

December 2018

فيلسوف
السيرة

They think we are foreigners

Statement of Muhammad Hasan Omar



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At last, after long years of bitter, suffering and deprivation of his most basic rights, Muhammad finally managed to realize his dream and obtained the Syrian citizenship.

Muhammad Hasan Omar was born in Ras al-Ayn, Sari Kani city in 1978. He is now married with three children. Muhammad and some 30 members of his family were all stateless, specifically from the *maktumeen*¹ class, but fortunately he managed to obtain the Syrian nationality lately in June 2018, as he recounted to STJ field researcher who interviewed him in March 2018:

"We tried for years to obtain the Syrian citizenship, but to no avail, even after the issuance of Decree No.49 on the naturalization of *ajaneeb* al-Hasakah in 2011. We submitted our papers to the Civil Status Department, but they told us that the decree is specific to the *ajanib*² class only and didn't extend to *maktumeen*. However, after strenuous efforts, we've managed to change our status to *ajanib*, and then we initiated a procedure to obtain the Syrian citizenship. I've received my family book, while the issuance of the ID would take several months. Besides, I will hire a lawyer to register my land and the estate under my name, because all our family's property is still registered in the name of my mother, who died in 2000. I don't know what difficulties I will face doing this, but I'm sure that it will not outweigh the difficulties I encountered before, when I was not permitted to hold a government position, and the jobs at the private sector which were available for us were of low salaries. I didn't have the right to own any good nor to open a bank account, but now that I obtained citizenship, my life will be far better".

Muhammad hopes that his children will pursue education and get all their social rights, so that they will not suffer the same fate as him and his family:

"None of us, me and my five brothers, studied after elementary level. I dropped out to help my father in working in agriculture. We used to rent farmlands to work in to get a share of the profit from the landowner. As for my children, I enrolled them in school under a residence permit issued by the mukhtar³. Regarding health care, we were not entitled to receive treatment in public hospitals. In 2000, my nephew, Muhammad Faseih Hasan, was diagnosed with leukemia, so my uncle, who has the Syrian nationality, took him to the al-Mouwasat, a government-owned Hospital in Damascus, to receive treatment, and registered his name in the hospital records instead of my nephew's and stayed with him for several months. We, as stateless, were not even allowed to visit him in hospital because we

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

² Sing. ajnabi/ajnabiyah, literally »foreigners« i.e. stateless. unregistered stateless people.

³ The head of the neighborhood.

did not have any proof of identity. There is so much to say about our suffering. I don't want my children to live in bitterness as I do."

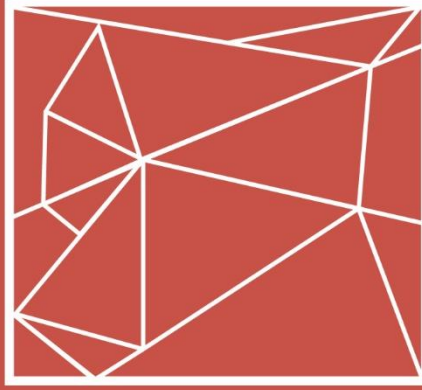
Muhammad's family did not enjoy any political or civil rights before 2018:

"Since we did not have Syrian citizenship, we were subjected to various restrictions. We were forbidden to vote or to be elected, and worse still, we were banned from traveling abroad. We were just permitted to travel between governorates inside Syria, but not to stay in hotels, for not having IDs. Besides, my marriage was under Islamic law contract, and not legally registered, as was the case for the births of my children. However, now after the passage of more than fifteen years of my marriage I got the family book."

Muhammad explained that it is not that easy for the Syrian government to compensate stateless Kurds:

"When I was in the sixth grade at school, I wasn't permitted to join The Baath Vanguard camp in al-Hasakah with my mates, because I did not enjoy Syrian citizenship. The *maktumeen* and *ajanib* students were not permitted to participate in any activity outside the school, which made me feel sad and inferior. And when I grew up I was ashamed to buy an estate or a car, because I was not able to register it under my name, but compelled to register all my possessions under the name of my mother, and later my wife's. *Ajanib* and *maktumeen* men usually prefer to marry a girl who enjoys Syrian nationality, so that they can register their property in her name. I will always remember all the sufferings we've experienced, regarding education, none of my family members attended secondary school or university, because we were used to hear the words "What would you have from education, nothing!!". We wouldn't be compensated in any way, because at some point we were prepared to pay any amount to acquire Syrian nationality. In my opinion, the only solution to the Kurdish issue is to grant citizenship to *maktumeen* too. Many of them have not yet acquired Syrian nationality. Males over the age of 19 must also be exempted from military service."

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.

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