

A 30-year-old man was rescued after surviving more than three weeks in the Alaskan wilderness with little food and shelter after a fire destroyed his remote cabin, BBC reported.



MUHAMMED SAID/ANADOLU

## Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan trying to stay warm

In Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, another cold winter has set in and that means trouble for the Syrians seeking refuge there.

Syrian refugee families living in informal tent settlements in Bar Elias are struggling to keep warm. Most tents have stoves used for both heating and cooking, but refugees cannot afford to buy wood or diesel fuel, Al Jazeera reported.

Instead, they burn toxic rubbish. "There are people desperate for help. We have thousands of Syrian and Lebanese families living on less than \$6 per month," said Sarah Farou, a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) civilian coordinator in eastern Lebanon.

Every winter the United Nations offers cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and Lebanese families. Each receives a one-off cash amount of about \$370.

But a shortage of funding means fewer families are receiving support every year. "There is never 100 percent sufficiency, there is always something missing for

most people," said Saleh Mustafa, a Syrian living in one of the camps in Bar Elias. "Some people can't buy [wood], they go and get plastic to burn in their homes."

In a nearby diaper factory, refugee workers take home faulty nappies as compensation for their working hours. They burn the nappies to heat their homes.

"The damaged ones, women take them and they benefit from them. They take them to their homes, they can [burn] them to make bread, they can put them in with the wood," said a Lebanese woman who manages the factory's 30 employees.

Lala Hamdan Khamis, a refugee from eastern Syria, said she purchases bags of defective diapers for 5,000 Lebanese lira (\$2.50).

It is cheaper than wood and keeps her children warm, she said.

More than three-quarters of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live under the poverty line. Nine out of 10 families are indebted.

And as Lebanon grapples with its worst economic crisis in decades, refugees living in the tiny Mediterranean country are

more vulnerable than ever this year.

### Refugees in Jordan

In Jordan, Syrian refugees collected winter aid items to keep them warm during the cold season. It included heaters and blankets to help them overcome the harsh cold.

Volunteers from the Jordanian Red Crescent Society handed out winter supplies including heaters and blankets to help families face the frigid weather.

After receiving her aid, Syrian refugee Onoud al-Jassim sat in her near-empty tent in a camp for refugees in Shahab city.

"The situation is very hard, always rain and cold, and our situation is very bad," she said.

The Jordanian Red Crescent's aid distribution effort is part of the Warm Winter Campaign funded by the Qatari Red Crescent and Qatari Airways.

The aid also includes food parcels. The campaign targets Syrians living in countries neighboring Syria and

operates in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, according to the head of the Qatar Red Crescent delegation, Nehal Henfy.

Families also collected aid at the headquarters of the Jordanian Red Crescent in Amman on Saturday.

Some 230 Syrian refugee families and vulnerable Jordanians received aid in the Jordanian capital.

Among them was Mohammed al-Jasser, who fled the Hama countryside in Syria in 2012.

"We need foodstuffs, we need heating items and we need medical care. We suffer from harsh winters. We don't have anything, we are powerless," Al-Jasser said.

Winter temperatures in the Jordanian desert can plummet to below zero degrees Celsius at night in January and February.

Jordan has provided refuge to an estimated 1.3 million Syrians, including some 670,000 people officially registered with the UN as refugees.

## With nothing to lose, loners build future in China's north

Li Hai is a nobody in China.

But the 32-year-old ship mechanic became a minor Internet sensation last month after posting a video of his everyday life in a largely forgotten coal city in the country's far north.

Resource-rich cities like Hegang in Heilongjiang Province helped power China's economic miracle. But as their coal, minerals and timber dwindled, their mines and industries declined. Populations shrank as the young fled south in search of jobs, opportunity and love, Reuters reported.

With China's economic growth at a 30-year nadir and living costs chronically high, cheap homes in hollowed-out cities are pulling a small tribe of frugal and independent-minded millennials to Heilongjiang.

Hegang was the cheapest real estate market among China's 321 larger cities in 2019, a big attraction for Li when he was house-hunting last year.

Li had few friends in his home city of Zhoushan 2,000km (1,200 miles) to the south. He had become estranged from his parents and his landlord was bent on raising his rent.

Often out at sea for a stretch of six months, Li's thinking was to build a base in Hegang and keep a lid on costs.

"Many drifted here to buy homes as a fail-safe," said Li, who paid 750 yuan (\$100) per square meter for a top-floor flat in a low-rise housing estate. Apartments in Beijing cost 80 times more.



