

Harvest

Giving power to the powerless • Giving a voice to the voiceless • Opening the path to peace and reconciliation



سفراء سلام
AMBASSADORS
FOR PEACE





About the "Ambassadors for Peace"

Our work with young people in Syria and Iraq has now helped over 400 to become peace-makers.



Ambassadors for Peace in Syria



The Ambassadors for Peace programme was born in March 2014, following a visit by Huda Nassar to a refugee camp in Lebanon. The refugees had shelter and food, but Huda recognised that they all lacked hope: they had no future.

From our first programme in October 2014, Ambassadors for Peace have found a welcome home in Syria and Iraq. We have been astonished and delighted by the number of young Christians who have accepted the challenge to become peacemakers and reconcilers for their communities. So far, well over 400 young men and women have already taken part, and we are always being asked to extend our work to other cities such as Damascus and Baghdad,

Because of the huge population

shifts caused by the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, when we lead an event in one area we are actually reaching the whole country. For instance, in Lattakia there are currently Christians from every part of Syria, including Aleppo, Damascus and East Syria.

Our programme is supported by every denomination, which is no mean feat in countries torn apart by sectarianism and mistrust.

An essential goal of our Ambassadors for Peace programme is to create a long-term action plan to promote peace-building and reconciliation. The nature and style of the Ambassadors for Peace events changes as we return to work again with those who have already begun their journey. As we hold follow-up events for past participants, we also plant new programmes in new areas on each country. You will see this in the following articles.

Every programme includes prayer, talks, workshops and fellowship. Our teaching is always Biblically-

based. Throughout, our message is always to bring hope and to spread the message of peace and reconciliation.

One important part of our work is to help the young people turn their feelings of frustration and anger into an energy they can use for the good of their communities. We show them how to use their own gifts, whether they are musical, artistic, sporting, dramatic or practical, to promote peace.

It has been such an honour to watch the young men and women change, committing themselves to work for the greater good, for a brighter future for everyone.





Group photos: Ambassadors in Duhok, 2016

Ambassadors for Peace: Iraq

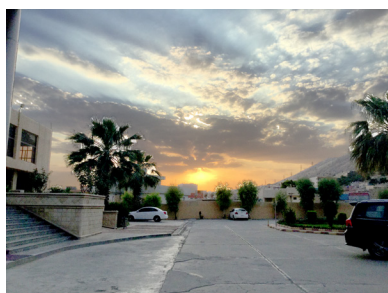
Over 100 young Christians came together in Duhok and Erbil to learn how to be peace-makers and reconcilers in the midst of conflict.



The Revd Nadim Nassar, our Director, and Huda Nassar, our Director for the Middle East, returned to Iraq in June 2016 to lead more Ambassadors for Peace programmes there.

As always, our aim is to help young Christian men and women to guide their communities on the path to genuine reconciliation and peace.

This time, we led two programmes, one in Duhok for those who took part in our first Ambassadors for Peace programme there last year, and a new programme in Erbil.



In **Duhok** (photo above), which lies north of Mosul and 50km south of the Turkish border, we met our young Ambassadors at the Jiyan Hotel. This was our second time together, and the theme of this two-day event

was John 16:33: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

We talked about how Christ conquered the world, and how we, as His ambassadors, have a special role today. With our guidance, the young men and women used their talents to promote peace. This was a new idea for them, especially for the women.



Some wrote and acted a play,



some drew their visions for a new Iraq,



and others planned for a Middle East-wide sporting competition.



This helped the young people to share their thoughts on life in Iraq, and how everyone can play a part to rebuild a new, integrated and secure country.

We were very inspired by them all, and we learned a great deal from them about their vision for a better future for Iraq.



We then travelled to **Erbil** for their first ever Ambassadors for Peace event. Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, lies 50 miles to the east of Mosul and is one of the oldest continuously-inhabited areas in the world.



The young people in Erbil were fearful for their future, but they were thirsty for our message of hope and for the opportunity to change their lives. We engaged with them to help them release the stress and anger they felt after witnessing years of sectarianism and warfare, and we encouraged them to have confidence in themselves as agents of change in their communities.



They were very enthusiastic and filled with energy. Every group we meet is unique: their problems, their challenges and their dreams are different. We are greatly enriched by the experiences that the young person share with us. They inspire us to be ever more creative in our work to empower them to discover the path to peace and reconciliation.



As this was the first time the young men and women of Erbil had encountered Ambassadors



for Peace, we spent four days with them. We talked to them about what it meant to be a leader, especially during wars and conflicts, and how to build bridges with each other and with the one who is different. At the end of the second day, we held a session on “Mending relations and rebuilding trust”, because this war has shattered the trust between communities in a way we have never seen before.



