

Request from government for temporary housing

(I forward this important mail on behalf of Sjaak van Leijenhorst, a missionary who is working among asylum seekers in Belgium) 14 January 2016

It remains a challenge for **the Cabinet of Theo Francken (Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration)** to find adequate shelters for groups of asylum seekers across Belgium. Therefore, the Cabinet of Mr. Francken recently asked 'Gave Veste "(an evangelical organization that works with refugees) to **ask the Protestant-Evangelical Churches if they might have shelters** that are available for groups of asylum seekers. This is **an unprecedented and unique opportunity** for us to give a good testimony of Christian love, also to the Belgian government! That can be in hostels, conference centers, bible schools, hospices, which temporarily (for a few months or half a year) could function as a shelter. That may be anywhere in the country.

On the other hand, there is also **a need for urgent provisory shelter in Brussels**: church buildings where the government may place camp beds from Monday to Friday, so that in the weekend the church is free.

Do you know anything? Are you an owner who may have a building to offer? Please let me know and how many people it could accommodate. I just need for now a general number, a possible option, without making any final commitment.

For I have on **Tuesday, January 19th** a meeting with two members of the Cabinet of Mr. Francken. There I could mention these numbers. During this meeting I will hear more detailed information on the conditions and everything it entails. I want to hear what they like to see and what they have to offer to us: food / catering, budget for all funds, camp beds, installation of additional toilets, provision of staff and security, financial compensation ...

So if you have a possible concrete offer (even if it has to be discussed first in your church board, before making a final decision), just let me know please. Then, after January 19, I'll be able to give you more specific information and we can talk this through in more detail.

I thank you.

Sincerely,

Sjaak van Leijenhorst
Gave Veste - Christian work among refugees

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Summary of Refugee Situation in Brussels 23 Nov 2015

As you may know the situation in Brussels with the refugees is a very fluid one. We are approaching 30,000 asylum application since January with 15,000 in the last 3 months alone. Once an asylum seeker is registered at the Immigration Office at 59B Chaussee d'Anvers, 1000 Brussels they are transferred to a residence shelter run by Fedasil or The Belgian Red Cross supported by the local government. At this time there are around 1000 asylum seekers waiting to register with the Immigration offices. With the current alert the Immigration office is closed. When the office is open registration interviews are performed each weekday which creates openings in the Red Cross Emergency shelter. On the days that no interviews are performed no beds are opened up. The average being register at this moment is 80 to 100 per day. Currently the in the WTC III, The Belgian French Red Cross has 500 beds for pre-registered asylum seekers at Rue Koning Albert II, 24, 1000 Brussels. On occasion the Flemish Red Cross that houses registered asylum seekers can open up some of there beds as well. Up to 120 on any given day.

Over the last 2 weeks fewer registrations have been completed each day leading to longer stays in the emergency shelter per asylum seeker. This in turn does not free up beds for new arrivals. This wait time between arrival in Brussels and having your first interview for registration is now 14 or 15 day. During this wait time, if the shelter is already full there are no other formal accommodations available for the asylum seeker. For the last 2 weeks the Red Cross along with many community groups helping the refugees, have been left with finding accommodations for between 200 and 400 hundred asylum seekers each night. This includes local hosting families, hotels, hostels or many have spent nights on the streets. Until the beds available equal the influx of asylum seekers to register, this issue will continue. Hosting families are drying up and donations for hotels can not be sustained by the few. We have been blessed by Eglise Roch and Eglise Ste Suzanne who have hosted 115 men each night for over a week now. They are hosted from 9pm to 9am each day but need to return outside for the daytime hours. The Belgium government officials meet on a regular basis to discuss the issue, but no solution has been offered yet.

There is the Refugee Welcome Center at 22 Willobroerk which is 3 block away. Providing services to all asylum seekers and homeless peoples run by volunteers and NGO's. The center is open from 9h00 to 21h00 7 days a week for the café and a place to warm up with limited services for a Dr., language training, legal aid, clothing, children's school 14h00 to 18h00. No housing accommodation are available. Many asylum seekers do not take advantage of these services out of lack of knowledge of it, or a fear of losing their place in line for the emergency shelter. At the moment with the alert level raised the services are minimum and tensions are growing with the quantity of asylum seekers present each day.

As a church body, I come to you for help with this situation. My church continues to provide support where it can with food and supplies distributions twice a week, but we need your help. What is most needed is more emergency shelter for the entire day including at night. We need facilities for them to sleep, to have halal food provided, toilets, showers, laundry facilities and basic necessities and ability to get to interviews. If we could come together to help provide this shelter it would greatly help the current crisis being faced at the WTC III - Red Cross Emergency Shelter.

To host families, minors or men please contact :

Team Lead

The Belgian Red Cross

0497 52 58 12

Rue Koning Albert II, 24, 1000 Brussels.

