

October 4, 2019



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**I'm Still Striving to Obtain Citizenship,
for My Children not to Suffer the Same
Fate as Me**

"I'm Still Striving to Obtain Citizenship, for My Children not to Suffer the Same Fate as Me"

*The statement of the stateless Kurd Hassan Haji Amin, in the 57th
anniversary of the special census of al-Hasakah*

Poverty caused Hassan Haji Amin to drop out of school at an early age and enter the labor force to support his family. Being a stateless, specifically a *maktum*, directly affected Hassan's decisions in life and will always do, since his civil status hasn't changed despite all his numerous attempts to obtain the Syrian nationality.

Hassan Haji Amin born in 1979, in the city of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani, and is married with three children. Hassan recounted to STJ the sufferings he went through due to his deprivation of his very right of nationality¹:

"Since the issuance of Decree No. 49 in 2011, I went to the Personal Status Department several times trying to resolve my and my family's legal status. When I first learned about the decree, I was overwhelmed, but my happiness vanished when an employee at the Personal Status Department told me in early 2012- after months of waiting- that the decree was intended only for the *ajanib*."²

Hassan said that the Decree No. 49 caused great disappointment to the *maktumeen*, including him and his family. But even so, he will continue striving to obtain citizenship. He added:

"I haven't given up hope, though I made numerous attempts to obtain the nationality myself and through lawyers and brokers. Despite my poor financial condition, I paid three million Syrian pounds in the course of my attempts to obtain the Syrian nationality, but so far to no avail. However, I will keep trying by all means, hoping my children to be citizens and continue their education."

The family of Hassan has denied nationality after the issuance of the 1962 special census of al-Hasakah, which stripped his father from his Syrian citizenship and thus they were deprived of all their political and civil rights since then. In this regard he said:

¹ The witness was interviewed face to face by STJ field researcher on September 10, 2019.

² Following the onset of peaceful protests in Syria, which demanded sweeping reforms in the country, Decree No. 49 was issued on 7 April 2011, and has been announced on the official website of The Syrian People's Council under the title "Granting Syrian Arab Nationality to those Registered as *ajanib* in al-Hasakah". The decree states:

Article 1: individuals who are registered as *ajanib* in the al-Hasakah province shall be granted Syrian nationality.

Article 2: The Minister of the Interior shall issue the decisions containing the executive instructions to this decree.

Article 3: This decree shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the Official Journal.

Several months after the issuance of Decree No. 49 of 2011, a ministerial decree of nationalizing *maktumeen* was reported. The Personal Status Department employees, however, told submitters that it was not yet in effect, and they actually didn't know which department would take it over.

For more info read: "Syrian Citizenship Disappeared", STJ, September 15, 2018 (last visit: October 1, 2019) <https://stj-sy.org/en/745/>.

"We are not considered Syrian citizens; therefore, we do not have any identity proof. Hence, we don't have the right to run for elections nor to vote. Further, we don't have the right to travel abroad; we only can move about Syria."

Even traveling inside the country isn't that easy for stateless people, as it only allowed in emergency situations, mainly for treatment. He said:

"I often had to get a security clearance from the Syrian government every time I wanted to travel to another province. I even couldn't stay in hotels, as that requires an ID or a passport which I don't have. Thus, I was obliged to stay at the house of one of my friends in my visits to Damascus or Aleppo. Further, we are denied access to treatment in general hospitals, which adds to our life expenses."

Hassan can barely read and write, since he left school at the primary level. In this regard he said:

"I dropped out of school from the sixth grade, since stateless students are not allowed to obtain a certificate even after completing their studies in universities; both public and private. Besides, children need to obtain a residence permit from the *Mukhtar* (the head of a neighborhood or a small village) to be enrolled in primary schools. Therefore, my brothers and I left school and started working in plowing and watering fields in our village of Raja'an in rural Ras al-Ayn. I don't want my children to have the same fate as me, in order not to suffer, but I can't help that."



Hassan Amin with one of his children, in the grocery shop he runs in the city of Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani, al-Hasakah. September 10, 2019. Photo credit: STJ.

Currently, Hassan runs a small grocery shop in the city of Ras al-Ayn to provide for his wife and three children:

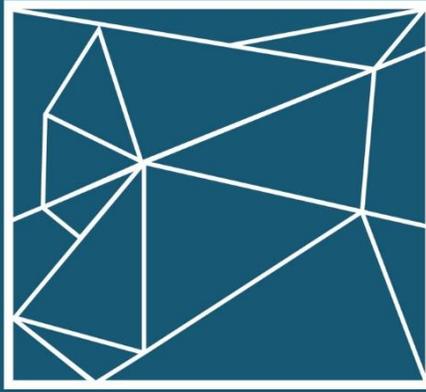
" We moved to live in the city about two decades ago. I used to work here as a simple worker in the private sector for many years with little pay, because I do not have any identity proof. And since we, the *maktumeen*, are not entitled to register property in our names; my house and that of my brother, are registered in the name of my wife, who is a Syrian citizen, in the government land registry. However, we inherited an agricultural land of 75 dunums from our father, but we can't sell or dispose it, as there is no official evidence proves his paternity of us."

Hassan considered that the only way to compensate the *maktumeen* is to grant them citizenship and make due apology to them. He said:

"Statelessness has put me in many awkward positions during my life, like being mocked by Syrian citizens. We have been treated like strangers in our own country. I see that the only compensation for the *maktumeen* is to be granted citizenship as soon as possible and apologize to them along with exempting their males over 19 from military service."

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة

Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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