

INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES IN REYHANLI - I

REYHANLI'DA SURIYELİLER İLE SÖYLEŞİLER - I

حوار مع المواطنين السوريين في ریحانلي – ١

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ

مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية



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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

History

In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle affairs.

Outlook on the Middle Eastern World

It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.

ORSAM's Think-Tank Research

ORSAM, provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the interested parties. With its web site, its books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.

Feyyat Özyazar

He was born in Reyhanli district of Hatay in 1954. After working as a clerk in Iskenderun Civil Court of First Instance for a brief period, he quit his job and worked freelance by writing petitions in Reyhanli. He still work as a columnist in a local paper. He has many published articles and interviews and also he has a published poetry book. Feyyat Özyazar is a member of ORSAM Advisory Board.

PRESENTATION

The terrorist attack that took place in Reyhanli has been a tragic indicator of how easily the instability in neighboring countries could spread to Turkey. Another tragic scene that we are used to see after the 2011 uprising in Syria and in 2003 invasion of Iraq, was witnessed also in Reyhanli district of Hatay. Official statements and the general view of the Turkish public opinion point out the Syrian regime as subject of the bombing. Accordingly, it is possible to read the attack as the Assad regime's striving to punish Turkey due to its Syria policy and to expand the battle field by drawing Turkey into the conflict.

The bombing had a major impact on Turkey. However, the people in the region and the local people in Reyhanli were directly subjected to violence. This situation further deepened the polarization in the region, which is directly influenced by the conflicts as it is the border town with Syria and where a tense environment prevails. The Reyhanli district has been hosting almost as many Syrian guests as its own population since the beginning of the uprising in Syria. Thus, it has radical impacts on the social, economic and security situation of the district. As ORSAM, we have conducted a great number of interviews with Syrian refugees, moving in Reyhanli since the beginning of the conflicts in Syria. In those interviews, we listened to their life stories. As ORSAM, we considered it necessary to share those interviews we have been publishing on our website with the Turkish public opinion once again after the last Reyhanli bombing. We bring this study, in which we gathered the aforesaid interviews, to the public attention with the hope that it will contribute to understanding the situation in Reyhanli and also to the outlook on Syrian guests; and we extend our thanks to those who contributed.

Hasan Kanbolat
ORSAM Director

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By: Feyyat Özyazar
ORSAM Middle East Advisor

INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES IN REYHANLI - I

The local people call the Syrian refugees fleeing to Turkey and seeking shelter in the country as “Foreign Refugees”, while they call themselves “Temporary Guests”. Thursdays are the fruit vegetable marketplace day of Reyhanlı district. Local people of Reyhanlı call it “Perşembe Pazarı” (“Thursday Marketplace”). There are as many Syrians as locals in the marketplace.

As Idlib is the neighboring district of Hatay, the local people of Idlib come to Reyhanlı. I see a Syrian who made shopping in the marketplace. I say hello and approach to him, then we start our interview.

An Interview with Abdo Yunus al Hadji, a Syrian who now lives in Reyhanlı district in Hatay by fleeing to Turkey

“I am unemployed. Because I can do my job only in a society with happy people,” says Abdo Yunus Al-Hadji who sells musical instruments.

Abdo Yunus al Hadji: My name is Abdo Yunus al Hadji. I come from Keferhum village of Idlib. I have a music studio in Idlib. I sell camera, CD’s and almost all kind of musical instruments. I was a happy and comfortable man with no debt or problem until the uprisings broke out. After the outbreak of events,

naturally the people started not to listen to music anymore. Weddings were started to be held in silence without music. Nobody bought cassette or CD anymore. So, I became unemployed. Because I can do my job only in a society with happy people. You cannot sell anything related to music to people living under the shadow of death and war. When this is the case, I joined the opposition groups. I engaged in conflicts and I stayed in places where I could hide. We got tired and hungry. Neither food nor water. We had to go down to villages. Some people welcomed us warmly. And some of them told on us behind our back. There is no connection or organization among the opposition. We have been fighting against the government and regime in random groups. We cannot find hospital or medicine when we get injured. Therefore, I had a close brush with death. I cannot fully use one of my arms now.

ORSAM: Did you come to Turkey with your family?

Abdo Yunus al Hadji: No, I came alone. My parents and siblings did not come along with me. They could not leave their home. We have animals and land of our own. “We prefer to die here than leave our home,” they said. Sometimes I visit friends in tent city, and sometimes stay with my friends who rent

house in Reyhanlı. I eat to survive and keep living. Believe it or not, nothing tastes good anymore. But I have to eat and drink to survive. We turned into sort of migratory birds. We are suspicious of everyone. We are afraid of every look. People, thereby, started to become suspicious of us. Some of them regard us as “traitors”, and some others as victim/innocent. But the worst is to be regarded as weak and desperate.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 26 July 2012.*

An Interview with Usama Haled, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

A retired public officer Usama Haled firstly preferred to stay neutral. However, as the pressures and economic difficulties increased, he

joined the opposition front. As the violence got intense, he fled to Turkey.

Usama Haled: My name is Usama Haled. I am a retired public officer. I was born in Keferhum village of Idlib province. I lived in the central Idlib.

I am neither pro Assad supporter, nor opponent. Nowadays, things look bad for those who say; “I am neutral. I do not want to get involved in the events”. My children study at university in Aleppo. They cannot come to Idlib. And I cannot go to Aleppo. Because even the roads are divided. The road going to Aleppo is seized by opponents and is separate from the road going to Idlib and seized by pro Assad supporters. If you want to pass through roads, you have to be a party to one of these groups. Because neither in Idlib and its neighborhood, nor across Syria you can find a neutral road.



ORSAM: Did you come to Turkey with your family, or by yourself?

Usama Haled: I came here with my family. However, my uncles, nephews/nieces, friends, my savings, house and everything remained in Syria.

ORSAM: So you came to Turkey. What are you going to do now?

Usama Haled: I don't know. I cannot decide whether I should go to tent cities, or rent a house. But it is likely that I cannot be happy in either case. Because being a refugee feels like living in prison. My children cannot go to school anymore, their dreams lie in ruins now; there is no such thing as happiness, peace in the family anymore.

ORSAM: Why did you have to leave Syria?

Usama Haled: In the beginning of the Arab Spring process, as a person with university degree, I couldn't imagine the protests would spread across Syria. I thought "Syria is a powerful state, and has a powerful regime. Who could ever oppose to Bashar Assad and stage protests against him?" I did not take the initial uprisings spreading from Daraa to Damascus seriously. I considered them as a simple tribal conflict. Nevertheless, when retired officers, public officers and certain businessmen were involved in tribes, I felt Syria was being dragged into a dangerous point.

In this case, I decided to stay neutral. I suggested the same to my family and friends as well. I waited, remained patient and silent. In Syria, you can't tell your secret even to your immediate family. We all live in fear due to the brutal laws and practices of the regime. Those who do not meddle in politics, and who do not react against corruption and injustice live freely. But a slightest reaction could be the end of you and the people around you.

As my retirement pension was insufficient, I bought 5 decares of land in Idlib. I made additional income by growing fruit vegetable in season. Between the two options, I had to opt for either one of them for our own sake. So I chose the opposition. First of all, my pension was started to be held over. Then my garden was messed up. I did not have income anymore, I went through a financial collapse. I couldn't do heavy jobs, take the hills or take to the roads because of my age. I took the sides with the opposition, but I could not afford materially or morally supporting them. When I was an untroubled and happy man, I became unhappy and poor. Worse still, not only me but many other people are in the same situation.

People around me who are in favor of the Bashar Assad regime were firstly manhandled, beaten and their assets were confiscated by the opponents. But none of them was killed in their homes. As for the opponents, there was no option other than fleeing to the inner regions of Syria or to Turkey, when people were started to be killed.

ORSAM: When you were leaving, what was the latest situation in Idlib and in the neighborhood?

Usama Haled: The area starting from the Turkish border to Idlib is seized by the opposition. The province, on the other hand, is seized by the Assad forces. Nonetheless, the neighboring villages and municipalities are also controlled by the opposition.

ORSAM: And how do you know each other?

Usama Haled: Each village and municipality or district has its own authority. And these authorities have their assistants. There are various signs and cipher messages among us.

ORSAM: Has anyone that you don't want ever joined in your group, or have you ever been raided by someone you don't know?

Usama Haled: Yes. We had hard times in Idlib province. Some people among us were caught and even killed. However, nobody could dare to infiltrate into our group in rural areas and out of town.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 26 July 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Kaddur, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay by renting a house

Mustafa Kaddur, from Kalcebril village of Idlib province, came to Reyhanlı with his wife and two children. We talked to him about the issues such as; high cost of living, worsening economic conditions and public security in Syria.

Mustafa Kaddur: My name is Mustafa Kaddur. I am 30 years old, and my wife is 25 years old. I have two children. I was born in Kalcebril village of Idlib province. I am a high school graduate. A friend of mine and I operate a canteen on the international highway to Damascus on Aleppo Hama route. I did my military service on the Lebanese borderline, in the area between Israel and Lebanon. I have never fought, but I served in the army for 4 years (2 years of official service and 2 years of requirement military service). In the area where I did my military service is the one that covers the long tour area of Syrian army in Lebanon.

ORSAM: How has the Syrian economy been affected by the uprisings that have been going on for over a year?

Mustafa Kaddur: Everything is approximately 10 times more expensive than its previous price. When a liter of petrol was 15 20 SYP, now it ranges between 150 200 SYP and it is on the black market. Some individuals cornered the petrol market, and they sell it as they wish. It is the same for propane cylinder. The cheapest energy was electricity. Right now, it is the most expensive one. It is not only expensive, but also there is not always electricity. Frequently the electricity is cut off. Therefore none of the tradesmen can work consistently. Bread is rationed out among us. While a kilo of bread was 15 SYP (In Syria, bread is sold in kilo), today it is 50 Syrian Pound. And people wait in long queues to buy it. All kind of consumer goods, food stuffs, kitchenwares are all very expensive now. You work for all day long under these circumstances, and then you have more difficulty in going back to your home. The routes are dangerous, there is no life safety. If nobody, there are robbers who pose a risk. We barely visit each other even within the village. Everybody lives in fear. Now we are like strangers to each other with our neighbors and friends, with whom we lived together for years. Everyone started to be suspicious of one another. We never invite anyone over as guest. Because whenever someone comes to our house, the questioning starts: "Who is he? Why did he come? What are the news?"

ORSAM: How did you and your opponent friends make a living in such an economic environment?

Mustafa Kaddur: We had representatives. They helped us depending on our financial situation and the service we provide. But I don't know their financial source.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 26 July 2012.*

An Interview with Zeydan Hasan abu Izzet, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Zeydan Hasan abu Izzet was exposed to torture and imprisoned during the period of Hafez al Assad. After the outbreak of events, his children joined the ranks of the Free Syrian Army (Jaish al Hur). When their lives were at risk due to the pro Assad informers, they fled to Turkey.

Zeydan Hasan abu Izzet: I come from Muradiya Neighborhood of Salkin district in Aleppo. My children and I are on the opposition front. I was exposed to torture and imprisoned during the Hafez al Assad period. Now my children are suffering. Following the outbreak of conflict, my sons joined the ranks of the Free Syrian Army (Jaish al Hur) and started to fight. My two daughters, wife and I stayed at home. There were pro Assad informers around us. As a family, we are already on the blacklist because of the events in the past. When those, who informed against us, added to this; our lives were put at risk. Apart from the safety of our lives, the Assad's soldiers started to rape women in many neighboring villages. So I fled to Turkey to save my honor.

ORSAM: Did everyone in your situation emigrated as well? Where did they go?

Zeydan Hasan abu Izzet: Most of them fled to Aleppo, Hama. I preferred Turkey. Most of the people migrated to save their honor like me.

ORSAM: You mentioned that you had been exposed to torture during the period of Hafez Assad, Bashar Assad's father. Could you tell us about those years and why you were tortured?

Zeydan Hasan abu Izzet: A land reform was made in our region. The government provided farmers with lands. However, only the members of the Ba'ath Party could get these lands. Nobody was allowed to build anything on their lands. People whose houses were old, or those with more family members could not get permission to build a building. Only certain groups were given this kind of permissions. Sunnis and anti regime supporters were exposed to pressure like this. My friends and I resisted. We reacted. Therefore I was exposed to torture and imprisoned during that period.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 7 August 2012.*

An Interview with Abid al Salih Naf'i, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

The reason why Abid al Salih Naf'i, who lives in the tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, came from Syria to Turkey is the Sectarian Factionalism and the economic problems stemming from the increase in the costs of raw materials, rents, and taxations.

Abid al Salih Naf'i: We are four siblings. We operate a textile atelier. We manufacture Gallabiya (men's clothing), Zubun (women's clothing) and sleepwear. All of the shops in our neighborhood are old, and all of them belong to foundations.

Let me tell you what happened a couple of years ago. New teachers were appointed to

the school in our neighborhood, as well as to the other schools around two tears ago. They established a close relationship with the people. They held meetings, conversations on education. They met with students' parents, visited neighborhood residents, and became to know us by name. Our children started to have education in a good, happy and peaceful atmosphere. Then we heard that those who were appointed as teachers were indeed undercover police officers. They asked children questions such as; who liked Bashar Assad, and whether they had Assad's photo in their house. They blacklisted people depending on the statements of children who said "My father doesn't want the photo of Bashar Assad at home", and "My uncle swears at Bashar Assad and spits in his photo". After the information on all the children at school and their families were collected and recorded, an operation was carried out in the neighborhood. Those who didn't like Bashar Assad and who didn't have his photo hung on the wall of their houses and who swore at Assad were all taken into custody, and we haven't been hearing from them.

ORSAM: What kind of changes took place after the outbreak of events?

Abid al Salih Naf'i: First of all they raised the rents to extremely high levels. Then they raised the duties. Increase in raw materials and labour all got worse. We endured despite all.

ORSAM: How did you decide to come to Turkey?

Abid al Salih Naf'i: My son is doing his military service near Damascus. When he took a leave of absence, he told us something he witnessed. They send Sunni soldiers to Sunni villages with simple arms. Then Alawite troops follow them with armored vehicles. Sunni soldiers and the Sunni opposition groups, namely the Free Syrian Army (Jaish al Hur) clash with one another. As they are the soldiers of Assad, of course, they have to engage in an armed conflict; and people are killed in both sides. Then the Alawite troop coming in armored vehicles surround our village and they open random fire in the village. Tens of people are killed both among the members



of Free Syrian Army, locals of the village and among the soldiers. All in all, sectarian factionalism is at the highest level. That is the reason why I fled to Turkey.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 7 August 2012.*

An Interview with Abdulkarim Idavi Habbaz, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Abdulkarim Idavi Habbaz, who is living in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, resisted against the regime practices and joined the opposition. Coming up with no solution to problems such as lack of equipment as well as health and accommodation problems, he fled to Turkey.

Abdulkarim Idavi Habbaz: I am 45 years old. I am married with 5 children. I am involved in animal breeding. I live in Hirzane hamlet in Esselam Town of Hama province. I am a member of a large family, known as “al Najar” family.

ORSAM: What did you go through in Syria? How did you decide to flee to Turkey?

Abdulkarim Idavi Habbaz: I am an inoffensive and God fearing man. I don't have another job, other than animal breeding. I have a little garden. I grow vegetable/fruit for my own needs. One of my sons is currently doing his military service.

When the unrest broke out a year ago, a large military build up was started to be done in our region. It is a mountainous and forestry area with abundance of water. There are plain

areas as well. As villagers, we could not afford to feed the army. But they started to take our animals whenever they want. The stock farmers in the neighborhood was not comfortable with the aforesaid situation. Everybody started to make loss. Nobody paid attention to our complaints. We also took up arms, and started to resist against soldiers who wanted to take our animals by force. From time to time we achieved deterring them, and sometimes we failed. But at the end, we ran out of missiles and resistance. They started to take whatever they want beyond measure and this neighborhood became poor.

I informed my son, doing his military service, about the situation to find a solution. But when he told his commanders that; “My family and neighbors were mistreated, their properties were plundered by military forces”, nobody paid attention. He is a young man, so he left his troop and came with his military uniform and arms. He started to hide in the mountainous area. He formed a group and they started to resist against the army. In the first place, we started to fight for our lives and assets, then we joined the ranks of the opposition. We got crowded and more powerful.

After a while, our weapons became insufficient. We couldn't find medicine and doctor to treat our friends going through health problems, and we couldn't find a place to take shelter in winter. Thus, we had to split. Some of us fled to Lebanon, while some of us fled to Turkey. Some people couldn't cross the border, while some of them achieved like me. I have been in Turkey for two months. All of my family, except for my son who left the army, is here with me. However my son and his friends have been fighting along with the opposition. I could see my son only for a week, and I haven't seen him since then. I can't hear from him anymore either.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 10 August 2012.*

An Interview with Abdullah abu Najip al Shammari, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

While studying in the Department of Commercial Accounting at Aleppo University, Abdullah abu Najip al Shammari staged protest actions along with university students and joined the ranks of Free Syrian Army (Jaish al Hur) by receiving weapon training with the opponents.

Abdullah abu Najip al Shammari: I study at Aleppo University, Department of Commercial Accounting.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about the process bringing you to Turkey?

Abdullah abu Najip al Shammari: The outbreak of the Arab Spring led to mobility in university. We came together with students sharing the same opinion, and started to make plans about the future. We brought other students into our fold. We aimed at fighting against the Bashar Assad regime. We staged protest demonstrations within and out of school, and held meetings. We organized a march to make ourselves heard all across Syria last year. As it was also supported by the people, the march created a tremendous impression in Aleppo.

Then the members of this group was started to be identified. Most of us were detained, exposed to torture; families were threatened, their economies and peace were disturbed. Some people in the neighborhood supported us, but they couldn't provide open support.

They didn't employ us, I had been dismissed from the school. I went into depression. My friends from the university suggested to join the ranks of the opposition and to fight against the regime, and I accepted. I received weapon training with them, and joined the ranks of Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army). My family and people around me were detained because of me. They were humiliated and tortured. When I secretly talked to my family, they asked me to leave Syria. "As long as you stay here and participate in demonstrations, they will further torture us. We are already in pain thinking about your fate, and besides pro Assad supporter torture us. Please convince your friends and go to Turkey," they said. And we came to Turkey with a group of friends. Currently, we live in tent city in Islahiye.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 10 August 2012.*

An Interview with Naji Selam al Istaz from al Sahur Neighborhood in Aleppo province of Syria

Naji Selam al Istaz, who is the state supply office authority responsible for Aleppo and its neighborhood, still insists on living in Aleppo. During our conversation on the phone, we talked about the living conditions of those live in Syria and the developments in the country.

ORSAM: Everybody is leaving Syria, but many people like you prefer to continue living in the country. Could you tell us about what you have been going through, and Aleppo in general?

Naji Selam al Istaz: Our neighborhood is full of opponents, it has been besieged by the opposition forces for approximately 15 days.

The military forces of Bashar Assad have been bombing our neighborhood due to the fact that opponents are in our streets, neighborhood and next to our houses. The majority of houses have been demolished, our vehicles in front of our houses have been set on fire, and streets and roads have been riddled. We use the ground floor of the building we live in as shelter, we got stuck in a single apartment with all the neighbors. There is no electricity, we have limited amount of water, and we provide bread from far away by putting our lives at risk under bombardment. Aleppo is in such a chaotic atmosphere that besides the opponents, there are also burglars who pretend to be opponents, and those who rob and exploit people. They take certain amount of money, say it exaction or bribery, from people who go to buy some food and vegetable to meet our household needs. We also pay tribute under this bombardment, otherwise we cannot buy bread or vegetable. During hours when gunshots ended, I climb up the rooftop of the building and watch Aleppo. The city that used to glitter at nights is now plunged into darkness. Looking at the regions and neighborhoods I know, I feel sad seeing them in darkness. But I have nothing to do.

