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Contact: Carrie Baptista
(559) 349-1666
cbaptista@shelterboxusa.org

Ten Years of Civil War in Syria *How 10 Years of Conflict Left Millions Displaced*



Santa Barbara, Calif., March 15, 2021 – This week marks the 10-year anniversary of the conflict in Syria. International disaster relief organization ShelterBox first responded to the crisis in December 2012 and has worked with its partners and supporters to provide more than 400,000 people with emergency shelter and other essential aid items. ShelterBox’s work in Syria is the largest and most sustained response in the organization’s history.

What started out as a peaceful protest calling for democratic reforms in March of 2011 eventually turned into a brutal war when peaceful demonstrations were met by swift government opposition. Over the course of a decade, this conflict has evolved into an internationally backed power struggle between government forces and a mix of opposition groups. Reports of war crimes have been widespread.

“There is nothing celebratory in the 10-year anniversary of the civil unrest in Syria,” said ShelterBox USA President Kerri Murray. “The war has robbed millions of their livelihoods and homes with half of the population displaced. The fact that the conflict in Syria represents the largest and longest piece of our relief work at ShelterBox, echoes the complexity and severity of the humanitarian needs in Syria. We remain steadfast in our commitment not to turn our backs on these displaced families, who are everyday in a fight for survival, and will continue to do everything possible to bring emergency shelter and essential supplies to families caught in the worst humanitarian crisis of our generation.”

Throughout the organization's Syria response, ShelterBox and its partners ReliefAid, Bahar Organization, and Hand in Hand have delivered aid to people in refugee camps surrounding Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, in addition to families still trapped within Syria and asylum seekers in Greece. Syria experiences extreme heat during the summer, as well as freezing temperatures and snow in the winter, so much of ShelterBox's aid is intended to help people battle environmental extremes. The organization's aid items include ShelterBox tents, thermal blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, and warm clothing. In total, more than 50,000 families fleeing the violence in Syria have received ShelterBox aid.

One of the families to receive aid from ShelterBox and Bahar Organization is Fouza and her seven children, who have been displaced in North East Syria for ten years, since the beginning of the conflict. She described the challenges her family faced when they were forced to flee their home saying, "we left when the fighting started and moved from village to village. Some places we stayed without tents or a house, or anything to protect us from the harsh, cold winter. And so on for ten years until we ended up in this camp."

Temperatures in Syrian displacement camps can drop to sub-zero during the winter. There is very little fuel for heating, especially for those with no money. Most families are forced to stay warm with whatever materials they are able to salvage. "There is no fuel, so we burn paper and plastic for heating," said Fouza. "We rely on the collection of firewood and plastic waste, and we store the raw materials for winter."



Fouza and her seven children pictured in front of a ShelterBox tent.

Fouza and her children were one of the families in North East Syria to receive a ShelterBox tent and a ShelterBox filled with essential aid items. Fouza explained how the aid items have helped her family during the winter saying, "the most important thing is that the tent is isolated from the dirt and there are also pillows and blankets that help us resist the cold. Everything inside the box was useful and we needed it—from the water carriers, blankets, light and kitchen utensils."

Millions of people like Fouza and her family remain displaced in the region. More than half of all Syrians have been forced to flee their homes. One in four schools have been damaged, destroyed or used for shelter and over half of Syria's hospitals are no longer functioning.

Currently, coronavirus represents another danger that threatens displaced families in Syria. Families face the double threat of having nowhere to live except potentially overcrowded refugee camps, while trying to protect themselves from the deadly virus. The emergency shelter provided by ShelterBox enables social distancing and helps to reduce the risk of transmission of the infection by providing families with personal aid items like water filters, cooking sets, soap, and hand washing basins.

For photos of ShelterBox's response in Syria throughout the years, please visit <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/oB8c92vXgLZoSZVAXtZzBWFR6cWs?usp=sharing>.

About ShelterBox

Since 2000, ShelterBox has provided shelter, warmth, and dignity following more than 300 disasters in over 100 countries. ShelterBox responds urgently to earthquake, volcano, flood, hurricane, cyclone, tsunami, or conflict by delivering boxes of essential shelter, aid and other lifesaving supplies. Each iconic green ShelterBox contains a disaster relief tent for an extended family, blankets, a water filtration system, emergency lighting, and other tools for survival. ShelterBox USA is based in Santa Barbara, California.

ShelterBox was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 and 2019.

ShelterBox is an official Project Partner of Rotary International. Tax deductible donations to the organization can be made at www.ShelterBoxUSA.org or by calling (907) 854-0901.