

IT'S NOT THEM, *it's us*

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The Voice
of the
Martyrs

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CITY OF HOPE

BRAZILIAN BASE

On February 3rd, we released the documentary called "CITY OF HOPE," a film produced by Daniel Lenço that describes the challenge the organization faced in a race against time to receive Afghan Christian refugees.

In August 2021, after 20 years of military intervention, the Taliban took over control of Afghanistan.

After taking over the government, the Taliban began to search throughout the country for Christians, leading to severe persecution of those who lived there. The group had in its power lists with the names of those who professed the Christian faith, and then acts of violence and death became commonplace.

That's when the challenge to beat the short timeframe began, so we could evacuate as many Christians as possible

from the country and bring them to Brazil safely.

There were countless challenges faced. The MAIS base in Brazil did not have the infrastructure to receive so many people, and the list of asylum requests only increased.

In light of this scenario, the documentary portrays the financial, climatic, and other challenges that we faced so that within three months, we could start receiving these families.

With the intent to save lives, it was a race against time showered with miracles, love, solidarity, tears, faith, and the certainty that God does not lose control of the situation - NEVER!

Access and check out the documentary: <https://maisnomundo.org/documentario>.



We believe that we are called to multiply the vision that God has placed in our hearts. The decision to serve the Kingdom needs to be made from the perspective of identifying the vocation and what God wants from us.

The MAIS Training Center (CTMAIS) is an Integral School of Missions with a duration of nine months and its objective is to equip each student so that after completing the course they can act as missionaries and evangelists, with the purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God and His justice through the proclamation of the Word and Christian service through the Church of Jesus.

The training takes place at the MAIS missionary base in Almirante Tamandaré (PR), where our students live throughout the entire course duration, and have the opportunity to live a transcultural experience together with the refugees who also reside at the base.

The teachers that compose the CTMAIS team are men and women with vast experience in the missionary field, who have understood the mission, based on the Bible, helping students to understand more of God's purpose, His mission, and how to participate in God's mission.

In 2023, we started the 18th group, which has fourteen students from different states of Brazil, including one student from Peru, one from Colombia, and an indigenous student who came from the Vale do Javari in Amazonas. At the MAIS base, we also have a complete transcultural experience among the students themselves and the Afghans.

During the week, the students have a full schedule with individual and collective devotionals, theoretical and practical classes, base maintenance, worship with the workers, and also serve the local church on weekends in the Bacaetava community in Colombo/PR.

When coming to CTMAIS, the students give up dreams and plans with the sole purpose of obeying God and equipping themselves. A unique opportunity given by God, providing growth and maturity in all areas. An opportunity full of challenges aimed at learning more about God and His Kingdom.

WOMEN'S DAY

BRAZILIAN BASE



In the month of March, we celebrate International Women's Day, a date that leads us to reflect on the value and importance of women in society as a whole.

In Brazil, despite still facing adverse situations, women are free to express themselves, dress as they wish, choose their husbands, walk alone on the street, work, and make their own decisions. However, this is not the reality in many countries, such as Afghanistan.

Therefore, being able to celebrate International Women's Day with Afghan women signifies **FREEDOM**, **RESTART**, and the **OPPORTUNITY** for a life without oppression.

The celebration of this day included the presence of students, missionaries, and refugees who live at the Brazil base. It was a day marked by much emotion, where we had a message delivered by missionary Franciele about the woman with the blood flow, recreational activities where women and children could laugh and have fun, snacks, and some "presentations" that the refugees themselves made, such as a musical performance, reading of poems in Dari, and Afghan dance.

"She is strong, her grace is divine
It's not luck, her Father made her blessed
And she shines, great girl
She can, just didn't know, she just didn't know..."

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It's not luck, her Father made her blessed
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Girl, Don't Go Discouraged - Marcela Taís

The excerpt from Marcela Taís's song portrays the strength and potential of women. This strength that many women didn't know they had. The song was taught in a Portuguese class to the women, and two teenage sisters surprised us by singing it in Portuguese during the celebration. How can one not feel a sense of accomplishment knowing that girls and women are getting the opportunity to understand their value, their potential, and how much they are loved by God?