ORSAM: What is the situation in other parts of the city? Can you communicate with them?

Naji Selam al Istaz: Everywhere including Bab al Faraj (where clock tower is located), wholesalers area (street going to the tower), Mashtel (public garden) are all damaged and destroyed as a result of the bombardment. The neighborhood residents of the area inform us about all these developments. Everybody is shaggy, there is no trade, children cannot go to school, cleaning is not sufficient, people suffer from inadequate nutrition, we sleep in rotation because there are at least 8 people in each room.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar on the phone, on 13 August 2012.*

An Interview with Yaşar Jamal al Nahtavi, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

While serving as Imam in Syria, Yaşar Jamal al Nahtavi was forced to give khutbah in order to quell the continuance of the riot. He joined the ranks of opposition and became responsible for the provision of supplies. Currently he sends food and medical equipment to Syria, and provides communication.

Yaşar Jamal al Nahtavi: I come from Tirmenin village of Idlib province in Syria. I am 35 years old. I am Imam. I am married with three children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about the reason why you came to Turkey, and what you went through in Syria?

Yaşar Jamal al Nahtavi: Protest demonstrations were staged everyday in Syria. But especially on Fridays, more violent actions were staged following the Friday prayer when it became more crowded. The government gave me a written khutbah to quell the continuance of the riot. I was a public officer, and I had to read that khutbah. I lost my credibility as I read a pro regime khutbah in a week, and pro opposition khutbah the other week. I lost my influence among both groups. I didn't have any asset. I was under pressure, and took sides with the opposition. We started to attack against pro regime farms, and shops in the neighborhood. We robbed to survive. I was conflicting with my religion and the education I received. In a nutshell, I went off the rails. They sent me to Turkey. Now I purchase supplies for them. I send them food products, medical stuff etc. They trust me on spending

the money collected. I provide all the services and vital needs of the area we live in. I can reach everyone who fled to Turkey due to the unrest, and those who have relatives in Turkey. I transmit the news and deliver letters. The majority of our village was destroyed through artilleries. Many people were killed during the first resistance and families were dispersed.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Shukri al Hamdo, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay by renting a house

Mustafa Shukri al Hamdo, who rent a house and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, was in prison for six years due to the fact that he criticized the regime. As he got worse after his release, he had to come from Syria to Turkey.

Mustafa Shukri al Hamdo: My name is Mustafa Şükrü al Hamdo. I lived in Aleppo province of Syria. I am 71 years old. I have two wives. I have six children from my first wife, and two children from my second wife.

ORSAM: What did you go through in Syria? How did you decide to come to Turkey?

Mustafa Shukri al Hamdo: I was invited to a wedding in Şanlıurfa 6 years ago. There were many people like me who were invited from Syria and attended the ceremony as a family. After the wedding ceremony, as a group of men we gathered in a room to have a conversation. During the conversation, one of my relatives living in Urfa asked me a question. “Has

there been any change in Syria since Bashar Assad came into power? Or is he also brutal as his father?” he asked. As I thought that it was a sincere atmosphere and what we talked would be between ourselves, I responded sincerely. I told him that nothing has changed, and that the regime is the same regime and the system is the same system as well. I told him that Bashar Assad couldn’t change this system even if he wanted, because his circle fed from this system and that they took advantage of it due to this system. Following day, I went back to Syria along with other guests. I was called to the police station in less than 24 hours after I arrived in the country. All I had said was recorded. I had no chance to deny it, and I was put in prison. Two of the guests in Urfa have evidence against me, and told what happened with exaggeration. To my surprise, they were from the intelligence service. Then came the prison. I was in prison for 6 years. Neither trial, nor visitor or a healthy environment. It is called prison, but it is almost the same as a cave. Then an amnesty was granted, and I was released.

When I came back, I saw that my second wife had left the house along with our children. My first wife and our children, on the other hand, were content with their lives and were angry with me. “Did you have to tell what you said, did you have to talk like that?” they said. Although I was in prison for 6 years, they weren’t sad for me at all. I had some savings. I sold my house and car, and converted my assets into cash. First I left Aleppo, and then Syria. Even my wife and children didn’t embrace me. My children became pro Assad supporters as a result of the pressure by their uncles. I lost my freedom, my two wives, children and my country because of a simple criticism. Currently, I live in a tiny house I rent in Reyhanlı district of Hatay.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Kasım Jisravi abu Bilal, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay by renting a house

Mustafa Kasım Jisravi was exposed to pressure of the regime. When his vineyards and orchards, which were his source of income, were destroyed; he decided there was no meaning to stay and live in Syria anymore and thus fled to Turkey along with his family.

Mustafa Kasım Jisravi: I come from Kefer Teluruk village of Harim in Idlib province of Syria. We were a happy family. When the unrest first broke out in Syria, I fixed the vineyard house within the olive garden located in the mountainous area of our village we used go in summers, and I made it suitable to live in winter conditions where we could live as a family. I have electricity, water, car. I also have a horse and two adult sons. In addition to this, I have olive, grape, pear, peach trees. When new crops grow, we bring them all to market place and sell them; my wife, on the other hand, weaves hand made mats, rugs and similar stuff that are used in bathroom and my daughter in law knits something in her spare time and bring all these to sell in the town.

ORSAM: What kind of changes did you go through when uprisings first broke out? What was the reason bringing you to Turkey?

Mustafa Kasım Jisravi: When Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) started to slowly become organized and to grow, they established a base in our neighborhood. They established a tent city and a training bay in a forestry area near

the mountainous region where I lived in. One day I went down to city. The military forces stopped and took me to the police station. The commander in the station got information and asked me “if there were Jaish al Hur members around me, or not”; and I said no. They said okay, and let me go. I thought they believed in me, but to my surprise I was being followed. One evening a family came to visit us and wanted to buy the mat sacs and similar stuff we produce, they bought they needs, gave our money, drank their tea and went away. Of course, those who came were not alone, a vehicle following them pried around and went around our garden and place, and as a result they saw the base of opposition forces. They detected the place. Two days later in the evening, we saw that we had been surrounded by tanks and armored vehicles. Then the conflict began. Tanks and armored vehicles destroyed my land, trees. When we looked the other day, we saw that the beautiful forestry was totally destroyed and became plain. Some of those in the base were killed, and some of them had fled. They questioned us for hiding them and not grassing on them, but when we promised that we had been under pressure and threatened, they released us after some insulting words.

Our house, trees, car, animals were all gone. The orchards and vineyard houses in the neighborhood were all destroyed. There was no meaning to live there anymore. We fled to Turkey along with my family and rent a house. Currently, we live in Reyhanlı.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Lattuf Hamit Kinnavi abu Kamil, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and settled in tent city in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

The sons of Lattuf Hamit were initially suppressed, and then they were put in prison. Lattuf Hamit states that the local people cannot be engaged in farming anymore and that the migration will further increase due to the economic difficulties and pressure.

Lattuf Hamit Kinnavi: I am a villager coming from Raghbete village of Idlib in Syria, and I am 67 years old with 5 children. I did my best to provide education to my two sons under difficult circumstances. I am a father who provided education to my 5 children, my 2 sons and 3 daughters. My two sons are public officers. One of them is court manger in the district court, and the other one is an engineer in the transportation.

ORSAM: What did you go through in Syria? How did you decide to come to Turkey?

Lattuf Hamit Kinnavi: When Idlib and its neighborhood resisted against Bashar Assad regime, our village was included in the black-list. All of us started to be regarded as the members of the opposition group, and we already are; but we did not stage a protest demonstration, because I am old. But people around me, my brothers and nephews take part in the actions. My sons were affected by these actions and first they were suppressed in Damascus, and then they were put in prison. They do not let us visit or talk to them, we don't even know whether they are healthy or not. My children are married and have children, they have nowhere to go, I have a simple land and it is not enough to provide an income. The people in the neighborhood cannot engage in farming due to the conflict. The crops are destroyed, or set on fire. Thus, I took my wife, daughters in law and grandchildren along with me and directly came to the border. A couple of families from our village also came along with us. We all go to tent cities, and won't come back until things get better. But I am concerned about my sons' lives.

ORSAM: Are the migrants' houses, furnitures or their stuff in shops, if there are any, are preserved?

Lattuf Hamit Kinnavi: There were people who emigrated from the neighboring villages before we fled to Turkey, and their crops and trees were all destroyed. The houses were evacuated, the old houses were set on fire, and some people moved in fancy houses. It totally turned into a country under invasion. People will further migrate from our region.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Isa Mahmoud abu Hikmet, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Isa Mahmoud abu Hikmet works as agricultural product merchant. He asked his son to go over the hill after what he went through in the army, but then they were exposed to pressures as the whole family. He decided to flee to Turkey when his employees, relatives and villagers were started to be tortured.

Isa Mahmoud abu Hikmet: I come from Rifatiah village of Cisir Afrin district in Aleppo. I am 45 years old. I am a merchant, and have an educational background as agricultural technician. I frequently visit Aleppo as a part of my job. I talk to wholesalers who sell food products, receive orders from them, and then I harvest seasonal products from neighboring villages and grow crops depending on the order.

ORSAM: Did you come to Turkey due to economic difficulties and pressures?

Isa Mahmoud abu Hikmet: My elder son served his military service near the Lebanese border. They started operations against the villages and those who intended to flee to Lebanon due to the unrest. My son participated for many times, but only the alawites were armed.

“They are soldiers, we are soldiers as well, they bring us to the border and villages and make us walk in the front rank of the troop, and then the armed forces shoot at opponents, namely the members of Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army),” my son said. When my son told me so, I told him to flee and come. And I also told my son that they use him and people like him as bait. So, my son listened to me and fled. I hid him in my friend’s farm in the rural area. He stayed here for a long time, but I was already being followed. My house was constantly raided, and my family members were all under pressure. They took my money from my pocket and food products from my truck by force for plenty of times. I endured for my son, I put up with it; but lastly my cultivated land and my granary were set on fire, my truck was gone, as well as plenty of my equipments. However, I did not turn my son over to them. People around me including my employees, relatives, and villagers were all exposed to torture. They even reached the merchants, wholesalers in Aleppo. They started to buy less food products from me. First of all I helped my son to flee to Turkey. Then I came to Turkey along with my wife and children.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Nizam Haydar al abu Hashim, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Nizam Haydar al abu Hashim’s foot is bandaged, some parts of his face is scratched and there is a plaster on his eyebrow. He got injured while fighting against the opponents, but when he saw what the regime forces did in his neighborhood, he took his family along with him and took shelter in Turkey.

Nizam Haydar: I come from Sarakib village of Idlib province in Syria. I am 30 years old, and married with 2 children. I own 10 decares of land in the village and ground water, and I plant vegetable garden. We grow seasonal vegetable, and make our living by selling them in the market place.

ORSAM: What did you go through in Syria? Can you tell us the reason why you came to Turkey?

Nizam Haydar: When the unrest broke out in Syria, they started to recruit military volunteers as well as reserve soldiers. Training units were established in somewhere near Hammadiyah neighborhood of Daraa province which is close to the Jordan borderline. We were trained to fight against the opposition, we were given the necessary instructions and we completely became a soldier in a week. My friends and I did not object as it was a national service, and we followed the orders. We fought against the opposition, some people were injured and some were killed among us. Of course, we also killed lots of opponents. We hindered them from leaking from Jordan, and we patrolled in fugitive routes to Jordan.

Meanwhile I talked to my family on the phone. I heard that our village was besieged, that everyone including young and aged people were all tortured by the Assad forces, and that the soldiers started to molest and harass women. I was injured in my unit, and we made a plan to leave our group with a couple of people from my village and to go back to our homes.

We stole a military vehicle and came close to Damascus, then we made a deal with a villager and came to our village by another vehicle. Many people were killed, women were molested, houses of some families in good shape were plundered, and people were left in poverty and misery. I was injured by the opponents as a soldier, but I had to take shelter in Turkey as Assad's soldiers injured my heart.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Muhsin Asım al Huvec abu Talat, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and currently lives in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Muhsin Asım El Huvec, who was forced by the Ba'ath party members to grass on opponents, joined the Free Syrian Army. He had to take shelter in Turkey due to his old age and diseases.

Muhsin Asım: I am from Keferderyan village of the Idlib province in Syria. I am a retired postal officer. I am 63 years old, and have 5 children (2 sons, 3 daughters). I started my job by delivering letters and telegraph. I met lots of people in neighboring villages, towns and Idlib province. I established relationships and friendships on every subject. When I was retired, I started to sell beverages, tobacco, vegetable, fruit in a booth 2 km. away from my village on Idlib route. I own a house in my village and a car. Three of my children are public officers, and my other two children are unemployed.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the outbreak of unrest in Syria? Could you tell us about the process that brings you to Turkey?

Muhsin Asım: When the unrest broke out in Syria, the Assad regime the members of the Ba'ath party in the region asked me to collect information. As they know that I know the neighborhood quite well, they demanded me to grass on people in the opposition and to



collect information regarding which family or tribe supports whom and regarding who supports whom, on behalf of the government, the Ba'ath party.

Initially the protest actions of the opposition were not taken seriously. Jisr al Shughour, which is the closest district, has been the most popular town in the area. It is followed by Sermada, Tarib, Atma and Dana. First of all I did not take it seriously, and I didn't imagine that protest demonstrations could be staged against the Assad regime all across Syria. I told some information regarding what a couple of people and families did to the Ba'ath party members. Because I was also under pressure, and indeed I was in favor of the Assad regime in the beginning, and thought that it would be limited to a simple unrest. When the crunch came, they asked me to collect more information, and when I refused to do so they leaked the fact that I grassed on the opposition on behalf of the regime out to the opponents. They used it as a trump card to set me against the people around me and for us to fight against one another on purpose. The opponents know me, and they know under which circumstances I am; besides I am a sociable person and it is not possible that somebody comes up and simply kills me. One of the opponents came and told me about the situation, "first you worked for them, then you withdrew and now they gave us your name. Even though we know that you were forced to do so or you did it because of a momentary mistake, you need to clear your name to us," he said. I closed my workplace. I sent my wife and my younger children to Turkey, I joined the ranks of Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army). I cooked for them and washed their dishes. I am not strong enough to fight or talk. I got exhausted and sick. I fell sick from constantly going between forest and mountain. As a result, I had to take shelter in Turkey.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 14 August 2012.*

An Interview with Abdo Mustafa al Cebeli abu Halid who came from Syria

Abdo Mustafa el Cebeli abu Halid from Tirmenin village of Idlib province lost his son and relatives during the conflicts. As famine and misery will carry on for a long time, he is not planning to go back to Syria until everything is settled down.

Abdo Mustafa al Cebeli abu Halid: I live in Tirmenin village of Idlib province in Syria I am 25 years old. I am married with 5 children. I own a store where I sell agricultural implements and pesticides. I am also engaged in farming.

When the conflicts broke out, my children joined Jaish al Hur. I also provide moral and material support as much as I could. These contributions led the pro regime supporters to bear hostility against us. The houses of my relatives, as well as my house, were bombed and our properties were destroyed. One of my sons and some relatives were killed during the conflict. Despite this, we hung on till the end. When commercial and agricultural activities totally came to an end, and when everyone around us started to migrate, we had to join the caravan as well.

ORSAM: Did you witness something that you cannot forget?

Abdo Mustafa el Cebeli abu Halid: People who were waiting in the queue to buy bread in Idlib were targeted through barrels thrown from aircrafts. There were bombs in those barrels. The barrels were thrown especially on crowded areas. One of the barrels fell ap-

proximately 150 meters away from where I stood. Many people were killed, and many others were injured. There were no medical center to treat the injured people. The people around tried to help but most of the injured people died afterwards as nobody could treat them in a proper way. And the majority of those who survived became permanently disabled.

ORSAM: Do you want to go back to Syria?

Abdo Mustafa el Cebeli abu Halid: For the time being agricultural lands cannot be planted. There is no raw material. No seed, no fertilizer, no pesticide. Even if the war is over, famine and misery will continue for a long period of time. Therefore, I am not planning to go back to Syria until everything is settled down.

This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 15 September 2012.

An Interview with Mahmoud Naif Igadi abu Raghieb, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and stays in tent city

Mahmoud Naif Igadi abu Raghieb, who remained in between the army and the opposition, fled to Turkey as the pressure and violence increased and basic needs could not be met.

Mahmoud Naif: I live in Hamdaniya neighborhood of Aleppo in Syria. I am 47 years old, and have three children. I sell spice and winter food. My son and I run the shop together. We have a large shop. You can find all kind of spice and winter food. We sell retail, as well as wholesale.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what you experienced in Syria, and the reasons you came to Turkey?

Mahmoud Naif: The area we lived in was full of Assad forces. They started to use a building near us as their headquarter. A couple streets away was seized by the opposition forces. My shop remained in the area controlled by the Assad forces, while my house remained in the area controlled by the opposition. As the acts of violence increased, the opposition forces started to stop me from going to the area controlled by the Assad forces. On the other hand, the Assad forces gave me a rough time while returning back home. All in all, I remained in between the army and the opposition. There were manhandling, bribery, extortion, and even whistle blowing and espionage. The pro Assad supporters threatened me to take my son away from me, if I did not spy for them. I stalled them. But as they understood I would not meet their demands, firstly they destroyed my shop. They took everything. Then they took my son away from me. I couldn't find him. He is still lost. I had no income, job, earning anymore. The conflicts still continued, and our neighborhood was hit by aircrafts and tanks. Electricity water was cut off, and we could not find anything to eat. First of all we came to Idlib from Aleppo along with my family. After we stayed there for a while, we came to Turkey. My health deteriorated because of the violence I was exposed to. My treatment still continues. I lost my properties, possessions, but most importantly I lost my son. There was no meaning to stay in Syria anymore.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 15 September 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Ziyad al Nasiri, a Syrian who came from Syria to Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Mustafa Ziyad al Nasiri started to use basements of the buildings as shelter in Aleppo, and he had to migrate as he could not find basic necessities anymore.

Mustafa Ziyad al Nasiri: I live in Al Safa neighborhood under the administration of Aleppo in Syria. I am 53 years old. I am a banker.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what you went through in Syria, and the reasons you came to Turkey?

Mustafa Ziyad al Nasiri: Our neighborhood was constantly bombed. We started to live in a shelter. The electricity was cut, water was cut, after a while we could not meet our daily needs. We started to use ground floor and the basement as shelter, and strived to protect ourselves both from Assad forces and bombs. Nevertheless, it was not quite possible. Barrels started to be thrown by aircrafts on our neighborhood. When the barrels fell on the ground, it exploded and iron sticks and nails spread all around. It caused to destruction at

least in an area of 50 meters. Neither Israel did it to Gaza nor any other state did it to a country it invaded. Despite all these, I tried to stay at home. I had some savings. And I tried to find something to eat, even if it was difficult. However, they started to collect young people and forced them to join the army. They shot those who did not want to go with them. And they armed those who accepted to go along with them, even though they had no idea how to fight and how to use arms; and then they put them against Jaish al Hur. All in all, our children were drifted into death. Thus, I had to flee to Turkey by bringing my sons, daughters and my wife along. I might not have found the peace I searched for. But I have started to adapt myself to the area with each passing day.

ORSAM: What did you go through while coming from Aleppo to Turkey?

