MESSAGE FROM MFA FOUNDER
DR. GEORGETTE BENNETT AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BENNETT GROSS

Dear Friends,

The humanitarian mission of the Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees (MFA) is to get the right relief to the right people – at the right time. Our mandate requires continual awareness of the current needs – and also a hyper-sensitivity to the ever-changing landscape and the inevitable human impact.

In 2019, the Syrian people continued to be victims of the interplay of international actors – all seeking control of territory, oil fields and military and geopolitical advantage over this beleaguered country. The unfolding events made MFA’s mission more complex – and that much more necessary.

In Idlib, in northwest Syria, millions have been displaced by Russian air raids. The use of chlorine gas and barrel bombs continues. The UN opened an investigation of Russia’s deliberate targeting of hospitals, and fleeing civilians were often left without shelter of any kind.

In Turkey, 13% unemployment led to a backlash against Syrian refugees. The country had admitted 3.6 million refugees, and offered the opportunity to work and education in Turkish schools. Now, Syrian businesses have been attacked, refugee relocation inside Turkey restricted and, to date, 350,000 Syrians “voluntarily” returned home.

In October, given a green light by the U.S., Turkey launched a military offensive into northeast Syria. By establishing a 20-mile “safe zone” inside the Syrian border, Turkish President Erdogan sought to eliminate the threat of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The fighting and the initial displacement of 300,000 people created tremendous new needs – and Turkey has recently announced its intent to resettle a million repatriated Syrian refugees into the area.

The U.S. and the E.U. have largely abandoned any role in the outcome of the war. Having withdrawn from its outposts in the north, the US is left primarily with the eastern oil fields. Erdogan and Vladimir Putin now have joint Russian-Turkish patrols along the border.

As fighting continues, the options for those remaining are grim. Most lack the resources to reach Kurdish northern Iraq. International NGOs have fled.

The displaced can only try to head away from the fighting, seeking clean water and abandoned buildings to stave off the harsh winter.

The people of northwest and northeast Syria and northern Iraq – major recipients of MFA's shipments – have been profoundly impacted by the upheaval of the past year. Fighting uprooted major segments of the population and intensified the need for aid – and shifting control has complicated deliveries. Against this background, MFA has now shipped more than $137 million of humanitarian relief, and the challenges of the Syrian people continue to be our mission.

We thank you for your support – and your dedication to the resilience of the people of Syria.

Dr. Georgette Bennett
Founder

Bennett Gross
Executive Director
MESSAGE FROM MFA SPOKESPERSON
F. MURRAY ABRAHAM

Dear Friends,

On the minds of most of us at this time of year are the holidays and all the warmth, family traditions, and festivities they bring.

Tragically, for the people of Syria, the war, the struggle for survival, and their urgent need for help have been going on for nearly nine years.

More than half of Syria’s pre-war population of 23 million people has been forced to flee their homes. Millions are refugees in bordering countries and in Europe. Many millions more are internally displaced. The recent withdrawal of American troops and the invasion by Turkey has forced another massive diaspora in northern Syria.

As a spokesperson for the Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees (MFA) for the past three years, it has been my privilege to be an outspoken advocate for those who have no voice. With great pride, I have witnessed MFA’s tireless work to deliver humanitarian aid directly to the people suffering inside Syria and in makeshift camps outside, and it has inspired me to do more.

I recently made a gift to MFA’s Fund A Container program to pay the cost of shipping four containers filled with aid for Syrians in dire need. By working with its partners, MFA optimized my donation filling those containers with $4 million in relief. MFA’s NGO partners delivered these medicines, medical supplies, basic hygiene items and water filtration kits, bringing necessities and dignity to people who have lost everything. Of those who have been ravaged by this war, 76% are women and children.

Won’t you join me at this time of peace and giving – by sending relief and a clear message that they have not been forgotten? By donating now, with winter in full throttle, we can provide warmth, healing and hope where no peace exists.

