



Consequences

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Rachel Yates

As a country we must face the consequences of war. We have generations of people who fought in Afghanistan to preserve American interests; we have generations of people who lost loved ones in the conflict and still feel the pain of their deaths or lasting injuries. The war might be over, but we have a continuing responsibility to care for those Americans who fought on our behalf and at our direction. Both the VA and community organizations are ready to work with us to [offer that care](#), from physical and emotional healing to job support to peer support as veterans face the realities of our withdrawal.

Another consequence of war is the need to protect Afghans who supported our military efforts. Because of the threats to them and their families, these allies were evacuated on an emergency basis, and many are being temporarily housed here in Wisconsin, awaiting resettlement. I've written about this previously, but now have some updates that can help you get involved, which several of our congregations are looking to do.

First, let's set the stage for how we resettle refugees and asylum seekers in a crisis such as this, using information from Breanna Illene at Wisconsin Council of Churches. *Phase One is already taking place at military bases across the country. There are approximately 13,000 people located at Ft. McCoy in Wisconsin. Phase Two is when resettlement agencies help families into permanent housing, find jobs, etc. The goal is that Phase One is temporary but because of the lack of infrastructure for Phase Two, people may be staying at bases longer than anticipated.*

The timeline and needs for final resettlement are stark: *Our sources have been saying people may be at Ft. McCoy until June or even up to two years. Originally volunteer support at Ft. McCoy was being coordinated by the Red Cross but this was a temporary response, and they ended their mission October 1. Team Rubicon was handling distribution of donated goods, but they will end their mission Nov 19. There is a request from military chaplains for support from local churches, but the need is larger than something one or even a small group of churches can handle.*

As a result, the Wisconsin Council of Churches is hoping to create a part-time, temporary staff position to help with the coordination. Coordination is sorely missing at this stage, but the need for volunteers and donations is great. For example, half of the Afghans at Fort McCoy are under age 18, and each day, on average, a baby is born there. Yet, many people are generously donating adult large winter coats. Unless needs are clearly articulated and donations coordinated, we get a mismatch that can result in waste or duplication. Our generosity in the face of such urgent necessities is great, but it's better delivered in coordinated fashion. We support the decision of Wisconsin Council of Churches to dive into this role, a role that was part of their genesis so many years ago.

Here is an indication of how you might get involved in the Phase 1 effort: *We have identified two channels of volunteer need. On base or near Ft. McCoy, there may be need for 100+ volunteers a day. We are currently seeking clarity on this question in this rapidly changing situation. There may be on-base (requires background check) and off-base (no background check) volunteer opportunities. It sounds like these needs require either*



local volunteers or people who can travel and volunteer for 1-2 weeks. There is housing available at Winding Rivers UMC and Wisconsin Military Academy for groups who would need it.

By the latest reports, agencies and sponsors will eventually help resettle 900 people in Wisconsin. This is a significant increase over the usual client base they assist. There will be additional volunteer opportunities in resettlement phase. There are some donations of items available from large corporations to help prepare homes for families but there is need of regional warehouses (Madison, MKE, Appleton, Green Bay) and volunteers to sort these donations.

Perhaps a mission trip for the week? A committed day each week? This will not be a short-term commitment, but it's part of our responsibility, a consequence of our actions, an extension of the love we have received in Christ. More will be forthcoming on how you can help!