



Hoden and her son Ahmed sit together and reflect on their time in Yemen and looking forward to a new life through UNHCR's resettlement program. © UNHCR/Gregory Doane.

A New Beginning: Hoden's Journey from Conflict to Resettlement

ADEN: Born in a small village called Adabo, Hoden's early life was marked by hardship. Her family sought a better future in Mogadishu, but the city brought no prosperity. Her father worked as a casual laborer until his health failed, and her brother, suffering from impaired vision, could not help support the family. It was Hoden who stepped up, tirelessly selling vegetables to make ends meet.

Life in Somalia was perilous. The country was gripped by conflict, making everyday life chaotic and dangerous, particularly for women. "Somalia was in chaos," Hoden recalls. The once-busy market became a danger zone, forcing her to flee.

In 2010, Hoden made the dangerous journey across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, hoping for stability. The boat was overcrowded, and as they neared the Yemeni shore, smugglers forced everyone into the sea. Hoden witnessed many drown; only 30 of the over 100 passengers survived.

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“I owe my life to a man who saved me from drowning and swam me to shore,” she says, still haunted by the memory.

Settling in the Basateen neighborhood of Aden, Hoden worked to rebuild her life, adapting to the challenges of being a refugee and a single mother. Now, at 40, Hoden reflects on her long and difficult journey to find safety and stability for herself and her son, Ahmed.

Initially, life in Yemen provided some respite. Hoden integrated into the community and found work, making the best of her situation to provide for her son. But the challenges of being a refugee in a country experiencing its own conflict, which erupted in 2015, became more evident. Yemen’s healthcare and education systems are stretched due to ongoing instability, making it difficult to meet the needs of both citizens and refugees.

Despite these challenges, Hoden has managed to survive with vital support through humanitarian aid.

Learning about the possibility of resettlement through UNHCR’s protection programs gave Hoden hope for a new beginning. The resettlement process was lengthy and often challenging, but she found comfort in the support she received. “I



cried about many things that happened in my life, but this is life,” she reflects.

Hoden’s greatest hope is to create a stable future for her son, Ahmed, who loves school and dreams of becoming a writer. “I want to give him the opportunities I never had,” she says.

Armen Yedgaryan, UNHCR’s Assistant Representative for Protection in Yemen, emphasizes the essential role of resettlement as a life-saving intervention for refugees like Hoden. “Resettlement is a critical pathway for the most vulnerable refugees, offering them the opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. It is a tangible demonstration of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, crucial for easing the pressure on host countries that bear the disproportionate burden of supporting refugees. As only 1% of refugees globally are resettled, it remains a vital, yet limited, solution that must be expanded.”

The international community’s partnership and commitment to expanding resettlement opportunities is crucial in supporting vulnerable refugees like Hoden. Such efforts not only provide a lifeline for those in need but also foster global solidarity and shared responsibility.

Hoden’s story underscores the urgency of international advocacy for resettlement. In 2024, 5,400 vulnerable refugees in Yemen are in need of resettlement, yet only emergency cases are being processed due to resource constraints. By increasing resettlement opportunities, the international community can help refugees like Hoden build safe and secure futures for their families.

Reflecting on her resettlement journey, Hoden shares her concerns and mixed feelings of anxiety and happiness.

“I know it’s just the beginning of another chapter”