This year, as you light your candles, hang your stockings, or gather with friends for good cheer, please remember to share your blessings. Ask your friends to join you in giving generously. The benefits on both sides of your gift will be enormously uplifting.

Thank you,
F. Murray Abraham

Photo: Reed Young
SAVING LIVES
IN SYRIA

“We have yet to experience this much distress,” said a doctor at Al Rahma Hospital in northwest Syria. The Syrian humanitarian crisis has continued into its ninth devastating year. To respond to this great need, since 2019, MFA has shipped more than $137 million in humanitarian aid to those in need in Syria.

In 2019 alone, MFA shipped 40 containers of humanitarian aid that have served more than 107,638 displaced people — or 23,646 families — living across more than 118 camps. MFA has also distributed life-saving medicines, medical supplies and equipment to more than 50 separate hospitals and medical facilities with a catchment area of more than 1 million people.

From distributing clothing to young refugee girls in northern Iraq, to providing desperately needed medical supplies to underserved hospitals in war-torn northeast Syria, MFA has increased the scale and impact of its work in 2019 to help more people than ever before.

“This is what the people need, but they need more, and we would like to ask you for larger quantities,” said a local council leader in the city of Qamishli in northeast Syria upon receiving MFA humanitarian aid. “We hope to continue this work with MFA,” he said. “Thank you.”
NORTHWEST SYRIA

There are more than three million people in need in northwest Syria. Making conditions worse, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure and violence have continued unabated.

In 2019, thousands of people have been killed in airstrikes in northwest Syria. The death toll continues to rise. The impact of hostilities on women and children, who make up the vast majority of the total population, is particularly severe.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their homes to escape the violence. There have been more than 750,000 people displaced. The majority of these people are moving to densely populated areas where relief networks are already beyond overwhelmed.

The medical infrastructure continues to be under attack. From March 2011 through November 2019, there have been some 588 attacks on 350 separate medical facilities.

Widespread destruction of civilian facilities, such as homes, bakeries, markets, hospitals, schools, and water stations adds to the suffering of people in northwest Syria and further complicates humanitarian assistance efforts.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

For many years, northeast Syria had been a destination for people fleeing other battle-stricken parts of Syria. In just weeks after the US withdrawal, this region has gone from relative stability to a state of conflict, uncertainty and fragility.

There are 650,000 people living in the region that have already been displaced. The initial fighting during the Turkish invasion forced another 300,000 from their homes, and camps for displaced persons were evacuated.

Medical facilities and the entire civilian infrastructure – powerlines, water supplies and bakeries – have been under attack. The humanitarian situation is dire as there are shortages of both food and medicine.

NORTHERN IRAQ

Since the U.S. withdrawal from northeast Syria, nearly 18,000 Syrian refugees have sought shelter in northern Iraq, causing a new humanitarian crisis in the region. Refugees have fled from aerial bombardment, artillery shelling and ground fighting during Turkey’s military assault in northeast Syria. The majority of the Syrian refugees are women, children, and the elderly.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) currently hosts over 275,000 refugees. The overwhelming majority — 250,000 people — are Syrians. The continuing influx of Syrian refugees into the KRI has increased the need for emergency and essential services, as well as winter supplies for the camps.
ON THE GROUND

“My name is Amid Abd al-Karim. I was displaced from Al-Ghab,” Amid says, giving the name of the plain region in northwest Hama. He stands outside, just before a group of tents — half-cylinder frames overlaid with plastic tarps. These makeshift shelters are now commonplace across war-torn Syria, with displaced families living inside the tents permanently.

Amin lives in Qartaba camp near the village of Batabo in northwest Aleppo. The camp is home to some 400 people that lack access to basic goods and services. “We left because of the severe bombardments,” Amin continues. “We couldn’t stay in that area anymore. We left with nothing. We have many needs — tents, food, and other supplies.”

In April 2019, MFA worked with its local partners on the ground to deliver emergency supplies to Qartaba camp. The supplies included mujadarra meal kits and basic hygiene items, like soap bars, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. In just one delivery, MFA served 78 families — totaling 433 people.

