

December 2018



How long will my sons remain stripped of all rights

Statement of Rawda Khalil Muhammad



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Rawda still feels sorry for her three sons, who were not able to pursue education and were deprived of all their civil and political rights. Rawda's suffering is constant, especially since the legal status of her sons hasn't been resolved yet.

Rawda Khalil Muhammad was born in Amuda town in al-Hasakah Governorate in 1974. He is married with three sons, all of whom are stateless, specifically from the *maktumeen*¹ class. She spoke to STJ field researcher through an interview conducted in March 2018:

"It all started when I got married to a *maktum* man, and gave birth to three children born *maktumeen*. As a result, I started to consider myself a *maktumah*, although I'm a citizen, because my sons are all *maktumeen*, and I can do nothing to help them. I have tried a lot to claim the mother's right to naturalize her children, but the Syrian law refuses that. My children have become young men and they work in the open labor market. I stand helpless watching their future being ruined. They will live in poverty, and suffer the same fate as me and their father. Even after their numerous attempts to resolve their legal status after the issuance of Decree No.49 on naturalization of *ajanib* in 2011, nothing has changed and they have not become citizens."

Rawda suffers and feels sorry for her sons, because they have been deprived of their most basic rights. They are not permitted to own property, to vote or to work in the public or even in private sectors, regarding this Rawda goes on to say:

"My ancestors lost most of the agricultural land they had before the census, because they had no official papers proving their ownership. My sons were not permitted to pursue education or to travel abroad. Lack of IDs caused them a deep inferiority complex, because they are deprived from all their basic rights. However, the most difficult issue I have ever faced is that I have no right to register my children in my name in the Civil Status department, except if I claim that my husband is dead, and of course, I'll never do that."

Rawda owns an ID but her sons don't. They only hold unrecognized identification certificates which do not entitle them to do anything. She can also receive treatment in government hospitals while her sons can't. Rawda lives a daily contradiction:

"All I want is for my sons to be citizens. The identity certificates they hold aren't recognised. They cannot travel abroad, they even face many difficulties in traveling between Syrian governorates, especially with the spread of the regime's checkpoints throughout the country. They always have to respond to prying questions about not having IDs. My boys

¹ Sing. *maktum/maktumah*, i. e., unregistered stateless people.

have become men and all I want for them is to have a good future, but, how would that be possible?"

Rawda recalls an incident she will never forget, when all the students in her son's primary school were entitled to a SP2500 financial grant, but not her son:

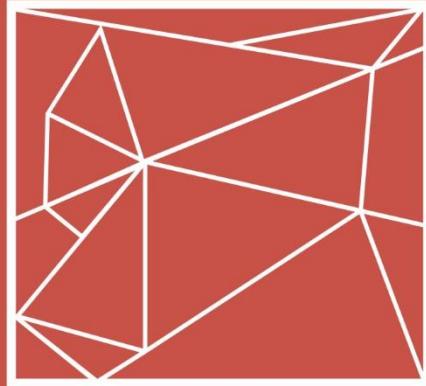
"I remember once, my son came back home crying and told me that the school headmaster gave all the students a financial grant of SP2500, except him, because he did not have a family book. So I went with my son to school and talked to the responsible manager. I asked him how he could hurt a child like this, and after long negotiations they gave my son the money, after he had been crying for so many hours."

Rawda's sons can't enjoy the same rights as other Syrian citizens, who can speak about their education and certificates and their future and hopes, while her sons just listen:

"The lack of IDs caused my sons a lifetime of despair. What can I say?! My eldest son is 25 and did not complete his education. He dropped out of school when he was only at the ninth preparatory grade. Shouldn't there be a compensation for these stateless people?"

The only way to compensate the maktumin is to grant them the Syrian nationality. Many of them have properties, homes and lands, registered in the name of others. They may lose everything because of not having IDs."

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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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