

# Global Emergency Response and Assistance 2017 Annual Report

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“There seems to be this impression, this belief, that there is no hope. That’s when it’s more important than ever that we come in against all odds and we do something.” -Peter Kassig





## **Global Emergency Response and Assistance**

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Global Emergency Response and Assistance (GERA), a nongovernmental organization (NGO), was established in 2014 by Sikandar Khan, who together with Oumar Kouraogo and Valeria Gomez Palacios worked together to make the vision of an NGO that upheld the dignity and human rights of the most fragile a reality.

They are three millennials from different geographic backgrounds but with a similar interest and drive to impact the lives of those around them. Their passion and drive for humanitarian work comes from their unique and individual experiences living in their home countries where they witnessed political violence, social injustice and economic inequality. Their personal experiences motivated them to create a nonprofit organization to advocate for justice and human rights.

When Sikandar returned from his service in Afghanistan, he presented his main vision to prevent children from joining terrorist organizations. He envisioned this goal through the gift of education. Valeria was raised in Nicaragua where she witnessed social inequality and discrimination. Oumar was raised in a country where poverty existed in a great percentage of the society.

GERA was created when Khan learned about the story of U.S. Ranger Peter Kassig who was captured and tragically killed by ISIS insurgents in Syria. Peter Kassig was in Syria operating as a humanitarian aid worker for an organization he created, known as Special Emergency Response and Assistance (SERA). GERA was created to fight for the rights and quality of life for refugees around the world.

GERA is held up by four pillars. The first is Sikandar's vision of education and terrorism prevention. The second pillar is Valeria's vision of human rights and justice. The third pillar is Oumar's vision of economic equality. The fourth pillar of GERA is Peter Kassig's vision and way in which GERA will continue his legacy.



# Global Emergency Response and Assistance

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## Mission

The mission of Global Emergency Response and Assistance is to protect human rights, and restore the dignity, wellbeing, and safety of those physically, emotionally, and mentally affected by conflicts.

We provide aid and assistance to refugees, new arrivals in host countries, and internally displaced persons. By assisting such individuals with basic supplies and supporting their assimilation processes both physically and psychologically, we help support the values of human dignity and human rights.





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### Vision

GERA's vision is to help create, advocate for, and manifest a world in which every refugee, migrant, or displaced person receives the basic living necessities to ensure that they live a healthy and just life in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. GERA is a grassroots NGO directly engaging with and assisting the populations we are to serve, as laid out in our mission; whether that be in the United States of America or elsewhere around the world.

We envision ourselves as a grassroots NGO helping people survive directly on the front lines in conflict situations, similar to the way Peter did through SERA. At GERA we believe that saving the life of one person is a step towards saving all of humanity.



"If I do die, I figure that at least you and I can seek refuge and comfort in knowing that I went out as a result of trying to alleviate suffering and helping those in need."

- Peter Kassig



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### Operations: What we do

GERA operations provide emergency aid, humanitarian assistance, and logistical support for refugees and internationally displaced persons (IDPs) by working within the communities of individuals who are vulnerable to conflict and hardship both domestically and abroad. In addition to providing humanitarian relief, we also assist refugees and asylum seekers with their adaptation and integration processes within new environments, including by means of translation services.

Through personnel on the ground near conflict zones, volunteers, and advisors, we aspire to advance the safety and human rights of those affected by conflict by offering a wide array of services.

GERA's home base and senior members are located in the Tri-State area; however, we do have team members that have helped overseas in countries such as Afghanistan and Turkey. Moreover, since we are located in the Tri-State area - primarily in New Jersey - we feel it is our civic duty to help our neighbors, and those within accessible reach.

We believe no matter who you are, where you are, or where you are going - we are all global citizens living within one community. Most of our focus has been right in our backyard, helping refugee families in New Jersey acclimate into their new environments in any and all ways possible. Due to our location, and proximity to New York City, we have been able to visit refugees in their new homes once they are placed, and even have the pleasure of working closely with some of the most influential and hard-working organizations fighting for the same cause.