“Amin's story is the new normal in Syria. Displaced families continue to be among the most vulnerable people and are dependent on humanitarian aid to survive. In 2019, MFA served more than 107,638 people across 118 camps with emergency relief.

“My children have never gone to school and I can't afford to send them,” said a mother living in Al-Farouk camp in northwest Syria. Displacement often has a damaging and long-lasting consequence on children and youth. The humanitarian crisis in Syria has had a devastating impact on education opportunities.

MFA’s local partners visited the mother in July 2019 during a distribution campaign of MFA relief supplies. Her three boys are unable to read or write. “I can’t afford the cost of pens or notebooks. I have no money or any support,” said the mother. “They only help me. I can't do anything for them.”

Displaced communities remain vastly underserved, with most displaced persons camps having insufficient or non-existent educational services. Moreover, schools in displaced and returnee communities have limited ability to absorb newly arriving students, which causes overcrowding.

“We can’t forget that education is a child's human right,” said Nesreen, an English teacher at a school in northwest Syria whose students received backpacks of school supplies from MFA. “It should be considered an integral element of an emergency response. The international community is responsible.”

MFA REPORT 2019

NORTHWEST SYRIA

Shipped:
- 34 Containers
- 246 Tons of Relief

Served more than:
- 93,384 People
- 107 Camps Served
- 72,918 Meal Kits
- 17,869 Water Kits
- 40 Medical Facilities

NORTHEAST SYRIA

Shipped:
- 3 Containers
- 16 Tons of Relief

Served more than:
- 5,590 People
- 4 Camps Served
- 11,040 Meal Kits
- 1,080 Water Kits
- 8 Medical Facilities

NORTHERN IRAQ

Shipped:
- 3 Containers
- 24 Tons of Relief

Served more than:
- 5,304 People
- 7 Camps Served
- 8,960 Meal Kits
- 1,536 Water Kits
- 6 Medical Facilities
HELPING SYRIAN WOMEN

The disruption of Syria’s healthcare system has had a disastrous impact on the most vulnerable members of the population — women and young children. Women face an elevated risk of sexual and gender-based violence, and gender-specific medical conditions like pregnancy and childbirth, which can become especially deadly without adequate medical care.

Humanitarian assistance largely focuses on immediate needs of the general population. Many women in Syria live in overcrowded makeshift shelters with little access to healthcare, clean water, and sanitation such as washing facilities or latrines. Due to scarce resources, medical facilities focus on emergency cases, with little left to address women’s specific needs, such as pre- and post-natal care.

In response, in 2019, MFA launched its Women’s Relief Program to address the gap in medical care and draw attention to women’s health and wellness in Syria. MFA supports women’s health and wellness through shipments of medicine, medical equipment, hygiene and dignity supplies, reproductive health items, and other supplies to underserved areas. These supplies support hospitals in Syria and northern Iraq, as well as mobile clinics to serve women in hard-to-reach areas.

PROVIDING MEDICAL AID

One of the most brutal aspects of the Syrian crisis has been the deliberate targeting of the medical infrastructure — the bombing of hospitals and killing of doctors. MFA has distributed life-saving medicines, medical supplies and equipment to more than 50 separate hospitals and medical facilities in the region with a catchment area of more than 1 million people.

The supplies included basic, life-saving medicines that ER nurses administer to patients needing emergency care, like antibiotics and local anesthetics. Other medical equipment and supplies ranged from ultrasound machines and CT scan units, to crutches and wheelchairs.

PREGNANCY SUPPLEMENTS

During pregnancy, women need higher levels of critical vitamins and minerals to support their health and their child’s development. Diet alone often cannot deliver enough of these nutrients, especially in war-torn Syria where access to food is precarious.

One of MFA’s supply partners, Kirk Humanitarian, has developed multiple micronutrient supplements (MMS) that contain 15 essential vitamins and minerals to ensure a healthy pregnancy, promote fetal development and higher birth weights and avoid premature births. MFA has made these available to Syrian women who are at risk of undernutrition during pregnancy. In 2019 alone, MFA delivered 120,000 bottles across hospitals and medical facilities in northwest Syria and northern Iraq.