Mustafa Ziyad al Nasiri: Certain parts of Aleppo are destroyed. Other parts, on the other hand, are closed to public. Nobody knows what is going on over there. The set-



tlement area with the neighboring village and towns of Aleppo is about 80 100 km. Telephone lines do not work. We could not communicate with one another. We had difficulty in going out from Aleppo, but the rest was easy. Idlib and neighboring villages are seized by the opposition forces. I did not confront any problem in that area. Only there were villages that had been destroyed, people waiting on the roads, and families preparing to migrate all along the road.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 15 September 2012.*

An Interview with Nazmi Malaf abu Abdo, a Syrian who fled to Turkey and who now lives in the tent city in Kilis

Nazmi Malaf, who went from his town to Idlib due to security and economic problems, fled to Turkey with the support of opposition as his son was forced to join the army.

Nazmi Malaf abu Abdo: I live in Kırkanya under the administration of Idlib province in Syria. I am a farmer.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what you went through in Syria and the reasons you came to Turkey?

Nazmi Malaf abu Abdo: In Syria as well as certain Arab countries, if the a family has a single son, their son is not recruited into the armed services. I have three daughters and a son. When the conflicts broke out, all rules were violated. They forced my 19 year old son to join the army. I am an old man. When I had no son, we felt ourselves insecure with my three daughters and my wife. We left our home, land, and animals behind, and moved

to Idlib province. We sold our animals and opened a greengrocer. We lived in a rented house, and the shop we opened was also rented. Trade is on decline with each passing day, and the purchasing power is getting worse as well. In those circumstances, I had nothing left. During the same period, girls started to be harassed in certain places. I did not have strength to cope with them. I was beaten for several times, my daughters were manhandled. We started to be tortured, and started to live in poverty. On the other hand, I could not hear from my son. I started to give up hope. A friend of mine recommended me to migrate. But I did not know how to leave Syria and flee to Turkey. I applied to opponents. They helped me, and I could come to Turkey. We stayed in Reyhanlı for a couple of days. Then we applied and moved in the tent city in Kilis. Here we met people who knew my son. They told us that my son is alive, that he came to Turkey, and that now he is in Reyhanlı. Thus we received permission from the authorities in Kilis and came to Reyhanlı. I found my son within a couple of days. Right now we are together as a whole family, and live in the tent city in Kilis.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 15 September 2012.*

An Interview with Nureddin Abdo Hacı Osman abu Kamil who came from Syria

Nureddin Abdo Hacı Osman abu Kamil, who joined the opposition, fled to Turkey for the safety of his wife and children.

Nureddin Abdo Hacı Osman abu Kamil: I come from the Jabil Elkirad village of Latakia Province in Syria. I am 41 years old with three children. I produce briquette and con-

struction materials. I attended the religious talks in line with my religious knowledge and gave speeches after work in Latakia and in my neighborhood. I always preferred performing prayer with the congregation. The Ba'ath Party and the party members do not like me, and neither do I like them.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what you went through in Syria and the reasons you came to Turkey?

Nureddin Abdo Hacı Osman abu Kamil: As one of my children is mentally retarded, I had to have my child treated. As I did not have any social security, I had to have my child treated in state hospital. I wanted my child to be treated at a young age and to be reintegrated to the society. However, none of the hospitals could treat him properly. A private hospital wanted 30 thousand dollars for the treatment. Nevertheless, it was not possible for me to earn/save such amount of money while doing my job in Syria. Thus, I left my family behind in the village and went to Lebanon and

worked for two years over there in order to save that money. I could save only around 15 thousand dollars at the end of two years. And I asked for help from the mosque congregation and benefactors to collect the rest of the required money. I gave 20 thousand dollars to the hospital that would treat my deaf mute and mentally retarded child. But they wanted 30 thousand dollars. I talked to the authorities, told about the situation. However nobody helped me, because I did not support the Ba'ath party. During the same period, an uprising broke out in Syria against the regime and the Assad family. And I took sides with the opposition. The members of the Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) created a base in our area. I provided them with moral support, held meetings and preached. One night, our village and the neighboring villages started to be bombed by tanks. The houses were destroyed, people were killed. Lands, vineyards and orchards were all destroyed. We were damaged in both material and moral terms. My brother and relatives also joined the Jaish al Hur. We fought. But after a while, we could



not struggle anymore. Our wives and children became miserable. I had to bring along my wife and children and come to Turkey. My friends and I go to Syria and help our friends over there when we find a chance. My child, on the other hand, is a living dead. The only reason why he could not be treated is due to the fact that I do not support the Ba'ath Party.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 15 September 2012.*

An Interview with Mahmoud Jasim al Menef abu Sabri, who settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay by renting a house

Coming from Idlib province of Syria, Mahmoud Jasim had to immigrate for not being able to meet their basic needs and also due to pressure and threat.

ORSAM: Could you briefly introduce yourself?

Mahmoud Jasim al Menef abu Sabri: I live in Idlib Nasara district of Syria. I am 37 years old. I have 4 children. I own a white goods and furniture store. I have many customers from villages, neighboring towns and districts.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mahmoud Jasim al Menef abu Sabri: When the uprising broke out in Syria, my relatives and I started to help Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army). There are three mujahids in my family. Those who have adult son send them to fight, while those who do not have son provide moral and material support to Jaish al Hur. There are lots of people in Idlib reporting about the actions of families and shop-

keepers. The pro Assad supporters reported me and people around me. There is an airport 20 km away from Idlib. One day, aircrafts started to bomb our neighborhood. My house, the houses of my neighbors and lots of people were destroyed. The bazaar in our neighborhood was also bombed. Shops were set on fire, and lots of workplaces were destroyed. The orders coming from neighboring villages stopped. The business life came to an end. When people started to migrate, nobody bought white goods or furniture anymore. Because people had no house left to buy these furnitures, or peace to live in. There was no other shops left except for groceries and some bakeries in the city. People can benefit from electricity only 4 5 hours a day. Water is constantly cut off. The life in Idlib came to an end in every sense. My children could no more go to school due to the lack of the security of life. As our homes were destroyed, we started to take shelter in our relatives. 2 3 families lived together in many houses. Approximately 15 people lived in 3 or 4 roomed apartments. There was no choice other than immigrating due to the lack of water, food, the pressure and threat. A friend of mine and I decided to immigrate to Turkey. However, it was required to pay a price to go from Idlib to the border and to cross the border. We could pay the price and came to Turkey.

ORSAM: What are you going to do now?

Mahmoud Jasim al Menef abu Sabri: We will stay here in a rent apartment for a while. But we have no other choice other than ultimately moving into the tent city.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Hadi Abdo Kelleş abu Kaddur, who lives in tent city in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Hadi Abdo Kelleş abu Kaddur lost his both brothers during the conflict, and he had to immigrate to Turkey when they had no other option to survive.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Hadi Abdo Kelleş abu Kaddur: I live in Tel-lece Hamlet of abuhudur Village in Aleppo. I own an olive grove and an olive oil factory. I am 45 years old and I have 6 children. I studied at Agricultural High School for two years in Aleppo, and I became Agricultural Technician. I also specialized in the field of vegetable and fruit growing, as well as greenhouse cultivation.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Hadi Abdo Kelleş abu Kaddur: Since the civil war broke out in Syria, my two brothers were martyred. After Jaish al Hur deployed in our neighborhood, I supported them by providing them with food and transportation opportunities. I created a portable bank by building up savings with humanitarians who provided necessary materials for their accommodation and who met their vital necessities in Aleppo. I delivered those aids from the members of Jaish al Hur to poor and needy people. The Syrian Army does not face and fight manly and bravely against the Jaish al Hur. After they detect us and drop bombs on our neighborhood and our base by aircrafts, they harass us by firing artillery shells. Our forces only have defense weapons. They do not have means to fight against the aircrafts and armored vehicles. Thus, Jaish al Hur has no other option but leave its location. They split into groups towards mountains and highlands. Since there is hardly any mountainous area in our region, they take shelter in caves and abandoned villages. Taking advantage of

this situation, the regular army start massacring people regardless of their being women, children, elder. They destroy everything that the local people in the area could be fed. They force people to suffer from drought, famine and misery. They force us to migrate. I left my olive grove, my vegetable planted land, home and car behind in Idlib; and then arrived in Reyhanlı district of Hatay. I settled in the tent city after I stayed here for a while.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Nuriddin Cabir Attar from Syria who lives in the tent city in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Coming from Aleppo, Nuriddin Cabir Attar lost his home as a result of the attacks. He fled to Turkey along with other families who are in the same situation with himself.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Nuriddin Cabir Attar: I live in the Firdovs Neighborhood of Aleppo. I am retired from municipality. I am 53 years old. I have 5 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Nuriddin Cabir Attar: My eldest son was martyred at the age of 26. A bombshell made out of barrels was dropped on our house. Most of those who were upstairs died. People downstairs were both injured and killed. My eldest son was also killed as a result of this attack, while one of my children was injured. An attack that felt like an earth-

quake took place, and the building that we lived in was destroyed. When we let ourselves out, we saw that the buildings around us were also destroyed and everything had burned into flames. We could not save anything other than the clothes we wore and some stuff in the apartment. We set off from Aleppo to come to Turkey along with many other families. My retirement pension is 15 thousand SYP. We could only arrive in Idlib by bribing. One night, we hid in an oil grove in Idlib. There were tens of people hiding there like us. We had neither bed nor blanket to cover ourselves in the chill of night, or bread or toilet. All families shared bread, pickles, halvah they brought along among themselves. Our goal was to come to Turkey, but they said we had to wait. We suffered among olive groves for days. Fear, concern, famine, cries of my children devastated us. But we had no other option, we had to wait. A pickup truck came and transported us from Idlib to Turkey border for 10 thousand SYP per family. I paid 2 thousand SYP to go from Cilvegözü to Reyhanlı. After all, I only have 3 thousand SYP left now. I can neither rent an apartment nor feed my children. My only hope is tent cities.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Gani Lütfi Kelmo abu Reshad, who came from Syria to Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Gani Lütfi Kelmo abu Reshad took shelter in Turkey along with his wife and children when the Harim district he lived in was destroyed between the opposition and the Assad Army.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Gani Lütfi Kelmo abu Reshad: I live in Harim district of Idlib. I work in the field of plumbing and trench work. I am 45 years old. Harim is located 3 km away from Reyhanlı. Districts and villages make a living from agriculture and stockbreeding.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Gani Lütfi Kelmo abu Reshad: During the Hafez Assad period, the government distributed lands to Harim district and its villages. The locals of this area started to operate the lands they rented from the government at a low cost. The mountainous and stony areas where dry farming used to be made in the past were cleaned and the areas became suitable for irrigated farming. While lowlands were reserved for grain, cotton and seasonal vegetables, the highlands were reserved for various fruit trees and olive groves. Those who live in this area have been engaged in farming all their life. After Hafez Assad came into power, we became pro Assad supporters and we reaped the benefits. We always excluded the opponents in our area, and we even reported against them. When the civil war broke out in Syria, unrest came along in neighboring provinces and districts. Even though elders did not object, the young started to join the Jaish al Hur. The two districts called Harim and Salkin which are known as the strongholds of Bashar became anti Assad districts such as others. Those who are against Assad and those who are not started to fight against each others. While the opponents armed some of their supporters, the Assad Army armed its supporters as well. First of all, villages and hamlets were destroyed. Water systems, irrigation canals were destroyed, and agricultural equipments were set on fire. Both districts were surrounded by tanks and they started to be bombed. The bombing lasted for days and we had many losses. I ran away from

this massacre by bringing along my wife and children, and then took shelter in Turkey.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Gaddur Hashim Killi abu Aziz, who rent an apartment in Reyhanlı district of Hatay after coming from Syria to Turkey

“We are free in Turkey, but we are not in peace; we are in the depths of despair,” says Gaddur Hashim Killi abu Aziz from Hamdaniya neighborhood of Aleppo.

ORSAM: Firstly could you introduce yourself?

Gaddur Hashim Killi abu Aziz: I live in al Hamdaniya neighborhood of Aleppo. I own a place where I sell auto accessories and spare parts. I am 48 years old, and I have 6 children. I arrived in Turkey on September 25th. I rented an apartment in Reyhanlı. I am trying to bring our winter clothes and food right now.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Gaddur Hashim Killi abu Aziz: I had a large store and more to sell than other sellers of spare parts in the neighborhood. When the bombs started to be fired in barrels from air in Aleppo, many buildings were destroyed. Stores and cars went up in flames. There were ruins all around us. Nobody could no more come in or out of the area from neighboring districts, villages and cities. Shrapnel pieces hit my house as well. My house fell into ruin. We turned the basement into a shelter with two families. However, the problem of wa-

ter, electricity and food came up. People who struggled for their lives started not to buy auto accessories and spare parts anymore. Most of their cars already burned. There was no one left to buy spare parts, as many people migrated. Jaish al Hur came into our neighborhood. They created headquarters on each street and road. The Assad forces left our neighborhood, but we were bombed by aircrafts and helicopters everyday. We couldn't even fulfill the religious duties of people who died. We buried them to an empty lot or to the garden of a totally destroyed building. It is hard to believe, but some of the bodies were buried without burial robes. Some of them were buried without being bathed. Because we had no other choice. When bodies started to stink, they were buried without burial robes without any hesitation. If those who already visited Aleppo went there, they cannot recognize the city. Schools, hospitals, luxurious hotels, office blocks, mosques were destroyed, ruined. The locals of Aleppo search for materials, collect iron among rubbles by putting their lives at stake, and turned each ruin and wreck upside down to find some money. The poor tried to get warm by using destroyed furnitures, household goods as fuels or used them to earn money. Those who encountered bodies while searching for furnitures or goods covered and buried the bodies wherever they found them. We are free in Turkey now, but we are not in peace. We are in the depths of despair. The standard of living in Turkey is higher than Syria. My family does not want to live in the tent city. But I do not know how much longer we can afford to live in a rented apartment in current conditions.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Salah Ali Takraviy, who settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay by renting an apartment

Salah Ali Takraviy, who was engaged in farming in Jabal al Akrad village of Latakia, says he won't go back to Syria before the regime changes.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Salah Ali Takraviy: I live in Jabal al Akrad village of Latakia. I am 57 years old and have 5 children. I am a farmer. I have lands inherited from my father. I grow olive, vegetable and fruit on these lands. I have a truck and a car.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Salah Ali Takraviy: There are lots of Sunni villages in the neighborhood of Latakia. Those villages became restless when the civil war broke out. They started to recruit children at the age of 16 17 who are not even at military age into the armed services by force. They forced the young to join a camp under

the pretext of military service in order to prevent them from taking part in demonstrations. Neither parents could go to camp and visit their children, not children could come to visit their parents in the village. The young people in the village are those who help peasants. It is all the young people's job to work in the field, to carry the crop to the city, and to carry the products. When the young people were inconveniently recruited into the armed services by force, we couldn't do anything and the elders had to do everything the young used to do before. On the top of it, the Assad forces set the fields and forests on fire during the crop period. Trees and gardens were damaged to a large extent. Our homes were destroyed and plundered. There were electricity and water cut offs most of the time. Life became unbearable in all aspects. Nevertheless, we decided to sit tight and carry on. However, the routes going to Latakia or Idlib were destroyed. Tight controls and inhuman attitudes as well as the fact that there was no one to sell the products deterred us. We had



crops, but those who bought from us from the neighboring villages for years could no more afford it and there was a devaluation. Under these circumstances, our economy collapsed. My two sons are in the army and I do not know where they are now. Many families and their children have been going through the same situation like us. I fled to Turkey by bringing along some stuff from home thanks to the money I earned by selling some products. I am not sure how much longer I can afford to pay rent. Ultimately, I will go to the tent city. I will not go back to Syria before the regime changes.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 10 October 2012.*

An Interview with Hadi Zekeriya al Kasimi, who came from Syria and now lives in the tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Retired worker Hadi Zekeriya al Kasimi decided to leave Syria when his village started to be bombed.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Hadi Zekeriya al Kasimi: I am from Al Rummane village of Hama in Syria. I am 60 years old. After working in a government office for many years, I was retired. I have 7 children, three sons and 4 daughters. My two daughters are married, my two sons are away from us, and my other son works as a clerk in Hama.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Hadi Zekeriya al Kasimi: I joined the Ba'ath Party in 1970s. As I was in favor of Hafez

Assad, they hired me despite the fact I was Sunni. In order to find a job either as a worker or as a clerk, you need to bribe or be a member of the party in Syria. As all of us were party members in the family, we could all find a job. After many years, the children of those who had been employed were asked to make propaganda in favor of the regime and to report against the opponents around them. Even if a pro regime supporter slandered a Sunni or an opponent, he was taken seriously and those who fell victim to slander were tortured and put in prison. When popular uprisings broke out after the Arab Spring, along with many other families, we were given missions that we had to accomplish. These were whistleblowing and bribery for the regime. Those who did not accept to do so were tortured. When we did not accept it along with my relatives, they started to put us in prison and torture us. Some of us lost our properties, some of us lost our lives, while some of us were dishonored. They could not cut the salaries of the retired people, but they fired them. They prevented them from finding another job and beggared them. When Hama and neighboring villages started to be bombed, we decided to leave Syria along with my son, my daughter in law and my grandchildren. I sold my house and field to the families in good shape, and I set off. We bribed many groups on each crossroad and arrived in the border. However, we could not get out of a scrape. Because those from where I came knew that I was an Assad supporter, they did not believe me. My family and I became isolated in an area near Idlib. We suffered from hunger, misery. After we stayed in an isolated place with no transportation or shop for three days, I stroke a bargain with a truck driver and we came to the Turkish border. I paid 500 dollars for 30 km. I made another payment on the border to enter in Turkey. Most of the armed groups started a robber gang on the ground of civil war. It is impossible to know who is opponent

and who is plunderer. You know it only when you are among them. We took shelter in tent cities when we haggardly arrived in Turkey in misery.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 15 October 2012.*

An Interview with Abdilcabbarel Asasniy abu Shaker who lives in the tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Abdilcabbarel Asasniy, a coffeehouse keeper in Aleppo, preferred coming to Turkey as he thought his family would suffer after the pressure applied on himself and his sons.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Abdilcabbarel Asasniy abu Shaker: I live in Karm al Ala Rif Aleppo, which is located on the southeast of Aleppo. I am 55 years old. I have 6 children. I am a coffeehouse keeper. One of my children is doing his military service, one of them works in railways, and others study.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Abdilcabbarel Asasniy abu Shaker: My son who has been doing his military service was put in prison in alleged malpractice. We started to be tortured. Syrian authorities black-listed my family. My son working in railways started to be applied pressure and tortured. Then he was suspended. My coffeehouse was constantly raided. My customers were threatened. Although my coffeehouse is located in

an active spot of the neighborhood and has many customers, after a while people stopped coming to my place from fear. Then we heard that military articles had been stolen from the military unit of my son, and that they had been given to Jaish al Hur. My son was put in prison as a suspect. Many soldiers are put in jail on that ground, and slandered. In main objective is to suppress, intimidate and torture Sunni people. We haven't heard from my son since then. We could not visit him. They did not let us defend him. Maybe he was killed. We have no clue. We started to take shelter along with my son fired from railways and my children who are students. As I thought that it is impossible to live in Syria and that my family and I could be hurt at any moment, I decided to flee to Turkey and live in tent cities.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 15 October 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Asasiye, who lives in the tent city in Islahiye district of Gaziantep

Mustafa Asasiye, who led his life as a tailor in Syria, immigrated to Turkey when his village started to be bombed and when no opportunity left to earn his life.

ORSAM: Could you introduce yourself?