NOWRUZ: “NEW DAY”. HOPE FOR A NEW BEGINNING.

BRAZILIAN BASE

On March 21st, according to the Persian calendar, "NOWRUZ" is celebrated, which means "New Day". In other words, it is the New Year according to the Gregorian calendar.

Nowruz is celebrated by over 300 million people in various countries, including Afghanistan.

At the MAIS "camp", as the refugees usually call the base, we could not let this celebration be forgotten.

Our Afghan brothers made a point of preparing a large dinner, which took a day to prepare. The women made henna designs and even lent dresses to the missionaries. The men were responsible for preparing the food on the improvised wood-burning stove.

Moreover, they improvised the decoration in such a way that they could feel a bit closer to their culture.

For the dinner, they dressed in their best clothes, and the women put on their accessories to celebrate together, as one big family. Students, missionaries, and refugees composed a large communion table filled with lots of food and love.

Despite being far from their home country, they were able to share this very important moment with us. And therefore, the love of God is manifested in the small details, such as the sparkle in the children's eyes or the adults' laughter when Brazilians dared to try to dance to Afghan music. Joy and hope being restored. **Noruz Mubarak:** 'Happy New Year'!





RENOVARE

BRAZILIAN BASE

The project focused on welcoming refugees in Brazil is called RENOVARE, which means "to make new", according to Latin. Indeed, this is our new goal as an institution: to renew everything that was lost by people who were victims of religious persecution and had to leave behind their lives, homes, families, country, and dreams. Enabling a fresh start and the rebuilding of their lives.

Through the Program, we offer practical assistance, such as shelter, food, Portuguese classes, help in obtaining Brazilian documents, medical and dental care, as well as emotional and spiritual support.

Our goal is not just to supply basic needs, but also to ensure a welcoming and loving environment, where they can feel safe and find hope to rebuild their lives.

Therefore, the program consists of

two stages:

1st. Removal from the hostile location to a safe place, withdrawal of documentation, and transfer to Brazil;

2nd. Reception at the base, Documentation, Transition to a partner church that will support the family until they can sustain themselves independently and can restart their lives in a safe country.

The number of people in refugee situations around the world is increasing due to conflicts, wars, and persecutions. In 2022, about 103 million people were displaced, 27 million of them being refugees, according to UNHCR.

It is important to remember that these numbers represent people; they are not just statistics.



RENOVARE - HOPE, FAITH, CARE AND LOVE

BRAZILIAN BASE

Currently, we have sixteen furnished houses in what we call the '**City of Refuge**' to welcome our refugee brothers and sisters. These houses were built on the MAIS base in Brazil, in the municipality of Almirante Tamandaré in the state of Paraná.

In addition, we have a medical clinic, three classrooms (for adults and children), a dental clinic, a playground for children to play, and a court where daily fun with football is guaranteed.

We have received approximately thirty Afghan refugees this year, totaling one hundred and seventy refugees from Afghanistan since November 2021. And also, about 40 refugees have left the institution just this year.

During this period in which they have

been/are at the base, all refugees receive medical and dental care, where the necessary vaccinations for their stay in Brazil are administered too

Both children and adults receive lessons in Portuguese, mathematics, personal hygiene, and cultural acclimatization, allowing them to learn a little about our culture and the differences compared to their home country.

In addition to the classes, there's an introduction to Brazilian food where they can eat lunch in the dining hall, trying basic meals from our traditional cuisine.

Beyond physical nourishment, we also provide spiritual nourishment through weekly worship services to strengthen their faith and practice their Portuguese.





RENOVARE

ADAPTATION AND INDEPENDENCE

BRAZILIAN BASE



During the refugees' stay at the base, they have the opportunity to learn about our culture and food, but we also enable them to maintain their cultural habits and foods as much as possible.

Afghan food is mainly composed of bread, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and tea. We try our best to provide foods so that they can prepare at least the basics of their culture and feel welcomed in their homes.

Many eat rice, beans, and salad and do not insist on meat. Others try to adapt to Brazilian seasoning, as Afghan food tends to be very seasoned and quite spicy. They do not forgo spices in the preparation of their food.