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Providing Clean Water

Diseases like polio and cholera easily spread without access to clean water and sanitation. Water shortages have severely impacted the Syrian population — with some areas only receiving 30 liters of water per person per day.

“This camp hasn’t been served at all. We’ve been suffering because of the lack of food,” says a man in a displaced persons camp in northwest Syria. He stands outside a tent that has been muddied by recent rainfall that had flooded the camp.

“We’ve also suffered because of problems with our water,” the man explains the poor water situation in the camp. “Our water source is direct from a well, but it causes a lot of problems for the women and children because the water isn’t clean, and it has a lot of debris.”

Beyond the man, two food-grade buckets are stacked atop another, with the bottom bucket holding a water faucet. This is the Rainfresh water filtration system. The technology removes 99.99% of bacteria and cysts — and also reduces sediment — to provide an easy-to-use and clean water source.

In 2019, MFA delivered 20,485 water treatment kits to provide people with access to safe drinking water.

Delivering Emergency Relief

Displaced Syrians continue to suffer due to the lack of food, clean water, and other basic supplies. "The humanitarian crisis is worsening every day," said an aid worker in Arhah camp in northwest Syria. MFA provided emergency relief to more than 107,638 displaced people — or 23,646 families — living across more than 118 camps. The relief supplies included items from tents and solar lights, to plastic drinking cups and baby diapers.

In 2019, MFA's emergency relief included:
- 190,338 Soap Bars
- 4,132 Diaper Boxes
- 5,940 Solar Lights
- 59,850 Plastic Cups
- 104,646 Toothbrushes
- 64,247 Toothpaste Tubes
- 1,181 Children’s Books
- 670 Assorted Toys

Mujaddarra Meals

Another of MFA's supply partners, GlobalMedic, developed a tasty and nutritious meal kit of mujaddarra, a traditional Syrian dish, made of bulgur, lentils, and onions. Inside each bucket, there are 14 meal kits. The dish takes 20 minutes to prepare and each kit feeds 6 people at a cost of just 25 cents per person. In 2019, MFA delivered 92,918 meal kits.

Water Treatment Kits

Using P&G and Rainfresh technology, GlobalMedic developed water treatment kits to provide easy access to clean drinking water. Each P&G kit can purify 2,400 liters of water. Each Rainfresh kit, with ceramic filters that trap harmful bacteria, can provide a family with roughly one year of water.
“The war has taken an ugly toll on civilians. Daily we strive to reach people in need. Our partnership with MFA helps us to reach the most vulnerable.”

—Rahul Singh, Executive Director at GlobalMedic
ADVOCATING FOR SYRIANS

Since its founding in 2013, MFA has grown to become the nation’s leading interfaith response to the Syrian refugee crisis. From advocating on capitol hill for the protection of refugee rights to delivering life-saving aid inside Syria and in surrounding countries, MFA has continued to expand the reach of its advocacy for Syrians.

ON CAPITOL HILL

MFA continued to press for sensible and humane refugee policies that reflect American values and the contributions of refugees to the fabric and strength of American society. In 2019, MFA’s advocacy priorities included: opposing the Administration’s travel ban; protesting the new Presidential determination that limited annual refugee admissions to a record low 18,000; supporting the extension and re-designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Syrians in the U.S.; and advocating for greater appropriations to assist refugee resettlement.

MFA AWARDS

This year, MFA’s founder, Dr. Georgette Bennett, received two awards in recognition of her leadership of MFA. In June, she was an inaugural recipient of the Global Impact Award from the Society for International Development/OLAM, and was cited for her work in helping the lives of Syrian refugees in partnership with the global Jewish community.

In November, Dr. Bennett received a prestigious 2019-2020 AARP Purpose Prize, as an inspirational figure who has used her life experience to create social change.
OUR COMMUNITY

MFA relies on individuals and organizations to support its life-saving work. From college groups and congregations, to foundations and corporations, MFA has built a community of passionate advocates dedicated to helping Syrian families.

