

# AN INVITATION TO HOPE

*WRITTEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REMON SHODHY,  
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In the heart of Egypt's bustling and impoverished slum, Ezbet Al-Nakhl, where dusty streets wind through crumbling buildings, the echo of children's laughter mingles with the sounds of a city striving for survival. This neighborhood, though small, is home to a resilient community of Christian refugees from Sudan, **who have fled the horrors of war** and now seek solace and a future in a foreign land. Here, amid the chaos, a Coptic priest has planted a seed of hope—a school dedicated to teaching these children to read and write, to rebuild what war has tried to destroy.

It was here that we, a small team of three, answered the call to teach the No Apologies program, a curriculum designed to instill values of self-worth, abstinence, and strong decision-making in young hearts.



**“They were so attentive as it was a life-saving message they have been desperate to learn.”**

The children, ages 11 to 18, gathered in the crowded classroom eagerly, though their eyes bore the weight of far too many sorrows for their tender years.

The challenges were immense. Although they spoke Arabic, **it was a dialect laced with the pain of displacement** and the harsh realities of their upbringing. Their self-images were shattered, their futures blurred by the daily struggle to survive.

In their world, the concepts of sacred marriage, physical boundaries, and personal dignity had been nearly erased—replaced by the distorted realities of their environment.

***Their overcrowded homes led to exposure to unhealthy sexual conduct and pornography; even drug abuse is common amongst these desperately poor communities, where cigarettes and marijuana are easily available to teenagers.***



Each lesson and interactive activity we became lifelines, drawing the children out of their shells, encouraging them to speak up, to dream, to believe in a future that held more than just survival.



# One of the most poignant moments came when we asked them to share their dreams.

We watched as girls performed skits, declaring, "My body is mine," and boys took part in role-plays, practicing how to say "No" to the temptations that surround them daily.



A 16-year-old girl stood up, her voice barely above a whisper, and said she wanted to be a flight attendant — to soothe the passengers in turbulent skies. We could only imagine the storms she had already weathered in her young life.

Another boy spoke of his longing to return to Sudan, to rebuild his country from the ashes of war. These were dreams borne of pain but filled with hope — a hope that we prayed would take root and grow.



## *In our final moments together,*

we led them in reading the Abstinence Pledge, a commitment to uphold the values they learned.

As each child signed, we felt the weight of their determination, their silent pleas for a better life. When the time came to leave, they clung to us, begging us to return soon. **It was a bittersweet farewell, but we knew that the seeds we have planted will be nurtured** by the local leaders who promised to continue the work we had begun.

As we took the final group photo, their faces told us all we needed to know. **In the midst of this slum, in a forgotten corner of the world, hope had taken root.** And we left, not just as teachers, but as witnesses to the resilience of the human spirit and the quiet, persistent power of faith.