Mustafa Asasiye: I am a Syrian. I live in Tedrib village of Idlib. I have three children. We have a sewing atelier in Tedrib. Besides tailoring, my wife and I also sew anything necessary for home.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mustafa Asasiye: We were a happy and peaceful family before the civil war. The youth of the village started to get armed. I also joined them from time to time. We fought, took part in the demonstrations, and struggled as whole village. At leisure, everyone went back to their jobs to earn their life. Our village was surrounded by the regular army (Assad forces). Firstly air shelling, then random artillery shootings were launched. Jaish al Hur only have defense weapons. Therefore, everybody went back to their homes and waited for shelling to end. The blockade and shelling lasted for three days. At the end, Assad forces left us to our fate and started to withdraw from the village. Dana district and Idlib Province are the closest places to our village. Our friends over there came to help. Each house in the village was all damaged. There were lots of injured and martyrs. I lost my two brothers, and many friends. I neither have my atelier nor my house. They were all destroyed. I did not have anything left to earn my living, and there was nobody left to receive order either. When migration started in our village and in neighboring villages, unemployment problem came out. I got sick after these events. I became tongue tied, and as you can see I can hardly speak. My wife Aliye is a strong woman. She brought me and my children to the eastern border. We waited there under trees for days. We lived half hungry half full. We are a five person family. We had nothing left other than a blanket, a plastic mat and our cardigans. We got stuck in a place near the Turkey border. Then people from my hometown also became cruel. They brought us to the border in return for money. We had to spend some of our savings to come to the border. We went to Reyhanlı when we arrived in Turkey. We rent an apartment. However, we could only stay for 20 days. When we ran out of money, we applied to stay in the tent city. We are here now.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Islahiye district of Gaziantep, on 15 October 2012.*

An Interview with Lattuf Bekkar al Nesimi, who came from Syria to Turkey, rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Retired teacher Lattuf Bekkar immigrated to Turkey when his home was destroyed during the conflicts and the living conditions became harsher.

Lattuf Bekkar al Nesimi abu Ibrahim: I am from Salkin district of Idlib in Syria. I am a retired teacher. I have 2 daughters and 2 sons.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Lattuf Bekkar al Nesimi abu Ibrahim: The civil war that broke out in Syria was not observed in our district in the first place. We lived a quiet and uneventful life for a long time. However, in the last 4 months the civil war started to spread into our district as well. When Jaish al Hur became dominant in our district, conflicts started to take place between pro regime supporters and Jaish al Hur. As many families were in favor of the Regular Army, it took a long time for Jaish al Hur to take the control of the district. During the siege, aircrafts and helicopters started to bomb houses. Water channels were destroyed. Farming in the area came to a standstill. The economy of the people regressed also due to the lack of agricultural input in the region. Families started to migrate one by one. My retirement pension is 20 Thousand Lira (approximately 500 TL in Turkey). As the life became more expensive, my retirement pension could only meet our 15 day needs. After my retirement, I had bought some livestock and I could earn my living from those.

During the bombardments, my animals perished and my house was destroyed. Above all, one of my grandchildren was killed. Since I also lost my income from my livestock, we were on the hunger threshold as the whole family. Two of my children are teachers in central Idlib. They became unable to work as Idlib was blockaded and bombed by aircrafts. Many schools were closed and the education came to a dead stop. Those who still work continue to receive their salaries. Nevertheless, when those who migrated are detected, their salaries are cut as they no longer work. My children did not leave central Idlib in fear of their salaries would be cut. So I fled to Turkey by bringing one of my daughters and my son in law along with me.

ORSAM: Are you planning to go back to Syria?

Lattuf Bekkar al Nesimi abu Ibrahim: Our house in Salkin was destroyed by those from the Regular Army. They took whatever we had. Houses we left behind to migrate are either destroyed by the pro Syrian regular army or those coming from the neighboring districts settle in those houses. Beautiful houses, on the other hand, are taken by the members of Syrian regular army. The efforts, savings are gone just like that. Even if I want to go back now, I neither have my house nor my furnitures. I can only receive my retirement pension which is my legal right. My children draw my salary and send to me. I have been going through financial problems in Turkey as well. If the conflicts persist, I will have to leave the house I rent and to move in tent city.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Cemal Abdo who rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

The goods and savings of Cemal Abdo Hashim abu Nureddin, who is engaged in food trade, were seized. When his employees were recruited into the army, he could not do his job anymore.

Cemal Abdo Hashim abu Nureddin: I am from Kefellesin Village (which is located close to the Cilvegözü border zone of Turkey) of Idlib in Syria. I am 45 years old. I have 4 children. I am engaged in retailing and wholesaling food in the customs area. My workplace is open 24 hours a day. I have 10 employees except for my children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Cemal Abdo Hashim abu Nureddin: When the civil war broke out, I was one of the well known rich people of the district. First of all, our export routes were blocked. No export goods entered into our borders. Even if there was any, it was too expensive. The purchasing power of the people simultaneously decreased. As we could not find/sell export goods, we started to do with domestic goods. When the routes to Damascus and Aleppo also came under threat, I started to sell goods in the storages in Idlib and its neighborhood. There were conflicts all across the region, but I couldn't see it would come to this point. I thought the events were temporary and that the Army would bring peace before long. Nevertheless, one night tanks suddenly blockaded our area. Thousands of soldiers entered in villages, towns and customs area. As we thought the soldiers came to capture criminals and arms, we did not worry about it. However, this was not the case. They took away whatever they found in my storage. My safe box, my house, everything in the house etc... As all my employees were young, they were all recruited into army. As my adult son

was also recruited into the army, I was all on my own. My thousands of dollars, millions of Syrian Liras were seized. Then, I wanted to gather all my receivables. Some of them opposed to this, and said they wouldn't give; while some others said they could not afford to pay as they had been robbed like me. We had some savings and golds that my wife had hidden in the house. So that, we could flee to Turkey along with my little children. We rent a house in Reyhanlı and now we wait. I can hear neither from my son nor from my employees.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Necib Bedii Allaviy, who came from Syria and lives in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Necib Bedii, who said he was faced with the occupying forces, not with the army, moved

in the tent city in Reyhanlı as the oppression and violence increased in the area.

Necib Bedii Allaviy abu Hasib: I live in El Rif hamlet of Taftanez town in Idlib, in Syria. I have 2 daughters and 4 sons. I am 60 years old. I am one of those who first brought TV, computer, white goods and various electronic devices in the region. My children are high school graduates, and they are tradesmen. We have a taxi, a truck, and a quite large workplace. We are a religious family which lives a quiet life and which is not in need in economic terms.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Necib Bedii Allaviy abu Hasib: Many stores I sell retail and wholesaling were closed due to the bombardment. When electricity, water, and transportation were cut, both our social and commercial life came to a stop. The company I purchased goods from is located in Aleppo. Our communication with Aleppo



is cut off. Local telephone lines did not work anymore. Mobile phones, on the other hand, were mostly cut. I could neither bring goods nor sell what I had. There are 2 kilometers between where we lived and the airport. I watch the aircrafts which take off to bomb the villages and cities. Most of the schools, workplaces, houses, mosques in our town were bombed. There were only 1000 1500 people left behind in our town with a population of approximately 20.000 people. Those who gathered their stuff together migrated along with their families. I was also damaged due to the bombs falling into the neighborhood of both my house and my workplace. We started to live like prisoners in our own country. It was as if we were faced with occupation forces, not with the army. It was not possible to object, or to claim rights. Some of our stuff were taken away from us. Large and empty houses were used as headquarters, and were destroyed. We were exposed to oppression and violence. When Jaish al Hur took the control in our district, the bombardment started to rise. Forces which could not enter in our area from by land started to kill innocent people through the attacks they carried out from the air. My children fled to Turkey before I came. Finally I couldn't stand and moved in the tent city after I arrived in Turkey. We will not go back to Syria until the war ends.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Nasif Ali Talal abu Shemseddin who came from Syria to Reyhanlı District of Hatay

The farm and livestock of Nasif Ali who is engaged in farming was damaged due to the bombardment, and he is not planning to return to Syria until things settle down.

Nasif Ali Talal abu Shemseddin: I am from Keferderyan village of Idlib in Syria. I am 62 years old. I have 7 children. One of my children is teacher in Aleppo. My other child is health technician and the other one is veterinary. My daughters are primary school graduates. All my children are married. I have a land with a cattle farm in it that is located 5 kilometers away from the village. I lived a quiet and modest life. I had 6 employees who worked as cleaner and carrier.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Nasif Ali Talal abu Shemseddin: When the civil war broke out, I had no peace and order anymore. In the first place, I preferred keeping quiet due to my responsibilities. I have a clear background. I neither have a criminal record nor did I involve in anything. I raised my children like that as well. Some people from our tribe resisted to the regime and they were blacklisted. My farm also had its share of the bombs that fell in Idlib and the neighborhood. Some of my animals perished. Some others escaped due to the fact that walls had been destroyed. I found some of the animals which escaped. However, most of them had been taken away by others. My children who lived in Aleppo were stuck in a difficult situation due to the fact that their neighborhood had been bombed. One of my sons in law was shot. Some people were stuck at their homes. They could not hear from each other for weeks. When I heard it, I wanted to gather my children and grandchildren together in Idlib. However, I could not achieve it. Some of them were afraid of losing their jobs, and some other did not want to leave their homes by saying that there was no difference between Idlib and Aleppo. My family had fallen to pieces. I had nothing left behind other than a car, a couple of animals and my house. My

only option was to migrate to Turkey. Firstly I sold my cattle, then some of my stuff. Unfortunately, I had to sell all of them at a very cheap price. I gained approximately 20 thousand dollars in cash, and thus I could come to Turkey. My children, sons in law and my grandchildren in Aleppo do not want to come to Turkey. My wife and I always think of them, but we are not planning to return to Syria until things settle down.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Ibrahim Suleiman En Nayif abu, who rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Ibrahim Suleiman, who is a faculty member in University of Aleppo, was tortured and oppressed for having given lectures not approved by the regime.

Ibrahim Suleiman en Nayif abu Salah: I am from Maarra District of Aleppo, in Syria. I am a faculty member in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at University of Aleppo. I am 48 years old. I have 4 children. My son is a student at University of Aleppo, and one of my daughters is Pharmacist.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Ibrahim Suleiman En Nayif abu Salah: I was a Syrian nationalist, a good citizen and an objective academician. I was objective, because I knew that leaders were temporary and the homeland was permanent. If you entrust your country to someone, you have to keep an eye on it just like you entrust your property. If you are a good observer, don't worry. You can criticize and defend as you wish on the right way. However, you cannot be informed about the course of events if you do not know anything about observation. The country you entrusted safely slowly slips away from your



hands. From this point of view, I started to give lectures against the injustices, mistakes and oppressions. I have never resorted to brute force. I have never taken part in actions. I only expressed my opinion. I have not adopted any will coming by force. Military men, administrators, ministry officials know me and people around me very well. They wanted me to change my attitude, and to give pro Assad advices. These demands even turned into oppression. I resisted, I did not do what they wanted me to do. In the first place, they only warned me. Then their attitude changed. In the dead of night, they took me away from home and brought me somewhere I did not know and tortured me. I was kept at a place which looked like a prison. I heard the screams of people around me. I saw that 40 50 people were kept captive in 16 20 m2 rooms of 4x4. They showed all those in order to intimidate me. However, I did not change my way. They resorted to various torturing methods such as bastinado, strapping etc. They told me to leave the country. Finally I left my home, family behind, and came to Turkey. I had some savings. I live in Turkey without any problem also thanks to the financial support from the people around me. Homeland means everything to me. Nevertheless, I will go back to Syria as long as cruel people continue to stay in power.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Muhsin Ali Zeki abu Farac, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Muhsin Ali Zeki abu Farac, a tradesman in Aleppo, had to migrate to Turkey when the living conditions became harsh in the city.

Muhsin Ali Zeki abu Farac: I am from Masharka neighborhood of Aleppo in Syria. I sell woman children clothes and cosmetics. I am 48 years old. I have 5 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Muhsin Ali Zeki abu Farac: My store is close to Emevi Mosque in grand bazaar. When the bazaar was bombed, the mosque was also bombed. Then Jaish al Hur seized the control of the area. As the air attack continued, the bazaar went to rack and ruin. All the stores in the area were destroyed and ruined. Some of them were plundered. During those bombardments, my uncle and niece were trapped in the wreckage and died.

Firstly wired telephone service was cut, then the electricity. As we could not use the mobile phones that ran out of battery, we could not communicate through them. Bazaar is closed, bakeries are closed, and groceries are closed. There is trade only in the areas where Syrian regular army seizes control. In the area where Jaish al Hur seize the control, there is no shopping opportunity. Because the area where Jaish al Hur seize control is constantly bombed. Syrian regular army dominates one third of Aleppo. In other words, trade came to a stop in two thirds of the city. The people who are locked in their homes due to the bombardment are hungry and miserable. Those who live in the areas where Bashar seizes control can meet all their needs. Our fellow citizens coming from those areas bring food and sell here. However, everything is too expensive. Everything went on the black market. My elder son is married with 2 children. When the whole family started to live on my savings, we became miserable in economic terms. We had to migrate to Turkey. We settled in the tent city. We won't return to Syria until peace is brought about here.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

Interview with Abdullah Hamid al Asasniy, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Abdullah Hamid al Asasniy abu Naci, who lives in Idlib, was taken under custody, tortured and forced to whistle blowing. He brought his father and mother along with him and came to Turkey.

Abdullah Hamid al Asasniy abu Naci: I am from Al Reshadiya, a neighborhood of Idlib province in Syria. I am 35 years old. I have a store where I sell musical instruments, mobile phones and accessories. I have 3 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Abdullah Hamid al Asasniy abu Naci: My elder brother joined Jaish al Hur. My brother is in Syrian regular army. My brother is a tanker. He is generally in Al Rif district of Damascus. My brother says that Syrian regular army is constantly dropping bombs on villages, hamlets and and strives to seize the control in the region. My elder brother joined the Jaish al Hur forces in Aleppo. I provide financial and moral support for my elder brother and his friends. I set a budget by gathering donation money from the businessmen around me. This budget is generally spent for families of those who fight within Jaish al Hur. Making its presence felt in Idlib at first, Jaish al Hur had to withdraw from Idlib afterwards. Currently, central Idlib is under the control of Syrian regular army. Even though I have no problem in my personal record, I was taken into custody due to the fact that whistleblow-

ers told I helped Jaish al Hur. I was tortured. I was forced to whistleblow. My house was destroyed. My store was destroyed during the bombardment. I had no goods or income left. I brought my old mom and dad along with me and came to Turkey. We cannot hear from my elder brother and brother. I will not go back to Syria until things settle down.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Hashim al Cebir abu Musto, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Hashim al Cebir abu Musto, who is pharmacist in Aleppo, says the number of immigrants will further rise in case the violent events continue.

Hashim al Cebir abu Musto: I am from Kellese neighborhood of Aleppo in Syria. I am 45 years old. I have three children. I am a pharmacist.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences in Syria and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Hashim al Cebir abu Musto: After the events broke out, the demand for medicines used in surgeries and treatment materials also increased. Rumors regarding that I provided medicine for Jaish al Hur members who were injured in bombardment began to spread. Jaish al Hur seize control in the district where my pharmacy is located, while the Syrian regular army seize the control of the area where my house is located. The area where my pharmacy is located was firstly bombed by aircrafts. Then my family started to be harassed.

I ran out of everything I had in the pharmacy, and I had nothing left. I could not find and bring any medicine except for simple medicines. When I had nothing left to sell, I closed my pharmacy. As I was blacklisted for helping the opponents, my house started to be constantly watched by the Syrian regular army. I could not leave my house for months. My 16 year old son and 18 year old daughter went shopping together. Telephone lines were cut, and mobile phones were wiretapped. There was no chance to properly have a conversation with anyone. Lastly, I built up my courage and talked to the members of Syrian regular army. I paid a price and came to the area controlled by Jaish al Hur after leaving Idlib. I came from Idlib to Babel Hawa and arrived in Cilvegözü without any batter, and finally entered Turkey. The bombardment in Aleppo still continues. Jaish al Hur seize the control of two third of the city, while Syrian regular army seize the control of the rest. There are lots of people who want to come to Turkey. If the events continue like this, the number of migrants will further increase.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 5 November 2012.*

An Interview with Kemaleddin Mustafa abu Hamza, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Kemaleddin Mustafa abu Hamza who has a grocery store lost many members of his family. When he could no more stand the living conditions in Syria, he came to Turkey.

Kemaleddin Mustafa abu Hamza: I come from Dana district of Idlib province in Syria. I am a father with 4 children. I am 43 years old.

I have a grocery store. I have 3 brothers and 17 cousins. We are an extended family.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Kemaleddin Mustafa abu Hamza: When the civil war broke out, my relatives and brothers joined Jaish al Hur. Some of them fought in Idlib, while some of them fought in Aleppo against the Regular Army. Three people in our family were martyred. Wives and children of the martyrs were desolated. I started to support them. As the violence became more intense, our house and grocery store were destroyed. We could save some of our stuff, but most of them were buried in the wreckage. We could see those who joined Jaish al Hur once every ten days. We got information from them about what was going on, and we learned the issues we could be helpful about. First of all, I sent the orphaned children to Turkey. Currently, they stay in the tent city in Kilis. On the other hand, we settled in somewhere near Tirmenin Village. When the Army completely seized the control of Idlib, my grocery store was plundered. When someone migrated, their houses and stores were plundered by the Regular Army and by those who still lived there. Nobody had pity on others. Some people robbed not to starve, and some others started a gang and took advantage of it.

Everywhere with lights on started to be bombed. When cluster bombs started to be dropped, people were stuck in a completely difficult situation. Some people were injured on their face and hands, while some other were hospitalized. There was no hospital, school, groceries left in the neighborhood. Electricity and water was constantly cut off. In addition, when winter was about to come, I decided that we could no more live there. I

brought a family of one of my brothers along with me, and firstly we came to Atma Village of Idlib near the Turkish border. Then we crossed the border and took shelter in Turkey. While we lived in Syria in peace and abundance, we became poor and people were martyred and we had to migrate. Currently, we live in a rent squatter's house in Reyhanlı. I cannot hear anything from anyone in my family in Syria.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Shehho Hadji Otman, who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Although Mustafa Shehho Hadji Otman, a teacher graduated from Department of History, wanted to do his job; he had to migrate as there was no one left from his family and the local people.

Mustafa Shehho Hadji Otman: I am from Binnec district of Idlib, Syria. I am 40 years old and father of two children. I am a member of a family in good shape. I graduated from the Department of Arabic Language and History at Aleppo University, and I work as a teacher in Syria.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mustafa Shehho Hadji Otman: In Binnec, there are two armies from opposition wing which are Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) and Jaish al Nasr from Free Syrian Army. These armies generally set their bases in villages and

towns of the district. Besides Binnec is also the hometown of Minister of Agriculture who was newly appointed by Bashar Assad, but he is not liked at all due to the fact that he did not react to the bombardment on his hometown. As the people in Binnec and his fellow townsmen, we hate the Minister of Agriculture due to fact that he has not resigned yet albeit he is Sunni.

Our district, which is near the military zone, military troops and airfield, is under the risk of a bombardment at any moment. Due to the cluster and barrel bombs dropped at certain hours, even the graveyards are bombed next to settlements. There are holes of 5 6 meters of depth in the graveyards where bones are scattered around. In Syria, Sunni people are tortured and massacred.

Even though some of the highways in the district are controlled by Jaish al Hur, and some others are controlled by Jaish al Nasr; they cannot be effective due to the fact that Assad forces have the air supremacy. It is so hard for them to open fire against the aircrafts and helicopters through the weapons they have.

Health service has also come to a dead stop. There are only two hospitals in our district, and the medical equipment is so insufficient that they cannot even perform a medical intervention until they take the injured to Turkey. Even if people do not die of the bombardment, they die because of the medical insufficiency in the hospital, which is full of injured people.

