

AID IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN GREECE HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY CARITAS BRNO FOR SEVERAL MONTHS ALREADY

(BRNO - ATHENS) Diocesan Caritas Brno has delivered 17 tons of material aid to Greece since January this year in three trucks. The main beneficiaries are the partner organization Caritas Hellas, the largest social clinic in Athens (Metropolitan Community Clinic Helliniko) and health-care organization Fair Planet that is providing help in a refugee camp at the former airport. With the last of the mentioned organizations, Caritas Brno has also started to depute students of the Medical Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno to the refugee camp in Athens.

Supplies of material aid have included durable food, shoes, clothing, hygiene, diapers and baby milk. Caritas Greece and its branch in Athens may in this way provide to refugees at least 400 meals a day for free. In addition, migrants can use a wardrobe, a playroom and a hygiene service there. The second part of humanitarian aid contained medical supplies and medicines. These will also support the pilot project of deputing Czech students of medicine and nursing to the refugee camp at Helliniko. This activity is a result of the recently signed Memorandum of Cooperation between the Diocesan Caritas Brno and Masaryk University.

"We plan to send five groups of four people till September, who will provide basic treatment under the supervision of physicians working for Fair Planet. Unfortunately, the activities of this organization will be interrupted during the summer months, so our students will come under the auspices of the National Medicines Agency Greece – HCDCP. That time each group of medical students will be completed by one licensed practitioner from Czech or a doctor living in Greece but graduated in Czech addressed by the Czech-Greek chamber," explains the Diocesan Caritas Brno's coordinator of humanitarian aid Filip Habrman.

Although the primary mission of Caritas Brno are social services to people in need in Czech Republic, it has 15 years lasting experience in integration of refugees and foreigners. That is why Caritas Brno coordinates humanitarian aid in the refugee crises from September 2015 on the Balkan route with the mandate of its national umbrella organization Caritas Czech Republic. Caritas Brno has operated so far in Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Greece. Overall, Caritas has invested more than 1 million CZK (40 000 EUR), delivered 300 tons of material aid and involved on borders over 100 staff and volunteers. Caritas Brno operates with the consent of the Czech Embassy. "As far as I know, Diocesan Caritas Brno is the only non-governmental organisation from the Czech Republic providing assistance in Greece at this moment," confirms Mr. Ambassador Jan Bondy.

"Helping people, who escape from war, is a natural thing for me. I'm sure it will be a new experience for us and we are happy that we can be useful because of our knowledge," says Martina Žižlavská, a medical student who attended the first medical batch in the refugee camp in Athens - Helliniko. After evaluation of the Czech volunteer medical group's activities, Caritas Brno intends to implement them by the end of this year. Delivery of additional supply of material aid is planned at the end of October.

"The borders on the Balkan route are closed completely at the moment. Over 100 thousand people stranded so in Greece now. It is not a solution to pretend that it does not concern us, it is our common Europe-wide responsibility. Therefore we consider the aid very meaningful in a country, that is struggling with an economic crisis and where culminates refugee wave at the same time. We have gained all financial resources associated with this help exclusively from donors and exceptionally from municipality such as the South Moravian region. Our activities will therefore continue until all donations will be spent. Therefore, an expression of solidarity from donors is absolutely crucial for us," explains the director of the Diocesan Caritas Brno Oldřich Haičman.

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