

Friends and Family,

Attached is my Christian Peacemaker Teams support letter for 2012. This is the third year of my three year commitment to CPT.

God bless,

David Hovde

Tuesday, March 20, 2012 9:22 AM

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Friends and Family,

Sophia from the Christian Peacemaker Teams office in Chicago sent me a list recently of people who donated to CPT on my behalf and the amounts of their donations. I am amazed and humbled to see how many of you supported me with generous financial gifts these past years. Thank you and may God bless you!

As you may remember, I committed to work with CPT as a reservist, which means working with CPT for up to two months a year for a period of three years. I worked with the team in Iraqi Kurdistan for seven weeks in the summer of 2010, and for seven weeks in the summer of 2011. I plan to return to work with the team this summer for eight weeks to fulfill my commitment.

As I consider why I do this, I remember the visit of our team's translator and advisor, Mohamed Salah Mahdi, to Chicago in October to be a keynote speaker at the CPT Congress, held at my church, Reba Place Church, in Evanston, Illinois. I believe it is providential that the Congress took place at my church this year, and that Mohamed was a speaker. My parents and people from my church met Mohamed and heard him speak about his life in Sulaimaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan and about his work with the CPT team there. I also accompanied Mohamed to a Chicago school, where he delivered letters from his students. (Mohamed is also a sixth grade teacher in Sulaimaniyah.) He told the students at the Chicago school that a way to work for peace between our countries is for people from our countries to talk with each other and get to know each other. He encouraged the students to respond to the letters from his students. I hope I can deliver some of their letters when I go to Sulaimaniyah this summer.

February 17, 2012 was the first anniversary of the beginning of the “Kurdish Spring” demonstrations in Sulaimaniyah. In 2011, thousands of people gathered in the city square for 62 consecutive days to demonstrate against corruption in the government. On the anniversary, Kurdish security forces occupied the square, preventing any people from entering. In the morning, CPTers joined Kurdish partners at the grave of one of the young men killed by Kurdish security forces last year during the demonstrations. The group then went to the square and witnessed troops beating and detaining journalists. Thankfully, two hours later, security forces released the journalists without charging them.

On March 1, 2012, a Kurdish student at a Christian school in Sulaimaniyah shot and killed his American teacher, then took his own life. An occurrence like this at a school is highly unusual in Kurdish Iraq. Some of CPT’s Kurdish partners called a meeting that CPTers attended to discern possible responses. They discussed having a remembrance for both the victim and the assailant. After the three-day funeral for student Bayar Sarwar, people filled the cultural hall in Sulaimaniyah for the funeral of teacher Jeremiah Small to remember both Bayar and Jeremiah. Bayar’s father spoke with emotion, apologizing to the Small family (who came from Washington State for the funeral), and said that the shooting was a painful thing for his family too. Jeremiah’s father said, “The killing of our son should be turned into an event to call for peace and coexistence. We do not have any hatred for the family of the student who killed our son.” The Small family left the stage and walked to the family of Bayar. The two families hugged and cried together.

These are some recent involvements of the CPT team in Sulaimaniyah. I hope to leave Chicago June 17 to join them, returning August 12. Because of your generous donations, I already have \$1390 of my funds raised for this summer. The total cost is \$3500, so I have \$2110 to go. If you want to donate to CPT on my behalf, you can mail a check to Christian Peacemaker Teams, P.O. Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680. You can also donate by credit card by going to www.cpt.org and clicking on “Give to CPT”. Please let me know if you donate, so I can keep track of how much has been raised.

Helping put faces and names on people from a country US media usually shows in a negative light is one of the reasons I want to return to work with the team this summer. Another reason is to work with local groups in Iraqi Kurdistan to promote peace, justice and human rights. Finally, I want to do this because it blesses me to experience the hospitality and culture of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, and I believe accompanying CPT’s Kurdish partners blesses them.

Thanks again for your support!

Peace of Christ,

David Hovde



Border of Iraq and Iran near the city of Sulaimaniyah