

# SCENARIO: *Refugee Resettlement for Ishtar*

*Objective: To gain an understanding of the experiences of refugees. Why do people become refugees? What challenges do they face? How can refugee resettlement help?*

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1) *Read Ishtar's story. Then:*

- a) *Discuss the scenario. For example: What is the refugee crisis here? What challenges does Ishtar face? What would you do in Ishtar's shoes? What is the Christian response?*
- b) *Act out the scenario and create your own dialogue. (optional)*

*Note: Ishtar's story is fiction, but it is representative of real-life people and situations.*

## *It all changed in seconds...*

It is nighttime. The streets are oddly still. They have been since the conflict began in early 2011. Suddenly, blinding flashes of light and the terrifying sounds of bombs wake Ishtar and her two children. The children in the bedroom beside Ishtar's are crying for her. She reaches their room and embraces them tightly before grabbing their hands and running outside. On the street they see neighbours running around, yelling and screaming, some of them with blood on them, or carrying loved ones who have been victims of the bombing. She tries to get information from someone, but there is much commotion and everything is confusing.

Ishtar decides to run to the church in the centre of the village. It's where everyone seems to be heading. Ishtar looks back at her house just in time to watch a dark projectile hit it. Her beautiful home, built by her mother's family and lovingly maintained for so many years, suddenly became a pile of rubble.

Ishtar notices that many people are already at the church, including some of her relatives and neighbours. Most of the people are crying or screaming or holding on to dear ones. Amid the screaming and yelling, she spots her favourite uncle, Youssef, alone in a corner. She runs to him. He shakes his head sadly as he states, "The conflict has finally hit the village. We are no longer safe here."



Ishtar is devastated and confused. Just three months ago, her husband Ashur was forcefully recruited by the Syrian military to fight the rebels. She had not heard from him since, and now they had lost their home. She wasn't sure where else in Syria was safe. Several of her cousins have already fled from some of the neighbouring villages because of the conflict. What was to become of them?

#### *A great journey...*

With just the clothes on their back and a little bit of money—donations from some relatives—Ishtar, her two children and her uncle Youssef, along with other relatives, reach the Lebanese border. It was a treacherous two-day journey, by foot and taxis. They had packed some food, but it wasn't enough. There were various checkpoints to pass and many armed soldiers to bribe.

Upon reaching the Lebanese border, Ishtar has some problems with the armed border guards because she has no travel documents for herself or the children, having had to run out of the house suddenly. When they are finally allowed entry, she takes a cab to Beirut, where cousin Rahaf and her family are waiting for them. Luckily, they speak Arabic in Lebanon, so getting around will not be difficult.

Once at her cousin's house, Ishtar learns she must go to the local UNHCR office to register as refugees. Then they call their relatives in Canada to see if there was a possibility for Ishtar, the children and Uncle Youssef to go there and be safe. As much as they would like to remain in



Much like "Ishtar," Kahle has fled the war in Syria with her children. When this photo was taken, she was living with two families in a small factory in northern Jordan. Time weighs heavy on refugees and many women in particular live in near complete isolation. CLWR, through partners like The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), have supported refugees and local Jordanians affected by this humanitarian crisis. Photo by ACT/Magnus Aronson

Lebanon, there is little possibility of staying there. Getting permanent status in the country is proving difficult for most Syrians. There are no jobs and everything is expensive. There are even reports of tensions and clashes between Syrians and Lebanese locals. They simply cannot survive here.

The family in Canada is willing to help Ishtar and her children while they are in Canada. They find out that they can help them by doing a private refugee sponsorship application. They don't know much about this. They remember hearing from friends that churches have helped in the past to bring refugees to Canada. There is a Lutheran church in their neighbourhood so they decide to call there. They speak with Pastor James. He listens to their story and decides to call Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR).



A CLWR staff member explains the private refugee sponsorship process and how they can help to sponsor Ishtar and the children to come to Canada.

Pastor James has much to think about. He must discuss this with the service committee and council. They decide to host an emergency meeting and invite Ishtar's relatives to attend. At the meeting, the church members are moved by Ishtar's story and decide they want to help. They begin the long process of getting Ishtar to fill out application forms overseas, and of raising funds with the family in Canada, to support the refugees for a full year.

Ishtar is excited about the news of being resettled to a new country. She is also sad about leaving Syria and all that she has left behind. But she is desperate to get her children to safety. In less than a year, she receives a call from the Canadian visa office in Beirut saying that she has an interview with them. She attends the interview and they ask many questions about her life, her family, why she left Syria and why she needs to go to Canada. It is a scary process, but in the end, she is told she will be going to Canada.

Ishtar doesn't know who Pastor James is, or who the church members are, or what CLWR is, but she is grateful for their help in welcoming her, a stranger, into their hearts and community.

#### *Consider: How can we respond?*

- *Pray for refugees around the world. Pray for peace and safety in their home countries.*
- *Pray for sponsors to come forward to help refugees move to Canada and start a new life in safety. Learn more about refugee sponsorship here and discuss it with your congregation:*  
<http://www.clwr.org/Get-Involved/sponsor-refugees.cfm>
- *Prepare and send CLWR We Care kits for people in refugee camps. Learn how to make kits here:*  
[http://www.clwr.org/What-We-Do/make\\_kits\\_and\\_quilts.htm](http://www.clwr.org/What-We-Do/make_kits_and_quilts.htm)
- *Give money to support refugees. Donations make it possible to provide food, water, safe shelter, clothing, latrines, school supplies, medical care, counselling and much more to the people who need it most. Check <http://www.clwr.org/donate> and click on Emergencies to find out about Canadian Lutheran World Relief's current calls for support for refugees.*