REUTERS  
People walk next to residential buildings in the coal city of Hegang, Heilongjiang Province, China, on January 2, 2020.

"If something happens to them, at least they have a home." Wary of frauds and tricksters, Li has few friends, who, like him, prefer not to go out.

"You need money to socialize," said Li, who earns 60,000 yuan (\$8,640) a year.

When not in bed with a novel, he would be posting positive product reviews online to get extra cash.

"Social classes are fixed," Li said. "The poor can never achieve anything. When you encounter problems, if you can solve it, great. There's not much you can do otherwise."

Not all recent Hegang arrivals are as fatalistic.

Zheng Qian, 26, moved to Hegang in October, and is now able to save half of his 5,000 yuan-a-month earnings from Internet marketing.

The Guangzhou native, who mostly keeps to himself, aspires to be a live-streaming star.

Last month, Zheng posted a video of himself throwing boiling water that instantly froze in Hegang's frigid air.

The seconds-long clip won him 20 million views on ByteDance's Douyin, a popular short-video app.

"That's where I must seize any opportunity," Zheng said.

## Women still missing out on UK's top jobs



SHUTTERSTOCK

British Women are still missing out on the top jobs across a whole range of industries and professions, campaigners say.

The Fawcett Society called for a "step change" to boost the number in senior roles in sports, education, politics and business, Daily Mail reported.

A survey by the gender equality charity found women make up just one in 20 chief executives in the leading FTSE 100 companies and a third of civil service permanent secretaries.

In education they make up 39 percent of secondary school head teachers and 30 percent of university vice chancellors.

Just 21 percent of national sport governing body chiefs are women, while in politics 34 percent of MPs are women and 27 percent are peers.

In many cases, numbers had not improved on a year before. The study also found there was an "alarming" lack of non-white women across top jobs.

The society's chief executive Sam Smeeths said, "Despite much lip service about the importance of having women in top jobs, today's data shows we are still generations away from achieving anything close to equality. We are wasting women's talent and skills."

## Former Pope Benedict breaks silence on celibacy debate after synod

Former Pope Benedict, in a new book written with a conservative cardinal, defends priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church in what appears to be a strategically timed appeal to Pope Francis to not change the rules.

Benedict wrote the book, 'From the Depths of Our Hearts,' with Cardinal Robert Sarah, 74, a Guinean prelate who heads the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Reuters reported.

Excerpts were published on Sunday on the website of the French newspaper Le Figaro. The Vatican had no immediate comment on the book, which was published on Monday.

In October, the final document of an assembly of Roman Catholic bishops, or synod, from the Amazon proposed that married men in the remote area be allowed to be ordained priests, which could lead to a landmark change in the Church's centuries-old discipline of celibacy.

Pope Francis will consider it, along with many other proposals on issues that emerged during the synod, including the environment and the role of wom-



TIZIANA FABI/GETTY IMAGES  
Pope emeritus Benedict XVI (L) is pictured speaking with Pope Francis during a papal mass for elderly people at St. Peter's Square in Vatican on September 28, 2014 at the Vatican.

en, in a document of his own, known as an Apostolic Exhortation. It is expected to be issued in the next few months.

In 2013, when he became the first pope in 700 years to resign, Benedict, who lives in the Vatican and is now 92 and in failing

health, vowed to remain "hidden from the world."

But he has given interviews, written articles and contributed to books, in effect breaking that pledge and cheering conservatives, some of whom do not recognize Francis' legitimacy.

Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at Villanova University in the United States, called it "a serious breach" by the former pope, who vowed "unconditional reverence and obedience" to his successor.

In his part of the book, Bene-

dicit says celibacy, which became a stable tradition in the Church only about 1,000 years ago, carries "great significance" because it allows a priest to concentrate on his vocation. He says "it doesn't seem possible to realize both vocations (priesthood and marriage) simultaneously."

In a joint introduction, both men say they could not remain silent about the October synod, which at times led to clashes between progressive and conservative Catholic media outlets, underscoring the polarization in the 1.3 billion-member Church.

The proposal calls for older married men who are already deacons in the Church, have a stable family relationship and are proven leaders in their communities to be ordained as priests after adequate formation.

This solution to the shortage of priests, backed by many South American bishops, would allow Catholics in isolated areas to attend Mass and receive the sacraments more regularly.

For his part, Sarah says making exceptions to the celibacy rule would be "a lie" that would set a dangerous precedent.