

**KURDISH LOBBY AUSTRALIA'S
 CONTRIBUTION TO OPERATION HOPE PROJECT,
 DOHUK, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ**



[Map](#) of Iraq showing Nineveh, Sinjar and Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Introduction

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) hosts 40 percent of all Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and 97 percent of all Syrian refugees in [Iraq](#). The region has been accepting Syrian refugees since 2011 and IDPs escaping ISIS since 2013. In the KRI, there are [nine camps](#) for Syrian refugees in a total of [18 camps](#), although the majority of refugees and IDPs live outside the camps in the host community.

In early 2019 Kurdish Lobby Australia contributed \$500 to a project that delivered medical equipment and humanitarian supplies to hospitals and a camp for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in the province of Dohuk in the KRI.



Email: kurdishlobbyaus@gmail.com
Website: www.kurdishlobbyaustralia.com

Operation Hope

Operation Hope Australia Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation that focuses on helping IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2017 they raised \$28,000 to fund a women's ward and children's ward in a new emergency field hospital in Hassan Sham U2 camp, 25 kilometres east of Mosul in the province of Nineveh, Northern Iraq. In 2018 Operation Hope purchased and filled a 40 foot shipping container with donated medical equipment and humanitarian supplies¹ worth AUD\$500,000 and in 2019 these were delivered to hospitals and Bajed Kandala 2 camp in the province of Dohuk, in the KRI, in co-ordination with a local NGO, *Joint Help for Kurdistan*.

Challenges

Volunteers started collecting medical equipment in January 2018 from three hospitals: Narrabri hospital in country NSW, Toronto Private Hospital and John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle. These hospitals donated large valuable medical equipment like neo-natal incubators, oxygen machines, auto sterilisers, defibrillators and patient monitors, Lifeline emergency trolleys, wheelchairs and hospital beds all of which entailed hiring a truck to collect the equipment. They also collected humanitarian supplies from a sewing group in Sydney called 'Gabbies Angels', which donated hand designed and made boxes of beautiful clothes, hand knitted dolls, baby bags, hand made quilts; a group called 'Wrap With Love' in Sydney supplied 500 hand made blankets, and individuals donated hand knitted gloves, mittens, beanies, jumpers, quilts and so on. 'Days for Girls' supplied 2,200 women's sanitary/health kits. Also donated were bags of new school uniforms, renovated crutches, suitcases and commercial laundry bags for packing.

The container was purchased and delivered to the driveway of a Newcastle charity in May. Five volunteers proceeded to sort, pack, weigh and label over 11,000 individual items, in total weighing 11 tonnes. Hand made crates had to be purchased to pack some of the delicate medical equipment, and in November the shipping container was filled. It left Botany Bay on 1 December and arrived in Mersin, Turkey, on January 16.

Collecting the donations in cash or in-kind was the easy part, although it took the best part of a year. Freightling the container via the Maersk shipping line from Botany Bay to Mersin in Turkey, also went smoothly with the managing director of SEATRAM, a freight forwarder in Perth, kindly donating the cost of freight.

The real challenges began on the overland journey from Mersin to Bajed Kandala 2 camp. A Turkish company, Van Umut Transport, was paid US\$2,346 for this service.

¹ Medical items included two emergency trolleys, 15 hospital beds with mattresses, an infant warmer, a Corometrics Foetal Monitor, 6 infant incubators, 3 ventilators, 3 pulse monitors, 3 sterilisers, 8 defibrillators, 14 other patient monitors of various types, hospital linen and X wheel chairs. Humanitarian aid included clothes, sewing machines and blankets.

At the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing between Turkey and the KRI the container was held up for 21 days. After 72 hours, Operation Hope was obliged to pay the Turkish truck driver US\$100 a day until the container arrived at the camp. In view of getting the container released, the head of Joint Help for Kurdistan took all the paperwork to the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) in Erbil, which forwarded the documentation to the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government. It was only after the ministry issued the authorisation, that the container was released. But then, having made it across the border, the container was diverted to a customs warehouse in Semel, outside the city of Dohuk. There it was unpacked, as shown in the following images.



Local authorities found more items than were listed on the inventory, so on February 5, another two inventory lists were supplied - one for medical equipment and one for humanitarian supplies, but the contents of the container remained unpacked. On February 22 the head of Joint Help for Kurdistan again went to the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) in Erbil, and was finally given a letter of authorisation to have the container taken to Bajed Kandala 2 camp. A crane had to lift the container off the lorry next to the medical centre buildings at night and in the rain! The medical centre is run by of Joint Help for Kurdistan.



Unpacking equipment in
Bajed Kandala 2 Camp

All items were mainly split between Joint Help For Kurdistan and the Dohuk Health Directorate, with two truckloads being taken to northeast Syria. At the request of Dr Hussain Nasser Ra Sho, Managing Director at Sinune Hospital north of Sinjar, an oxygen concentrator made it through numerous checkpoints and a car accident to arrive at Sinune Hospital. This hospital serves the Yezidi minority. He had explained that the hospital and ambulance had no source of concentrated oxygen and as a result many patients were dying on the six hour journey to Mosul hospitals. Operation Hope has since donated a mobile oxygen concentrator for the ambulance.

Operation Hope volunteers are now organising the supply and shipment of another container for the Dohuk Directorate of Health. If you would like to donate to this project find the necessary information at <http://operationhopeinc.org.au/donate/>



Two of three neo-natal incubators delivered to Heevi Pediatric Hospital in Dohuk. The hospital opened a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in October 2016 due to the influx of refugees and IDPs. Another three incubators were taken to northeast Syria.