

DONOR IMPACT STORIES

The Al Moustafas Journey from Aleppo to Norway



Ahmad and Sharif Al Moustafa in Izmir, Turkey, August 2017 ©UNHCR / Esther Judah

IZMIR, Turkey: “Our story is a long one”, begins Ahmad Al Moustafa whose bags are packed again, for the next leg of his family’s journey. This time the Al Moustafa family are off to Norway where they have been granted resettlement places as Syrian refugees.

The Al Moustafas were displaced internally multiple times in Syria before crossing the border to Turkey just over three years ago. The family left Aleppo because of an escalation of conflict. They then left the family village where they went to from Aleppo as the schools stopped functioning. They then finally left Syria all together after an armed

group tortured their son for not abiding by the group’s strict interpretation of religious law.

“We walked across the border in the winter, we walked for what seemed like forever in the icy cold, it was so painful that Sharif took her shoes off. We had nothing else left to lose at this point as the smugglers took everything we had” explains Ahmad.

The journey has been long, but when your “country is at war, you don’t care about the distances you go” Ahmad replies to my question on what he thinks about traveling this time to Norway a place yet further from Syria. “I care only about my daughters’ education and my son’s

safety” he continues in a matter of fact way. “Insh’allah (God willing) Norway!” Sharif, Ahmad’s wife claps her hands together at the thought of her three daughters returning to school.

The family’s bags are packed and lined up against the wall, but they have been packed long since they knew they were going to Norway. “I got used to keeping the bags ready from the constant bombing attacks. In each bag is one pair of clothes per person and our family photos”, there is not much as “we don’t have many things left since our house in Aleppo was bombed” Sharif says tapping her thigh with her hand, as if a covert family sign that it’s time to go again.

“The stories are the same, the nights, the days, the bombs, the stories of escape, the cold winters and the hot summers for all of us that have left Syria” Ahmad concludes tired from telling his story but more than anything tired from the journey that began years ago when they left Aleppo.

The Al Moustafa family are part of the small percentage of refugees registered in Turkey that will be resettled to a third country. Around 10 percent of the total number of Syrians currently

registered in Turkey are deemed to be in need of resettlement, although the number of vulnerable refugees is much higher. So far this year just over 11,000 refugees of all nationalities have departed on resettlement places around the world from Turkey. Over 350 Syrian refugees have departed to Norway this year. Norway has contributed to building durable solutions by providing key resettlement places but also financial assistance to make this possible.

Resettlement is an important modality of international responsibility sharing, however only a small fraction of the 3 million refugees registered in Turkey will have access to it.

UNHCR is grateful to all of its donors that participate in the resettlement programme as well as those that contribute financially to helping the Operation build durable solutions and a strong protection environment for refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey.

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