

# UNHCR TURKEY

## DONOR IMPACT STORIES

Providing specialized child protection for special needs refugee children



*Zahra waving hello (far left) and her siblings Yakup (three years old), Nour (eight), Abdulhey (five) and their casework Nisreen in Mardin old city centre. Turkey, July 2017 ©UNHCR/Esther Judah*

MARDIN, Turkey- Seven-year-old Zahra is bouncing off the walls of her family's one room house. She is bursting with excitement at the prospect of seeing Nisreen, her caseworker from AAR Japan. UNHCR has partnered up with the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR

Japan) to provide specialized child protection in the south-eastern Turkish province of Mardin, where AAR Japan estimates that disabled and special needs children, like Zahra who is autistic, make up a quarter of all refugee children.

“Zahra is calmer, happier” her mum says smiling, “she’s more manageable since she started receiving weekly counselling”. Her caseworker helped refer her for crucial further assistance that helped her receive the correct prescription medicines. While Nisreen discusses Zahra’s treatment with her parents, Zahra is beaming, giggling and tickling Nisreen; all the while Nisreen keeps Zahra happy and entertained.

Zahra and her family came to Turkey in 2014 when armed groups took control of their hometown Mosul. “I decided to come to Mardin”, Zahra’s father Abdul tells us, “as my grandfather was originally Turkish from Mardin, it only seemed natural to return here three generations later,” he explains. Zahra’s brothers and sisters speak Turkish, as they are enrolled in the local school. Access to social services such as health and education, is provided for by the Government of Turkey to Iraqi refugees as stipulated in the Law for Foreigners under International Protection (LFIP) and to Syrians thanks to the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR). However, the language barrier, gaps in services and the lack of guidance remain considerable challenges for many refugees. This is when protection partners such as AAR Japan, among UNHCR’s other partners, step in to help bridge this gap.

Zahra and her family are part of the over 130,000 large caseload of Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR in Turkey. In 2014, Turkey became the largest host country of refugees in the world, today hosting more than three million refugees and asylum seekers. Across Turkey, UNHCR supports community centres, community outreach teams, protection awareness raising sessions, specialized protection outreach teams like AAR Japan’s that play a key role in identifying vulnerable individuals, helping them access the care they need and referring them further for other service providers.

This work is possible thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Japan, that supports UNHCR Turkey work and in particular AAR Japan’s work in Mardin. This year alone UNHCR Turkey has received just over USD 5 million from the Government of Japan. This key financial support has helped Zahra and her family, funds a range of protection activities and boosts the capacity of UNHCR and the Turkish authorities to register refugees.

## CONTACTS

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