

Transmission 2023 Migrations

Study Guide



How the worldwide migration and displaced persons are being supported by loving and caring people.

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Introduction

Transmission is a series of five, 10-minute video productions leading up to 2025, the 500-year celebration of the Anabaptist movement. Migration and (internally) displaced persons is the fourth in that series. Each of the productions gives voice to young adults from a different continent. In each case, they grapple with issues they face as Anabaptists.



The video “Transmission 2023 Migrations” focusses on the many loving and caring people who try to relief the needs and sorrows of the millions of migrants and displaced people worldwide.

The stories cover five different countries, each with their own set of challenges. We visit various migrant locations and people, who are all very much concerned about the welfare, nourishment and

psychological matters. The aim is to provide a better prospect for the displaced people and their children.

We investigate the situation on the US-Mexican border, the refugees in Colombia, the situation in the Democratic Republic Congo, the many refugees in Lebanon and the refugee camps on the Greek island Lesbos. We meet refugees, relief workers and volunteers who share their practices.

We hope to present you a picture showing that the huge issue of migration and displaced persons is something that affects us all. And that we can be proud of the many people that are committed to dedicate their lives to help out and try to relieve the needs of the many disorientated people as a result of wars, violence and persecutions. We can only hope and pray that the leaders of the world start respecting life and the integrity of each individual. But until that time we are lucky to have dedicated and motivated relief workers.

This study guide is designed to provide added perspective and depth to these faith journeys. People from all over the world worked together to bring this unique production to life. To view this and the other video series in many languages, search “Transmission” on:

<https://mwc-cmm.org>

The study guides can also be found on the same website.

Discussion topics

The idea is to view the video in a group setting. It may be good to watch the video and briefly discuss in the group what caught your attention. Then watch the video again so you have a good grasp of what has been said.

As a discussion leader, you can guide the conversation with your own questions and input, but the questions below may also help you in this discussion. Of course, you can pick the questions you think are interesting for your group. The situation you are in may differ from the issues addressed in this video and in these questions. If you come up with new insights or questions, please feel free to share them with the production group by contacting hajo.hajonides@ziggo.nl



1. In 1660 The Martyrs Mirror¹ was written as an account of the severe persecutions that took place after the reformation. The catholic as well as the protestant church were convinced that only their belief and their way of serving God was the right one and so they had God’s blessing to torture and kill people that believed otherwise. We see this attitude even today. Can you give examples where people are convinced that they are doing the right things even when that threatens other innocent people?

¹ See page 10

How do you think these people or groups of people justify their deeds? In what way does group identity play a role in their behavior? Why are people changing from nice and social persons into relentless sadists?

2. Sebastian mentions the staggering number of over 108 million forcibly displaced people around the world. This number is the same as the number of inhabitants of Italy and Spain together. And the number is rising. The video describes various refugee situations. Are you involved in any activity to assist refugees and/or displaced persons?



3. On the US-Mexican border a daily disaster is going on every day. What we see here is that the US border states are directly affected by the huge number of immigrants. Their attitude towards the immigrants is not positively influenced. Some states put the immigrants on busses and transport them to the more northern states. What do you think should happen to relief the border states of this dilemma?

4. Christopher and Elizabeth are both concerned about justice for refugees. They are focusing on the legal issues of migrants in the US. The US has always dealt with immigrants, but what do you think is different from the historical immigrant situation and the current one? Where should Christopher and Elizabeth focus on in regard of the legal immigrant issues?



Christopher tells us that he is instilled with a sense of duty and a feeling that it is important to help others. How do you feel about that? Do you have similar feelings and if so are you able to do something about that?

Christopher confesses that he is largely ignorant about the global situation of displaced people. How is your knowledge about the world situation, but even more important your local situation?



5. Venezuela is a country in distress. More than 6 million people fled the country, many of them going to Colombia. Francisco Mosquera, the pastor of the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Cali is very dedicated to social work, particularly to the immigrants from Venezuela. He states that the church plays a major role in improving the life of the immigrants. How do you feel about that statement?

6. Maria and Alexander seem to agree with the ideas of Pastor Francisco. Both underline the importance of the basic needs like food and clothes. What other needs, do you think are important for displaced people as well?



7. Leddi and Jordan started an Ice cream sales and distribution company. Their entrepreneurial attitude made them successful. What other sorts of businesses can you think off as a possibility for migrants to start with little capital and sometimes little experience? What would you think to be necessary to support these entrepreneurs?

8. Ricardo is a Mennonite Central Committee worker currently linked to the PAM program (Programa de Atención a Migrantes). This program helps displaced people and migrants. Ricardo hopes the program is to be long-term and not just an emergency program. What would be needed to extend programs like PAM to become more permanent?





9. The Kivu area is a scene of suffering and misery for a long time. In the city of Goma many refugees hope to find a place of safety. However this area is also struggling with many social, political and security issues. There are shortages of basic needs like water, food and shelter.

What do you think are the reasons for these ongoing wars and disregard of the people that

just want to live their lives? Apart from these great volunteers, like Jimmy, what else could be done here?

10. Christian is a volunteer with HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities). HROC is a partner of MCC who is working at the traumatic experiences of the internally displaced people (IDP) in Goma. Many relief workers focus on traumatized children and adults. Why is that so important?



11. In the Kasai region, where fighting started in 2016 hundreds of thousands people fled, losing access to essential goods and services such as health care, safe water, sanitation and education.

The situation in all of the DR Congo seems hopeless. Each time new warlords rise and start fighting. Young children are forced to join. Should we give up on DR Congo?

12. Rev. Antoine Kimbila, does not lose hope or faith. His belief in God is deeply felt. God takes care of people, and so the water project also evolves around people. What do you think of Gods role in these circumstances in Congo?





13. Not only in the DR Congo a seemingly endless fighting is disrupting society and the lives of many people. The Middle East area is also suffering under the powerplay of just a few immoral people who care not for the lives of other people. Kate and Gary are working hard to give opportunities and hope to millions of displaced people in Lebanon and Syria. There is a dilemma; should people move on to Europe for

instance, or would it be better to create better circumstances in their own region? What would be the advantages and the disadvantages of both solutions?

14. Pastor Riad Jarjour is a Syrian from Aleppo, he grew up in Homs and is now president of the Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) in Beirut. Jarjour has become increasingly involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue. He is presently is the general secretary of the Arab Group For Muslim-Christian Dialogue.



He is also working to help society in Syria to rebuild itself: “because war leads to a breakdown in values”. War demolishes houses, roads, villages, personal lives but also entire societies, or the fabric that keeps a society together. Therefore, the Churches must “build trust among the people, create paths of conciliation between communities, promote values of equality and citizenship, and prevent violence and religious extremism.”

When asked what churches and civil society can do right now in Europe he answers: “They can ask that people are the main focus of all negotiations, of everything, to look at reality from a human perspective. Because people are the ones who pay the price of war, and the cost of sanctions that are imposed on their countries.”

What are your thoughts of the statements Riad Jarjour is making?



15. Levbos is a small Greek Island, close to Türkiye’s coast. Many refugees who flee countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Ethiopia are coming on the island with the hope to travel on to Europe.