INTERFAITH PACKING EVENT

More than 135 volunteers of different faiths and backgrounds gathered together at Brotherhood Synagogue in New York City to pack 1,000 backpacks of women’s health and hygiene supplies in April 2019. The event marked the launch of MFA’s latest initiative, the Women’s Relief Program, to address the gap in medical care and draw attention to the overwhelming needs of women in Syria.

FUND A CONTAINER

MFA’s unique Fund A Container program allows organizations and individuals to “adopt” a container of life-saving humanitarian aid to send to those in need in Syria. Through our online tracker, donors can follow each container’s progress from its initial packing to its arrival in Syria. After arrival, donors receive a personalized report with photographs and information about their container’s impact.

“What a great feeling my friends and I had when we received pictures of the container we sponsored,” said Riad, a doctor from Boston who mobilized his friends to participate in Fund A Container. “It arrived to northern Syria — delivering daily necessities to the mothers and children who lost their homes and live under inhumane conditions.”

From college groups to celebrities like F. Murray Abraham, the program has helped serve thousands of families across the region with relief. In 2019 alone, Fund A Container donors sponsored 22 containers of humanitarian aid — more than half of our total shipments for the year!

Visit multifaithalliance.org/container to learn how to fund your own container.

BOSTON COMMUNITY

Community leaders in the Boston area have been fierce advocates for Syrian refugees. After hosting MFA speakers during an interfaith event to mobilize the community, JFS of Metrowest led a collection drive, which sent hundreds of backpacks of school supplies to elementary school students inside Syria. They also sponsored a container of humanitarian aid through MFA’s Fund A Container program.

COLLEGE CAMPUSES

MFA has worked with student groups ranging from George Washington and New York University, to Vassar College and Wesleyan to help Syrian refugees. Students have been at their creative best, finding ways to advocate for refugees by meeting their elected officials on lobbying visits, planning concerts and running marathons to raise funds to support MFA’s work.
RAISING AWARENESS

TV PROGRAM
Taking advantage of a unique opportunity, MFA has joined with Live Point Media Production and Orient News to sponsor a weekly educational and awareness medical program entitled The Clinic. The first program went live in September.

Highlighting health and medical treatment problems facing war torn Syria, The Clinic creates greater awareness of this dire humanitarian crisis by providing stories, information, and data – along with potential solutions and innovative approaches to addressing the massive needs of those so deeply affected by the war.

MFA is helping to direct program content regarding its medical relief efforts, particularly regarding specific needs of women, the medical care crisis, and the desperate conditions for displaced families. The work of MFA partners, such as CMMB and Kirk Humanitarian, will be featured.

The Clinic airs in Arabic with subtitles in other languages (including English), and reaches viewers throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. It is also available on the internet via Daily Motion, YouTube, Orient News, and other IP TV service providers.

MFA regards The Clinic as a powerful vehicle to reach broad, new audiences, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa – and raise awareness of the crisis in Syria, the medical needs, and MFA’s work.

IN THE REGION
MFA’s relationships on the ground and access to immediate information on the ever-changing events are key to our ability to respond most effectively to the escalating humanitarian crisis.

The reliability and scale of MFA’s humanitarian relief has earned us a broad network of partner NGOs, relief workers, medical professionals, care givers, and other reliable sources inside Syria. This provides us with the vital up-to-minute information necessary to focus our deliveries. It also gives us the ability to provide unique and critical information to both members of Congress and the media – which greatly increases MFA’s impact in the U.S., as well.

In addition, MFA’s Director of Humanitarian Relief spent significant time in Turkey, as well as in Erbil, Iraq, capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, monitoring human needs, reviewing logistics and operations, meeting with key government and relief workers, and connecting with potential new partners.

