

Loving the Overlooked



**Our New Website - <http://lovingtheoverlooked.com>

A Day in Patras -

Last Thursday a few teammates and I traveled to the western port city of Patras to see the refugee situation there firsthand. Despite having heard stories about the horrid conditions, I was not prepared for what I saw.

First, the sheer number of refugees was staggering. Driving in from the eastern side of the port, we began to see hundreds of refugees lining the main seaside road. Most were simply watching time pass, although more than a few were actively trying to find a way around the port security. A dozen or so overly optimistic refugees were attempting to jump onto moving trucks as they slowed to pass a construction area. We were led by a few friendly Afghan refugees into their makeshift camp. The camp, including a tent-city and two abandoned construction sites, is believed to provide *minimal* shelter for around **2,000 Afghans** on any given night. We were invited to have tea with one of the camp's elders, and discuss the situation. We were later told by a police officer that there are also **Kurdish and Somali** areas near the port. The Kurds, for example, are said to have taken over an abandoned train depot near the center of the port.



Besides the number of refugees, I was also overwhelmed by the *living conditions* that we found in the camp. A quick glance would tell you their clothes were filthy and insufficient for the winter temperatures. While no one seemed on the brink of starvation, it is clear that food is not in ready supply. The camp elder told us that two community groups bring food periodically, maybe

a total of *10 times in the month*, but that it did not even begin to provide for all people. In the last year, the camp was given access to city water and concrete sheltered toilets. However, the camp's septic is not linked to the city's sewage system, and is not pumped regularly. A foul, putrid smell haunts the eastern half of the camp.

A sense of hopelessness pervades Patras. The refugee community, the port police, and the local Greeks look tired and desperate, but none are willing to back down from their implicit demands.



What are Christ-followers to do? First, please join us in **PRAYER** – for the refugees, the city of Patras, and the local churches. The situation is indeed hopeless apart from God. Please pray for wisdom as we continue to discuss possible ministry ideas and partnerships in the area. We have contacted the pastor of the Greek Evangelical Church in Patras, who has been praying about the situation and is interested in discussing possible partnerships. At his own admission, however, the Greeks in Patras harbor a great deal of suspicion towards foreigners. Pray that the church would develop a heart for missions and kingdom eyes.

By God's Grace -

Brett, Kristin, & Sofia