Nate, is the field director of I-58 on Levbos. His organization tries to make the lives of all the refugees on the island as comfortable as possible. I-58 works with volunteers, mainly

from the US.

Have you ever considered of volunteering with organizations like I-58 or would you consider it after having seen the needs in the various countries and regions?

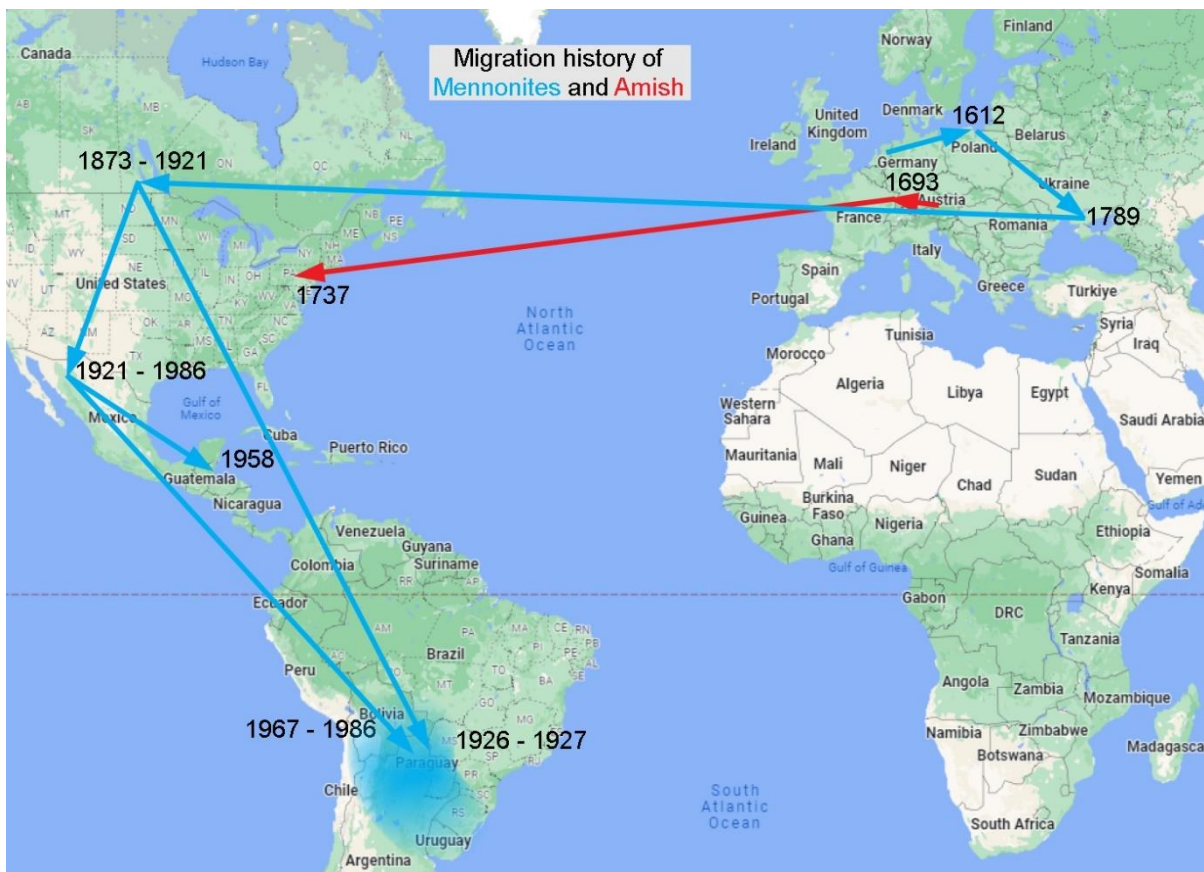
Background information

Mennonites, migration and displacement

In the early days, the Anabaptists had very charismatic pastors, such as Jörg Blaurock, Melchior Hoffman and Jan Mattheijs. The latter started the New Jerusalem movement in the city of Münster (1534-1535). Under the leadership of Jan van Leiden, this occupation got terribly out of hand and a lot of violence was committed. The reputation of the Anabaptists or “Wederdopers” was ruined and many were persecuted. Menno Simons, who also had to go into hiding himself, was so shocked by the amount of violence by and against the Anabaptists that he gave a new emphasis to the concept of Anabaptists: “non-violence / non-resistance”.

However, the persecutions and executions of Anabaptists continued (see the Martyr's Mirror) and many of them moved to England and West Prussia. In particular to the delta at the mouth of the Vistula (Wisla), around the city of Danzig, which belonged to the Kingdom of Poland. This swamp area was developed by Anabaptist farmers from the Netherlands and Northern Germany. Despite many setbacks, the Anabaptists survived along the Vistula and their numbers grew from 3,000 in 1600 to 13,000 in 1780.

When the Prussians occupied the Vistula delta, many privileges and freedoms were taken from the Anabaptists. At the invitation of Catherine the Great of Russia, some 600 families (approximately 4,000 people) decided to emigrate, a movement that began in 1789. By 1864, between 10 and 12,000 Mennonites had moved to what is now Ukraine. Despite many setbacks, mainly due to the climate (heat, cold, floods and drought), the colonies became increasingly stronger economically. Ultimately, there were about 100,000 Mennonites in Russia. They had a high degree of autonomy and were not subject to the government of the country.



They also ran their own schools. Their prosperity gave rise to an enormous missionary drive towards Russia and other Asian countries.

When the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, the conditions of the approximately 100,000 Mennonites deteriorated drastically. A time of indescribable suffering began and many died. The emigration of about 20,000 Mennonites to the US and Canada took place from 1923 onwards. After the Second World War, Russia was no longer a safe place for the Mennonites and many left for Germany where they now form a large group of Russian-Germans (Russlanddeutsche)

The Mennonites, who eventually emigrated to the US and Canada, were very successful and now form a close-knit large community, from which much missionary work has been and is being undertaken. This has led to the number of Mennonites worldwide now being around 2.2 million. The greatest growth can be seen in Africa and Asia.

The exceptional position the Mennonites had acquired in Canada and the US could not be maintained for long. Smaller groups of very conservative Mennonites moved from the US and Canada to Mexico and when the group's autonomy was limited again, they even moved on to Belize, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina. What remains special is that these Mennonites are descended from Dutch and North German Anabaptists and still speak an old Dutch/German language (Platdietsch).

So we see that migration has played a very prominent role in the history of Mennonites. Many Mennonites and others are still helping to relief the migrants and displaced persons, worldwide.

Current situation in the world.

By the end of 2022, 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. This includes:

- 35.3 million refugees
- 62.5 million internally displaced people
- 5.4 million asylum seekers
- 5.2 million people in need of international protection, a majority from Venezuela

As of May 2023, more than 110 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide. This marks the largest ever single-year increase in forced displacement in UNHCR's history, propelled by the war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts.