On the third day, we concentrated on “how to be peacemakers”, and the young people then set about developing their own peace projects. Then we talked extensively about citizenship and faith. Our programme finished with a time for prayers and a farewell lunch before the young Ambassadors left to begin a new chapter in their lives.

“How can I go back and be the same person now? You have changed me forever”

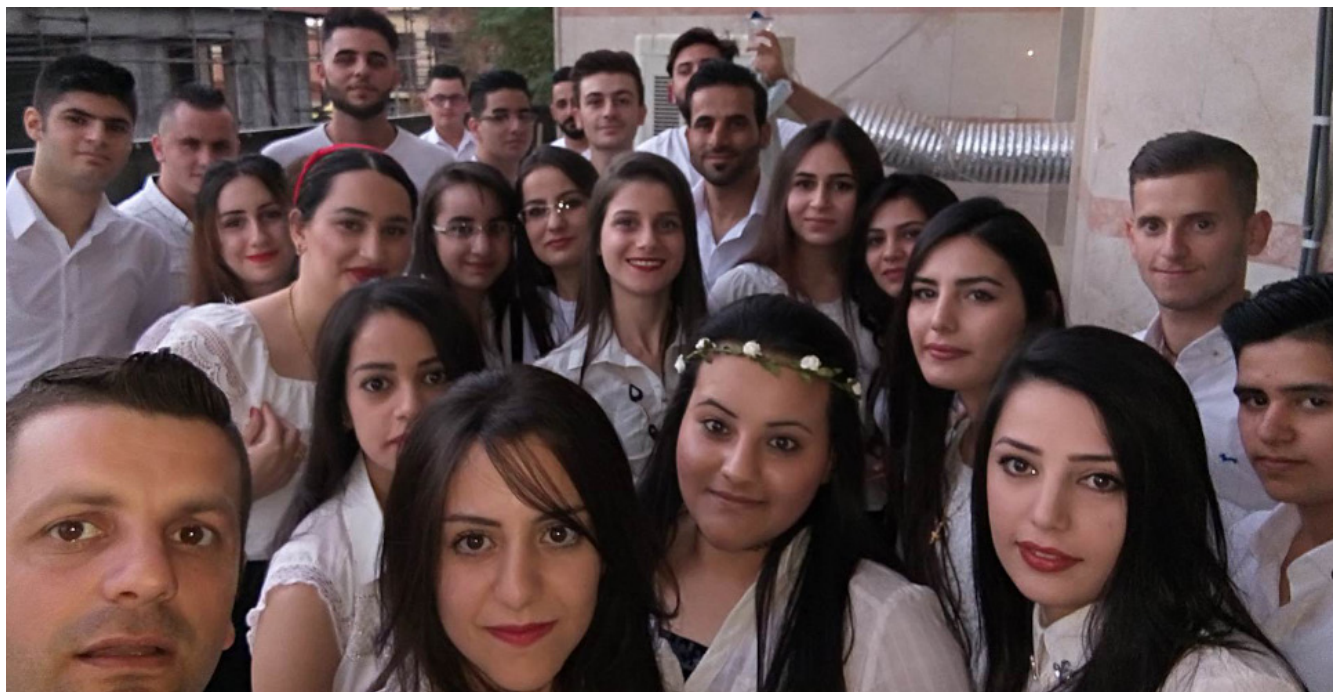
A young woman in Erbil

“In a Spiritual Desert, your visit was a chance for me to reconnect with Peace!”

A young man in Duhok

Our Ambassadors Celebrate Peace Day

The Ambassadors for Peace programmes create long-term action plans to promote peace-building.



Ambassadors for Peace in action

The young people in Erbil went back full of energy and inspiration, keen to work hard together to put their plans into action. The plan they had developed at their Ambassadors for Peace programme was to bring the message of peace to everyone in their community.

The young Iraqi men and women chose to commemorate the International Day of Peace with their own Peace Day on Sunday 25th September - Awareness Sunday.

young Ambassadors worked hard as an ecumenical team, with the support and supervision of Father Boulos (Syrian Orthodox Church) and the Awareness Foundation. Their Peace Day was sponsored by CAPNI (Churches Aid Programme Nohadra - Iraq).

Choosing the white rose as a symbol of purity and peace, our Ambassadors decorated 1,500 roses with ribbons which carried the message, **"Peace begins with me"**.

people as they left after the main service, as well as to anyone passing by. This was well received, with many recipients being very touched by the young people's message. A small act can produce a huge impact, and the young really can make the greatest difference!

We were amazed by how these young Christian men and women came together to work on this project, how they supported each other, and how much energy they put into making this event a great success.

Now they are planning a new project, buoyed by their achievements on Peace Day! We congratulate each of them. We are proud to work with them, and we thank all of the Ambassadors for Peace for all that they are doing to rebuild their communities.