I lost most of my relatives. Tools and equipments of my family were all destroyed, out stores went wrack and were ruined, all our goods were wasted. The school I worked at, and the other schools in the district became completely empty due to the immigration. I could receive my salary as long as I stayed

in the district. I do not need the salary given by the government, but I had to escape from the torture and massacre in Syria like others did, as nobody was left in the district despite the fact that I preferred staying to do my job. What else could I have done?

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Vahed Lutfi al Habbaz abu Mustafa, who settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

When the conflicts broke out, carpenter Vahed Lutfi al Habbaz abu Mustafa firstly sent his family to Turkey; then he also came here as it became quite difficult to live in Syria.

Vahed Lutfi al Habbaz abu Mustafa: I come from Keferuruk village of Idlib in Syria. I am 43 years old, and father of 5 children. I am a carpenter and a joiner. I have an atelier with all kinds of machines and lumbers on 2 decares of land on Idlib Aleppo route. I make doors, windows, office furnitures to order for offices, houses, state institutions and organizations. I have 5 employees in my atelier.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Vahed Lutfi al Habbaz abu Mustafa: Right after the outbreak of civil war, our village was bombarded. Cluster bombs were dropped, a great number of children and women were killed. People started to emigrate from the neighboring villages and districts. This situation led to a downturn of trade. As we could not sell anything, we could not manufacture

either. Jaish al Hur seized the control of our area. When our houses were destroyed as a result of the bombardments, they built shelters. We began to stay in those shelters along with my family. My brother was killed during the conflicts. First of all I sent my family to Turkey. Then I carried on staying in Syria on my own. During the day, we stayed in woodlands, out of the village. During nights, on the other hand, we stayed anywhere we saw light. However, we had to sit by candle light. Winter almost came. There was no firewood in our neighborhood. Fuel, on the other hand, was very expensive. If the bombardment continued, more people would have to immigrate throughout winter.

We cannot even perform our prayer together with the crowd the way it used to be. Because wherever there is a crowd, that place is bombarded. Pro Assad reporters are all around. We call them “Shabiha”. When a whistleblower is detected, whether he is from the public or Jaish al Hur, he is immediately executed.

There are only very old and poor people left in our village and in the neighboring villages. Everybody immigrates. I could not stay on my own any longer and I came to my family in Turkey

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Asım Nebi abu Musto, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Minibus operator Asım Nebi abu Musto could not do his job due to the immigration, and came to Turkey. He is not planning to turn back to his country until things settle down in Syria.

Asım Nebi abu Musto: I live in Sermada in Idlib, Syria. I am 46 years old, and I have 4 children. I am a minibus operator between Sermada Aleppo, and also I am a chairman of a transportation cooperative. Sermada is the first settlement in the entrance of Syria right after the Cilvegözü Border Gate. Sermada is a developed and modern town with 10 thousand population. Those who escape from the bombardment in Aleppo and the neighborhood preferred the areas close to Turkish border and Sermada as the safest place. However, as the settlements in the area cannot absorb all people coming from other regions, migration began to flow towards Turkey. Sermada and its neighborhood were also bombarded by air strikes from time to time, lots of houses were destroyed but the aforesaid area was not damaged as Aleppo and Hama.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Asım Nebi abu Musto: In the neighborhood of Sermada, Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army FSA) and also Jaish al Nasr and Jaish al Salafiyya (Army of Radical Islamists) set up bases and seized the control in the area. Generally single young men; those who guarantee the security and subsistence of their family by settling them in Turkey; and those who feel conscientiously and mentally comfortable join these armies. I also have my relatives and friends within Jaish al Hur and Jaish al Nasr. Sometimes I myself participate in the actions against the Assad forces. Some people, on the other hand, provide logistic and financial support.

As our minibus stop and the vehicles could no more work in Aleppo, the Transportation Cooperative was dissolved. Some people sold their vehicles, and some of us came to Turkey by our minibuses. I no more have income in Syria. As the immigration flow to Sermada increased, the number of local people decreased and I could no more work. As it



became more difficult to go to neighboring provinces, I could not transport passengers to Aleppo either. Therefore, I brought along my family and crossed the Turkish border. I am not planning to go back to Syria until things settle down in the country.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Fadıl Kasım al Cibril abu Nahsen who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

“We felt like we lived in a country under occupation,” says Fadıl Kasım al Cibril abu Nahsen who is a broker in wholesale market hall.

Fadıl Kasım al Cibril abu Nahsen: I lived in Kellese neighborhood in Aleppo, Syria. I am 37 years old, and a father of 2 children. I make my living by acting as a broker in wholesale market hall.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Fadıl Kasım al Cibril abu Nahsen: When the civil war broke out, my two brothers were both enlisted in the army by force. As families and soldiers could no longer hear from each other, I could not hear from my brothers either.

When Aleppo and the neighborhood were bombed; the wholesale market hall was one of the first places attacked due to the fact that it is located in center of the city. When the roads of the neighboring villages were blocked, we couldn’t work anymore. No vege-

table or fruit arrived in central Aleppo. However, as there was no bombardment in areas where the army seized the control, in suburbs and highways, people could set up shops in those places.

As the areas where Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) seizes the control were constantly bombed, none of the shopping centers worked. Because the local people did not leave their homes and went to those areas, as they did not feel secure. In the areas where the army seizes the control, on the other hand, people went shopping in fear. Besides, the people and tradesmen can live in those areas in exchange for a certain price.

I felt like I do not live in my country, but rather in a country under occupation. Neither our children could go to school, nor our wives could go outside. We were stuck. We could barely find water, and electricity was completely cut. The bottled gas we bought was both very expensive and also went on the black market. We could buy it only at high prices and we hardly found it. However, even if we bought gas, we had neither vegetable and fruit nor food to cook. We strived to get by only with tea and food for breakfast.

In addition to such a life, we were also exhausted by fear, and thus we decided to immigrate. I packed my stuff, loaded it on my truck, and I drove through rural roads and finally arrived in Idlib with a heavy heart. Central Idlib is also under the control of Assad forces. In suburban villages, on the other hand, the Free Syrian Army seizes the control. I arrived in the border after many questions and great difficulties. I could come to Turkey after staying overnight in the border.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Mahmoud Najib Gazel, who rent an apartment in Reyhanlı district of Hatay and settled in here

Mahmoud Najib Gazel joined the Jaish al Hur, took part in the conflicts, and due to the lack of ammunition, shelter and food, he came back to Hatay where he had already brought his family.

Mahmoud Najib Gazel: I am from Taftanez in Idlib, Syria. I am 45 years old, and I have 4 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mahmoud Najib Gazel: Before the civil war, I worked in the Department of Agriculture in a government office, while I was engaged in farming in my own fields, and helped the farmers in the neighborhood on agriculture at my leisure.

As our hometown Taftanez is located two kilometers away from the Military airfield, it is the first place bombarded and constantly watched. During the bombardments, approximately two third of the town was completely bombed. First targets were mosques, schools, hospitals and bakeries. We were left for dead as the electricity and roads were completely cut, and we were forced to immigrate. We were an extended family, but during the bombardment at least 60 people in my family, including my brother and nephew, were killed. After the bombardment, we turned back to our houses which had gone to rack and ruin and we began to resist: During daytime we stayed under the shadow of our destroyed house, and at nights we left women and children in a place where they could hide and we went to participate in conflicts along with

other young men from the town. We caught various infectious diseases due to the problems such as dehydration, famine and lack of shelter.

The whole family was blacklisted due to the fact that young members of the family joined Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) to help the Free Syrian Army.

During the conflicts, Russia made MiG fighter jets dropped Al Ankundiya (Cluster Bomb) bombs on us like Israel did. Women, children and who lived in the town, including us, were injured because of the cluster bombs.

I rented an apartment after bringing my wife and children in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, and after staying a while, my friends and I went back to Aleppo to fight against the Regular Army. They attacked through jets and brutally dropped Syrian made Barrel Bombs, filled with nails and iron pieces, on us. Wherever barrel bombs dropped, it destroyed everywhere. On the other hand, we responded through insufficient weapons to hit the afore-said jets, and we had to wait due the lack of ammunition.

As the lack of ammunition caused to the waste of our efforts, due to the insufficiency of shelter, food, and as I missed my family, I came back to Hatay. However, I will participate in conflicts when I find a chance.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Muammer Sabri al Jafari abu Nihad, who settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

“People who have become poor, who have martyrs in their families and who are becoming less resistant started to immigrate,” says Muammer Sabri al Jafari abu Nihad.

Muammer Sabri al Jafari abu Nihad: I am from Martmasrin district of Idlib Province, Syria. I am 65 years old. I have 8 children. We have agricultural lands and farms. We are a notable family. I have 6 sons and 2 daughters. We have various agricultural implements, houses both in our town and in our olive groves. My two sons de facto fight in Jaish al Hur. My relatives and I provide them with financial support.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Muammer Sabri al Jafari abu Nihad: When the civil war broke out, our houses were first bombed through tanks and then through jets. Our houses were all destroyed. We ended up homeless with nothing. Our agricultural lands were destroyed, oil groves were plundered. While the Regular Army dropped bombs, on the other hand robbers gave damage. While we resisted against the Regular Army, some people among us formed an organization. They deceived poor people and formed a robbery gang. They plundered state warehouses, and places with basic foodstuff. In fact they stocked oil, increased prices and then they sold it. If a person like me in a good shape is on the verge of bankruptcy, I can't imagine those with an average salary per month. Those gangs gave us more damage than the Regular Army did. We began to fight both against them and also against the army. Many people among us were killed or injured due to the internal conflict. The civil war in Syria turned into a war between well intentioned and evil minded people. People who

have become poor, who have martyrs in their families and who are becoming less resistant started to immigrate. Along with my family I also had to come to Turkey. I am not planning to go back to Syria unless things settle down.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Mus'ab al Naci abu Ibrahim, who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Mus'ab al Naci abu Ibrahim's house is located in the area where the Regular Army seizes the control, while his store is located in the area under the control of Jaish al Hur. He had to migrate due to these difficult circumstances under the occupation.

Mus'ab al Naci abu Ibrahim: I am from Kel-lase neighborhood of Aleppo in Syria. I am 57 years old, and I was retired from the Municipality. I have two sons and three daughters. My daughters are married. I have 6 grandchildren. I have a store in Aleppo where I sell toys, and kitchen utensils. I have three younger brothers. One of them studies at university, while others have a clothing store in Long Bazaar. The distance between home and my store is 3 km. Therefore, I prefer minibus for transportation between home and my work place. However, since the outbreak of civil war, I have to walk due to the lack of security in the city.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mus'ab al Naci abu Ibrahim: The Bazaar is under the control of Jaish al Hur, while the

neighborhood where my house is located is under the control of the Regular Army. As the areas where the regular army seize control are not bombed, there is no harm in my house. But this is not the case in the Bazaar. Since the arrival of Jaish al Hur in Bazaar, there is a constant bombardment. They use many stores as their base. Therefore, there is neither security nor trade in Bazaar. After a while I stopped going to my store. Just like me, my brothers who also have their store in the Bazaar stopped opening their shops. On the other hand, they forced our younger brother who studied at university to enlist in the army. We do not know where he is now.

As the civil war continued, we started to go through problems due to the lack of water, electricity and food. Telephone lines did not work either. Therefore, we could hear from each other. We left Aleppo as soon as possible to get rid of these difficult circumstances. We

only took our clothes and took shelter in Tulel village in Idlib. Then we came to Reyhanlı district of Hatay.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Salahaddin al Nasiri, who rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

The printing house of Salahaddin al Nasiri was destroyed, and his equipments were burnt out. He says he is going to stay in Turkey until the problems are solved in Syria.

Salahaddin al Nasiri abu Kenan: I live in Aleppo, Syria. I have two children. I gradu-



ated from high school, and I make my living from printing business.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Salahaddin al Nasiri abu Kenan: During the civil war when Jaish al Hur (Free Syrian Army) seized the control of the area where my printing house is located, it was constantly bombarded by air. My working place in basement was entirely destroyed due to the barrel bombs. Only two families had left the building to immigrate, but others were in the building and they were either killed or severely injured during the bombardment. As I was at home, located two kilometers away from the building, during the bombardment; I saw the wreckage after the attack. My only source of income and capital was destroyed because of a barrel bomb. All of my equipments were destroyed.

There is no pitched battle in the area, the Assad forces do not fight manly tooth for tooth. Wherever Jaish al Hur is, that area is bombarded by air. So that the people are forced to immigrate, thus the aids to be provided for Jaish al Hur are prevented.

In Aleppo, where electricity and water is cut off, bakeries are bombarded, vegetable and fruit is obtained with lots of difficulties, I also went through many problems and pain like many other people in the city. Like everyone else, I brought two blankets, a carpet and a couple of stuff in my car, left home and started to look for a way out of Aleppo. First of all, I went to neighboring villages and then to Idlib. I arrived in Hatay with some savings and rent an apartment in Reyhanlı.

I had a peaceful life before, but now I am a poor refugee here. I am going to stay in Turkey until I find a way out.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 25 November 2012.*

An Interview with Muhib al Casim Hussein abu Ragib, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Muhib al Casim Hussein had to migrate from Binnec district, which is located near Turkey border, when he lost his job and his house was destroyed.

Muhib al Casim Hussein abu Ragib: I migrated from Binnec district of Idlib province, Syria. I am 62 years old and I am a father of 5 children. I am retired from Municipality.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Muhib al Casim Hussein abu Ragib: After my retirement, a friend of mine Mustafa al Baqqar and I started to run a patisserie. As he is an artist and I know nothing about the job, we agreed that I would provide the capital and he would do the job; and we opened a patisserie where we sell desserts, seasoned ice cream, mulberry syrup, palm syrup etc. We sold bagels and pastry in the mornings. We earned our living like this. I have 3 married daughters and their husbands are in central Idlib. On the other hand, my two sons are carpenters and they have an atelier.

When the civil war broke out, opposition groups started to stage a revolt in our area like in everywhere else. Some groups joined the Free Syrian Army (Jaish al Hur), while some others joined Jaish al Nars. They fought against the Regular Army and they collected money. Binnec district act in unison with

opposition groups except for traitors and reporters. And the financial and moral support continued to be provided. The military airport was 3 km away from our location, and the aircrafts started to constantly take off and bomb us. The bazaar, mosque, collective settlements, bread and oil lines were all controlled and bombed by air. Many people were killed and a large number of settlements were destroyed. There are many people who could not be freed from the wreckage.

We could not open our patisserie anymore. The people migrated, purchasing power was on the decrease, and people started to fight for their living. People neither ate dessert nor drank beverage anymore. This civil war was a kind of destruction for tradesmen in every aspect. My sons also fought along with Jaish al Hur. They have been providing support for those who came from outside the city, and they still carry on fighting.

I could only receive my retirement salary, but we could no more work and our house was destroyed. I had to migrate. There is a half

hour distance between Turkish border and Binnec district which is my hometown. One night, I brought my family along with me and came to the border. After waiting for a day in the border, I arrived in Turkey. My sons did not come, but I brought along their wives and my grandchildren over here. All of us stay here in an apartment. Those who fight within Jaish al Hur in Syria receive 150 dollars in a month. My sons send their salaries to me for the household maintenance. This amount is enough for our house rent and our maintenance here. Syrians in Reyhanlı receive support from outside. Rich Arabs in Europe send units to the area, they detect the needs over here and provide food and accommodation services. I lead such a life.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Necmeddin Zuher abu Mustafa, who came from Aleppo to Turkey and settled in Hatay



A car dealer Necmeddin Zuher abu Mustafa says to new immigrants that “I would also go and fight, if I were younger”.

Necmeddin Zuher abu Mustafa: I come from Halluk neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 63 years old and father of 6 children. I am a taxi driver. I make my living by selling cars that I bring from Germany. Whomever buys a car abroad, they send me to bring it in. I used to bring those cars from Germany to Syria via Turkey in return for a certain amount of money. I do not have another job.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Necmeddin Zuher abu Mustafa: When the civil war broke out in Aleppo, car business came to a stop as well. During the bombardment my car was trapped in the wreckage along with my house, and I lost my three children. Nobody could survive in my family except for my married daughter and my two sons who live outside Aleppo. I am in a total misery. As I cannot carry out heavy work due to my age, I sell Salep Bagels in Hatay Reyhanlı. Although I earn enough to pay my rent and to lead my life, I have a big problem in terms of health as I have to stand up while working during the day. Besides, I might also have to make do with what I earn by selling only bagels from time to time, as I cannot sell salep in hot weather. Salep sales also increased as the weather got cold. Currently I make relatively good money, I earn 20 25 lira on average.

The civil war did not only take our economy away, but also it swallowed our pride. I never thought I would make my living by selling salep, as I used to earn my living by going to Eu-

rope and bringing cars to Syria. I feel embarrassed as I have become dependent on those at the age of my children.

I used to have a luxurious house and a decent life in Aleppo. Now I live in a shack in Reyhanlı. Winter is about to come and I am not prepared for winter conditions. I have neither a heating stove, nor carpet or charcoal. My biggest dream is to take a rest next to a heating stove when I come home after working outside all day long, but it does not seem possible in such an environment with such income.

I’m telling those who have recently been migrating from Aleppo: It is getting worse, and the circumstances are getting worse as well. Bombardments continue. I would also go and fight, if I were younger. I would join Jaish al Hur. Those who join those groups and fight receive 150 dollars in a month. I would prefer this option rather than living here under these circumstances, but my age is an obstacle. I have no choice other than being patient.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Bekkar Hamid el Cannad abu Aziz, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Bekkar Hamid al Cannad, who is a farmer in Syria, came to Turkey along with his wife and children, and currently he earns his living by hawking.

Bekkar Hamid el Cannad abu Aziz: I come from Bergum village of Aleppo, Syria. I am 55 years old and I have 5 children, I have a small cattle farm.

As my family was in good shape, I started to work in the village with my dad without completing my studies in Aleppo. We have our land, sheeps and goats, tractors, agricultural equipments and machinery, and livestock carrier.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Bekkar Hamid el Cannad abu Aziz: Our village is the most developed village in the neighborhood in terms of transformation and construction plan which is located between Aleppo and Hama, also which has an itinerary to Damascus. We had electricity, water, schools, health centers and everything. While we lived in a peaceful atmosphere, we did not have peace anymore like the rest of Syria when the civil war broke out.

When Jaish al Hur supporters and the regular army supporters divided our village into two, we started to fight, and people were killed and injured in both parties. People started to migrate. Only 20 household population remained in the village from 150 household population. When everyone immigrated, there was no more security in the village.

As our highways were closed to traffic, living in the village and raising livestock became meaningless. Besides, when my employees left the village as well, only my children and I were remained in the farm. We had hard times, we were concerned and frightened. There were burglars and gangs around us. They started to prey on us. We did not know who supported whom anymore. My agricultural equipments, and livestock were taken away from me by force. My livestock perished, and I could no more find animal feed water. Our houses were

set on fire and destroyed, and I moved to another place. I sold my livestock at a low price. Only my car and tractor remained. I brought along my wife and children and came to Turkey with as much as stuff we loaded to our car.

As the living conditions in Turkey is relatively more expensive than it was in Syria, I had to work. I opened a stall and here I sell wrap. In other words, I run a mobile kebab shop. Because the only thing I know about is sheep-herding agriculture. I do not know anything else, or have any profession other than this to make my living. One of my adult sons work in a bakery, and my other son sells vegetable on a barrow. As we have to live here, we have to endure this hardship and poverty as the price of saving our lives.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Muammer Necib Hasan abu Adil, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Muammer Necib Hasan's son was badly injured by a shrapnel piece, and he became permanently disabled. When poverty, accommodation and heating problems arose, he came to Turkey.