Martyrs Mirror

Martyrs Mirror or ***The Bloody Theater***, first published in Holland in 1660 in Dutch by Thielemann J. van Braght, documents the stories and testimonies of Christian martyrs, especially Anabaptists. The full title of the book is ***The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians who baptized only upon confession of faith, and who suffered and died for the testimony of Jesus, their Saviour, from the time of Christ to the year A.D. 1660.***

The use of the word *defenseless* in this case refers to the Anabaptist belief in non-resistance.

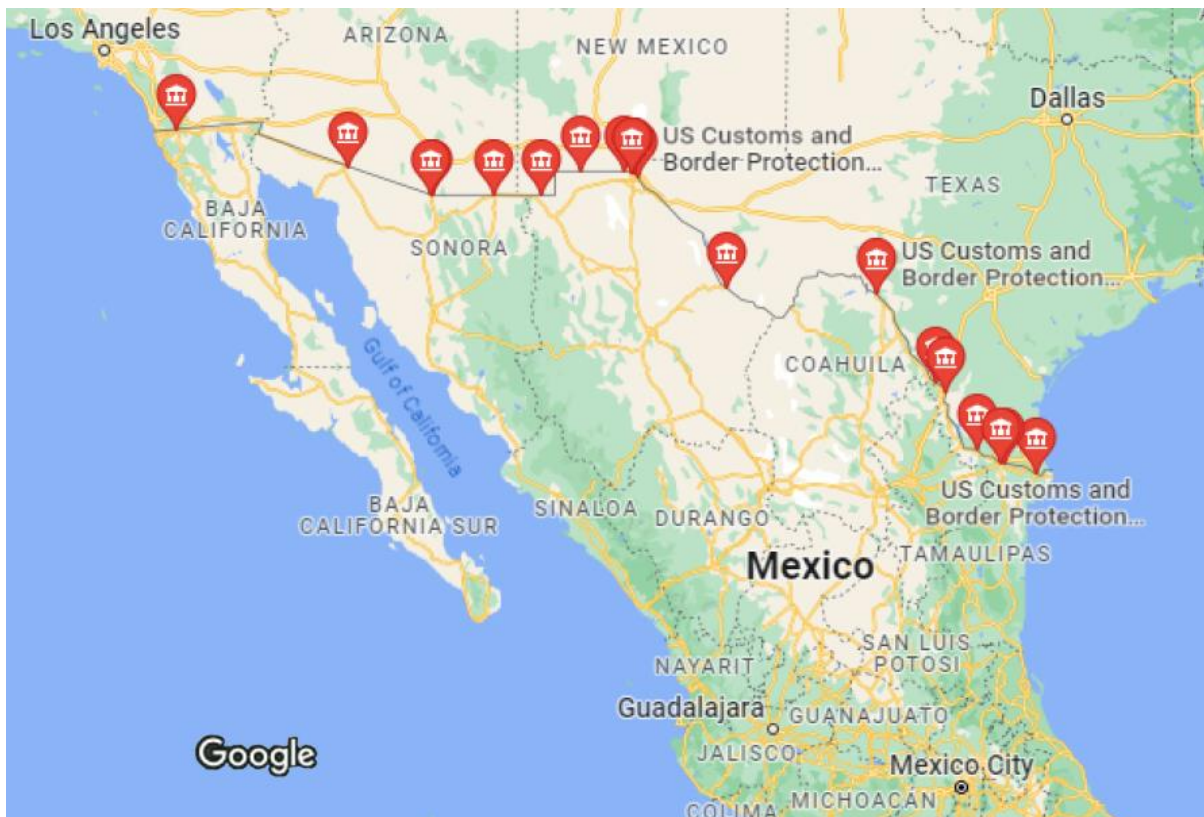
Each century has its own martyrs and it all starts in first century with the suffering of Jezus Christ. The book includes accounts of the martyrdom of the apostles and the stories of martyrs from previous centuries with beliefs similar to the Anabaptists. In total around 1200 martyrdoms are described.

Next to the Bible, the *Martyrs Mirror* has historically held the most significant and prominent place in Amish and Mennonite homes.



Context for migrants at the US-Mexican border

In the year 2022, Border Patrol at the US-Mexican border encountered 2.2 million people crossing the border illegally. On top of that about 1 million people crossed the border legally.



You have to go back decades to see comparable numbers. There is a difference however between the immigrants of the past and the current immigrants. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were more single adults coming to the U.S. Now, families with children are increasingly arriving, and they have different needs.

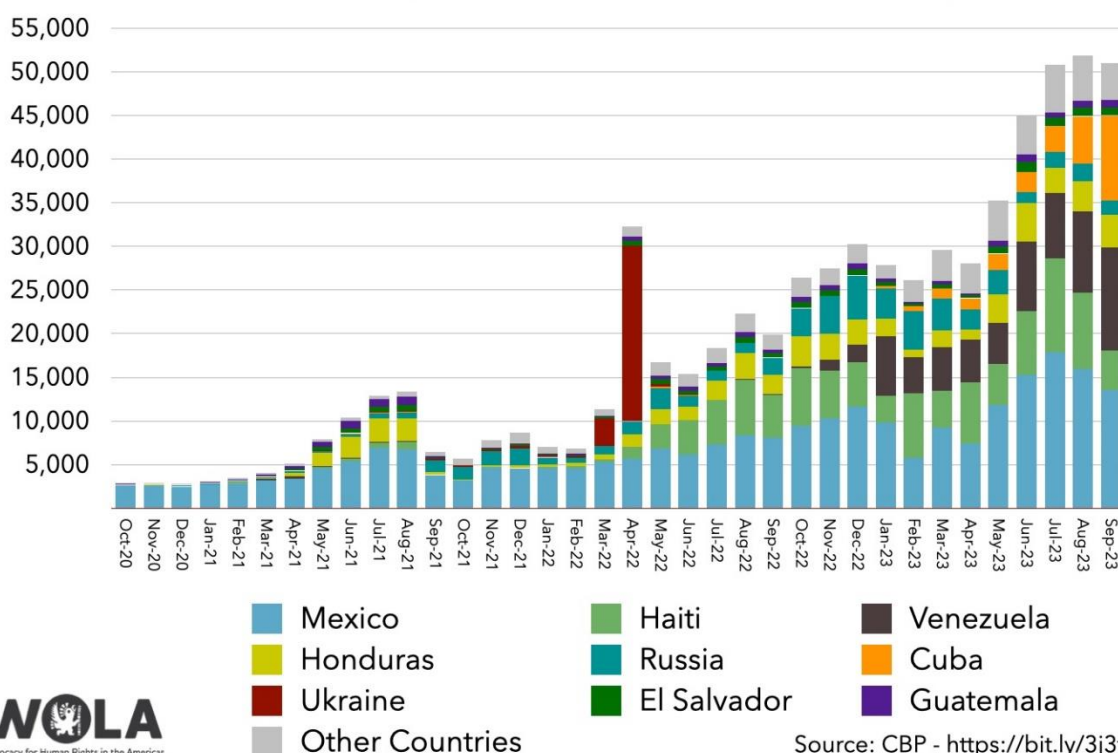
While a single adult traveling by himself may be OK crashing on a friend's couch, families often expect more for their children and may be more likely to need government services to protect them. Kids need to go to school.

