

Home > Our Impact > Our Stories > **Festival brings together Syrian and Turkish youth**

## Festival brings together Syrian and Turkish youth

### PUBLICATION INFO

POSTED 7/24/18

More than 1,000 children and parents from Syria and Turkey came together recently for the first Kilis Children's Festival, organized by CARE and the Kilis municipality at the Southern Turkish town's football stadium.

"The event is about bringing people together, giving children an opportunity to enjoy playing and interacting with one another regardless of their nationalities," said Pinar Cetinkaya, CARE Turkey's Protection Manager. "It's also to offer their mothers the chance to socialize with each other and have an afternoon out. For many mothers at this time of the year, when the school holidays have begun, caring for children becomes a full-time job, and one that makes it harder for them to leave their homes."

"It's nice to have a chance to come out and meet with people, to talk," said Bushra Kurd, a 20-year-old Syrian mother, who attended with her daughter, Amina. "Sometimes you feel like you are trapped in your house and you don't really see anyone. It can be a little lonely and sad."

The festival included face painting, drawing, clowns, skipping, hopscotch, play dough, inflatable slides, music and dance, sack-races, and hula-hooping, as well as free sandwiches, ice cream, and water.

The opportunity to play football in a stadium with full-sized goals proved too tempting to pass up, and boys and girls also took part in several impromptu games.

"This afternoon has been great fun. I like everything the best! I have been painted as a cat, and I went on the slides and played with everyone," said Hassan, 10, a Syrian refugee. "I do have Turkish friends. I go to school with Syrian children and Turkish children and I am learning Turkish. It's good to live here in Kilis, and to play with my friends."

Kilis has become famous around the world, including a 2016 Nobel Peace Prize nomination for its refugee response. The number of Syrian residents (138,000) is now larger than the Turkish population (93,000). Kilis and CARE Turkey are working together to engage, involve, and assist all people in need in the region.

"We are very happy to work alongside the municipality in Kilis. It's a fitting city for a celebration of coming together in diversity," said Cetinkaya.

Kilis runs 11 Women and Children's Centers, where Turkish and Syrian people take courses in arts and crafts, Turkish, and take part in social and vocational activities. CARE operates Information Protection Spaces where Turkish and Syrian people can receive advice and assistance regarding their legal rights. Most of the adults and children who attended the festival use these resources.

Dunya Al Hassen, a 25-year-old mother-of-four from Aleppo, Syria, has been living in Kilis for four years. "My children have had lots of fun here today," she said. "What is really excellent is that they have been playing here and having fun with Turkish children. This is something I want very much."

Asma Nejjar, 32, a mother of three from Aleppo, is new to the area and don't know many people.

"There are Turkish boys and girls here playing with Syrian children like my sons, so I hope it is a good way for them to meet and maybe to become friends. We all need to have friends," she said. "This is what I want for me and my family. This is how to live a life. Not by hiding, but by knowing people, speaking. For children, playing together. It's a good chance to meet people today, and I hope we will be able to all use the opportunity."

Ten-year-old Hassan is a Syrian refugee living in Kilis. He wanted badly to attend the festival, but his family couldn't come. Nazife Topluogura, a 46-year-old mother and schoolteacher from Turkey, offered to bring him along with the rest of her family. "It's important they have places to play, as equals. That is where they can make friends," she said.

Hassan took the opportunity to show the family around his neighborhood, pointing out where he plays and goes to school. "Even though he's a Syrian child, he has been teaching us things we did not know about our own city!"

"I believe the rest of the world can learn a lot from the positive examples of welcome and the provision of safe places we have seen in Turkey," said CARE Turkey's Country Director Christina Northey.

TAGGED: [Turkey](#) [Syria](#) [Refugees](#) [Syria Crisis](#)



**DONATE**

\$

**SUBMIT**