If you have a larger solution with facilities, please see my contact information below.

Thank you for your time.

Blessings in Christ,

Sandy Wiemer

Christian Center Refugee Co-ordinator in Brussels

swiemer@hotmail.com

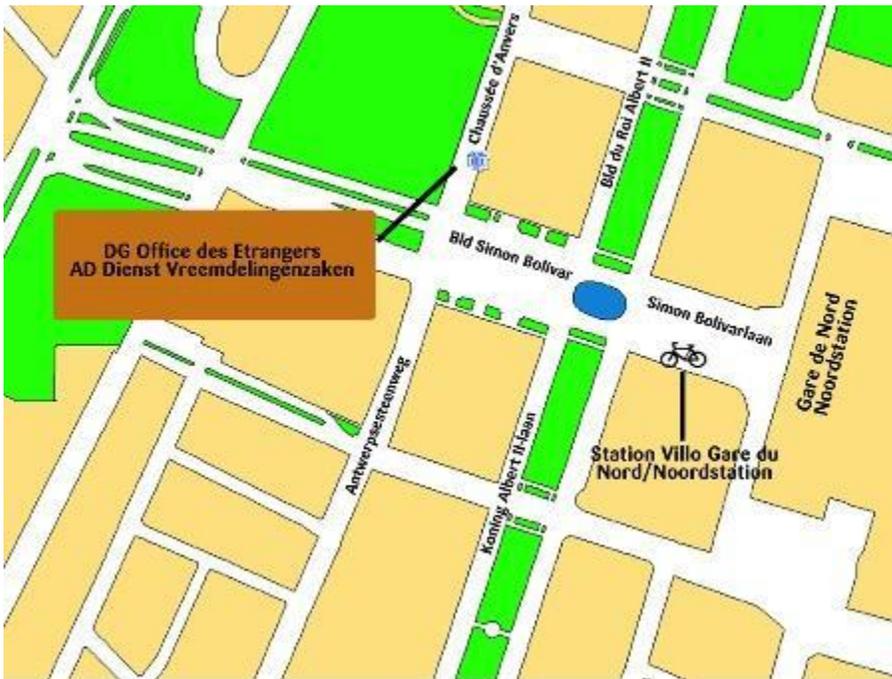
info@christiancenter.be

Frequently Asked Questions on helping refugees in Belgium

About this document: this note has been prepared by the [Community Support for Refugees in Belgium](#) group, as a resource for primarily English-speaking people in Belgium who want information on how to help refugees. Please get in touch with the group (via the [Facebook page](#)) if you feel any information should be added or corrected, and feel free to share this doc.

Where do newly-arrived refugees in Belgium go?

Newly-arrived refugees go to **register their asylum application** in the Federal Office of Foreigners (Office des Etrangers in French, or Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken in Dutch), located at the World Trade Center, Tower 2, Chaussée d'Anvers 59b, 1000 Brussels (see map below).



While waiting to register, they are given **temporary accommodation** across the street, the World Trade Center Tower 3, run by the Red Cross. Those unable to find accommodation in the World Trade Centre (eg because they don't meet the criteria to apply for asylum) must find their own accommodation. Daytime services are available through [Plateforme Citoyenne](#) and Medecins du Monde. They are operating a 'Refugees Welcoming Centre' at [Quai Willebroek 22, Brussels](#) near Gare du Nord (North train station), from 9h to 21h, 7 days a week. They try to offer services to asylum-seekers (and others in need) including materials, medical attention,

language teaching and a playroom for children, film showings and a cafe.

What happens to refugees after they have registered?

The refugees stay in the World Trade Centre for 2-4 days, depending on how quickly they can register, and are then transferred to a **refugee Reception Centre**, where they stay while their asylum case is processed (at least 6-12 months). While in the Reception Centre, they are not allowed to work, and receive basic legal and health services from the government. If their application for asylum is approved, they move out of the reception centre into normal accommodation and can work. If their application for asylum is rejected, they have to leave Belgium.

Where are the Reception Centres and how can I contact them?

There are around 50 Reception Centres in Belgium, mostly run by FedAsil (the Federal government's agency for asylum and immigration) and the Red Cross. Some are located in and around Brussels; most are scattered across Belgium. You can find the **locations** and **contact details** of the Reception Centres on this [map](#).

Since members of the [Community Support for Refugees](#) group are contacting the Reception Centres to ask about their needs, if you contact a Reception Centre, **please share that information** on the Facebook page of the [Community Support for Refugees](#) group, in order to coordinate efforts to identify and respond to their needs.

HOW CAN I HELP REFUGEES IN BRUSSELS?

