

## Art & Education Bloom in the Desert

Contributed by [HIAS](#)

Source: [www.hias.org/passover2017](http://www.hias.org/passover2017)

The world's refugee camps are some of the most desolate backdrops against which people fleeing violence and persecution rebuild their lives. The Akre Refugee Camp in Iraq, which houses hundreds of Syrian families, was built out of the remains of a former Saddam Hussein prison. The Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan, one of the world's most populous refugee camps, consists of endless rows of beige tents and caravans with almost no plant or animal life. Dust storms, heat, and blindingly bright sunlight make life unbearable for the more than 100,000 primarily Syrian residents. Without much structured activity or access to education, the thousands of children in these camps sit listlessly. Initiatives like the Za'atari Project and the Castle Art Project are changing this bleak reality. Through these projects, children paint vividly colored murals on the walls of their temporary homes. They begin to work through the trauma they have experienced and to articulate and depict their dreams in technicolor. These projects create a sense of camaraderie and community amongst the participants and even provide a venue for the volunteers who run them to provide informal classes on water conservation, camp hygiene, and conflict resolution, in addition to artistic techniques.