people have access to online content across the region and with your support we have managed to reach thousands of them. Please continue to join us in praying for the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” *Romans 10:14 (NIV)*.



The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:34 (NIV)



Focus on Prayer:

Sudanese Refugees

Focus On
Prayer | 10

We shared earlier in this newsletter that Sudanese refugees are under incredible pressure, experiencing awful situations across North Africa. Although they are in desperate situations, our God is greater and there is hope for their future.

Our Christmas campaign this year is going to be focused on raising funds to bring healing, counselling, restoration, and hope to Sudanese women in North Africa through our projects there. As well as praying for the points below, please join with us in praying that our Christmas campaign reaches its funding goal so that we can help as many Sudanese women as possible.

Prayer Points

- » Pray that Sudanese refugees in North Africa would find freedom from their isolation and protection from severe racism.
- » Pray that Sudanese women would find healing and restoration from their trauma through our *Blossoms* project.
- » Pray for the Sudanese families in North Africa, that they would forge new lives for themselves and come to know the love of God and how He can give them hope for the future.
- » Pray that North African society will stop blaming refugees for their region's problems, but rather come together and build a positive future for their nations.
- » Pray for our staff who work with these Sudanese women, ask God to give them wisdom, strength, and resolve.

Give

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mem.org/give

Pray

Visit our prayer &
news blog
mem.org/pray

Advocate

Visit our
advocacy page
mem.org/advocacy

Thank You

Your giving, prayers, and advocacy for MEM, are what make it possible for us to do our vital work across the Middle East and North Africa.

Sowing seeds of transformation

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media