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### Our Current Work

We believe in creating and advocating for a cohesive community where all refugees feel welcomed and at home. We strive to act as a liaison between refugees and other agencies, helping them acclimate and feel welcomed, despite obstacles presented before them. Aside from providing humanitarian relief, we also assist refugees and asylum seekers with their adaptation and integration processes within new environments by assuring that they are receiving proper and just amenities and helping them both emotionally and psychologically.

### Two Main Areas of Work

- 1) Humanitarian Assistance Network(HumAN)
- 2) Community Development and Relief Network (CDRN)

#### 1) Humanitarian Assistance Network (HumAN)

GERA's **Humanitarian Assistance Network** is currently made up of team members, overseas partners, and volunteers who provide assistance to refugees and IDPs in a variety of communities. The **Humanitarian Assistance Network** coordinates aid operations through our personnel on-the-ground's "needs assessments", which are used to clearly and properly serve the community based on their most urgent and pressing needs. **Humanitarian Assistance Network** includes providing basic sanitation and healthcare items, as well as assisting the needs of individuals and families upon their arrival at refugee camps.



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### 2) Community Development and Relief Network (CDRN)

Integration and adaptation assistance is provided for the refugees' new life in a new environment. Often traumatized by their journeys, as well as the violence they fled from within their homelands, the **Community Development and Relief Network** works to alleviate their transition process towards their new life in their new community. This network pursues projects assisting shelters and supporting the work of local schools and community centers on their assimilation processes.

The **Community Development and Relief Network** seeks to integrate refugee children in particular as functional members of the society through a holistic and direct human security approach. The **Community Development and Relief Network** provides school supplies (e.g. books, pencils, and clothing), household supplies, and family supplies such as cooking supplies, baby food, baby formula, and staple foods.





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The CDRN Network has a strong focus on assisting the education, as well as the psychological and physical health, of refugee children. We believe psychological support is extremely important in assuring the successful futures of these young children. Therefore, we hope that through our future ESL and mentoring program, they will be able to use the love of arts and sports as tools of expression and healing. This will also stimulate their positive participation in their daily environment.







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Services Provided For the Community Development and Relief Network

**Volunteer Services**

GERA has a growing list of volunteers that assist in a variety of tasks; including translators, ESL teachers, lawyers, and students.

**Bilingual/Clinical Program**

GERA is working to set up an Bilingual/Clinical Program program with the local government of Passaic County and various universities in New Jersey.

**Translation Services**

During the integration process we aim to provide translation services for refugees, in order for them to effectively communicate and express themselves while they learn the language of their new host country.

**Language Classes**

An integral part of refugee integration is learning the language of their new home. We connect refugees with volunteers that teach them the language of the host country.

**Pro Bono Legal Services**

During the integration process GERA partners with lawyers that give legal advice to refugees concerning their specific situations.



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### Future Services

#### **Psychological Support and Mental Health Screening**

Refugees are likely to be affected by trauma. A majority of refugees have experience victimization, racially and religiously motivated violence, and in various cases, gender-based sexual violence. We aim to provide a mental health screening program working with professional therapists who can offer initial mental health assessments to the vulnerable people we encounter and determine whether a further referral for counseling or other treatment might be in order. We hope to work with Passaic County and other trauma counseling departments' personnel to provide grief and trauma counseling services to the refugees.

#### **Human Rights and Culture Integration Workshops**

GERA plans to organize and coordinate Human Rights workshops for refugees to help them acquire an understanding of their human and legal rights. Additionally, in order to help them assimilate to their new society, we aim to provide assimilation and culture integration workshops in their own language.

#### **Recreational and Sports Center for Refugee Children**

GERA wants to provide a recreational center for refugee children who have lost their childhood due to traumatic experiences and who were forced by conflict and war to give up their innocence. At the recreational center children can focus their built up energy in sports and express their feelings and emotions through drawing, painting, and crafts, which also contributes to a therapeutic healing process.