Also, communications have advanced. These days, migrants can easily share information on social media about the best places to go and what services are available.

Decades ago, migrants arriving in the U.S. were almost all Mexican nationals. Experts and officials note that migrants today arrive from a vast array of countries across South and Central America and Africa, as well as from China and India. Their disparate countries of origin complicate deportations, because they have to be flown. In some cases, migrants can't be deported because the U.S. has no agreement with their native countries, notably Venezuela.

CBP Port of Entry Migrant Encounters by Country at the U.S.-Mexico Border

September 2023: Mexico 27%, Venezuela 23%, Cuba 19%, Haiti 9%, Honduras 7%, Russia 3%, Colombia 2%, All Others <2%
Since October 2020: Mexico 38%, Haiti 15%, Venezuela 10%, Honduras 8.4%, Russia 8.3%, Cuba 4%, All Others <4%



Many of the migrants are from Venezuela, where a socioeconomic crisis – fueled by President Nicolás Maduro’s authoritarian government and worsened by the global pandemic and US sanctions – has led one in four Venezuelans to flee the country since 2015.

The number of Mexican migrants has ‘increased notably’. Increases in violence in certain regions of Mexico have also fueled more migration.

In July 2022, for example, CBP figures indicate 4,000 Mexican family encounters at the border. A year later, that number had more than quadrupled, reaching nearly 22,000.

Central American Routes

The Americas region hosted about 21.5 million forcibly displaced and stateless people in 2022. Forced displacement was driven by human rights violations, persecution, violence, insecurity and inequality, coupled with the economic consequences of COVID-19, the global economic impact of the Ukraine situation, and severe climate-related disasters.

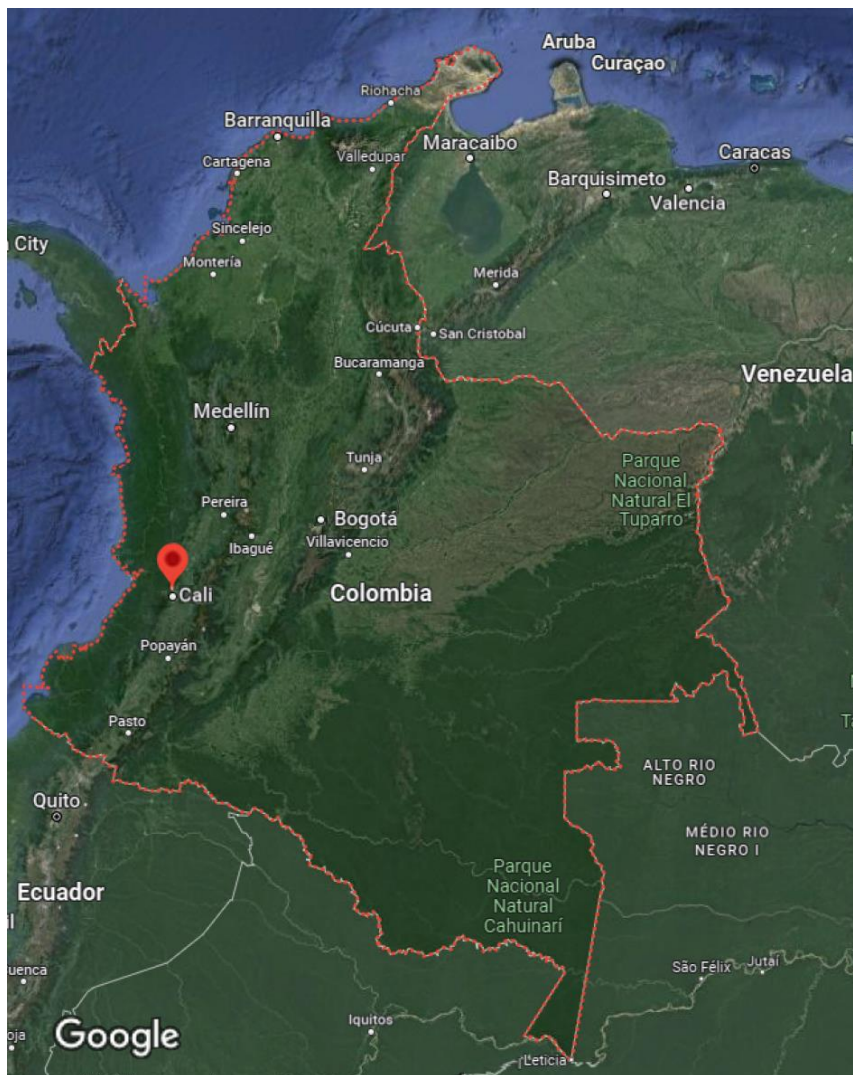
A record number of people made their way to the United States of America in mixed movements, enduring extremely hazardous conditions. The most dangerous area is the Darién Gap on the Colombia-Panama border.

There is no road, not even a primitive one, across the Darién. Heavy rain and flash floods are frequent, law enforcement and medical support are non-existent, rapes and robberies are common. However, this route was taken by hundreds of thousands of migrants since the 2010s, primarily

Haitians and Venezuelans, to reach the Mexico–United States border. By 2023, 360,000 had crossed the Gap.



Context for Colombia



For thousands of years before Europeans arrived Amerindians lived in what is now Colombia. The first Spaniard to land in the area was Alonso de Ojeda in 1500. The capital Bogotá was founded in 1538. In 1564 Colombia was made a captaincy-general. The colony thrived and many African slaves were taken there.

In 1819 Simon Bolivar defeated the Spanish. Subsequently, a new nation was formed consisting of Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Bolivar became dictator in 1828 but he resigned in 1830 and Colombia became separate from Ecuador and Venezuela.

In the 19th century Colombia was a troubled country and 8 civil wars

took place during that period. In the early 20th century Colombia was, generally peaceful and the economy developed. Exports of coffee increased.

In the 1960s left-wing guerrillas began operating in Colombia. Then in the 1970s cocaine production increased and it continued to increase in the 1980s. The drug trade led to a great deal of violence. In the early 1980s, Colombia was hit by a severe recession.

In the early 21st century the situation improved. Violence declined after 2002 and the economy grew rapidly and poverty and unemployment declined. Colombia, like the rest of the world, suffered in the recession of 2009 but the economy soon recovered. The country also suffered severe floods in 2010. Today tourism in Colombia is growing and the country is developing steadily. In 2020 the population of Colombia was 50 million.

Brief History of Mennonites in Colombia

In Colombia we can distinguish two main groups of Mennonites. The first are the Mennonites who stem from the missionary work mostly by Mennonites from the United States of America. It all began in the fall of 1945, when the General Conference Mennonite Church sent Mary Hope (Wood) and her husband, Gerald Stucky, together with Janet Soldner and Mary Becker, to begin mission work in Colombia. In 1946 they settled on a small farm near Cachipay, about 50 miles southwest of Bogotá,

to start a boarding school for children whose parents were isolated due to leprosy. From there the faith spread. Mary Hope Stucky died in 2020 at the age of 103. Currently there are four Anabaptist groups working in Colombia resulting from various mission initiatives.

