



## B'NAI B'RITH WORLD CENTER - JERUSALEM

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IsraAID mission participant Dr. Shlomit Bressler is developing a psycho-social program to strengthen the knowledge of Bulgarian governmental and non-governmental bodies as they struggle to cope with the mental-health needs of the refugees. IsraAID is the first Israeli-aid organization to reach out to assist the burgeoning refugee population in Bulgaria. The mission conducted meetings with high level national and local institutions responsible for the treatment of refugees and met with representative of NGOs providing assistance to the refugees. They also visited two refugee camps where they met with refugees from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia and visited urban refugees in their homes in the Bulgarian capital Sofia. The meetings and visits will provide the basis for a detailed plan for future activities that IsraAID will submit shortly to the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees and the Bulgarian Red Cross. B'nai B'rith Bulgaria President Solomon Bali, who has been engaged in assisting refugees since their arrival, was instrumental in arranging the mission. News of the mission was carried in the Israeli and Bulgarian media, including The Times of Israel and Bulgarian national radio.

The visit to Bulgaria followed a meeting between Schneider and the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior responsible for refugee affairs, Tsvetlin Yovchev, in Jerusalem in November 2013. Together with Bulgarian ambassador in Israel Demitar Serafimov, the three discussed Israel-Bulgarian bilateral relations and the challenge faced by Bulgaria from the growing number of Syrian refugees who have entered the country illegally from Turkey, now estimated at over 11,000. Schneider presented to the Minister an early draft proposal by IsraAID – the Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid – BBI's strategic partner in providing disaster relief, to deliver material assistance and trauma counseling to the refugees. The minister, whose responsibilities include care for the refugees, expressed support for the initiative and offered his ministry's assistance.