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### Humanitarian Assistance Network Projects

Previous Project

**Project Title:** Immediate Relief to Refugees in Kilis (In partnership with Embrace Relief)

**Location:** Kilis Öncüpınar Accommodation Facility in Turkey

**Plan:** GERA, in February 2016, set out on a humanitarian mission to deliver aid to the Syrian refugees in Turkey. As part of GERA's Humanitarian Assistance Network, we provided assistance to refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in a variety of communities. The Humanitarian Assistance Network coordinated aid operations by conducting on-the-ground needs assessments. For this mission we partnered with Embrace Relief and the head of the refugee village, who told us that some of the most urgent needs of the refugee community included clothes, blankets, and shoes for newly arrived refugees. We worked with a family that had just made it through the border four hours before GERA arrived. It was heartbreaking to see them with no coats or warm clothing in the freezing cold. It was hard to see how these innocent lives had to endure a blistering cold winter without proper living conditions. Many children in addition to the elderly were freezing due to the harsh weather. Some had no shoes, and others had their shoes frozen. Thankfully, we distributed coats, blankets, and shoes to the families in need. We provided a total of 50 families with winter clothes and blankets. And, with the help of Embrace Relief, we were able to provide 4000 refugees with food.

**Project Merit:** Refugees arriving in Turkey arrive famished, disoriented, and with no possessions at all. Our goal is to help them by providing them with immediate basic relief support. The assistance we provide includes providing basic sanitation and healthcare items, as well as assisting the needs of the refugee camps upon refugees' arrival such as providing them with winter coats so that they can keep themselves and their children warm.

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### Humanitarian Assistance Network Projects Continued

Future Project

**Project Title:** Educational and Recreational Center (in partnership with Malala Fund)

**Location:** Kilis Öncüpınar Accommodation Facility in Turkey

**Plan:** This facility is a refugee camp in Kilis, Turkey, next to Turkey's border with Syria. Kilis is one of the six "container camps" opened by Turkey, which sought to offer a quality of life better than traditional tent camps. GERA plans to assist the camp in providing a higher quality of life to refugee children by implementing educational and recreational activities in the camp. The project is two-fold involving both an educational as well as a recreational aspect in order to assist both the mental and physical wellbeing of children. GERA plans to encourage young adults in these camps to work with younger children, by engaging them in organized activities such as board games, sports activities, storytelling, book reading, English language workshops, and other organized programs. GERA will also set up a remedial education and tutoring center in the camp needed in order to assist the education of these children. By offering this mentoring program, we will be giving these children a solace from the harsh reality in the camps while implementing a human security approach to aid Syrian children refugees.

**Project Merit:** This project aims to re-evaluate the dynamics of integrating refugee children as functional members of society through a holistic and direct human security approach. Introducing a mentoring program will allow refugee children to use the arts and sports as tools of expression and healing. It will also stimulate their positive participation in their daily environment.

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### Community Development and Relief Network Projects

Current Project

**Project Title:** Refugee Assistance in New Jersey

**Location:** Passaic County and Hudson County, New Jersey

**Plan:** Creating a safe and comfortable environment for refugees by helping them access resources and basic necessities on a daily basis will help them assimilate to society here in the United States. Thus, GERA is assisting in welcoming and assisting refugees in their integration process in New Jersey. Some of the activities performed include the following:

- *Refugee case management:* In September 2016 GERA assumed some responsibilities in respect to catering to some of the daily needs of refugees that were resettled in Hudson County, New Jersey. These needs include living supplies, furniture, and renovation of living spaces.
- *Doctor Visit:* On several occasions GERA has taken the responsibility of taking refugees to doctor's appointments, due to lack of transportation for the refugees. In some cases we have acted as interpreters due to the language barrier.
- *Advocate:* On several Occasions GERA has advocated for refugees in regards to getting necessary documentations needed to ease their transition into American society. One prominent advocacy role GERA played in Hudson County was helping out with welfare paperwork and also providing translators to help refugees properly understand the instructions disseminated from the welfare office.