Muammer Necib Hasan abu Adil: I migrated from Hamdaniye neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. My workplace was located in Bebibecen neighborhood. I am a father of 3 children and I am 32 years old.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Muammer Necib Hasan abu Adil: I inherited the spice store, which I run in Aleppo, from my father. I sold all kinds of spice and coffee. When Jaish al Hur seized the control of both our neighborhood and the neighborhood where my store was located during the civil war, the Regular Army started to fire bombs into these neighborhoods by air. My 10 year old son was badly injured by a shrapnel piece when he was in bread line in front of the bakery, and he became permanently disabled. Our family was unsettled we had no more peace.

There was no one left around to whom I could sell the goods in the store, neither could I have pulled the goods out of the wreckage. Everything stayed in place. Right now, my store is locked, but the upper floors and my neighborhood are all destroyed. I do not know what is left behind, because I can by no means go there right now, because the area might be bombed at any moment. When I lost my source of income and I had no other choice, I brought my wife and my children along with me and we moved to a relative who lives near

Idlib. My relative lives in Tirmenin village in Idlib. Despite the transportation problems, poverty etc. in the village, it is a good place in terms of life security. It is not a shelled area. However, before we arrived here, the Regular Army came and took young men away to join the army. Agricultural activities and business life came to a dead stop. Villagers pick from fields and make their living by selling a vegetable called Kōmeç, and onion, lettuce, spinach they plant in their garden. They bake their bread on old style sheet iron. Due to the lack of meadow, pasture and feed, villagers cannot get benefit from their livestock as they are not fed sufficiently, so they sell their livestock to merchants. I had to come to Turkey due to poverty, accommodation and heating problems as winter is about to arrive.

I rent a shanty house in Hatay Reyhanlı. Sometimes I work as porter, farm laborer, construction worker, or whatever I find. Although I have hard times as I do not have a profession, I am striving to adapt myself into the living conditions here. Most of those coming from our region are working as well.



Those who have capital buy food products, biscuits, wafers, diapers etc. from Turkey and sell them in Syria. However, I do not have an opportunity to do so as I do not have a car and money. The civil war turned my life into a misery. I will stay here until things settled down in Syria.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Musab Lütfi Haccar abu Rıdvan, who came from Aleppo to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Musab Lütfi Haccar, who is a teacher, says: “Many people around me whose houses were destroyed and who had to leave their stores either went to tent cities or rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı”.

Musab Lütfi Haccar abu Rıdvan: I come from Masharka Neighborhood of Aleppo. I am 35 years old and I am a teacher. I am father of 2 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Musab Lütfi Haccar abu Rıdvan: When the civil war broke out, I remained neutral and carried on working as a teacher. However, when the school was closed as a result of bombardments and the arrival of Jaish al Hur in our region, I left the school and came to Turkey along with my family.

I know nothing other than my teaching profession. Due to the financial problems, I started to work as tea seller in Reyhanlı for 20

TL a day. I rent an apartment with 2 rooms and a kitchen for 250 TL, and my family and I are striving to hold on to life. Many people around me came to Turkey. Those, whose houses were destroyed and left their stores either went to tent city or rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı.

I cannot receive my salary. I need to get back to work as a teacher to receive my salary, but I could not return to Syria as I do not have a life security over there. I would have joined Jaish al Hur if I did not have my wife and my children. They give 150 dollar per month. It is close to my teaching salary, but my children and my wife would not be safe there. They cannot live alone here either. Therefore, I did not join Jaish al Hur. Those who do not have a job or a profession and some volunteers join Jaish al Hur. They receive a salary ranging between 150 and 200 dollars. There are not only Syrians, but also Pakistani, Afghan, Yemeni, Libyan and Palestinian people in Jaish al Hur. Some of them joined the group for Jihad, and some others joined for both Jihad and money.

I have a decent and holy profession, and I cannot practice my profession. I am far from my country, friends. I am fed up with serving tea, washing the dishes, and cleaning the place out all day long. I am depressed. But, I console myself with the fact that I am healthy, I saved my family from the bomb attacks. If I hadn't come here, we might have been trapped in the wreckage. Maybe we would have been killed by a shrapnel. I wait in patience now. I have nothing else to do.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Mustafa Hatib Abdulgafur abu Shahabeddin, who came from Idlib to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Mustafa Hatib Abdulgafur suggests that the civil war stemmed from the revolt of young generation for freedom against the oppression of the Ba'ath Regime.

Mustafa Hatib Abdulgafur abu Shahabed-din: I am 65 years old. I have 5 children and I am a retired imam.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mustafa Hatib Abdulgafur abu Shahabed-din: Nobody prevents us from performing our religion and our religious duties in Syria. However, some restrictions were imposed in lessons and khutbahs. We cannot mention the cruelty of tyrant. We cannot interpret some verses from the Qoran. We cannot talk about some issues at all.

Our children study, but they cannot take office in crucial positions within state institutions. We are always appointed to second class positions. Even current Ministers cannot

make political statements and comments, even if they are Sunni. Only Head of the State, Ba'ath Party members and Foreign Minister have the control. We have a symbolic assembly and a symbolic Council of Ministers. The same problem is observed also in Parliamentary elections, municipal elections, and mukhtar elections. Those who are not from Ba'ath cannot even become candidate.

From each district, 15 20 people go to the polls in Presidential elections. Others do not even go to the polls but when the election results are announced, voter turnout is 90%. In our system, neighborhood mukhtar or village headman are not elected but they are appointed, and they do not receive salary, nor do they have a social security. The civil war, conflict, and opposition stemmed as a result of this. No matter what your position, rank or character is, you are nothing if you are not from the Ba'ath party and if you are Sunni. The person with lowest rank gives order to the one with highest rank, he disobeys.

The old were ignorant, and they put up with it. The new generation, on the other hand,



is in the quest of a change in the changing world. What we call freedom is for that. We are free in trade, in education, in travel; but we do not have a dignity. In some regions, we are not even treated like a human being. As they do not take us seriously, we cannot give orders on important issues, but instead we receive orders. Therefore, unrest broke out among the young. Therefore, we rebelled against the regime, and we started our fight. We cannot say wrong sides of a Ba'ath Party government official to his face. Otherwise we are put in prison and nobody knows how long and where we are kept under custody. No one can defend the political prisoners and opponents, and nobody including their family can visit the aforesaid prisoners. It is not possible to know where they are either. That's why the civil war broke out. Briefly those are the reasons of migration from Syria.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Nebhan Hadji Aliyaser, who rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Nebhan Hadji Aliyaser, who owns an electronics store, says that “people are hungry, miserable and worried about their future.”

Nebhan Hadji Aliyaser: I am from Bab town of Aleppo, Syria. I am 37 years old. I have a store where I sell white goods, home appliances and bottled gas. I am married and have two children. I graduated from primary school, and I took Arabic Religious and Quran courses. I purchase all items for my store from wholesalers in Aleppo.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went

through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Nebhan Hadji Aliyaser: After the civil war broke out, transportation to our area came to a stop. We could neither bring any goods from outside, nor sell the goods in the store. Due to the fact that Syrian pound (SYP) lost its value and that people started migrate from the neighborhood, trade came to a halt. As bottled gas went on the black market, we could no more work as dealers. Also, due to the constant power blackout and as people could no more live in their homes in peace, electronic items were not used anymore. Everything came to a dead stop in our area.

Our town was bombed, settlements, mosques and most of the stores were all destroyed. People stay mostly in villages and hamlets out of the town. The Regular Army and the related forces intruded in our homes and took away money, jewelery and whatever they found precious, and stole from people. Women were harassed. Some people, rich families were forced to pay money. Top it all off, they paid a price in certain days to live in their homeland.

There was almost no education, no properly working government office, and no state order anymore. The farmers in the neighborhood could not harvest their crops. There was no one to collect olives during the harvest season, none of the crops were harvested and they were all ruined when the harvest season was over. The local people were hungry, miserable and worried about their future. There are thousands of people who want to come to Turkey, but they cannot come as they do not want to leave their homes and properties behind.

I left everything behind including my electronics store and my home behind and came

to Turkey. And you cannot find what you leave behind due to the robbery, they steal whatever they find. Some people make their living only by stealing things. Because they cannot do anything else. Relatives and friends do no more have a pity on each other, and everybody has become preoccupied with their own troubles. We lost the power of solidarity, our willpower and our homes.

In Turkey, I work in random jobs; I load charcoal cement on transportation vehicles, I do whatever I find as a daily job and pay my rent and look after my children.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Kaddur Hashim abu Ibrahim, who rent an apartment and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Kaddur Hashim abu Ibrahim supported and provided financial assistance for Jaish al Hur, and thus he was blacklisted. He came to Turkey along with his wife as he was sought as a fugitive.

Kaddur Hashim abu Ibrahim: I am from Akrebat village, Idlib province. I am engaged in livestock farming. I am 55 years old and father of 5 children. My two children have college degrees, and it is thanks to my shepherding and stockbreeding. However, I could not provide them with a good job. Those who graduated from the same school and department were assigned to high positions as they were from Baath Party, but my sons are only a regular civil servants. They are still in Syria and I do not reveal their identities to prevent any possible damage to them. My other son, on the other hand, is engaged in trade in Idlib.

My two daughters are married, and one of them migrated to Turkey with her husband months ago, while my other daughter is still in Idlib.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Kaddur Hashim abu Ibrahim: Like all people who are oppressed, we took sides with the opposition group as well. Our house was destroyed, my animals all perished, I was despised and assaulted; but I have never changed my view. Also my children live like a refugee as if they are not a Syrian citizen. While they work as civil servants under those who are less educated than themselves, others work in top positions. There is no equality, no justice. Therefore we are filled with hate, and we oppose.

The families I know who suffered like me joined the Jaish al Hur for this reason. Therefore, those who have means started to fight. I provided Jaish al Hur with financial support, I opened up my house to a couple of people for a while, and I shared my bread with them. The Regular Army knows that I help those people, so I was blacklisted by the army. And also my relatives. Including my family and people around me, all of us lost our properties and everything.

I brought my wife along with me and we came to Turkey. But my children, my grandchildren are still in Syria. I have a pickup truck, I buy food products and blankets and bring them to Syria. And I sell those in rural areas.

Those in Syria live in poverty and misery as factories do not work anymore. The production came to a halt due to the constant black-out and the lack of oil. However, they main-

tain their lives through products brought from Turkey. The Regular Army still keeps the control of the center of Idlib. Only the neighboring villages and towns of Idlib are controlled by Jaish al Hur. We cannot even go to our province, our city. There is no possibility to buy our needs. There is no security of life and property. They put us in prison the moment they catch us. Thousands of people like me are escapees.

Winter has arrived, and people still live there without any heating stove, and they do not have almost anything to eat. We lived in an order where suppression is at maximum level, and that's why people migrate. People will continue to migrate as long as the system does not change.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Suheyl Mahmoud abu Riyad, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Suheyl Mahmoud abu Riyad, who is an employee in a hotel, lost his brother during a bombardment. And he brought along his family and came to Turkey.

Suheyl Mahmoud abu Riyad: I am from Masharka neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I used to work in a three star hotel in the Bab el Farac neighborhood of Aleppo. I am 30 years old. I am married and father of 2 children. I graduated from high school in Aleppo. After military service, I found a job and started to work in a hotel. We are a poor family, my father and my brothers work in wholesale market hall. Some family members, on the other hand, repair shoes and work in similar jobs.

As the hotel is located in the center of Aleppo and I have been working here for a long time, I talk to people from various nations. I speak Turkish and English at a basic level. But I know Arabic language and literature very well, and besides I am good at preparing appetizers and have an expertise in hotel and tourism sector.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Suheyl Mahmoud abu Riyad: I had a peaceful life, and a house of mine; but my family had hard times when the civil war broke out, and our neighborhood was bombed. One of my brothers was killed, and I had to look after my 3 half orphan nephews and my brother's wife.

I was determined not to leave Aleppo no matter what happens. As the bombardments became more frequent, and more and more people were killed, I had to leave my country as there was no trade income anymore, and I changed my mind and decided to come to Turkey. I brought my family, my widow brother's wife and my half orphan nephews and we all came to Turkey. As my father and all my other brothers had come to Turkey months ago, they had already settled in the tent city in Kilis. But I rent an apartment in Reyhanlı as I could not get used to the idea of staying in tent city.

I drove to Turkey in my old model Skoda car. I carry Syrians, loads etc. sometimes within the city and sometimes from the city to villages. I gave my telephone number to all Syrians, and they call me when there is a need to carry things, and thus I make my living in Turkey. I cannot go back to Syria until things settle down in Syria. I hope we have the freedom you have here, because what matters is to live in freedom.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Zekeriya Haman al Shemmari abu Hamza, who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Zekeriya Haman, who has an olive oil factory, says that we will stay in Turkey until peace and security is brought about in Syria.

Zekeriya Haman al Shemmari abu Hamza: I come from El Rif district of Salkin village, Idlib. I am 47 years old. I am a farmer, and I have olive trees and a factory of olive oil. I have 5 children. I received religious education.

During the Hafez Assad period, the government distributed lands to the people, and I also benefited from the land reform. I planted olive trees on the land I received from the government, and I started to engage in olive farming by also renting lands from those in the neighborhood who are not in a good shape. In due course, I expanded my lands and I owned an olive oil factory. When my sons grew older, we maintained this job as a family in our area. I have a car, tractor, and a pickup truck for transportation, and I have my employees.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Zekeriya Haman al Shemmari abu Hamza: When the civil war broke out, our district was divided into two parts: Pro Assad supporters and opposition. Pro Assad supporters claim that they benefited from the land reform in the past, and that they make their living thanks

to these lands despite the fact that these are state lands. The new generation, on the other hand, opposes as they prefer a more modern life against the oppression and maltreatment. When the government forced them to fight against the opposition and to report them everything, it turned into a conflict because as there are both pro Assad supporters and opponents within a family, they realized they had to report each other. They would either do that, or their lands would be taken away from them, and given to pro Assad supporters. They fought against each others for a long time, but they could not reach an agreement in their districts.

On one hand, Jaish al Hur members started to attack pro Assad supporters, and on the other hand pro Assad supporters started to attack the opposition forces. We were caught between two fires. Our lands were destroyed slow by slow, as well as our houses.

Both due to the lack of order among ourselves and we were targeted by the government, we decided to migrate, and many people in our district migrated. We had means to come to Turkey with our family, and we did so. Only a member of our family was injured, but nobody was martyred in our family. In Reyhanlı, children and I buy food products and a variety of products, load them to our pickup truck and carry them to Syria through the border and we maintain our life like this. We will stay in Turkey until things settle down and peace is brought to Syria.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 6 December 2012.*

An Interview with Velid Mohammad Zeydan, who came from Idlib Province of Syria to Turkey and has been receiving treatment in Hatay

Velid Mohammad Zeydan was persecuted and injured a lot. Thus, he came to Turkey for treatment.

Velid Mohammad Zeydan: I am from Idlib province of Syria. I am 62 years old. I engage in trade.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Velid Mohammad Zeydan: When the civil war broke out, all neighborhoods were bombed by jets. Our shop was plundered, and our animals were taken away from us. Everyone around me immigrated to survive. My married children along with my grandchildren came to Turkey, but I stayed in Syria. I was prevented from engaging in trade. I was restricted. I was manhandled and insulted wherever I went. But still, I did not migrate on purpose. "I will die in Syria," I said. I was beaten to within an inch of my life. Ultimately I took to my bed. My relatives said I needed a medical intervention, and forced me to go to Turkey. When I came here, I found my children. I received treatment. However, many of the injuries I already had could not be treated.

A couple of days later this interview was carried out, Velid Mohammad Zeydan's son tells; "We immediately had my father treated. But he passed away in Hatay Reyhanlı on 24.12.2012. My father's wish was to live and die in Syria. However, he passed away in Turkey. We will take his corpse to Syria after completing necessary legal procedures."

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Semi Necib Abdullah abu Hikmet, who came from Aleppo Syria to settle in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

After the outbreak of the civil war, outfitter Semi Necib Abdullah's shop and home were destroyed. Then he came to Turkey and began to send food and ready to wear products to Syria.

Semi Necib Abdullah abu Hikmet: I come from Ayn al Tel neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 58 years old. I am father of 4 children. I am an outfitter. With my two sons and 16 employees, we sell both underwear and outerwear products to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. When the civil war broke out, trade routes were blocked and demands were declined. First, the chances of export to foreign market, then in domestic market were lost. I started to dismiss my employees. Fabrics, accessories I had bought for manufacturing remained unsold. My capital of millions of SYP was of no use anymore.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Semi Necib Abdullah abu Hikmet: The trade center where my shop is located was bombed. My neighborhood was invaded. When everywhere was destroyed, everybody started to leave. I started to struggle for my life, left Aleppo and came to Turkey. I had some savings. In addition, I asked for financial help from the businessmen I know in the Middle East. I opened a shop in Reyhanlı, and started export food and ready to wear products to Syria. Those who live in Hatay Reyhanlı and export goods to Syria apply share based trade. They go to rural areas, villages or less damaged towns and warehouse the goods over there. They make sale depending on the

needs of the area. The major problem is the devaluation of SYP, and the rising cash flow problem of the people. While the price of a shirt ranged between 300 to 500 SYP before, it is currently 1000 SYP. While the price of a coat ranged between 750 to 1000 SYP in the past, now it is 3000 SYP. Wood burning stove is demanded most. Because fuel is currently on the black market in Syria. The people try to get warm by burning chocks, sacks etc.

I set up a business in Turkey where I came as a refugee, and started to earn my living. In fact, I also provided job opportunities to Syrians who came here to struggle for their lives like me.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Mahmoud Idris al Selim abu Ibrahim, who came from Idlib province of Syria and came to Turkey to settle in Hatay

Mahmoud Idris al Salim, who is a farmer, lost his son during the conflicts. He decided to migrate for safety of his life, economic problems, and also due to the pressure caused by the war.

Mahmoud Idris al Selim abu Ibrahim: I am from Kefellesin Village of Idlib, Syria. I am 62 years old. I have 2 wives, and I am father of 11 children. The ages of my children range between 15 to 28. I have 8 sons. My 5 children are married. I have 12 grandchildren. We have lands in our village. We grow olive, grape, fig. Our sole source of income is agriculture and stockbreeding.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mahmoud Idris al Selim abu Ibrahim:

When the civil war broke out, my 26 year old son joined Jaish al Hur. During the conflicts, my son was martyred. He has two sons. After his death, the whole family started to feel more uneasy about the situation. Our olive groves, orchard were damaged. We could not harvest our crops. We were damaged to a large extent in economic terms. There was no meadow left to graze our animals. Blackout, food shortage etc. We could not find anything to eat. I wanted to sell my field and my livestock. However, there was no one left to buy them as everybody migrated, lands could not be cultivated, and due to the lack of meadow to graze livestock. I sold my livestock at low prices to butchers. We decided to migrate for safety of our lives, economic problems, and also due to the pressure caused by the war. We arrived in Reyhanlı and rent a house. As the whole family, we settled in this four room house with garden. We took a pick up truck while coming here. We both meet our own needs and also transport to the border or city center through this pick up truck. During the olive season, we worked in the fields in Reyhanlı. We planted onion, and pruned trees. Women in our family bake bread and sell them to the Syrians in the neighborhood. We are in contact with those come from and go to Syria. We hear that our furniture and goods at our home we left behind are all plundered. We were damaged in both financial and emotional terms. What I worry about most is the fact that my grandchildren cannot carry on their education.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Naif Abdo Zahir abu Ekrem, who came from Syria to Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Naif Abdo Zahir abu Ekrem, who lived in Hama Syria, went through all kinds of difficulties and came to Turkey.

