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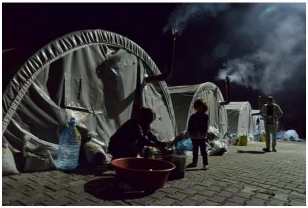
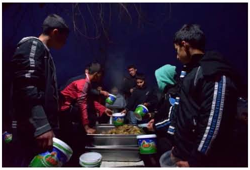
Refugee Stories – The Yazidis In Turkey

By Edge of Humanity Magazine, August 28, 2016



After Dinner
They are lodged in a single-room tent. They no longer have a kitchen or a dishwasher. After dinner they do the dishes in front of the tent. These are the last tasks of the day at a refugee camp. A little girl keeps her mother company as she does the dishes.
Besiri Refugee Camp, 05.Dec.2014

Documentary Photographer Aydin Cetinbostanoglu is the Edge of Humanity Magazine contributor of this social documentary photography. From his project 'A Human Tragedy in the 21st Century, Yazidi Refugee Camps in Turkey'. **To see Aydin's gallery of projects click on any image.**



Dinner delivery
There are small neighborhoods within the camp. The food is delivered to each neighborhood, after which person in charge of rationing hand out the meals to someone from each tent. Tonight on the menu: kidney beans, rice and boiled potatoes. Sometimes they also give out fruit.
Diyarbakir Refugee Camp, 10.Dec.2014

Different areas of interest
Daddy is having his morning shave. While his son is trying to pick up some tips for future reference, his daughter comes into the frame to show me that she also lives there at the camp.
Besiri Refugee Camp, 05.Dec.2014

Continuing education in the ugly face of war
A part of the children at the camp continue their education under the supervision of teachers who are also refugees living there. It is very difficult for them to continue education in Kurdish in the Arabic script outside of their own country. The purpose of this initiative is to keep children in education and away from the sad realities of war as much as possible.
Besiri Refugee Camp, 04.Dec.2014

"We are not the children of Adam and Eve. God created Peacock Angel at the beginning of humanity and he created his own people. We are his children"."Our people and our religion is Yazidi" by saying they define themselves in different social categories. Their belief system has roots in ancient Mesopotamian religions and Zoroastrianism. This is a society that beliefs in the infinity of the world and the nature. They believe that God, who created the world, would never destroy it. They pray three times a day, facing the sun. Wednesday is the day of rest. They believe that the first man was created on Wednesday. They celebrate this creation in April with a feast called "Red Wednesday". They define wars as a genocide and not participate. They walk around with white clothing to symbolize peace.What a great irony such a society to live the genocide 74 times.They had to leave their country because of this belief. YPG fighters have created a security corridor for them. Twenty days and nine hours later they reached the border with Turkey on foot.

Something to do for everyone
When the sun is out, morning cleaning is a must at the camp. The mother must be out handling something harder to accomplish, because the older daughter has been tasked with taking care of her new-born sibling. The baby is not yet aware of anything.
Besiri Refugee Camp, 05.Dec.2014

A story of sorrow
It is the story of Adile Ashur, who fled with her 4 children after her husband was decapitated right in front of them. It will take a long time for them to recover from the trauma. They will never be able to forget what they saw. At the camp in Diyarbakir they live together in the same tent with her husband's siblings in an effort to support each other. All of the women observe the tradition of mourning by wearing brown clothes and headscarves.
Diyarbakir Refugee Camp, 10.Dec.2014

Contact with the outside world
The only connection to the outside world of young people living in the camp are mobile phones. They establish contacts with other relatives and share their experiences with an Internet connection. They receive news of lost relatives.
Sirnak Refugee Camp, 14.April.2015

They live in the state and municipal camps in Turkey. Approximately 14,000 Yazidi are giving struggle a life today in those camps. They are experiencing the same pains from a 100-year-old woman till new-born babies.Their future have been destroyed and dreams demolished.To documenting this tragedy I visited 5 major camps between 4 December and April 22. I shared their lives and listened their stories and took their photographs.

I interviewed quite a lot of people in their camps at Southeastern of Turkey. I asked them about their lives at the camp, about how they came to be there and what their expectations were from the future. What they all have in common is their unwillingness to return home. They don't want to be reminded of what they have been through out there. All they want is to live and practice their faith peacefully in a free and democratic country that will have them. As you listen to these stories, you don't even want to imagine what has been happening, let alone imagine yourself in their shoes.

People tell you a lot of stories during live interviews. However, what struck me the most was the words of 17-year-old high school junior Halime:

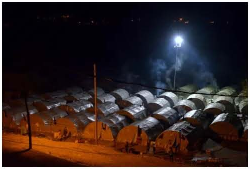
"I studied for 10 years. Look where I am now."

A sea of shattered dreams, a future full of uncertainty and a wait full of hope.

"Celebrating Red Wednesday"
A day earlier they paint boiled eggs to different colors. Eggs symbolize World. Feast day everyone bump the egg in the hands of someone else's eggs. Many aspects it is similar of the Christian Easter feast. They are painting eggs for the feast even though in a refugee camp under a tent.
Sirnak Refugee Camp, 14.April.2015

Adiba Qasim's Story
Adiba is a product of the Yazidi religion which promotes a philosophy of love and harmony with all people and nature.

Adiba and her family were transported to Sirnak where the local Kurdish municipality was providing food, shelter, and clothing for them. Slowly life begins again. In photo Adiba was working as a volunteer witn IMPR in Sirnak camp. She displays coloured eggs for the Red Wednesday feast in the tent before distribution. Red, green and yeloow are traditional colors of her district and her flag.
Sirnak Refugee Camp, 15.April.2015
One year later when I met Adiba. Her brothers have reached Germany and her farher, mother and sister were trying to live in Diyarbakir refugee camp. She is in Iraq as a volunteer again in an humanitarian organisation.



Unthinkable, but a forced and imposed life
A neat row of little boxes. Smoke coming out of each box into the darkness shows that there is life inside each one. Each box contains the essentials people were able to take with them when they fled their homes as well as all the pain they would like to forget.
Besiri Refugee Camp, 05.Dec.2014

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A Syriac Wedding Ceremony

By Aydin Cetinbostanoglu

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