Moreover, in November, members of MFA’s senior staff traveled to Turkey to meet with officials in Gaziantep and the Hatay province, where there are currently 500,000 Syrian refugees. In meetings with medical directors, refugee camp administrators, local journalists and refugees, MFA was able to gather detailed information on conditions and needs among this displaced population. Our findings are being shared in Congressional meetings and with national media.
MAJOR DONORS

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the numerous donors that provided support during 2019. Your generosity and belief in our mission is a source of daily inspiration.

AARP
F. Murray and Kate Abraham
American Arabic Benevolent Association
Anonymous
Arnow Family Fund
Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust
Dr. Georgette Bennett
Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation
Dr. Riad and Doris Cachecho
Donald Eugene
Georgetown University
Bennett and Ellen Gross
Kirk Humanitarian
Kirsh Foundation
Seth and Beth Klarman
John Mills
Joanne Moore
Morningstar Foundation
Robert and Margery Mueller
Judith Orringer
Leonard Polonsky
Michael and Jo-Ann Price
Louis Rafetto
Mickey Rolfe
Gary Roof
Schwab Charitable Fund
Shapiro Foundation
Spingold Foundation
Janet Wengler and Joseph Redman
LOOKING FORWARD

In the past year, MFA shipped 40 containers of relief to Syria and northern Iraq – more than in any previous year – delivering pain relievers to breast cancer treatments, forceps to CT scan units, water filtration systems to school supplies. Being demand-driven means responding to the exact needs on the ground.

We began this Report describing the increasingly dire situation in Syria due to international interests, which along with domestic actors (the Assad regime, insurgent groups and the remnants of ISIS), all create a highly combustible mixture that has overwhelmed the innocent people of Syria and complicates the delivery of humanitarian relief.

As the population displacement continues, the scale and types of need expand exponentially. This requires that MFA must continue to increase the quantities of relief – and, equally important, the sources and types of aid. Thus, we are continually cultivating new suppliers – in Canada, from NGOs in Germany and relief donors in Switzerland. This enables us to respond more quickly, with a greater selection of medicines and relief – while reducing logistics expense.

Likewise, MFA’s capabilities and success attract new partners on the ground – providing for greater geographic distribution, and the opportunity to reach additional, underserved populations – such as those fleeing the Turkish offensive.

As demands grow, so must our commitment and our solutions. The people of Syria deserve no less.
GET INVOLVED

Raising public awareness of the crisis and the needs in Syria is a key part of MFA’s mission. We can help organize events for your community – large or small.

Visit multifaithalliance.org/getinvolved to receive important advocacy alerts and news about the Syrian crisis. Reach out to us by email at info@multifaithalliance.org or at +1 (917) 810-2820 by phone to kick off your own project.

DONATE

Make a tax-deductible gift by visiting our website at multifaithalliance.org or to donate by mail, write a check to “MFA-Tides Center #1146” and send to:

Multifaith Alliance
6 East 43rd Street, Floor 22
New York, NY 10017

FUND A CONTAINER

For just $6,500, our unique Fund A Container program allows organizations and individuals to help send a container life-saving humanitarian aid worth up to hundreds of thousands of dollars to those in need. Visit multifaithalliance.org/container to get started today.

Donors can follow their container’s progress on our online tracker, and once it arrives, you will get a personalized report on the impact of your container.

COLLECT SUPPLIES

We can help mobilize your school or congregation with a collection drive of relief supplies to send to Syria. From school backpacks and notebooks, to shampoo and feminine hygiene products, everyday items are desperately needed by displaced Syrians struggling with the consequences of war.

PLAN A PACKING EVENT

Help sort and pack life-saving relief supplies to send to devastated areas inside Syria. MFA can furnish the packing event with our supplies, or we can help you plan your own event with supplies that you and your community collect.

HOST A WELCOME DINNER

Gather your community together around the dinner table. When refugees are resettled, they often encounter language and cultural barriers that separate them from their new communities. MFA can help you plan a night of traditional Syrian dishes.

WRITE POSTCARDS

Remind families living in war-torn Syria that they are not alone by writing messages of hope. MFA will provide special postcards that your community can send. Then, we will include them right inside the relief supplies sent displaced families inside Syria.