1. Items to donate

Items are always needed. Needs change very often (as new refugees arrive and are sent to different places), and there is no single central organization receiving and distributing donations, so it takes a bit of time to find out what is needed, but below are some suggestions:

- You can check the [Community Support for Refugees](#) Facebook page for regular updates in English. Needs lists will be pinned to the top of the page, and/or stored under 'files'.
- You can find an updated needs list maintained by [Plateforme Citoyenne](#) and [Medecins du Monde](#). Please check their [Facebook page](#) for information on the latest needs, and note that donations should be brought to the **depot** located at [Rue Francois Mus 7, Molenbeek](#), open Tuesday-Sunday, 10-18h (not to the Refugees Welcome Centre at Quai Willebroek). The phone numbers are: 0486/951290 or 0489/073670.
- You can also bring donations to [Convivial](#), an organisation helping refugees to settle and integrate after they leave the reception centres. Contact their 'Aide Matérielle' (material help) service for latest needs at 02 503 43 46. They are located at [Rue du Charroi n°33-35, 1190 Forest](#) and open from Monday to Thursday from 9h to 12h30, 13h to 17h, and Friday from 9h to 12h.
- **Refugee reception centres:** the majority of refugees are now staying in refugee reception centres, where there is a need for donations and volunteers. Some centres have their own Facebook pages providing updates on their needs. You can find the locations and contact details of the reception centres on this [map](#). If you have any contacts or ties to any of the centres, **please let us know** by sharing that information on the Facebook page of the [Community Support for Refugees](#) group.

2. Volunteering

- Volunteers can interact with and help refugees by teaching, serving food, setting up activities, etc at the [Refugee Welcome Centre](#) located at [Quai de Willebroeck 22](#). They try to offer services to asylum-seekers (and others in need) including materials, medical attention, language teaching and a playroom for children, film showings ([Cinemaximiliaan](#)) and a cafe. Please check the Plateforme citoyenne [volunteer page](#). You can also help out at the **depot** for donations at [Rue Francois Mus, 7- Molenbeek](#). Open usually Tuesday-Sunday, 10-18h. The phone numbers are: 0486/951290 or 0489/073670.
- [Serve the city](#) organises regular volunteering in Brussels, including initiatives to help refugees and asylum-seekers. Please check their [website](#) and [Facebook page](#), and look out for their regular '[Focus Days](#)' - the next will focus on refugees.
- '[We Can Help](#)' is a citizens' initiative to match volunteers with needs - please see their website for information and a sign-up sheet.
- [Red Cross](#). If you want to volunteer at WTC III get in touch with volontariat.wtc3@croix-rouge.be or get in touch by PM with [Anna Pethe](#) via the [Community Support for Refugees](#) group.
- The 'School of the World' (Ecole du Monde) organised by the Plateforme Citoyenne tries to provide educational activities for refugee children. You can find more information on their [Facebook page](#). => Send them a pm if you want to organise an activity
- Convivial has several volunteer opportunities (<http://www.convivial.be/j-aide/>)
- If you have language skills (Arabic, French, Dutch), there is a Facebook group for volunteer translators organised by the Plateforme Citoyenne. Please see the [Facebook page](#) for more information.

2. Donation of funds

Below are organisations supporting refugees in Belgium, Europe and Syria. We recommend you support your choice of NGO - if they do not have a fundraiser specifically for refugees, you can mention in the communications field "refugee crisis", which obliges them to use the funds for the issue mentioned.

Outside Belgium:

[International Rescue Committee's](#) response to the refugee crisis

[Concern Worldwide](#)

[International Federation of the Red Cross Europe](#)

[International Medical Corps](#)

[CARE](#)

[Medecins Sans Frontieres](#)

[ProActiva Open Arms](#) (rescue of refugees in the sea around Lesbos)

[Rain Ponchos for Refugees](#) in Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia

[SOS Mediterranee](#) (rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean sea)

[UNICEF](#)

In Belgium:

[Medecins du Monde](#)

[Convivial](#)

[Serve the City](#)

[Croix Rouge Belgique](#) (Belgian Red Cross)

[Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen](#)

A list of NGOs working with refugees in Belgium can be found here:

<http://picum.org/en/resources/contacts-of-organisations/links-to-organisations-belgium/>

This information was compiled by the organization "Community Support for Refugees in Belgium" with website link: <http://communitysupportforrefugeesbelgium.yolasite.com/>

Street Ministry for Asylum Seekers in Brussels

As you will know the situation in Brussels with the refugees is a very fluid one. Since late August the average monthly in flux of Refugee is approximately 5000. We are approaching 15,000 asylum seekers process with up around 1000 waiting for their registration date. Depending on how many registration interviews are performed each day will create openings in the Red Cross Emergency shelter. On the days that no interviews are performed no beds are opened up. Currently in the WTC III, [The Belgian French Red Cross](#) has 500 beds for pre-registered asylum seekers at [Rue Koning Albert II, 24, 1000 Brussels](#). There also are an additional 300 beds for post-registered asylum seekers waiting to receive their residence shelter somewhere in Belgium.