The other group consists of Low German Mennonites who started to settle in Colombia in February 2016. These immigrants come mainly from regions in Mexico, but others come from the United States, Canada and Bolivia.

These Mennonites are mostly so-called "Russian" Mennonites who formed as an ethnic group in the 19th century in what is present-day Ukraine. These Mennonites live in colonies where they try to preserve their conservative values and life-styles?

In 2012 there were 2,825 members in 67 congregations in Colombia.

The Cali Congregation

Cali is the third most important city in the country, located in the south of Colombia, just 100 kilometers from the Pacific coast; a city of warm, friendly and welcoming people; Perhaps that is one of the reasons why migrants go to this city, but it is also a city very close to the neighboring country of Ecuador, which is why migrants come from the north as well as from the south of South America. Cali has a population of 2,3 million inhabitants.

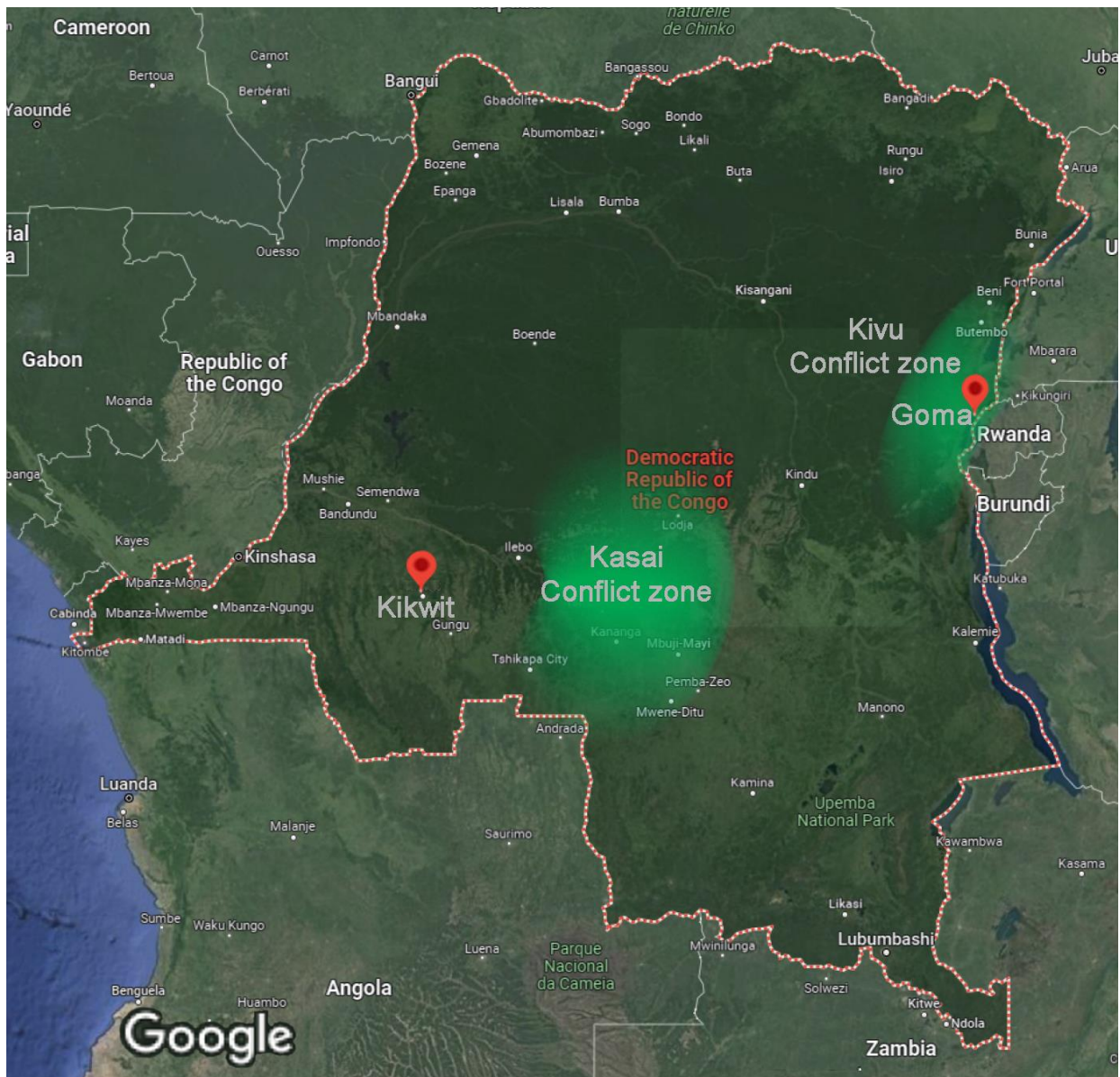
MCC supports the Mennonite Brethren denomination in its various projects and institutions (with volunteer resources and personnel) and one of them is the migrant care program (Programa de Atención a Migrantes, PAM for its acronym). This program provides assistance for displaced people and migrants, as well as psychosocial support for those affected by violence. Also education efforts are supported and investments in youth.

La Dihmeno: The Mennonite Brethren denomination in the valley of Cauca has 21 churches of which 10 are in the city and who are recipients of migrants and displaced people. These migrants and displaced people who arrive at the churches are referred to the PAM program where they are cared for in a comprehensive manner. Sometimes they also reach rural churches and are also referred to the program. Migrants provide labor in various activities for the city. The majority manages to acquire official documents to remain in the country, and thus find work. However, a large percentage of the population performs informal jobs such as selling groceries from their country, cleaning, both in homes and on car windows on the streets.

Francisco Mosquera is the pastor of a Church of approximately 60 members, the church is called Luz y Vida of the Mennonite Brethren; Francisco is a great charismatic leader and also dedicated to social work. Francisco is the coordinator of the PAM program for assistance to migrants and displaced people.

Ricardo Torres is a Mennonite Central Committee worker who has served in the MCC in different parts of Latin America for 20 years and is currently linked to the MCC Colombia as coordinator of the program with boys, girls, adolescents and young people through a project called Church Initiatives; Ricardo is present with the Mennonite Central Committee in the Valley Region and supports the PAM program.

Context for Congo



The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC or DR Congo) is a country in Central Africa. By land area, the DRC is the second-largest country in Africa and the 11th-largest in the world. With a population of around 112 million, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the most populous officially Francophone country in the world. The national capital and largest city is Kinshasa, which is also the economic center.

King Leopold II of Belgium formally acquired rights to the Congo territory from the colonial nations of Europe in 1885 and declared the land his private property, naming it the Congo Free State. From 1885 to 1908, his colonial military forced the local population to produce rubber and committed widespread atrocities.

Congo achieved independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960 and was immediately confronted by a series of secessionist movements, the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and the seizure of power by Mobutu Sese Seko in a 1965 coup d'état. Mobutu renamed the country Zaire in

1971 and imposed a harsh personalist dictatorship until his overthrow in 1997 by the First Congo War.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is extremely rich in natural resources but has suffered from political instability, a lack of infrastructure, corruption, and centuries of both commercial and colonial extraction and exploitation, followed by more than 60 years of independence, with little widespread development. DR Congo's level of human development was ranked 179th out of 191 countries by the Human Development Index, and is classed as a least developed country by the UN. As of 2018, following two decades of various civil wars and continued internal conflicts, around 600,000 Congolese refugees were still living in neighboring countries. Two million children risk starvation, and the fighting has displaced 4.5 million people.