So, every Friday we have what we call "**little market**", where each family goes to pick up the necessary food for their weekly diet, each at their own time to maintain organization and so that everyone can do their 'shopping' in the best way possible.

All the food is provided free of charge and are the fruits of donations. Therefore, fruits, vegetables, legumes, eggs, chicken, wheat flour, pasta, sugar, milk, cleaning products, personal hygiene, among others are available in our "little market" so that they can take what they need for the week.

We also have a "**little store**" where we provide clothes and shoes for free, all from donations, that is, from the generosity and understanding of the people who participate in the mission with us.

The adaptation upon arriving in Brazil also occurs in clothing. Where we see some women no longer wearing a veil, others keep using it, but having the freedom to choose.

Without the oppression of the Taliban, women do not need to wear burqas, men can wear shorts, shave their beards and everyone can dress freely. A process of change, adaptation, independence, and freedom begins in all areas. The dream of starting over slowly takes shape, becoming real.



“The Taliban had many reasons to kill me, but I believe that God’s mercy reached me and that’s why I am here.”

TESTIMONY

BRASILIAN BASE

would like to share my story, a boy who changed his religion from Islam to Christianity, and after that had to face the discrimination of people who did not accept his decision.

My name is R., I'm from Afghanistan. I was born into a Muslim family and lived as a Muslim until I went to university where I met some Chinese and Afghan Christian friends who shared the Good News with me.

When the Taliban took over the country, I was arrested for being a Christian. In Afghanistan, being a Hazara (ethnic group) in itself is considered a crime. Can you imagine my situation being Hazara and Christian?

The Taliban had many reasons to kill me, but I believe that God's mercy reached me and that's why I'm here.

When the Taliban found out that I was a Christian and that I was sharing God's Gospel with different people, they arrested me and kept me in a dark, cold, and dirty place for a while. This place was previously used as a bathroom.

During my first day in prison, they were asking me some questions and then a man walked in, looked at me and asked: "Why is he here and what is his crime?" They replied: "He converted to Christianity and invited other people to become Christians like him", the man was furious and asked once more: "Who arrested him? Why didn't they kill him?". And they replied: "If it were me, I would have shot all my bullets

at this filthy one". The man left the room angrily...

During my time in prison, they took me to the bathroom only three times, a soldier was responsible for watching me. One night, a young soldier took me outside, we were on our way to the bathroom, and he was playing with his gun, when suddenly he fired and the bullet went right in front of my feet.

I always wondered why I was still alive. I found out the reason and now it's all clear to me. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 5, God said: "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you...". No matter the situation I am in or what difficulty I am going through, God will be with me. God will never forget me, but God will protect me!

I stayed in that prison for about 21 days during the winter, I didn't change my clothes and I didn't take a shower. Then they transferred me to the national security prison, where they tortured me even more than before with electric shock, whipping my feet for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, every day.

It was very cold, about -7 degrees, I didn't have warm clothes, there was no blanket or pillow. One night, after 10 p.m., two masked men came and took me to the courtyard, ordered me to take off my clothes and lie on the ground. After that, they threw cold water on me until



“ ... I think all these challenges were necessary for me, as they made me stronger and I'm ready for the next moments in the Mission.”

6 in the morning without clothes. My hands and feet were chained and tied behind my back.

At that time, my family came to the prison to visit me, but they could not see me, it was very hard for my family, especially for my mother who cried day and night without news about me. The Taliban transferred me to the public prison, that's when I finally managed to talk to my family, so I called them from prison and said: "I'm alive, don't worry". After that, they found someone to help me and paid a lot of money to get me released.

In the first instance the judge told me: "I'm going to let you go free but with one condition: someone must guarantee that you will not leave the country and whenever we need you, you must return to us. If you don't come, we will arrest the person who guaranteed your release." The judge also told me: "I will give your name to the police, who are at the borders and airports, there will be no way to leave the country". And I was released!

When I got out of prison, I received a call from an American, saying: "I can get you out of Afghanistan, I know you are not safe there. Would you like to leave this country?" I said "yes".