Over the last 2 weeks fewer registrations have been completed each day leading to longer stays in the emergency shelter per asylum seeker. This in turn does not free up beds for new arrivals. For the last week the Red Cross along with many organizations, helping the refugees, have been left with finding accommodations for a few hundred asylum seekers each night. This includes local hosting families, hotels, hostels or many have spent nights on the streets. Until the beds available equal the influx of asylum seekers to register, this issue will continue. The Belgium government officials meet on a regular basis to discuss the issue.

During the month October the asylum seeker would arrive in Brussels and make their own way to Gard du Nord. From there they would walk to the Immigration office at [Chaussee d'Anvers 59B, Brussels](#). If the Immigration office is open and accepting more people they could get in line and hope for a convocation paper with the date of their registration interview. Previously, the Immigration office was accepting 250 per day up to a maximum of 750 per week. The Immigration offices are closed on weekend and holidays. The wait time averaged 2 to 4 days wait between getting a convocation paper and the registration date for October. As of yesterday the waiting time is now 2 weeks. During the waiting time the only prepared accommodation is the 500 beds in the Red Cross Emergency Shelter across the street from the immigration office. Each day this leaves up to 500 without food and housing.

There is the [Refugee Welcome Center](#) at [Quai de Willebroeck 22, 1000 Bruxelles](#) which is 3 blocks away. Providing services to all asylum seekers and homeless peoples run by volunteers and NGO's. The center is open from 9h00 to 21h00 7 days a week for the café and a place to warm up with limited services for a Dr., language training, legal aid, clothing, children's school 14h00 to 18h00. No housing accommodation is available. Many asylum seekers do not take advantage of these services out of lack of knowledge of it, or a fear of losing their place in line for the emergency shelter.

The weekends are the most difficult and the current situation may leave asylum seeker without housing and food for a few days at a time. Our team tries to fill the gap where we can with sandwiches, snacks, drinks and needed hygiene products and bibles if requested. This also gives each of us wonderful opportunities to have a conversation with those willing to share stories, a smile and hope. Sometimes, it just takes a bit of food and directions to the Welcome Center to induce a smile. Other times it is prayer and a heart connection to reinstate hope and strength to keep going. Sometimes it is just explaining the convocation papers and what their next steps need to be.

Short Term Requirements 23 Nov.2015

What is really needed in the short term is emergency shelter for up to 250 people including families per day for 2 weeks periods. The Red Cross is doing all it can under its mandate. They feed and house 500 per day, but can not support those left outside. This is where more NGO's and churches really need to come in and support, unless the government acts. It is the ones left outside as the weather turns that we are very concerned for.

Maybe we can get the word out and if churches can come together to host these people in real need, love can be shown. **We would need** emergency accommodations including cots or beds, toilets, showers, laundry facilities, a functioning kitchen and access to dining area for quantity. Along with transport for the masses. This would need access to electricity, water and heat for the 2 week period they wait for their registration date. Once they are registered then the state takes over and houses them in Residence shelters for the duration of the application process (up to 1 year).

I have benefited by the knowledge I have gained by volunteering at the Red Cross Shelter, the Welcome Center, at the Donation Depot, at the Camp Maximilian and with our team through Assemblies of God Ministries. This gives us information situation that is helpful to the Asylum seeker.

Please consider helping where ever you can. You may check with Sandy for latest situation.

Sandy Wiemer

or The Belgian Red Cross
0497 52 58 12

Refugee Ministry
Brussels Christian Center

swiemer@hotmail.com

info@christiancenter.be

Other facilities

Centre Social Protestant

Rue Cans 12, 1050 Ixelles

Tel: 02 512 80 80

Service réfugiés: tel: 02 500.10.13

email: csp.psc@skynet.be

website: <http://www.csp-psc.be/en>

Centre Social Protestant (CSP) accepts food, clothing, and furniture.

Best to telephone to find out current needs.

Tél/Fax (+32) 2 524 4491

Service social (+32) 466 383105

Service juridique (+32) 498 072936

Email info@lolivier1996.be ou
lolivier1996@yahoo.fr

N° de compte bancaire

IBAN : BE53 3630 4481 5353

SWIFT : BBRUBEBB

N° de TVA : 897342842

Heures d'ouverture

lundi – vendredi, de 9h à 13h, et sur rendez-vous

Comment venir

Train SNCB : Gare du Midi

Métro : Gare du Midi

Bus : 49, 50, 78

L'Olivier 1996 ASBL

SERVICE SOCIAL ET JURIDIQUE POUR LES ETRANGERS

(Entité reconnue d'insertion fédérale)

Rue Charles Parenté 10/6,
1070 Bruxelles (Anderlecht)