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Holthausen

The MTO Shahmagsoudi® School in Wersten cooked for the residents of the refugee camp in 'Am Karweg' and gave them presents

In a small community room at the refugee camp in 'Am Karweg' there are lots of Persian delicacies. On the table next to the dishes, there are numerous chocolates and lovingly wrapped presents. There is a gift exchange on St Nicholas Day, not from a traditional saint but from the students of MTO Shahmagsoudi® School of Islamic Sufism® in Wersten. We cannot tell who is happier, the children receiving presents or the MTO® students.

There is a big crowd in a room where the refugees normally take German classes or the women meet in the café. There are people laughing and talking and children running around their parents. Somehow they manage to line up in front of the delicious meal. There is rice with saffron, barberries, bread, chicken and fresh salad. Another person who is present is the chef, Yakob Moghaddam, who cooked for 200 people today.

"We were here during Ramadan and now we wanted to treat the refugees on St Nicholas Day", one of the organisers, Donya Khalighi explains. By now there is no longer a queue for food. Everybody has filled their plates, some are sitting on colourful blankets in the corridor and others have taken their food to their rooms.

After asking whether the food tasted good, their faces lit up with a smile. That itself is an answer. After the dinner break the giving of gifts commences. The children are untamable with their pleasant anticipation. Every gift has a sticker with the name and age of the recipient. A universal way of telling someone to be quiet is "sshhh". Everybody understands this, but it takes a while until it is possible to hear the names that are called out. Nural, Muhammed, Djamila, Ismail and others raise their hands as they hear their names and receive their gifts. The youngest children are four years old and the oldest ones are eighteen. Even the babies get a present.

"We put much thought into the presents; they should be suitable for the different ages. The adolescents get cosmetics and body care products and the children receive games to support their language development", Donya Khalighi explains. The students of the Sufi community chose the presents and wrapped them together and had a lot of fun. "With Christmas music", Donya Khalighi adds while laughing.

However, Khalighi also explains that the activities of MTO® are not only focused on Christmas or refugee camps. "We have spoken to the 'Diakonie' (a welfare organisation) to plan something for the homeless in the next year. We're also in contact with the 'Arche' (another welfare organisation)." Further activities will take place after the Christmas period to spread joy all year round.