The situation in the DRC is a major moral and humanitarian challenge. Women and children are abused sexually and "abused in all possible manners". Besides the conflict in North Kivu on the eastern border, violence increased in the Kasai region. The armed groups were after gold, diamonds, oil, and cobalt to line the pockets of rich men both in the region and internationally. There were also ethnic and cultural rivalries at play, as well as religious motives and the political crisis with postponed elections.

Religion

Christianity is the predominant religion of the DRC. Christians constitute 93.7% of the population (with Catholics making up 29.7%, Protestants 26.8%, and other Christians 37.2%). Muslims make up 1%.

There are about 35 million Catholics in the country with six archdioceses and 41 dioceses. The impact of the Catholic Church is difficult to overestimate. Its schools have educated over 60% of the nation's primary school students and more than 40% of its secondary students. The church owns and manages an extensive network of hospitals, schools, and clinics, as well as many diocesan economic enterprises, including farms, ranches, stores, and artisans' shops.

Sixty-two Protestant denominations are federated under the umbrella of the Church of Christ in the Congo. It is often referred to as *the Protestant Church*, since it covers most of the DRC Protestants. With more than 25 million members, it constitutes one of the largest Protestant bodies in the world.

The conflicts in Kivu

Basically, the conflicts all started in the border region between Congo and Rwanda. About 85% of Rwandans are Hutus but the Tutsi minority has long dominated the country. In 1959, the Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and tens of thousands of Tutsis fled to neighboring countries. By the end of the 100-day killing spree, around 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been killed.

A group of Tutsi exiles formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which invaded Rwanda in 1990 and fighting continued until a 1993 peace deal was agreed. Some two million Hutus - both civilians and some of those involved in the genocide - then fled across the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo, at the time called Zaire, fearing revenge attacks. Others went to neighboring Tanzania and Burundi.

Human rights groups say the Tutsi RPF fighters killed thousands of Hutu civilians as they took power - and more after they went into DR Congo to pursue the Interahamwe. The Interahamwe ("Those Who Attack Together") and Impuzamugambi ("Those Who Have the Same Goal") played a central role in the troubles. Radio broadcasts further fueled the genocide by encouraging Hutu civilians to kill their Tutsi neighbors, who were referred to as "cockroaches" who needed to be exterminated.

The RPF, now in power in Rwanda, embraced militias fighting both the Hutu militias and the Congolese army, which was aligned with the Hutus. The Rwanda-backed rebel groups eventually marched on DR Congo's capital, Kinshasa, and overthrew the government of Mobutu Sese Seko, installing Laurent Kabila as president.

The Eastern DR Congo area, Kivu, has suffered decades of unrest as a consequence of Rwanda's genocide. An estimated five million people died as a result of the conflict which lasted until 2003, with some armed groups active until now in the Kivu areas near Rwanda's border.

The conflicts in Kasai region

Violence initially flared in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in August 2016, sparked by tensions between customary chiefs in Kasai-Central Province and the government. The violence spread rapidly in early 2017. Existing intercommunity tensions became part of a wider conflict involving militias, armed groups and security forces across a region the size of Germany. Beyond Kasai, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated dramatically over the past year.

When violence broke out in 2016, hundreds of thousands of people ran for their lives. Women and children displaced by violence have escaped to isolated locations to find safety – losing access to essential goods and services such as health care, safe water and sanitation, and education. The militias have used children to fight and kill, or to act as human shields. Today, 3.8 million people in the Kasai region need humanitarian assistance, including 2.3 million children.

Relief work in the Kivu and Kasai regions

Traumatic exposure is very common for people from DR Congo and other war-affected countries. Many experienced armed violence as a child, lost loved ones to violence and were forced to flee their homes as a refugee. It was clear that trauma was something that could and should be responded to by studying at the Africa Peacebuilding Institute, where trauma is studied and as a consequence also trauma healing methodologies like Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR), developed by Eastern Mennonite University, and Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC).



HROC workshop participant, Raymond Sadiki, presents the results of his small-group discussion to the rest of the participants

MCC and its partners use HROC in North and South Kivu in eastern DR Congo to help people name and understand how they have been impacted by different traumatizing events, how they can cope with trauma and pain and how as a community they can overcome difficult experiences and move forward in lifegiving ways. The HROC approach is valuable because it works at both the individual and community levels. HROC applies the ubuntu principle: I am because you are. One cannot be fully healed alone.



People visit outside following a service at a Mennonite Brethren church in Kikwit, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ever since survivors of brutal fighting in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of Congo fled to the city of Kikwit in 2017, the Mennonite Brethren Church has been ministering to them with faith and action.

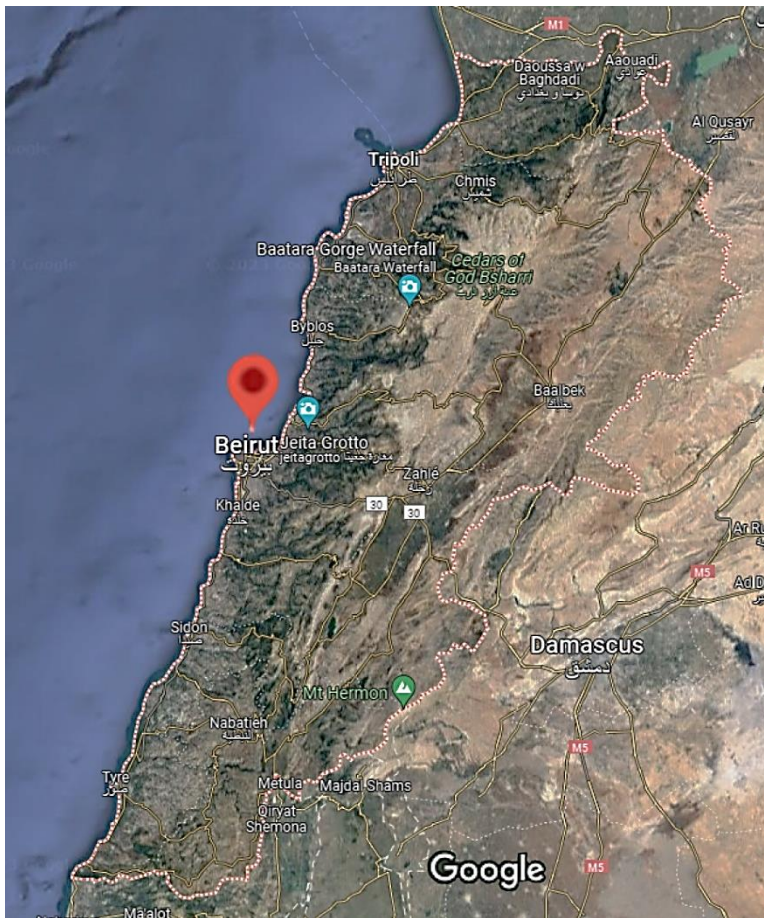
The survivors came with burns, wounds from machetes, and babies about to be born. They were exhausted from walking for weeks or months from various regions of neighboring Kasai Province with little food or water. They carried emotional wounds from watching their family members and neighbors massacred.