At that time I didn't have a passport and was trying to get one. Then, I received a call from the man who guaranteed my release in

court; he told me: "the judge wants you to come back". I called the judge, and he told me: "you have to come for a second trial, if you don't come, I will arrest the person who guaranteed your release and no matter where you are sooner or later we will arrest you too and your crime will be considered a heavy crime".

I called the person who could help me get out of Afghanistan, so I explained everything to him and he did his best, arranged everything for me and paid the policeman who was at the border waiting for us, he took me out of Afghanistan.

Now I live in Brazil, I'm fine and safe. I had challenging moments, but I think all these challenges were necessary for me, as they made me stronger and I'm ready for the next moments in the Mission.

If you read the book of Acts, you will find that the first church faced the same discrimination. The older Jews put the apostles in prison many times, they even killed Stephen, forcing them not to talk about Jesus Christ. But as you know, the church has continued to grow every day and nobody will be able to stop it.

Best regards, R.

Pray for The persecuted church!

Pray for Afghanistan

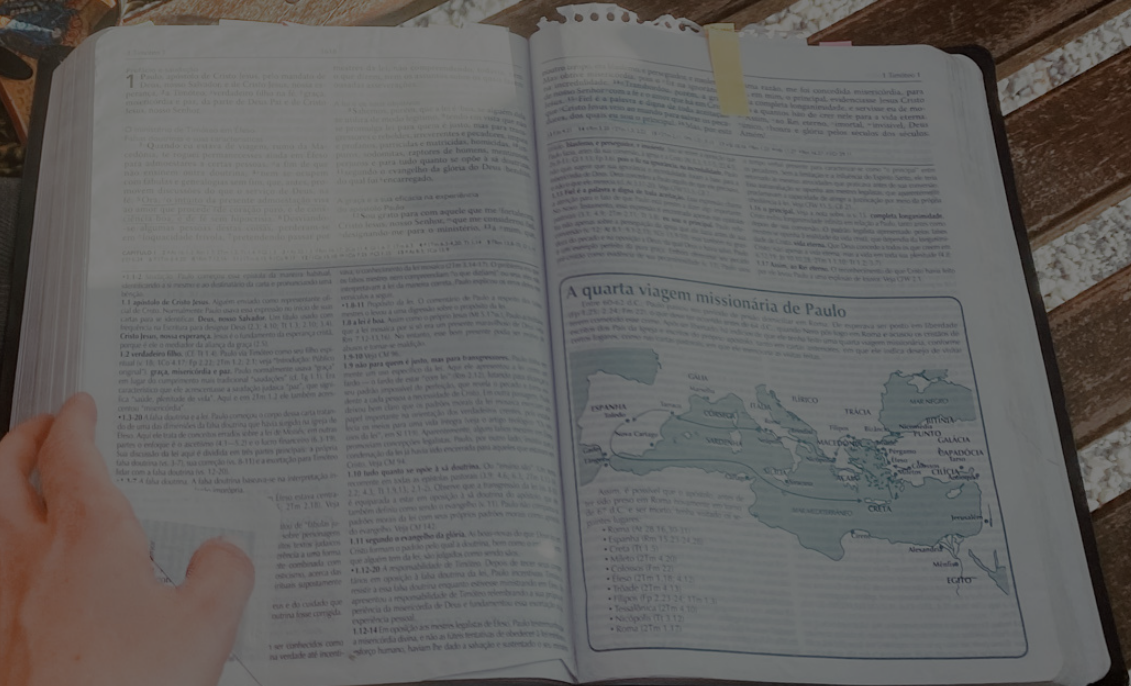
- **Spiritual renewal and protection for the Christians who still are at Afghanistan;**
- **Segurança** para os cristãos afegãos escondidos no Irã, Pakistan and other countries, waiting for a chance to go to a safe country;
- For Afghans who have been risking the illegal route towards USA and Canada, in search of safety and opportunity;
- Mastery of the Portuguese language for Afghans in Brazil
- Adaptation and job opportunities, so that our brother may walk independently;
- More churches willing to welcome and commit to Afghan families;
- For peace and stability in the country.

"Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Hebrews 13: 3



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