We should like to pay a special tribute to Tearfund, our partners whose support made these programmes possible, and to CAPNI for facilitating our work in Iraq.



Their plan was to promote peace through demonstrating that peace starts with each one of us. The

On Peace Day, the young Iraqis split into four groups, each going to a local church to give peace roses to





Ambassadors for Peace: Syria

Our first **advocacy** programme in Syria for more than 90 young men and women!



Group photo: The Revd Nadim Nassar addresses the Ambassadors

In October 2016, The Revd Nadim Nassar and I completed the third phase of our Ambassadors for Peace programme at the Latim monastery of Slinfah, west of Lattakia, Syria.

This phase, as with all of our work in the Middle East, was held in cooperation with all local churches and with Eid b Eid, the ecumenical youth group. We are proud that our work is always exceptionally ecumenical, with all denominations fully participating.

The theme of our programme was 2. Cor 4:7-10: *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We*



always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

Over three days, Nadim, Father Amer Kassab from the Syrian Catholic Church and I challenged over 90 young men and women (the maximum number that our venue could hold) to enter into a democratic process, so that they could choose from their peers to elect 14 Ambassadors for Peace.

I taught sessions on what it means to be a good citizen and on how to express yourself through a democratic process. We then divided the young people into groups of 10 to 15. Each person then addressed their group to try to

convince everyone that they would make a good representative.



The groups then voted, and the 14 Ambassadors were chosen. This was more than a selection process - this was an introduction to advocacy and to what it means to have the great responsibility of a vote. Through interactive workshops and discussions, the young Syrians



learned about voting for the best choice rather than just for your friend or someone from your neighbourhood or denomination!

After the election, each successful candidate developed a peacemaking project with the help of their team.

Afterwards, the Ambassadors spoke passionately, campaigning for their own project.



The teams were then disbanded, and everyone went from Ambassador to Ambassador, asking questions about each project.

Each Ambassador was then given 2 minutes to give a closing speech to persuade their young colleagues to vote for their idea. Those present then voted on which projects should become reality.



The top 5 projects will be worked on by all Ambassadors for Peace to build harmony and encourage reconciliation in their communities.

As part of their continuing spiritual development, Father Amer (*photo, above*) and Nadim talked to the young Ambassadors about the meaning of pain, and how Jesus responded to hardship and suffering, including His own. He also spoke on how to turn experiences of persecution, pain and oppression into motivations for peace and reconciliation.

The work did not stop at the end of each day. In the evenings we split the young men and women into new groups so that they could use their talents to make short plays

about a challenge their community faced, and how this challenge could be overcome. Many of the groups tackled how to stop the war; their solutions were based on love and forgiveness. Their plays reflected what they had learned each day, and what they had faced in their own communities. We were very impressed with how creative and insightful they all were when addressing such weighty subjects.



Following this ground-breaking programme, we have been inundated with calls for us to offer our programmes across Syria. In Damascus, they want us to launch a new Ambassadors for Peace programme. In Aleppo they are asking for us to work with their children through our Little Heroes project. Now we must find the extra resources!



AWARENESS APPEAL 2017

Ambassadors for Peace, and our Little Heroes programme for displaced children, have already been successful beyond our imagination. Over 450 young men and women in Syria and Iraq have become Ambassadors for Peace, and nearly 1,500 displaced Syrian children have become 'Little Heroes' who can now play their own part in healing their families and their new communities.

We need your help. In 2017, we are planning to train another 305 Ambassadors for Peace and 1,500 Little Heroes in Syria and in Iraq. We will of course be working with all those who have taken part in previous years. We are also planning our first ever Christian Muslim Ambassadors programme in Syria!

Please help the young people and children of Syria and Iraq to grow and to guide their communities on the path to peace and reconciliation.

Each Ambassador needs a donation of £50, and each Little Hero just £35.

Through your donation, you can make a difference in the lives of those who seek hope and a peaceful future in the midst of conflict and darkness.

**UK and
Hong Kong**

GIVE BY CHEQUE: Please send **cheques**, made payable to the Awareness Foundation, to:
Awareness Foundation, Lodge House, 69 Beaufort Street, London SW3 5AH
Please mark your cheques "Little Heroes".

OTHER METHODS: Please contact us if you would like to make a gift **online** using your debit/credit card or PayPal, or **electronically**, directly from your bank.

Gift Aid: If you are a UK taxpayer, please contact us as Gift Aid could add at least 25% to the value of your gift.

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Awareness Foundation America is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

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Please enclose a note requesting that the funds be used for the Awareness Foundation's programs.

Please contact us directly at awarenessamerica@awareness-foundation.com if you have any questions, especially regarding possible tax benefits related to donations made in North America.

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