

BAM

February 10-13, 2004

I went to give; I received so much more.....

On December 26, slightly before dawn¹ an earthquake of the magnitude of 6.3 - 6.8² degrees hit the city of Bam. It lasted a few seconds. An estimated 43,000 people died. The old citadel greatly



damaged. The modern town ruined³.

People said that it was dangerous off limits to outsiders and that G and I) would not find any assurance that we took our tents safe side!

to drive there, that the city would be most certainly we (Hamid N, Massoud lodging. All of this with such and sleeping bags just to be on the

As usual in Iran and elsewhere had to go and see for myself.

there were so many "stories" that I

And what a sight it was:

I saw lots of destruction, sadness, misery and despair but so much more happiness, hope and joy that I almost forgot the earthquake and the dead. The togetherness of the community in the camp that we visited and the life and yes, even the happiness emanating from the children was so contagious that we were overwhelmed. It gave us a great feeling to see so much joy in the middle of such misery. A lesson in life.



We went to give; we received so much more....

"The children of Bam" have already become special. The gifted ones will certainly fare better than other children of similar background because of this sad experience. By being in contact with so many different types of people that they would have otherwise not have had a chance to even see during their whole lifetime they are already ahead of "normal children". "The children of Bam" of course are the stars but the men and women with their great philosophy, wisdom, elegance and beauty were also very impressive. We spent less time with them but they also had a lot to teach us.



There are now apparently about 14 camps in Bam. We spent most of our time in one of the main ones by the name of Vahdat⁴. It was well organized and by our "third world" standards acceptable as a temporary camp.



¹ 05:26 local time

² Depending on your source

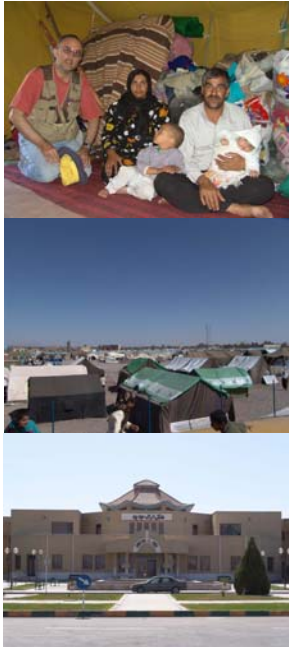
³ As many as 70 percent of the homes have been destroyed

⁴ Unity, concord

Quite a few governmental organizations, Iranian and foreign NGO's are active there and "things" seem to be working. Of course, it should not drag on for too long especially with the dreadful summer approaching.

In this particular camp there are kitchens, school(s), playground(s), library(s), running water, showers, toilets and of course basic medical care.

Some food and other "stuff" is distributed daily. Of course all of these are bare minimum services. No electricity in the tents so far.



ANY help will be welcome and needed for quite some time if not for ever since most of the people here were already in need of it before the earthquake!

People that have decided or had to camp next to their no longer existing house seem to be worse off than those in the camps are. Unfortunately, I only managed to see a few of them since most of our time was taken by the camp visit and because the nature of the people that chose to stay next to the ruin of their houses is more "independent" it is more difficult to establish contact with them than it is with those in the camp.

The purpose of our trip was: to see, to hear and to find out how we could in a very small way aid the people there.

We have already received the reward to whatever help we would be able to provide. There is no rush. There will be room for help there for years to come. We, however, will be back very soon to see our new friends since we already miss them.



We drove to Bam which is about 1189 kilometers from Tehran by road.

We spent the night in Yazd on the way to and in Kerman on the way back. Both cities that have kept their old time charm.

The hotel Moshir Al Mamalek (www.hotelgardenmoshir.com) where we stayed in Yazd was a very pleasant "hotel de charme", while in Kerman we stayed in the recently built hotel (Pars) that is among the very best in Iran.

There is also very decent hotel where we spent the night in Bam (Hotel Arg-E-Jadid). The earthquake hardly affected it.

Links:

http://www.mehdizare.com/bam_eq_seismological.htm

<http://bbs.keyhole.com/boards/showflat/Board-currentEvents-Number-7138.html>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/12/30/iran.quake/index.html>

Photos:

Page 1: Looking at the citadel's ruins, "The children of Bam"

Page 2: Left top to bottom: Sanjari family and I, The Vahdat camp, Hotel Arg-E-Jadid, Shazdeh's garden (near Kerman), The hotel Moshir Al Mamalek, Dowlatabad garden in Yazd

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