

# Bereft of money, jobs, refugees forced to rely on handouts

Tanjay Saputra, 22, along with 11 of his friends from Tanjung Priok, North Jakarta, visited Jl. Peta Selatan, Kalideres, West Jakarta, where the Jakarta Immigration Detention Center is located, on Sunday.

As the city does not have sufficient shelter and community housing for refugees, dozens live on the street opposite the detention center while they wait to be resettled.

Tanjay and his friends distributed 100 loaves of bread, 50 *risoles*, three boxes of mineral water cups and a few packages of used clothes, which were enthusiastically received by the refugees.

He said they found out about the refugees living on the streets of Kalideres via social media.

"We just wanted to become more useful. I also believe that we will be mentally fulfilled and happy [by helping others]," Tanjay told *The Jakarta Post*.

After distributing some of the bread and water, Tanjay's group walked to a shop house whose third and fourth floor had been

converted into temporary shelter for at least 35 refugees.

There, they gave Sarah, 11, her sister, Salsabila, 18, and mother Fatma, 55, who are refugees from Somalia, bread, water and clothes.

Unlike her mother and other adults, Sarah and some of the child refugees speak some Indonesian they picked up on the street. "We [left Somalia] four years ago and have been in Kalideres for five months."

She added that her family used to rent a room in Ciputat, South Tangerang, but left for Kalideres after they ran out of money.

They had to pay monthly rent of Rp 650,000 (US\$44).

Bereft of money and denied jobs, Sarah said the refugees had to rely on handouts just to eat.

"We only eat if people give us food. We don't have any money to buy food."

Muhammad Khan Noori, 49, from Afghanistan said people would visit Kalideres to hand out food at least five times a week at lunch time, something that he, like other refugees, had come to

rely on.

"If there is no money and no donation then we will just *shabr* [be patient] to Allah," he said, adding that sometimes he would go without food for up to three days.

However, not all agree that giving free meals or clothing to the refugees will solve the problem.

"Food aid shows good social awareness, but it will not solve the problem because they are actually asylum seekers [that don't want to settle in Indonesia]," said head of community unit (RW) 11 Cecep C.

He added that the government should find a better place for the refugees living on the streets of Kalideres because it was inhumane for them to live there.

Indonesia is not a signatory to the United Nations' 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which makes it only responsible for repatriation and settlement.