



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***DELAYED AID DISTRIBUTION FINALLY REACHES IRAQIS IN NEED
250 Families and Children Receive Assistance from American Donors and Partners in Iraq***

WASHINGTON – 250 families in the Salahuddin province of Iraq received assistance in the form of blankets, mattresses, medications, and soccer balls for children on February 15-16, 2016 from the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) and their partners in Iraq. The aid delivery, originally scheduled for December, had to be postponed while Iraqi Security Forces ensured that the roads to the aid delivery site in the village of al-Alam were safe from potential attacks by the so-called Islamic State or ISIS.

Medical students from the University of Tikrit joined the aid caravan to provide essential health screenings and basic care in al-Alam, just northeast of Tikrit. Volunteers also delivered five wheelchairs to individuals who depend on them.

“We are pleased that the aid delivery could finally get through to a village that very much needed it,” said Erik Gustafson, Executive Director of EPIC. “The security situation in Iraq sorely limits the mobility of basic necessities and we are grateful for our friends at the Iraq Health Access Organization (IHAO) in Baghdad who coordinated the delivery.”

EPIC works with IHAO to identify the most vulnerable communities in Iraq and assess their basic needs. Foundations and private donors with a demonstrated interest in peace and stability for the region provide funding that supports these aid distributions, affectionately known as *Soccer Salam*.

“Salam means peace, and on each of our journeys within Iraq, soccer balls and toys for children are distributed whenever possible,” according to Gustafson. “The toll that witnessing violence takes on a young person is devastating, but simple gestures of kindness can foster long-lasting good memories and, at least for a moment, let children live and play as children.”

Soccer Salam is the collaborative effort of the Iraqi Children Foundation, Karadah Project, Goals and Dreams, and EPIC—organizations founded and led by U.S. veterans striving to make Iraq peaceful and prosperous. Since 2015, the project has distributed over \$50,000 in aid to more than 2,500 families in some of Iraq’s most isolated regions.

The Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) works one-on-one with young people in Iraq to carry out impactful programs, monitor the crisis and inform public policy, enhance understanding of Iraq’s story, and advocate on their behalf. EPIC was founded in 1998 by veterans of the Gulf War seeking to make Iraq safe and prosperous again by encouraging a human security approach and empowering youth for peace.

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*The Education for Peace in Iraq Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
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