



Get Involved: Pray

EMBRACE Prayer Group
May 2017

THE TRAUMA OF FACING DEPORTATION.

O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. Psalm 88 verses 14 - 16

The UNHCR recently posted a report on their Facebook page about refugee children in Sweden who have fallen unconscious after being informed that their families would be expelled from the country. In summary since 2000 hundreds of children, mostly between the ages of eight and fifteen, have fallen into the condition, which medical professionals have named resignation syndrome, an illness that is said to exist only in Sweden, and only among refugees. The children have no underlying physical or neurological disease, but they seem to have lost the will to live. Nearly all have migrated from former Soviet and Yugoslav states, and a disproportionate number were Roma or Uyghur. None are known to have died, but a few have been bedridden for as long as four years. The children are said to embody psychic wounds in a literal way: they feel totally helpless, and they become totally helpless. The report notes that "isolated in a culture that can't relate to their traumas, refugees have often expressed their griefs in unique forms of psychological expression."

Such extreme manifestations of despair are rare but many fleeing conflicts across the world today will feel similarly when hope is destroyed. The author of Psalm 88 knew the feeling. It is one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not conclude, as such psalms usually do, with any suggestion of comfort or joy, but, from first to last, it is mourning and woe.

Those who are pressed down by trials may read this psalm with feeling; those that are not should read it with profound gratitude to God that they have been spared such suffering.

This month we pray for

- asylum seekers awaiting or appealing decisions on their refugee applications.
- those facing deportation who have genuine fears for their safety in their own countries.
- the wisdom of Solomon for immigration officers who have to translate cold government policy into real life decisions.
- light in the darkness for those living in fear – especially our migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking brothers and sisters,
- the governments of the world who have the power to offer refugees the opportunity to start new lives and to live in safety,
- those who support people who have suffered from trauma, that they may be filled with compassion, love and hope.

Contributed by Noel McCune