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Community Development and Relief Network Projects Continued

- *Assimilation:* GERA is aware of the inevitable cultural shock for refugees. For this reason, GERA pioneered programs to help refugees assimilate properly into the American society. Such programs include organizing playdates for refugee children, museum and park excursions to enable them to learn American history and culture in practical yet fun manner, celebration of the holiday spirit by organizing a Halloween pumpkin carving party, in addition to providing Christmas and New Year's Eve celebration events.
- *Winter Drive:* As winter dawns upon us GERA organized coat drives to help refugees stay warm during the winter season.

**Project Merit:** The Jersey City Immigration and Refugee Office have estimated about 50 Syrian refugees and 150 other refugees have settled down in the area in the past few months. These refugees have no viable means of support or resources. Consequently, they are left alone and afraid in their new environment. As of today, there are no refugee help centers in Passaic or Hudson counties of New Jersey. GERA wants to initiate a program where refugees can seek assistance and resources to get acclimated in their new environment without feeling distressed.



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### Community Development and Relief Network Projects

Future Project #1

**Project Title:** Bilingual/Clinical Program

**Location:** Passaic County and Jersey City, New Jersey.

**Plan:** The lingual training of refugees is directly linked to their incorporation as functional members of society and is thus fundamental. Throughout this Bilingual/Clinical Program project, we seek to support the integration of refugees through the formation of Bilingual/Clinical Program classes. These actions will generate strong support for the incorporation of refugees in New Jersey, and will create an environment of civic engagement. Having the refugees speak English and be able to communicate with other residents of New Jersey will help create a culture of peace and open coexistence. The development of this project is designed as a lasting service and as an aid to the local government institutions as they struggle to incorporate refugees into their cities. The program will be working with established government institutions.

**Project Merit:** Both children and adults will acquire the crucial language skills necessary to function as members of society. The Bilingual/Clinical Program will allow refugee children to be re-integrated to English speaking schools in New Jersey and continue their education. Adults will acquire the crucial skills to communicate with locals and be able to work in an English speaking environment.



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### Community Development and Relief Network Projects

Future Project #2

**Project Title:** Mentorship and Sponsorship Program

**Location:** Passaic County and Jersey City, New Jersey.

**Plan:** American families willing to sponsor a refugee family will be able to provide financial support, guidance, and counseling through friendship. The mentorship portion of the program will involve administrators, mentors, and volunteers. The administrators will be members of GERA, who will be responsible for keeping in touch with the mentors. He/she will provide the mentors with any additional assistance as needed.

- Each mentor will be assigned to a Syrian family. The responsibility of the mentor is to be available to the family as needed. The mentor will be providing various resources that include but are not limited to:
  - Information about nearby stores to buy items such as clothing and food
  - Information about transportation and the surroundings of the family's new home (streets and directions)
  - Information about schools and tutoring services
  - Translation and information about ESL classes
  - Access to incoming donations (clothing, toiletries, and non-perishable items)
  - Give out information of government services

**Project Merit:** There are no precedents for associating a community network of local government, NGO's, and volunteers with the resettlement efforts of refugees in the area. The development of this project is designed as an aid to the local governmental institutions as





