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CROWDRISE CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF TO SUPPORT THOSE IN IRAQ AFFECTED BY ISIS

***With \$25,000 Goal, 1000+ Families and Children Would Receive
Humanitarian Aid and Soccer Equipment through Soccer Salam Program***

WASHINGTON – Compelled by violent attacks on innocent families, including children, in Iraq by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) today kicked off efforts to raise \$25,000 to support its *Soccer Salam* initiative through the popular crowdfunding site CrowdRise.org. *Soccer Salam* provides emergency assistance in the form of temporary shelter, food, clean water, and medication for those in Iraq displaced from their homes by violence. Alongside this much-needed aid, soccer balls and equipment are provided to children.

According to Erik Gustafson, a veteran of the 1991 Gulf War and founding director of EPIC, “Witnessing violence can be devastating for a young person, but meaningful gestures of kindness can foster positive memories even amidst violence. Soccer Salam lets children live and play as children. Salam means peace; spreading peace through the unifying power of soccer scores a goal in the fight against despair.”

EPIC works with on-the-ground partners to identify the most vulnerable communities, assess their basic needs, and provide aid purchased from trusted local suppliers in Iraq. Individuals interested in peace and stability for the region provide the funding that supports these aid distributions and the spread of soccer, and can support this latest campaign by visiting:

www.crowdrise.org/soccersalam

On March 25, [an ISIS suicide bomber](#) killed 43 people, including 29 boys younger than 17, during a soccer game south of Baghdad. Condemning the attack, Gustafson reiterated, “Soccer unites Iraqis from all backgrounds and religions, and unity is needed now more than ever. We hope more Americans will join us and make a donation as we stand in solidarity with the people of Iraq.”

Soccer Salam is the collaborative effort of the Iraqi Children Foundation, the Karadah Project, Goals and Dreams, and EPIC—organizations founded and led by U.S. veterans with an enduring sense of mission to do what they can to improve Iraq’s prospects for peace. 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 and civil society leaders in Iraq to carry out effective programs, monitor the crisis and inform public policy, enhance understanding of Iraq’s story, and advocate for peaceful change. EPIC was founded in 1998 by veterans of the Gulf War who believe that youth empowerment and a human security approach can make Iraq safe and prosperous again.

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

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