Naif Abdo Zahir abu Ekrem: I am from Al Rif district of Hama in Syria.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about the reason you came to Turkey and the process of your arrival in the country?

Naif Abdo Zahir abu Ekrem: Two of my 6 children and one of my grandchildren were killed. Then I brought along my daughters, my daughter in law and my grandchildren, and we came to Turkey. We got on a truck, took some stuff and food, and set off. The distance between Hama and Turkey border is 130 km. Hundreds of people in our district were killed as a result of bomb attacks. So tens of thousands of people migrated like we did. There were many negative factors like the lack of oil, and rough roads. There is no means of transport on highways. Village roads are used for transportation. Besides, there are also gangs and thieves in some areas where Jaish al Hur is not present. They question those who pass by the route and take away their extra belongings. They do not let people go for a long time. They hold them for hours. Many injured people are treated primitively on the roads. Some of them cannot be treated even through primitive ways. One cannot live in an area of bombardment. But in the process between leaving the area and arriving in the border, you can also be killed. People who are injured die of either blood loss, or diseases. When jets detect a crowded group on the road, they start to drop bombs. Artillery shells are fired from a distance. Artillery shells stop in 20 kilometers distance away from the Turkey border because the area is controlled by Jaish al Hur. Even though the entire rural area of Idlib is saved, there are still Assad forces in the city center. We could not feed children with any-

thing other than dry bread and cheese on the road. We had neither time nor place where we could be safe.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Numan al Hashim abu Ibrahim, who came from Aleppo Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Retired worker Numan al Hashim abu Ibrahim rent an apartment with those who came from Syria settled in Reyhanlı like himself, and he works in daily jobs.

Numan al Hashim abu Ibrahim: I am from Hamdaniya Neighborhood of Aleppo. I am 53 years old. I am father of 5 children. I am a retired municipal worker. My elder son has been serving his military service in Tartus, Syria. We cannot hear from him for three months.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Numan al Hashim abu Ibrahim: Our house was damaged due to the barrel bombs dropped on our neighborhood during the civil war. Despite the fact that many walls were damaged, we kept on living in the house. The pension of a retired municipal worker is 20 thousand SYP (approximately 400 TL). When the economy collapsed in Syria, all prices increased. While a bag of bread used to cost 25 SYP (8 loaves of bread in a bag), now it is 150 SYP. In the given circumstances, we had to make do with 8 loaves of bread for 2-3 days as an entire family. We lived half hungry. It was also the same in

vegetable prices. We could not eat any fruit. There was a blackout in general. Bottled gas was in black market. When winter was about to come, we decided to set up a fuel stove but the price of fuel increased from 40 SYP to 200 SYP. Then I tried to convince my wife to come to Turkey along with our children. However, my wife said she would not go anywhere before our son in military service comes back. So I came to Turkey by leaving my wife and children behind. My wife has been receiving my retirement pension by proxy, and struggling to survive. I rent an apartment with some Syrians. I work in daily jobs; sometimes I work as a porter, sometimes as an agricultural worker, and sometimes I sell things I brought from Syria. (Second hand household items, and even clothes brought from Syria are now sold in Hatay. As some people in Syria do not have any source of income anymore, they break into vacant houses and take whatever they find.) The civil war and winter conditions forced most people to steal. There is no production and besides there is a constant devaluation. The number of thieves is going to further increase.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Naci Hassun al Kasravi, who came from Idlib Province of Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

“We hope that the current regime topples as soon as possible,” says Naci Hassun El Kasravi who is a farmer.

Naci Hassun al Kasravi: I am from Kille Village of Idlib Province in Syria. I am 55 years old. I am a father with 6 children. I have been engaged in farming for years. I have a tractor,

pick up truck, and all kinds of land vehicles. When people started to migrate, I took over their lands. They told me to plant their lands and they would accept no matter what I give as a profit during the harvest season. My two adult sons and I ploughed lands and started to plant grains. However, helicopters hovered over us and they opened harassing fire on us. Our own army prevented us from farming in our own country, and also they prevented us from ploughing uncultivated lands, and producing food. Fear on the one hand, and the lack of oil to run vehicles on the other hand, we could not plant the lands.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Naci Hassun al Kasravi: My children were scared. We baked bread on a wood fire, and generated electricity through generators. When oil and fuel was on black market, we had to come to Turkey by bringing only our personal belongings with us. We are farmers. There is no job we can do here. Some landowners employed us for a couple of days. However, the daily wage was not enough to fulfill our needs. As 13 people; my children, my daughters in law, my grandchildren and I live in a 4 room apartment. New year has arrived but we could not set up a stove yet. There is no carpet, rug on the floor. We furnished the apartment with thin and old blankets. Even though we light electric stove from time to time, we cannot always use it as electricity is expensive in Turkey. We work as laborers in various jobs. We started to make second hand sales. However, we cannot make much profit as there are many people do it. Sometimes my children and I cross the border and go to Syria. We bring our stuff from home. We take things that we need from the vacant houses. When there is a crowd in the

morning, bombardment starts immediately. We can only cross the border during the night in dark. We do not have enough food, or any winter clothes. We hope that the current regime topples as soon as possible. Otherwise we will die of starvation and misery like all other poor and homeless Syrians.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Nevvaf Muhsin al Seyyid, who came from Aleppo Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Nevvaf Muhsin al Seyyid, who is a senior at Faculty of Law, migrated to Turkey with his family due to harder living conditions and lack of life safety.

Nevvaf Muhsin al Seyyid: I am from Kellese Neighborhood of Aleppo in Syria. I am single. I am a senior student in Faculty of Law at University of Aleppo.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Nevvaf Muhsin al Seyyid: I am a member of an anti regime group at University. Most of my friends were killed. As I thought that my family was in danger, I brought along my parents, my two sisters and my nephew, and we came to Turkey. My father opened a stall in Hatay and he sells wraps. And I work as a porter. Otherwise I work in coal packaging job. As long as the regime goes on like this, it is not possible for me to go back to Syria. In fact, I am even afraid of some Syrians in Turkey. Following the outbreak of the civil war, I

took part in many demonstrations. Some of my friends are lost, and even their families do not know where they are. When Aleppo was attacked by jets and cluster bombs, I witnessed many people were buried in the wreckage. There was no hospital to carry the injured people, nor any medical intervention to treat them. People treated the injured through primitive methods. During the day it was not possible to do anything with bodies, we could bury them only at night. While being persecuted by our own army and our citizens, Aleppo turned into an invaded city. On one hand destroyed houses, fires, scent of gas and gunpowder; and on the other hand gangs of thieves robbing destroyed houses and shops. Some days we longed for a hot plate of food and even for bread. It was not possible for us to change our clothes. There was no water to clean ourselves. Neither any washing machine, detergent, nor soap. We stank. Under these circumstances, it was not possible to stay at home in Aleppo. The only option was to migrate to Turkey.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Shakir al Zammar Tillavi abu Shahab, who came from Aleppo Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Running a grocery store, Shakir al Zammar Tillavi abu Shahab hopes to go back to Syria if the civil war comes to an end by the end of winter.

Shakir al Zammar Tillavi abu Shahab: I am from Muarra town of Aleppo in Syria. I am 55 years old. I have 4 children. I run a grocery store.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Shakir al Zammar Tillavi abu Shahab: I came from Idlib to Reyhanlı six months ago. My married son was injured during the civil war. He cannot work due to his injuries. His 3 children and my 3 children live in a house with no heater. We can barely pay the rent of the house we live in. I work in fields, harvest olives, plant onion, and work as porter. Sometimes we cannot find a hot plate of food or even bread. Money I earn is by no means enough for all of us. I had some saving while coming from Syria. I am about to run out of it as well. Children who are not fed enough and cannot find a warm house will become miserable during the winter. In our country, the poor are left for hunger and misery. Nobody provide food, coal, gas aid for anyone. My house in Syria was bombed. My grocery store was plundered. I have no property, assets now. I had never worked under hard conditions, but here I have to.

As Syrians, we do not have mercy on each other. We hear that some benevolent people send various food products, blankets and heater to Reyhanlı. Many Syrians received them, but many families like us did not even hear about these aids. Families like us suffered due to the random distribution of aids. If distributors had checked each neighborhood and houses and detected poor Syrians, I could have benefited from those aids as well. Everyone helps to those from their own village. Sometimes, even those who are not in need might benefit from those aids.

Our neighbors provided us with some clothes. Sometimes people give us fruit and vegetable that are left at the end of the open market in the neighborhood. However, I can barely pay

the monthly rent, gas and electricity bills. I hope the civil war ends and we can go back to our country by the end of winter.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Khaddur Hadji Nouri al Kad, who came from Idlib Province of Syria to Turkey and settled in Hatay

Khaddur Hadji Nouri al Kad ran a coffehouse in town of Sermada near the Turkey border. When the tanks were deployed in customs area and the neighborhood was bombed, the coffehouse was destroyed.

Khaddur Hadji Nouri al Kad: I am from town of Sermada in Idlib Province, Syria. I am 41 years old. I am a father of 3 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Khaddur Hadji Nouri al Kad: Town of Sermada is the nearest location to Turkey border. I ran a coffehouse there for years. It was a stamping ground of truck drivers. Those who waited for their turn in the queue in customs while coming from Turkey and returning to Turkey left their vehicles and stayed with me. Some people waited for days. So I made many friends from Hatay. When the civil war broke out, there was no job opportunities left in the town of Sermada. When tanks were deployed in the customs area and the area was bombed, my coffehouse was destroyed as well. Neither trucks came, nor did I have any place left to serve them. As a family, we passed through wire fences and we settled in Reyhanlı. Some

driver friends rent a house for me and helped me. But as the number of Syrians coming to Reyhanlı increased, cord was cut. I opened a shop in Reyhanlı. I sell sandwiches, hummus and wraps. I pay 500 TL for the rent. Other expenses cost at least 600 TL. At least 1500 TL is needed for monthly expenses including electricity, water, gas bills. However, I cannot earn this amount of money. My child studies at 7th grade in primary school. In Syria, the primary education is 8 years. A school was opened in Reyhanlı. The fee for service is 20 TL. But I cannot even pay it.

My house in Syria was invaded. Like many other houses, it was destroyed and plundered. Beforehand, we could bring cheap bread and food products from Syria, but we cannot provide them anymore. Trade and production in Syria came to a stop. My relatives stocked up on flour and wheat. However, now it is a bigger crime to sell wheat than selling drug in Syria. People can neither find a mill to make flour nor can they sell their wheat.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Mahmoud al Bereci al Vihebi, who settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

“Even those who waited in bread line were bombed,” says Mahmoud al Bereci al Vihebi engaged in food trade.

Mahmoud al Bereci al Vihebi: I am from Keferdeyan village of Idlib Province, Syria. I am 47 years old. I am a tradesman, a merchant.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went

through during the civil war and the reasons why you came to Turkey?

Mahmoud al Bereci al Vihebi: I used to trade on various kinds of food products, all kinds of grains, and olive in my hometown. I have a storage and a sales office in Idlib Province. I have a storage in the village as well. I purchased the products grown by villagers, stock up on these products, gathered them in the storage in Idlib and distributed them across Syria. When Jaish al Hur seized the control in our area, the trade routes with other districts of Syria were closed. Some of the stock products needed to be sold/consumed in time, but it did not happen. On the other hand, some products needed to be applied pesticides and aired, but there was no means to do so either. My employees migrated due to the bombardments.

One of my children deserted the army as a result of persecutions during his military service, and he fled to Turkey. And I came to Turkey along with my family for fear as well. I have been in Turkey for 3 months. When I asked those who came here afterwards, I heard that my house and storage had been plundered. There are stock crop grain in lots of areas in the region, but there is no mill. I quietly cross the border. I have been trying to buy a flour mill from Turkey, grind flour, and to sell bread to the people in Syria.

When even those who wait in bread lines in the city are bombed, people flee to rural areas controlled by Jaish al Hur. However, there is no stove in rural areas either. The people bake their own bread at home on furnace floor. I will provide the people with bread at a low price. Although baking bread currently cost more than it did in the past as a result of the devaluation of SYP, it is my job to do it as a citizen. Many people help me on this. We have to take this risk to meet the nourishment need of the people.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, on 27 December 2012.*

An Interview with Adil Suleiman al Kallawi abu Ahmed who came from Syria to stay in Hatay Reyhanlı

As a result of the bombing attack during a demonstration, retired Adil Suleiman al Kallawi abu Ahmed lost his son. He says he is not planning to go back to Syria even if the regimes changes.

ORSAM: Could you briefly tell us about yourself?

Adil Suleiman al Kallawi abu Ahmed: I was retired from Aleppo Foundations. I am 63 years old. I had two daughters and a son. My son was killed during the bombardment, and we migrated from Aleppo to Turkey along with my widow daughter in law and my three grandchildren.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your experiences during the civil war in Syria, and the reasons that bring you to Turkey?

Adil Suleiman al Kallawi abu Ahmed: My son Ahmed was graduated from University of Aleppo, Department of Arabic Language and Literature. His graduate friends from the same department were assigned to high positions as they took sides with Ba'ath, the power. While they received high salaries and were provided with good opportunities, none of my children or any children in my family took office due to the fact that I do not support Ba'ath and people in my family are against the regime. My son was a university graduate. But still, he opened a stall and worked in a vegetable market. He was constantly under pressure

while working. When the civil war broke out, he had to join Jaish al Hur and started to fight along with them, stage demonstrations and take part in actions. During a demonstration, he was shot and killed in Aleppo. Some of my relatives, neighbors and friends went to Lebanon, and some others to Jordan. And I came to Turkey. We cannot hear from each other. Everybody is struggling for their life.

I rented an apartment in Reyhanlı, Hatay. My children, daughter in law, and I live in a two room apartment. A Syrian opened a restaurant here. I work as a cleaning worker there. My daily wage is 20 liras. I also bring leftovers, vegetable fruit from the restaurant to home. I also received aids from various aid societies. For now, I can meet the needs at home. My house in Aleppo was destroyed as a result of the bombardment. I am planning to stay in Turkey for a long time as I do not have a roof over my head in Syria anymore even if the regime changes.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Bashir Nazmi al Hamdo who came from Syria to stay in Hatay Reyhanlı

Bashir Nazmi al Hamdo, who worked as a carrier, says that his life in Syria is over.

ORSAM: First of all, could you tell us about yourself?

Bashir Nazmi al Hamdo: I am from Murattıl al Numan town of Idlib, Syria. I am 48 years old, and father of two children. I work as a carrier from Syria to Jordan. I make my living as a truck owner and driver for years.

ORSAM: What did you go through during the civil war in Syria, and how did you come to Turkey?

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

Bashir Nazmi al Hamdo: Our town was suddenly besieged and started to be bombed. 17 people among my neighbors and friends were killed and I do not know how many people were wounded. There was no criminal, terrorist or traitors among us. Our only fault was the fact that we were not Sunni, and we were attacked for nothing. My house was partially destroyed. My family and I escaped unharmed, but my neighbors were not as luck as we were. This bombardment took place on 30 December. The distance between our town and the border is approximately 60 kilometers. I suffered a lot until I arrived in the border. I had some savings, and we loaded our belongings to pickup truck, and my son took the pickup truck while I took the car and we set off to come to Turkey. There were some search and barricades on the way to Turkey. When we arrived in the border region, some groups started to search us. They unloaded our foodstuff from the car, and they took some of our stuff. We rented an apartment when we arrived in Turkey, but we did have anything left. I had 120 thousand SYP left in my pocket. I bought a couple of furniture and now I have money only for a month. My son and I work as carrier dolmush drivers, me in my car and my son in pickup truck. When necessary, we carry things to the border region and sometimes to Syria.

Some relatives of every Syrian in Turkey are left behind in Syria. As they have no income or anything left to eat back in Syria, we deliver what they need through the aid of some philanthropists or in return for money for their life. There are thousands of people who want to migrate but cannot. They cannot migrate due to transportation problem and poverty. Life in Syria is over.

An Interview with Dervish Talib al Hasawi abu Mahir who came from Syria to stay in Hatay Reyhanlı

34 year old Dervish Talib al Hasawi abu Mahir, who had to migrate from al Rif district of Muarra, Idlib province of Syria, graduated from the University of Aleppo, Department of Literature. He is a father of two children and a high school teacher.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war, and what brought you to Turkey?

Dervish Talib al Hasawi abu Mahir: My father is a poor peasant who owns a couple of small cattle and 8 decares of land. And I have two sisters. He made great sacrifices for my education. We had a peaceful life.

Muarre district is an area where Jaish al Hur and al Nasr units are found. When the voluntary units called SUVVAR arrived in our district after the escalation of civil war, the conflict grew worse. As a person who lived in poverty and fought against the regime for years, I quit my job and joined the warrior group. When I left my job, also my salary was cut, the area we lived in was bombed, our house was destroyed and we lost everything we had including our animals. I sent my old parents, my wife and children to Turkey. My family has been in Turkey for 4 months, and I arrived here in new year.

I both fought and struggled to meet all kind of needs of my friends including food and clothing. I carried many injured to the border

and then I turned back to my unit. Those who fought in Jaish al Hur received monthly salary. And I sent my salary to my family. I made do with a food packet they gave us and stayed with friends in hut like places. We surrounded the the airport in Taftanaz for several times, and they repelled us. We did not have much chance as it was a flat terrain. Each time some of us were injured or martyred. Our weapons were not enough to defeat the armored unit, we were not provided with strong weapons and sometimes we even ran out of missiles. Most of the time, we only ate once a day. We could rest, take a shower, and change our clothes only once a month. As we lived in hard conditions, most of our friends were depressed, they were fed up, exhausted and some of them left their units. They deserted. Even though it was possible to alternately go to rear areas and rest for a while, there were problems such as lack of water, electricity, shelter and food in those areas. We had no difference from those who were in the front line. Because the neighboring villages, settlements were still bombed... Wherever they saw a light, or any sign of people living in a house, they bombarded the area.

Eventually I could not stand anymore and came to Turkey. I do whatever I find as a job. I worked as a porter, I loaded goods of Syrians on vehicles and sold them in Syria. We bring some goods with commercial profit to Turkey and sell them here. After passing the winter in Turkey, I will go back to fight if things do not get any better.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Macid Salman al Zuhrevi, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Macid Salman al Zuhrevi defines Aleppo as the city of “poverty and misery”. He says it is not possible for him to go back to Aleppo under the current circumstances.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Macid Salman al Zuhrevi: I live in Aleppo, Syria. I am 55 years old. I have 3 children. I used to sell wedding dress, and evening gowns in Aleppo grand bazaar. In addition, I had an atelier and 30 employees in the neighborhood. I had my employees tailor these dresses and marketed them to the Middle East countries. I received orders from all Arab countries.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life in Syria before the civil war, your experiences during the civil war and what brought you to Turkey?

Macid Salman al Zuhrevi: Due to the fact that trade in Syria came to a stop, that there was no means left to export and nobody in the Middle East countries came to Aleppo anymore led to a stop in my work and my employees left. And I made my living by selling what I had left in the store. I came to Turkey to save my life along with my wife and my children by leaving everything behind due to the fact that the grand bazaar was bombed in the past few months and my store was damaged.

I asked people I know who came from Syria to Turkey after I did, and learned that there was nothing left of my store or anything inside. Those who take advantage of the civil war stole everything. They break into stores and houses, and Aleppo turned into a city of those who plunder everywhere.