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## Financial Report

### **Amount of money raised:**

*Organizations:* \$8,600

*Individuals:* \$2,050

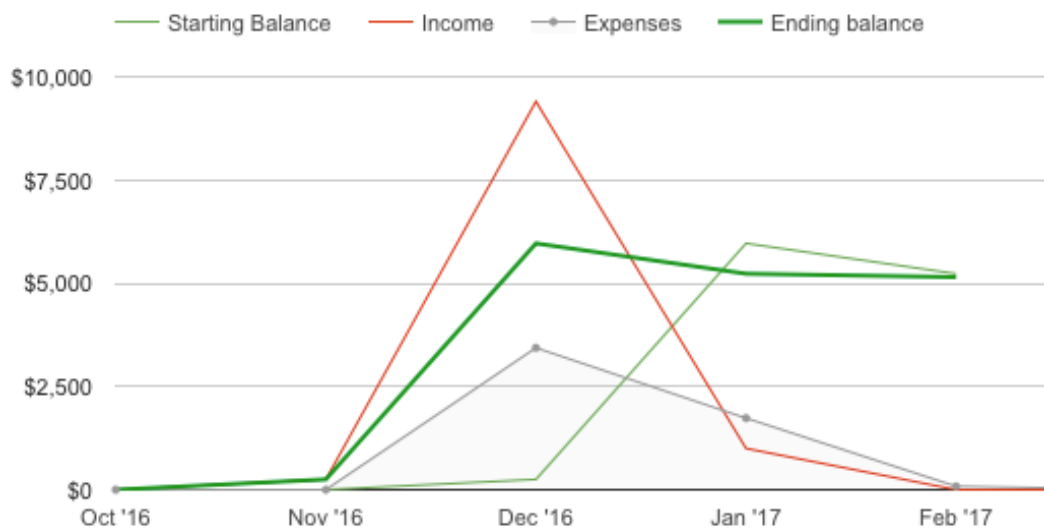
### **Allocation of Funds**

*Recreational Activities for Refugees:* \$940

*Community Development Projects:* \$285

*Client Expense (Supplies + Services):* \$3,183

*Client Expense (Food):* \$650



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### Board of Advisors and Supporters

#### **Executive Advisor John Bartlett**

Freeholder Bartlett is the County's first alternate delegate to the N.J. Association of Counties, which formulates policy and best practices for county government and helps counties interface with our State government in Trenton. He is also a member of the Board of Social Services, whose programs provide essential support to Passaic County's neediest children, families, and seniors.

#### **Dean Andrea Bartoli**

Dean Bartoli is an international conflict resolution expert who has served in key academic and diplomatic positions for more than two decades. Currently, he is the Dean of Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations.

#### **Khyati Y. Joshi**

Khyati is an internationally-recognized scholar on cultural and religious pluralism in America, and in particular on issues involving race, religion, and immigrant communities.



## Our work

Through personnel, volunteers and advisers, we aspire to advance the safety and human rights of those affected by conflict by offering an array of services. GERRA works on the ground in coordination with like-minded organizations and individuals within the community for a more effective delivery.

GERRA's two main areas of work are:

- The Humanitarian Assistance Network
- The Community Development and Relief Network

"There seems to be this impression, this belief that there is no hope. That is when it's more important than ever that we come in against all odds and we do something"

Peter Kassig

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## Contact us

Web: [gera-ngo.org](http://gera-ngo.org)

Phone: (862) 253-7474

[ngogera@gmail.com](mailto:ngogera@gmail.com)



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Emergency  
Response &  
Assistance



GERA was founded and created by Seton Hall University alumni with an interest in changing and impacting the lives of those around them, while also advocating for human rights and justice. GERA also seeks to honor the memory of former U.S ranger Peter Kassig who was doing humanitarian work in Syria and was captured and tragically killed by ISIS.

The mission of Global Emergency Response and Assistance is to protect human rights and to restore the dignity, well-being and safety of those affected by conflicts and disasters.

We provide aid, relief and alleviation assistance to refugees, new arrivals in host countries, and internally displaced persons. By assisting such individuals with basic supplies and supporting their assimilation process both physically and psychologically, we help support the values of human dignity and human rights to those in vulnerable situations.



**The Humanitarian Assistance Network** provides assistance to refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in a variety of communities. Humanitarian assistance includes providing basic sanitation and healthcare items, as well as assisting the needs of the refugee camps upon a refugees' arrival. The Humanitarian Assistance Network coordinates aid operations through our personnel's "on-the-ground" needs assessments" so that we can serve the refugee community based on their highest need.



**The Community Development and Relief Network** seeks to integrate refugees, children in particular, as functional members of society through a holistic and direct human security approach.

The Community Development and Relief Network focuses on resettling refugees and provides school and household supplies and assist refugees as needed. It has a strong focus on assisting the education as well as the psychological and physical health of refugee children.

