



Pope Francis sends both money and his prayers to over 500 Yemeni refugees who are stranded on the Island of Jeju in the Korean Strait.

The Apostolic Nuncio to Korea, Archbishop Alfred Xuereb received €10,000 from Pope Francis destined for over 500 Yemeni refugees stranded on the South Korean Island of Jeju.

Pope in solidarity with the refugees

Bishop Peter Kang U-il, the local Bishop of Jeju (Cheju), received the gift personally from the Apostolic Nuncio, who visited him specifically to express the Pope's solidarity with the refugees. The Apostolic Nuncio also met with the refugees, celebrated Mass in the Cathedral, and imparted the Pope's Blessing. The money will fund the needs of the Yemeni refugees through diocesan organizations caring for them.

Bishop Kang and the local Church have supported the Yemeni refugees from the moment they arrived. The Bishop has advocated on their behalf, asking that the South Koreans living on Jeju be tolerant and charitable to the refugees.

Situation of the refugees

These Yemeni refugees are fleeing civil war which began in 2015. They chose the Island

of Jeju as their destination because there was no need at the time for a visa for tourists planning to stay up to 90 days. In order to cope with the influx, South Korea prohibited the asylum seekers to access the mainland, and restricted access to certain types of work, causing high rates of unemployment among them.

Some locals are lobbying the government to revoke the requests for asylum and expel the Yemeni refugees from the island. Others have taken in some of the refugees, teaching them Korean since they cannot enroll in local schools. The refugees have received discounted rates from some hotels, and donations of food, blankets, and clothing. Some local inhabitants view it as an opportunity to do in their turn what others have done for Koreans who have sought refuge in other parts of the world.