

october 2018

ولتفكر
سورة

It's better for my children to
grow up in the country of
refuge, so as not to suffer the
same fate as mine

The statement of Juma'a Abdullah Kumai



"It's better for my children to grow up in the country of refuge, so as not to suffer the same fate as mine"

The statement of Juma'a Abdullah Kumai

Juma'a has been stateless for 33 years, feeling like a stranger in his own country. He was once stopped by Syrian security service agents, who questioned and interrogated him as if he was a criminal. They even mocked his red card. This discrimination led him subsequently to migrate to Europe.

Juma'a Abdullah Kumai was born in Al-Malikiyah/Derek in 1975. He is married and works in construction. Juma'a is a stateless Syrian Kurd, specifically from the *ajanib*¹ class, like the majority of his family. In 2011, following the issuance of Decree No. 49 on the nationalization of *ajanib* al-Hasakah, all of Juma'a's family managed to acquire citizenship, while he didn't, because he was outside the country at the time, as he recounted to STJ field researcher in July 2018:

"I was born in al-Malikiyah/Derek city, but I lived and grew up in Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani city, where my parents moved after marriage. We lived there for 25 years. In 2003 my 13 family members and I moved to Aleppo to seek work, since we were so poor. I worked there in the field of construction, with my father and brothers. Thank God our financial situation got better, and I managed to get married in 2005 and buy a house in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood, which I registered under the name of my wife, who is a citizen. My younger brothers, Muhammad and Ahmed, also registered their houses under the names of their wives. We were also not permitted to work in the governmental institutions. Two of my sisters were compelled to work in sewing workshops, with a little pay, since they did not have recognized proofs of identity."

Juma'a was also compelled to work in construction to earn a living, although it's a hard line of work. This has been the reason pushing him to emigrate at the very first opportunity in 2008:

"I had saved some money. I used it to travel to Germany through smuggling routes, and applied for asylum there. Although I am a refugee here, I enjoy all my rights as any German citizen. Despite obtaining Syrian nationality after 2011, most of my family have come here in the last few years, except my brother Hasan, who remained in Aleppo to complete his university studies at the Faculty of Civil Engineering."

Juma'a still finds it extremely difficult to read and write in Arabic, since he did not complete his primary education in his country because of his legal status, and was forced, as the eldest of his brothers, to work at an early age to help his father secure the family's living. Juma'a's family has suffered the deprivation of the most basic social rights. In this regard, he continued:

"I have five brothers and six sisters, and none of us completed primary school, except for my brother Hasan, who is now studying Civil Engineering in Aleppo University, where he insisted to pursue higher education and to realize his dream of being an engineer. We were not entitled to graduation certificate from Syrian universities, both public and private, and

1 Sing. ajnabi/ajnabiyah, literally »foreigners« i.e. stateless. unregistered stateless people.

even our primary school enrolment was done under a residence permit issued by the mukhtar². Regarding health care, we are not permitted to receive treatment in government hospitals, except in emergency. We still have to get treatment in private hospitals and clinics, that are quite expensive for us."

Juma'a said that leaving Syria was the right decision. Prior to arriving in Germany, he hadn't enjoyed any civil or political rights:

"We did not have the right to stand for election or vote at any stage of the political process, because we didn't have any proof of identity, as the Syrian law considered us as strangers or outsiders. We were deprived from our rights to education and property. I don't have any Syrian document to this moment, but the rest of my family managed to get Syrian IDs and passports after the issuance of the Decree No.49 on the naturalization of the *ajanib* al-Hasakah in 2011. After 49 years' deprivation of their most basic rights, that was too late."

Juma'a recounts how once, before leaving the country, he was stopped by a number of Syrian security agents, near the Saadallah Al Jabiri square in Aleppo city:

"The security agents were surprised to see my red card, as if it it was the first time they saw such a document in Syria. They started interrogating me and questioning me as if I was a criminal. When I told them that I was an *ajnabi*, they began snickering and mocked me saying: "Are you here on vacation? You must be a spy!"

I recall once when I was a fourth grade student, the school organized a contest for outstanding students in all subjects. I wanted like to participate in the drawing, but the teacher told me that I wasn't permitted because I'm an *ajnabi*. I just felt like I didn't belong to school, and studying was useless, so I dropped out of school that same year and started to help my father at work. We, *ajanib*, were treated as strangers in our country, and now even after granting citizenship to the *ajanib* I have no intention to return to Syria to get it. It is better for my children to live here, so that they don't suffer the same fate as me ."

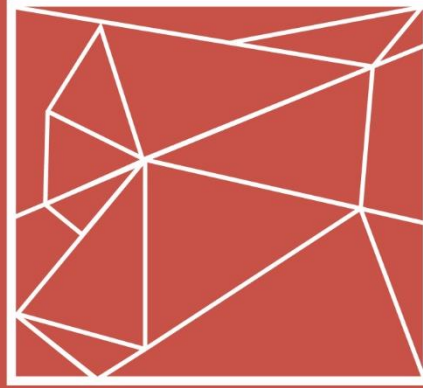
Juma'a believes that it is not that easy for the Syrian government to compensate stateless Kurds. The only way to do so is by granting them Syrian nationality, he said:

"We have suffered for 56 years because of statelessness, and I think any compensation without resolving the Kurdish issue will not be effective, because such injustice may be repeated at any other time and under any other rule. *Ajanib* and *maktumeen* in Syria deserve fair compensation, that would restore confidence in human rights law."

² The head of the neighborhood.

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة

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.

-
- 🌐 www.stj-sy.com
 - 📘 [syriaSTJ](https://www.facebook.com/syriaSTJ)
 - 🐦 [@STJ_SYRIA_ENG](https://twitter.com/STJ_SYRIA_ENG)
 - 📷 [Syrians for Truth & Justice](https://www.instagram.com/Syrians_for_Truth_Justice)
 - ✉ editor@stj-sy.org