The Communauté des Eglises de Frères Mennonites au Congo (CEFMC;

Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo), which is based in Kikwit, saw the need. Individuals with CEFMC took people into their homes and provided clothing and food. The CEFMC hospital staff provided medical care, and their churches became temporary shelters.

Of the more than 24,000 people who had fled to Kikwit by the end of 2017, CEFMC supported nearly 3,000 the following year with the support of Anabaptist organizations around the world. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worked with CEFMC, training them to carry out equitable food distribution and development programs, brought in Canadian Foodgrains Bank for food distributions and continues to fund ongoing programming today.

Context for The Middle East: Lebanon



Lebanon has a long and eventful past. It has been part of the Phoenicians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Christians, Muslims, Ottomans and the French. In 1945 Lebanon became independent and has now 5,3 million inhabitants.

Lebanon's history since independence has been marked by alternating periods of relative political stability and prosperity based on Beirut's position as a regional center for finance and trade, interspersed with political turmoil and armed conflict.

On 17 October 2019, the first of a series of mass civil demonstrations erupted; they were initially triggered by planned taxes on gasoline, tobacco and online phone calls such as through WhatsApp, but quickly expanded into a country-wide

condemnation of sectarian rule, a stagnant economy and liquidity crisis, unemployment, endemic corruption in the public sector, legislation (such as banking secrecy) that is perceived to shield the ruling class from accountability and failures from the government to provide basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation.

Lebanon is suffering the worst economic crisis in decades. Lebanon is the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to see its inflation rate exceed 50% for 30 consecutive days

On 4 August 2020, an explosion at the port of Beirut, Lebanon's main port, destroyed the surrounding areas, killing over 200 people, and injuring thousands more. The cause of the explosion was later determined to be 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that had been unsafely stored, and accidentally set on fire that Tuesday afternoon. Protests resumed within days following the explosion, which resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab and his cabinet on August 10, 2020, nonetheless continuing to stay in office in a caretaker capacity. Demonstrations continued into 2021 with Lebanese blocking the roads with burned tires protesting against the poverty and the economic crisis.

In May 2022, Lebanon held its first election since a painful economic crisis dragged it to the brink of becoming a failed state. Lebanon's crisis has been so severe that more than 80 percent of the population is now considered poor by the United Nations.

In the last election the Hezbollah movement and its allies lost their parliamentary majority. Hezbollah's ally, President Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, was no longer the biggest Christian party after the election.

The Syrian war brought many refugees to Lebanon. The country hosts the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. Around 20% of Syrian refugee families live in informal settlements and collective shelters, often in deplorable conditions. The crisis has also pushed many Lebanese into poverty. Due to the deprecation of the Lebanese pound and high inflation, people’s purchasing power has significantly decreased.

91% of households* in Lebanon across the three population groups were found to have unmet sectoral needs in at least one sector. The main drivers of these unmet needs were Livelihood needs (95%), Shelter needs (35%) and Food Security needs (15%).

% of households found to have unmet needs, by sector and population group	Lebanese HHs	Migrant HHs	PRL HHs	Overall
Livelihoods	94%	97%	96%	95%
Shelter	33%	32%	49%	35%
Food security	10%	28%	30%	15%
Health	15%	8%	16%	14%
WASH	10%	8%	22%	11%
Education	3%	1%	6%	3%
Protection	3%	17%	3%	6%
Overall	94%	76%	96%	91%

* Lebanese Households; Migrant Households; Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) Households

Needs assessments show that all population groups struggle to cover their basic needs, particularly in terms of food and health care. Public services were already struggling before the economic crisis and are now on the verge of collapse. Access to health care has been drastically reduced due to financial barriers and lack of medicine. Many health staff have left the country due to low wages, making it even harder to access critical secondary health care.

Religion

Lebanon is the most religiously diverse country in West Asia and the Mediterranean. Because the relative sizes of different religions and religious sects remains a sensitive issue, a national census has not been conducted since 1932. There are 18 state-recognized religious sects – four Muslim, twelve Christian, one Druze, and one Jewish.

A rough division is:

- Islam 57.7 % (Sunni, Shi’a, Alawite, Ismailiu)
- Catholic 39.1 % (Maronite, Greek orthodox, Melkite Greek, Armenian)

Relief work

MCC has a long history of support for refugees and providing emergency relief in Lebanon. MCC continues that work today with the support for Syrian refugees, as well as vulnerable Lebanese communities. MCC is helping to increase food security, expand access to education and reimagine peace throughout the nation.

An important partner in this work is the Beirut based Forum For Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD). They organize workshops, conferences and dialogue sessions to enable society to approach conflicts in a non-violent manner.

The aim is to help thousands of Syrian refugees, a number that is growing all the time, and that the military escalation will only cause to increase exponentially. This is the first objective and commitment of pastor Riad Jarjour, who works closely with Kate and Garry Mayhew, MCC representatives for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. A Syrian from Aleppo, Riad Jarjour grew up in Homs and is now president of the Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) in Beirut.

The situation throughout the area is, of course, very dramatic. “We try to help internally displaced people (who, unlike refugees, have not crossed the borders of their country, and who therefore are among the most vulnerable) to survive, first of all, and to live in decent and dignified conditions, and in adequate shelters.