It has been a month since we arrived in Turkey, but I still think of Aleppo. Currently Aleppo is a city where garbage heaps almost reached the size of a mountain, everywhere

stinks, there is almost a constant blackout, and sometimes electricity is provided for certain neighborhoods only for a couple of hours. It is now a city where nobody from the neighboring villages and towns do not come anymore, and where people can't even afford to buy a bread. A city which is full of destroyed stores and houses, and where people struggle for their lives in hunger and misery, and where a sack of flour, a bottle of oil, vegetable is longed for, and barely afforded. Under these circumstances, I cannot go back to Aleppo.

I am planning to open a store in Reyhanlı, Hatay, and carry on doing my job here. I talk to friends abroad on the phone and I expect some financial aid, loan from them. If they send me money, I will carry on my business life here. If they don't, I am thinking of doing something through my own means. Currently I have no job, but I can stand on my own feet.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Muhyiddin Kermo al Cebeli abu Tariq, who came from Syria to Turkey to settle in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Muhyiddin Kermo al Cebeli abu Tariq tells us about how they left everything behind due to the bombardment and plunder in Syria and came to Turkey.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Muhyiddin Kermo al Cebeli abu Tariq: I am from Muarra Rif district of Idlib Province, Syria. I have 2 children. I brought along my wife, daughter, son in law and two grandchildren, and came to Hatay. People and our lands were damaged due to the random bombardments and plunders in our district. There was no end of the torture people were exposed to. Therefore, I had to leave everything behind and come here.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about what you went through during the civil war?



Muhyiddin Kermo al Cebeli abu Tariq: My nephew was killed during the explosion in the dormitory where university students stayed in Aleppo on 15 January 2013. He was a senior student in the Department of Agricultural Engineering. I heard it through someone I knew from Aleppo on the phone. There was an annual exam in the Faculty of Engineering at University of Aleppo on that very day. As Aleppo is located in a central position, the exam was organized at the University where the army seized the area. All students from the neighboring provinces and districts came to stay in the dormitory of the University the night before the exam day. After a certain hour, all the inner and external doors of the dormitory were locked. Nobody knows the exact number of students who stayed at the dormitory at that night, but faculty members inside know it. When students as well as the supervisors and observers from abroad Aleppo were in the dorm, an aircraft dropped barrel bombs on the building where both students and some officials stayed in. At the end of the bombardment, hundreds of people were killed and hundreds of others were injured. It is alleged that it was a pogrom. The future Agricultural Engineers, Civil Engineers and Architects were all killed.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Musa Saleh al Hassaviy abu Haled who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Musa Saleh al Hassaviy abu Haled, who is a farmer, came to Turkey due to the lack of raw material to do agriculture. He says they lost their hope for the future when the civil war broke out.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Musa Saleh al Hassaviy abu Haled: I am from Salkin district of Idlib Province, Syria. I am 46 years old. I am a father of 3 children. I am a farmer. We live together with my old parents and my handicapped sister.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, what you went through during the civil war, and what brought you to Turkey?

Musa Saleh al Hassaviy abu Haled: Our lands, orchards, and whatever we had were all damaged during the civil war. There was no hope for our future either because we did not have raw material, fuel, electricity to do agriculture. We could not do agriculture. Sakin turned into a place where everywhere was destroyed, set on fire and roads were damaged.

On the one hand the army, and on the other hand Jaish al Hur destroyed a great number of houses as a result of the conflicts. Lots of people were killed. Peasants, who were completely innocents, were damaged most. People were tortured, beaten and killed. Fields were set on fire, crops were destroyed. They were completely innocent. They did not know the reason they were tortured. There was no authority to put an end to this torture and massacre, or to complain.

I suffered a lot as well. I had a responsibility for my family, and they could not stand to those circumstances in Syria anymore. We only took our clothes and came to Turkey. We live in a village called Harran in Reyhanlı district of Hatay. I work for a farmer here. Many people coming from various parts of Syria were settled in this village. Syrians, who know farming, work as onion and olive collectors.

Most of us do neither have heating stoves at home, nor blankets. Sometimes aid organizations provide Syrians with aid. However, only those who live in central Reyhanlı receive the aid provided. By the time we hear about the aid, it is already distributed among those who live there and we cannot receive them.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Necmi Ali Kiro abu Mahfuz who came from Syria to stay in Hatay Reyhanlı

53 year old Necmi Ali Kiro, who migrated from Al Rif district in Harim from Idlib Province in Syria, is a farmer and a father of 5 children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, and what you went through during the civil war?

Necmi Ali Kiro abu Mahfuz: I had 20 dec-ares of land in Harim, and my children and I made our living by planting vegetable on this land. This year we planted broad bean, onion, peppermint, pepperweed and parsley. I used to sell them to restaurants, butchers and to the people in bazaar in Salkin and Ser-made districts. Beforehand, we did not even have life safety while harvesting the crops, but when Jaish al Hur seized control in our area and we found the opportunity to treat our water thanks to the centrifugal machine and to provide electricity through generators, we could both do farming and also were provided with water and power. Thus, we could meet our basic needs but due to the decrease of purchase power of the people and the fact that only a few people remained in the area,

farmers brought their products to Turkey through vehicles or sometimes on their back to sell them in Turkey.

One of my children is at his military age, but I did not send him and he is still in Jaish al Hur. He took part in besieging Taftanaz Airport which is located near our area. And the other family members are in Turkey. We go to Syria and come back to Turkey in every two days, and we harvest whatever we grow in our field. It is problematic to come and go, but we do not have a job and income.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Omar Asım al Hadravi abu Ridwan who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Omar Asım al Hadravi abu Ridwan, who made his living by selling kitchen utensils, came to Turkey after his store was bombed. He says that Syria is now in a total mess, and it will not get any better for a long time.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, and what you went through during the civil war?

Omar Asım al Hadravi abu Ridwan: I am from Al Afa Neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 45 years old, and a father of 3 children. I had a store where I sold kitchen utensils. Rich people and high level officials came to my store for shopping. Violent conflicts broke out after August 2012 in Aleppo. After the civil war broke out, all the rich people in Aleppo started to leave the city. The bazaar was bombed. When the opposition seized

the control of bazaar and its neighborhood, customers no more came to shop. I closed the shop. Everything remained inside. I brought along my children and came to Turkey. Since then, I have gone to Aleppo twice. Most of the stores were plundered and destroyed. I started to search for my shop among the piles of stone and concrete. It was partially destroyed, and some of my stuff were plundered. I wanted to take what remained of it, but I did not have any means to carry them. Vehicles could no more come even near our bazaar.

I opened a shop in Turkey. I rented vehicles, and hired drivers. I am in good shape. I rented a clean and a nice house. I send flour, sugar, biscuits, diapers, baby food and milk powder to Idlib and Aleppo through Kilis and Cilveg-özü. Due to devaluation of SYP, the purchasing power of the people has decreased. I make a little profit. I aim to help those who have no job, and who cannot migrate here. Both drivers living in Syria and I earn money. In Syria, there are families living in misery and hunger, and expecting flour, bread, bulghur, rice. Syria is currently destroyed, and it will take long years to restore it.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Taha Allavi al Hüseyin abu Nazmi, who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Taha Allavi al Hüseyin, who migrated from Karm al Cebel Rif district of Hama province in Syria, says that transportation in Hama has come to a stop and the roads were destroyed and that there is no safety in the area.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Taha Allavi al Hüseyin abu Nazmi: I am from Karm al Cebel Rif district of Hama province in Syria. I am 65 years old. I have 6 children and 3 grandchildren. When I lived in Syria, I worked as a long distance dolmush driver. I had an automobile station and 8 vehicles.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life before the civil war in Syria, and what you went through during the civil war?

I have been an automobile driver for years, and I have been all across Syria. My sons also earn their living as drivers. When the civil war broke out, one of the first provinces being bombed was Hama. It is a place which had been bombed and which witnessed death also in the old times. After bombardments, urban roads and streets were so much damaged that they were all closed to traffic. When everywhere was full of barricades and under control, we could not work. When nobody came to Hama from other areas, the transportation sector came to a dead stop. There was no safety on highways either. In addition, many people were stranded due to the fuel oil problem, and they had to live with the worry of being shot. Afterwards, works came to a dead stop for security reasons. Jets, helicopters and sharpshooters in the city attacked our people many times. Many vehicles were attacked along with the passengers inside, and so many people were killed. I had 8 vehicles, and lost two of them. When the civil war broke out, I sold 4 of them. And my son and I use the two other vehicles left for our own needs.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Jamal Nasser al Sarhani abu Kamil who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Owner of a touristic restaurant, Jamal Nasser al Sarhani says that “in such an environment where everybody fights for his/her own life, there was no more helping each other or humanitarian emotions and people started to hide even a piece of dry bread”.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself in brief?

Jamal Nasser al Sarhani abu Kamil: I lived in Masharka neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 52 years old. I owned a touristic restaurant.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life in Syria before the civil war, your experiences during the civil war and what brought you to Turkey?

Jamal Nasser al Sarhani abu Kamil: I had a large restaurant in the neighborhood of Citadel of Aleppo, and it was known as the most luxurious restaurant and narghile café of the neighborhood. I served in this sector with my 6 employees for years. Before the outbreak of the civil war, it was a popular place where the jet set of Aleppo came. It was popular with all kinds of Arab and Middle East dishes, kebab and a variety of appetizers. Like other areas in the region, this neighborhood was also bombed following the outbreak of the civil war, highways were blocked, electricity and water was cut, so I had to leave my restaurant.

People had no chance to hang out with other people anymore, and besides they did not have time or could not afford to go to a restaurant or narghile café either. Many rich people migrated, and only poor and low income people did not leave the region. The infrastructure of Aleppo was completely destroyed due to bombardments, nobody came from neighboring provinces to Aleppo, there was no such thing as a trade life anymore, no

vegetable, fruit, or even dry food could be brought to Aleppo. In such an environment, nobody came to my restaurant and people could not even live in their homes anymore.

I witnessed some bombardments, houses were destroyed, stores were damaged and plundered. In such an environment where everybody fights for his/her own life, there was no more helping each other or humanitarian emotions and people started to hide even a piece of dry bread. Those who had flour, rice or any other food product at home did not give them to anyone else. On cold days, hundreds of families lived a prison life in ruins without heater, under blankets.

I had to migrate to get rid of such an environment, and I am still in Turkey. I have no job here, but I will work if I can find a job.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Vasfi Hussein al Bagari abu Nahsen who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Vasfi Hussein al Bagari, who sold spare parts and agricultural irrigation equipments, states that; “Some people in our area do not migrate, put up with pressure, problems, pains; some of them cannot leave their properties; some others cannot risk their salaries and income by leaving to migrate”.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Vasfi Hussein al Bagari abu Nahsen: I lived in Al Bab district of Aleppo, Syria. I am 47 years old, and a father of 3 children. I sold tyre, spare parts and agricultural irrigation equipments.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life in Syria before the civil war, your experiences during the civil war and what brought you to Turkey?

Vasfi Hussein al Bagari abu Nahsen: I had a very nice house in the district, and I had bought it for 7 million SYP back then (it equals to more than 200 thousand TL). It was a house with a large garden. I also owned my shop with a storage full of equipments. It was a decorated retail sale shop. My son and I had a regular and a peaceful life. I stood on my own feet. I sold spare parts for all kind of vehicles, as well as all kind of pipes, generators etc. to be used in agricultural irrigation, and also I had a good capital.

When the civil war broke out, people stopped cultivating, and I could no more sell anything when migration started as well. When farmers who used to pay me each harvesting period lost their sources of income, I could not earn anything either. Money lost its value. Although those who migrated were financially damaged, at least they got rid of pressure and torture. Those who could not migrate continued to live in difficulty. Even though I had not migrated in the first place, my brother and relatives migrated, so I suffered loneliness and unease. After a certain point, we could not hear from each other with my relatives. A bombardment took place, and those invader groups took whatever we had away, water was cut, our wheat stocks declined, we couldn't find anything to eat with our bread we baked at home. The young people I know were killed in conflicts, and most of the families who have not left Syria are in sorrow and misery.

I could not live in such an environment, and thus I also migrated like other people around. Some people in our area do not migrate, put up with pressure, problems, pains; some of

them cannot leave their properties; some others cannot risk their salaries and income by leaving to migrate. Children of some people work and study in Aleppo, Damascus and many other districts of Syria. When families of those people migrate, they cannot be heard from and their children suffer.

Currently, I live in a rent apartment, and I have no idea what happened to my luxurious house where I used to live back in Syria. Even though I am safe here in Turkey, I have neither peace nor am I happy.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Hashim Necmeddin al Salahi abu Zeldan who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Hashim Necmeddin al Salahi, who used to sell wholesale food products, migrated to Turkey along with his children when the trade life was over, he had no more source of income or life safety in Syria.

Hashim Necmeddin al Salahi abu Zeldan: I am from Sarakeb town of Idlib province in Syria. I am a 51 year old tradesman, and a father of four children

ORSAM: How was your life in Syria? What brought you to Turkey?

Hashim Necmeddin al Salahi abu Zeldan: I sell wholesale food products in Syria. In general, in addition to all dry food products, I also buy olives of those having oliveyards in the region. I give the olive oil cans to villagers, and they deliver them back to me with olive oil after harvesting. Then, I used to send them

to tradesmen I know in Aleppo Idlib Hama and Damascus. I had a good income. When the civil war broke out, farmers had to migrate without harvesting olives. Most of the trees which were not harvested were invaded by others. Most of the trees were uprooted to be used as firewoods. Due to blackout and lack of fuel, local people started to uproot all kinds of trees. Now people use firewood both to get warm and also to cook. I sold everything I had in my shop. I had nothing left, and I had to close the shop as I could no more receive new crops. As the trade life came to a deadlock, I lost my source of income and we no more had a life safety, I brought along my children and we migrated to Turkey.

We join our forces with a couple other people who are still in good shape, and we provide the poor in Syria and those, who came to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay, with all kind of support. We distributed food products, blankets and some clothes to our citizens. Many families do not have a heater in the middle of winter. I regularly go to Syria. There is no regular army in rural areas of Idlib province. Military troops of Bashar Assad seized the control in city center and in the area between Damascus and Aleppo. Highways, roads, streets are all closed to traffic. There are barricades, burnt cars, piles of stones and ruins, checkpoints everywhere. It is the same in central Aleppo. All roads are closed to traffic. Despite winter, everywhere stinks, and no living thing can live in such an environment when it gets warmer in forthcoming months. Those who do not die of attacks during conflicts will die of stinks, disease etc later on. There are even bodies not buried, in the wreckage.

Some families do not know where their relatives are. Siblings are all in different places with their children and families. Everybody strives for his/her own life. Nobody knows who migrated where.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Hurshid Jabir al Salahi who came from Syria to stay in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Hurshid Jabir al Salahi sent his wife, children, parents and siblings to Turkey, and he stayed in Syria to join Jaish al Hur to fight.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself in brief?

Hurshid Jabir al Salahi: I am from Taftanaz town of Idlib province in Syria. I am 32 years old, married and a father of two children.

ORSAM: How did the civil war in Syria affect you and your family? What brought you to Turkey?

Hurshid Jabir al Salahi: When the civil war broke out, I sent my wife, children, parents and siblings to Turkey, and I stayed in Syria to join Jaish al Hur to fight. I was ready in all conflicts in Idlib province. We killed many troops. We destroyed a large number of tanks and seized many military articles. Taftanaz district is a settlement with a population of 15 thousand people. The distance between the district and the airport is 2 kilometers. It is also the area which is bombed most among other districts and towns in Syria. We have at least 150 martyrs in our district. Hundreds of houses, mosques, shops etc. were all destroyed during bombardments.

We surrounded the airport for a couple of times, but we could not somehow seize the control due to the lack of military equipment. We made planes and helicopters crash. But they were all by chance, we did not have

a proper means to measure the distance. We shot jets by random cross fires, we did not have much chance to hit the target. There are some 400 thousand Mujahids in our region. But most of them are not trained, just volunteers. There are also Iraqi, Yemeni, Libyan and Palestinian people among us. In order to prevent all clothing, food aid and shelter to be provided for us by the villagers, these areas are bombarded due to our presence. As we do not have any place to take a rest or anything to eat while fighting, we get exhausted and have to split into groups and had some rest in far places.

Most of migrations are caused by the presence of Jaish al Hur in this area and the bombardments to prevent aid to be delivered to us. Roads were blocked to suppress us, to suppress people, certain points were bombed and our agricultural fields and crops were all set on fire. Trees were uprooted to prevent us from taking advantage of them.

I was wounded, but it is not serious. We have a medical team, as well as medical equipments. But we do not have a hospital with beds in the area. We turned either a large house, a warehouse, or a tent into a hospital. Through the support of Turkey, a hospital was opened in Syria Babel Hava, which is located near Cilvegözü border gate. Turkish authorities came to attend the opening, and it turned out to be a nice hospital; but I do not think there is not enough medical device and equipments to operate seriously wounded with the capacity to provide service for those who live in tent cities and the neighboring villages.

As Mujahids, we are provided with financial aid, and our families in Turkey are provided with food aid, as well as clothes. They are also provided with financial aid at certain point. I came to Turkey to have some rest for a while.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

An Interview with Mahmoud al Ibrahim Nasiri who came from Syria to Turkey and settled in Reyhanlı district of Hatay

Aleppo origin carpenter Mahmoud al Ibrahim Nasiri says, "There are people who stay near Turkish border; but they were in need of electricity, water, food. If it goes on like this, they will have to migrate due to insufficiency of food and misery".

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Mahmoud al Ibrahim Nasiri: I lived in Aziziye neighborhood in Aleppo, Syria. I am 25 years old, and I am a carpenter. I lived with my old parents and four sisters.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about your life in Syria before the civil war, your experiences during the civil war and what brought you to Turkey?

Mahmoud al Ibrahim Nasiri: I could not live in Aleppo anymore, my mother is a housewife, and my father is retired. My father's retirement pension is 20 thousand SYP (it equals to some 400 TL). My father opened a shop for me, and I had just finished my military service. I made armchair, couch, office equipments in the carpenter shop. I had a good job and income, my sisters did not work. Like other people in Aleppo, my shop and the neighborhood were also attacked during the bombardment, and our home was also partially destroyed. In addition to hunger and misery, diseases also broke out.

As a 7 membered family, we rented a house in Reyhanlı district of Hatay. I found a job relat-

ed to my job. My daily wage is 20 TL, and we have to pay 600 TL for the rent. The monthly expense of a 7 member family is at least 1500 TL, and I borrowed money from some Syrian fellows. Currently, we cannot receive my father's retirement pension as my father cannot go to Syria. Going back to Aleppo is the same with committing suicide. There are agricultural labors in Reyhanlı, women go to work in fields but my family members have never worked in the field. It is necessary to be used to work in the field to be able to work in the open in winter from 07.00 until 15.30, but we had to. They went to work but they could hardly make through the day, and at the end of the day, they were told not to come to work the following day as they were not experienced. It is January now, and we still do not have a heater at home, or sufficient number of blankets. We try to get warm through a small bottled gas in a cold apartment.

I went to Aleppo without letting my family know, and I saw that there was nothing left at our home and also any neighbor around.

The neighborhood was completely abandoned, everywhere stank, there was a black-out, no water, namely there is nothing else other than smoke and wreckages. Syria is totally destroyed, and Aleppo is unrecognizable. Troops, tanks and gangs of thieves are all around, there is no family left and trade life has come to a deadlock.

I stopped by a village in Idlib province, and I saw that those who stayed near Turkish border had problems for not having an access to electricity, water, flour and bread. Nobody can find vegetable or fruit anymore, everybody has tea, sugar, food for breakfast in their stock, but they can hardly make it through this season. If it goes on like this, they will have to migrate due to insufficiency of food and misery.

** This interview was made by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on 15 January 2013.*

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