

## Such red cards are issued for animals

Statement of Mahmoud Khalil Ahmed



**“Such red cards are issued for animals!”**

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As a stateless, and after a month of repeated failed attempts, Mahmoud was forced to pay a bribe of SP.300.000, in order to register only one of his children at the Syrian government's Civil Status Department, while it generally takes Syrian citizen only one day to do so.

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Mahmoud Ahmed Khalil was born in Hasoud village in Qamishli/Qamishlo in Al Hasakah Governorate in 1977, and is married with children. Mahmoud's family was divided as a result of the census carried out in 1962. Some became *maktumeen*, others citizens. Ahmed spoke to STJ field researcher in an interview conducted in March 2018:

**"I remember that one of my uncles and two aunts were registered as *ajanib* as a result of the census, but they succeeded in resolving their status and became citizens after paying SP2.000 to SP4.000 as bribes, which was considered large sums at the time. While my father and another uncle are still stateless. We tried to obtain Syrian nationality between 1985 and 1990, but in vain. The general public used to say that the *ajanib* issue is political and must be resolved in a political way, which had put fear in our hearts."**

Mahmoud knew fully well that he would not get a certificate even if he completed his education, so he and his brothers decided to leave the school, before they went beyond the preparatory stage:

**"Only one of my brothers decided to pursue his studies. He finished the industrial high school and managed to attend the Industrial Institute after that. He was graduated but didn't get the certificate of course. As for the registration of my children, I had to hire a lawyer in order to do so, since I'm a stateless. It took more than a month and I had to pay SP300.000 as bribes in order to register only one of them. I also had to go to the political security branch and to the police station to write a record of evidence in the presence of witnesses. I suffered a lot in order to register only one child, while those who have Syrian nationality register their children in the Personal Status Department in just one day."**

Mahmoud's family was not permitted to possess or acquire agricultural land, since they were stateless. His father was thus forced to work in various fields such as building-blocks industry and watering agricultural land. When Mahmoud left school he worked with his father in watering land besides raising cattle, which he is still practicing till today:

**"At some point, my father got sick, so we started taking him to Damascus and Aleppo for treatment, and often needed to stay in hotels there. Every time we were asked to get a permission from the hotel division, so we had to take our sick father with us to the hotel division, in order to be given the approval. This incident was repeated a lot because my father was often sick. Furthermore, each time we traveled by bus to Damascus for work, the checkpoints asked us for IDs, and when we showed them the *ajanib's* red identification**

card we hold, they used to mock us and say: "*such cards are for cows, aren't they?*" We felt ashamed to present our cards."

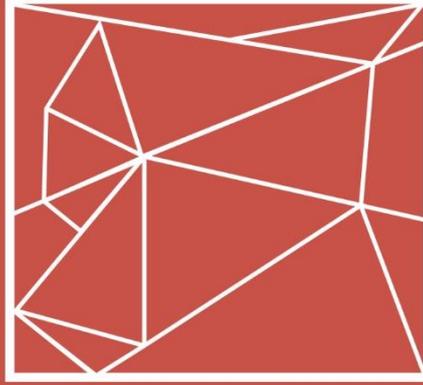
Mahmoud never thought of traveling abroad, because he already knew that his attempts would fail, since he was banned from traveling, and he recalled his father's failed attempt to travel to Turkey. Even marriage was a complex matter for him. Citizen refused to marry a stateless, but Mahmoud points out that they have passed this by marrying from the relatives:

**"Following the issuance of Decree No. [49](#) in 2011, on the naturalization of *ajanib*, me and most of my siblings, seven brothers and five sisters, have acquired citizenship without any significant difficulties. However, two of my sister haven't yet obtained it, and whenever they go to the Personal Status Department, the employees tell them that their papers got lost and they have to submit again. Becoming citizens, I strongly hoped from authorities to make up for the rights we were denied for so long, or to give us a little attention at least, but unfortunately neither Syrian government nor the international organizations operating in the region did anything. We were just exempted from compulsory military service."**

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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