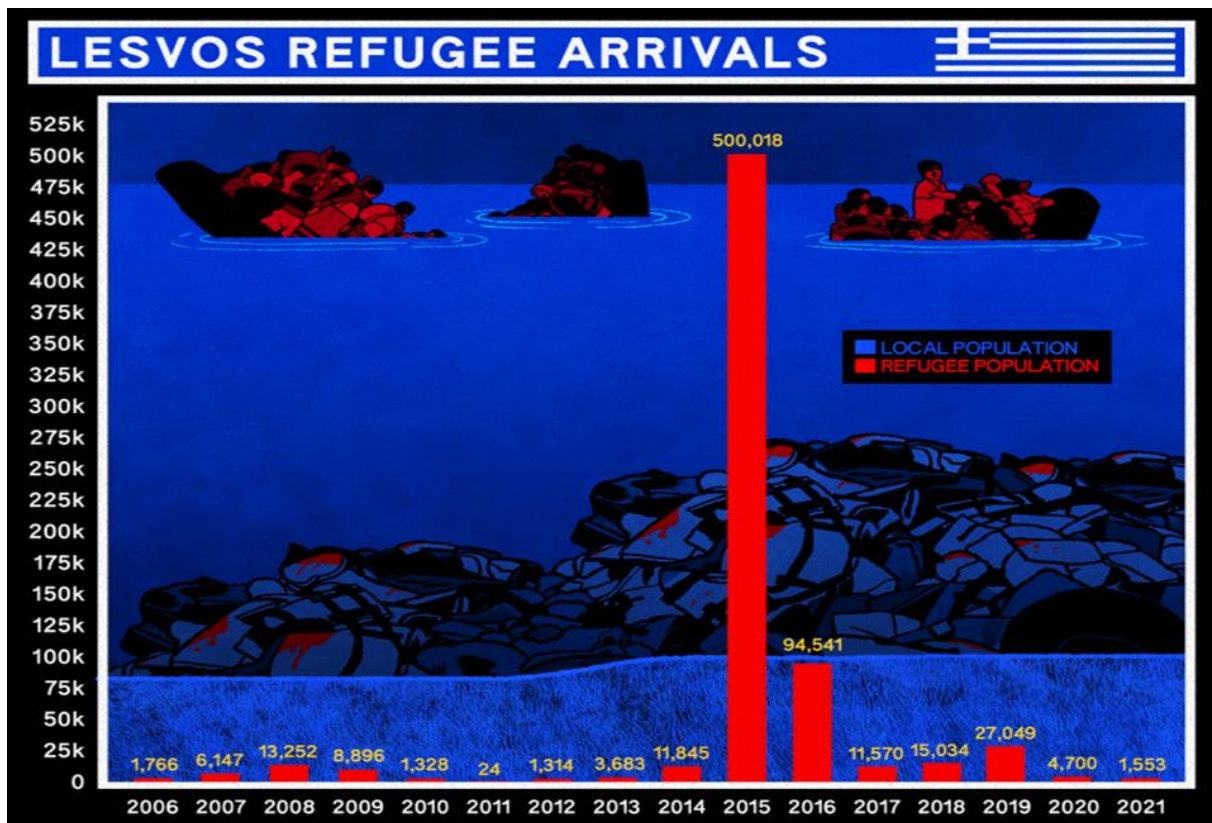
Work that never seems to end and where the new tensions between Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah are fueling the disaster and misery for the people in the region.

Context for The Middle East: Lesbos



The local population of the island of Lesbos (also written as Lesbos) is about 85,000. In September of 2015, migrants and asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq began arriving on the shores of Lesbos. “Over the course of 2015, the island hosted more than a half a million migrants and asylum seekers. This represents about 59% of all asylum seekers and migrants who transited through Greece that year on route to destinations in northern Europe.”

Even though arrivals have significantly dropped since the height of the so-called refugee crisis and Lesbos is currently hosting less than 1,500 asylum seekers, they are forced to stay on the island until their asylum claim is decided. Seven years on from the 2015 spike in arrivals, it is unclear who should be held accountable for the ongoing human rights violations on the Greek islands and whether an alternative asylum policy is feasible.



Refugee Camp "Mória" was founded in January 2013 and served as the largest refugee camp in Europe until it was burned down in September 2020. In August 2018, it was dubbed by the field coordinator of Doctors Without Borders as "the worst refugee camp on earth. The camp was built to accommodate around 3,000 people, however there were around 20,000 people living in the camp in summer 2020, among whom 6,000 to 7,000 were children under the age of 18.

After the fires destroyed the camp in Moria, Europe responded rapidly as countries sent aid to help the host community on Lesvos. Although the center was created overnight, today it has all the necessary facilities and provides services to its residents for a humane and decent living environment. New facilities and winterized housing significantly improved the center and following gradual improvements of facilities the Mavrovouni center has become a welcoming space for asylum seekers.

Today many organizations and NGO's are working on Lesvos to relieve the worries of the refugees. One of those organizations is I-58 Mission (from Isaiah 58:6-12). This Christian service agency is working at setting the oppressed free, share food, provide shelter and clothe those in need. I-58 works predominantly with volunteers and is amongst others, active on Lesvos.

The Transmission video series

Producer Max Wiedmer, a Swiss Mennonite from Affox (a video, film, and multimedia company), together with Hajo Hajonides, a Dutch Mennonite, from the International Menno Simons Center, developed a video project to commemorate the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, in 1525. Alongside other festivities being organized in Europe, the two partners are producing five short videos each year between 2020 and 2024. Each video covers a topic that is close to the hearts of Mennonites around the world. To emphasize the global dimension, the videos are being filmed in different countries. Many different video teams are part of the making of the series

These videos are intended to be used in workshops, discussion groups, Sunday schools, and so on. The videos are narrated or subtitled in several languages, making them widely applicable. Each title has a study guide which provides background information about the country where the recordings were made and about the subject itself. The guides include questions that can serve as a basis for discussion.

In 2020 the first video was produced, on the subject “freedom of belief.” This film was shot in Ethiopia and is about the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, which was heavily oppressed during the country’s totalitarian communist regime. In spite of that oppression, the church grew with an impressive rate. Today it is the largest anabaptist body in the world.

In 2021 the second video is about the dialogue between Muslims and Christians. In the video Hani and Adi share their faith journeys on how they relate as Mennonites (a small minority) and Muslims (a large majority) in Indonesia. It shows how the Mennonites in Indonesia can live together in peace.

The 2022 video covers the topic “Creation Care” and focuses on examples of how our brothers and sisters in Latin America are practicing creation care. The stories cover four different countries, each with their own set of challenges. We visit various Mennonite locations and people, who are all very much concerned about the future of their children and the next generations. They want them to live in a better and cleaner world.

The Transmission video series can be found on the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) website: <https://mwc-cmm.org/> Search for „Transmission“ There you also find the Study guides which can be downloaded for free. On affox.ch you get more information about the production teams

Profiles in order of appearance

Sebastian Alsdorf	Mennonite Relief organization Germany
Christopher Harnish	Immigration Legal aid
Elizabeth Harnish-Nisly	Student University of Maryland School of Law
Francisco Mosquera	MCC Program Coordinator
Maria de los Ángeles Vásquez	Immigrant from Venezuela
Alexander Garcia	Immigrant from Venezuela
Leddi Carolina González Rosales	Micro Enterprise selling Ice Cream
Ricardo Torres	MCC Children and Youth Programs Coordinator
Jimmy Muhima	HROC volunteer in charge of Prevention in Goma
Christian Salumo	HROC volunteer in charge of Prevention in Goma

Florence Mihigo	HROC volunteer in Goma
Germaine Kambundi	Displaced person from the Kasai region
Antoine Kimbila	Pastor Mennonite Brethren Churches
Kate Mayhew	MCC Representative for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq in Beirut
Garry Mayhew	MCC Representative for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq in Beirut
Riad Jarpour	Pastor and general secretary of the Arab Group For Muslim-Christian Dialogue.
Nate Shrock	Site Coordinator of Levbos of the I-58 organization
Margaritha Guenther	i58 Volunteer
Travis raver	i58 Volunteer
Felicity Nolt	i58 Volunteer

Project supporters

The production group offers thanks to these contributors and the many others who helped make this video possible.

AFHAM, Association Française d'Histoire Anabaptiste-Mennonite:

AEEMF, Association des Eglises Evangélique Mennonites de France

KMS/CMS The Swiss Mennonite Conference

AMBD, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brüdergemeinden in Deutschland e.V.;

Anabaptist Mennonite Network:

IMSC, International Menno Simons Centrum:

Mennonite Church Canada International Witness:

Mennonite World Conference, a community of Anabaptist-related churches celebrating 500 years in 2025.

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