



Abdulrahman Ibrahim Ali

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when they get a new baby, when we feel guilty for it**

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Abdulrahman wasn't able to fulfill his dream of attending the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in the capital, Damascus, as he was forced to drop out, because he is a stateless Kurdi, specifically from the so-called *maktumin*<sup>1</sup> class. Being so Abdulrahman is not entitled to a graduation certificate, and he even cannot choose the profession he like to practice. Abdulrahman's suffering continues to this day, as his legal status has not resolved despite his several attempts.

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Abdulrahman Ibrahim Ali was born in the city of Qamishli/ Qamishlo in 1978. He is married with two children. He was born in a family most of whose members are stateless. In this connection, Abdulrahman spoke to STJ field researcher who interviewed him in March 2018:

**"My father told me that as a result of the census, some of his brothers were registered as citizens, while the rest were classified as *maktumeen*. My parents and uncles tried to resolve their legal status, they paid a lot of money in order to do so, but without consequence. My four brothers, five sisters, and I, were born as *maktumeen*. We tried several times to resolve our legal status but to no avail. My wife endured similar suffering. We have two children, one in the ninth grade and the other in the seventh. Sometimes I wonder how people can feel happy when they have new babies, while we, stateless, feel guilty for it."**

Abdulrahman was unable to pursue his education, since he is not a citizen. People always said to him: "you should leave school and learn a trade to help you survive, since you are a stateless". These words were the most hurting for him. Abdulrahman was deprived of his most basic rights as a human being. Regarding this, he said:

**"I do not want my children to be deprived of their right to educate as me. I still remember once when I stood opposite the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts when I was in Damascus, and got into tears feeling sorry about myself. Every time I come by Damascus University, I feel sad for not being able to access higher education just like the students I see there in campus. We only live once."**

Abdulrahman wishes he could have a house and a car registered in his name, but he couldn't. As a stateless, he had to register all his property under the name of his friends. However, the most painful thing is that, as a *maktum*, he has to produce more documents than any citizen, which let him feel a stranger in his country:

**"I remember when I went to the school to enrol my children, the headmaster told me that my children have to appear before the age assessment committee to be accepted in the estimated grade, since we don't have any official identity documents to prove it. However, doctors in this committee are able to delay the stateless child a year from school if they**

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<sup>1</sup> Sing. maktum/maktumah, i. e., unregistered stateless people.

wanted to. School officials used to ask us, *maktumeen*, to extract identity certificates from the *mukhtar*<sup>2</sup> in the elementary, preparatory and secondary levels. We always have to show papers and proofs.”

Being a *maktum*, Abdulrahman has faced several difficulties, as he was not permitted to travel abroad, and he used to face many obstacles when he traveled to another city especially to Damascus and Aleppo, where police and security forces had no idea what the words “stateless” and “*maktumeen*” mean. *Maktumeen* are also not permitted to stay in hotels unless they receive permission from the so-called hotel division in these areas, which force them to stay at their friends’ houses:

**“Following the issuance of Decree No. 49, on the naturalisation of *ajanib*<sup>3</sup>, we heard that they would also accept the papers of the *maktumeen*, so I headed with all of my family members to the Civil Status Department in Qamishli/Qamishlo city to submit. There was an age assessment committee there, before which we had to appear. When it was the turn of my father, who is over seventy years old, they asked us to bring a witness older than him and who knows him well to remember his real age, something we’ve managed with great difficulty. Although we have submitted all the required papers, this has been futile, as no one of those who submitted got an ID.”**

Abdulrahman noted that some *maktumeen* were no longer able to obtain identity certificates from the *mukhtar*, saying that there was superior instructions concerning that. Abdulrahman concluded saying:

**“We, as *maktumeen*, still suffer these difficulties and obstacles till today. Students still struggle to complete their studies. In the past, the Ministry of Higher Education issued some exceptions, which permitted *maktumeen* to attend university, but these exceptions are no longer available today. What I would like to say is that a man only lives once, and I do not want my children and grandchildren to suffer the same misery.”**

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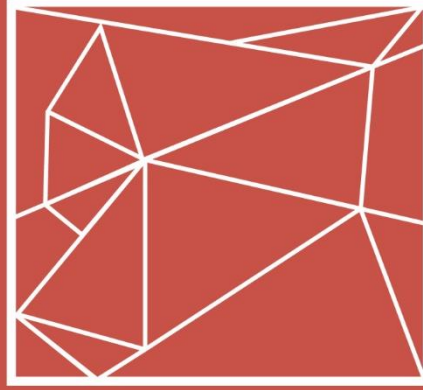
<sup>2</sup> The head of the neighborhood.

<sup>3</sup> Sing. *ajnabi/ajnabiyah*, literally »foreigners« i.e. stateless people.

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  

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Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



## About Syrians for Truth and Justice:

**STJ** is an independent, nongovernmental organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (females and males) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

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