

INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES IN REYHANLI AFTER REYHANLI BOMBINGS - IV

REYHANLI'DA SURİYELİLER İLE SÖYLEŞİLER (REYHANLI SALDIRISI SONRASI) - IV

حوار مع المواطنين السوريين في ریحانلي (بعد تفجيرات ریحانلي) - ٤

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 Reyhanlı 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 Reyhanlı. 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 Reyhanlı 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 Reyhanlı 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 in the conflict.

The bombing had a major impact on Turkey. However, the people in the region and local people in Reyhanlı 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 Reyhanlı 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 in the district. As ORSAM, we have conducted a great number of interviews with Syrian refugees, moving in Reyhanlı 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 Reyhanlı 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 Reyhanlı 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 Advisory Board

INTERVIEWS WITH SYRIAN REFUGEES IN REYHANLI AFTER REYHANLI BOMBINGS - IV

Impressions from Reyhanlı I / 15 May 2013

The first blast occurred at 1:55 p.m. Saturday on May 11th, 2013 behind Reyhanlı's city hall. The first vehicle loaded with bomb was parked under transformer on the south of city hall. It is located 100 meters away from District Police Department in the west, and on the north of settlements where Syrian refugees live and the mosque where they perform prayer. It is the neighborhood that is called the "cross-roads" where bazaar is set up every Thursday. In this area is found a photography, barber, glassware and souvenir shop, grocery store, poulterer, a beauty salon, engineering office, womenswear store, real estate agency, and a patisserie. The bomb-laden vehicle is parked right across those shops. There are peddlers, commercial vehicles and private cars on the same street. On the other side of the street is found Atatürk Street, namely Antakya route, on the way to Yenisehir district from the city center. There are various shops and offices on this route. Besides, on the Atatürk Street is found apartment buildings and houses, where mostly Syrian tenants live.

Syrian refugees who migrated from Idlib province and districts of Syria settled in the neighborhood where the first car bomb exploded. In the first bombing, people from

Idlib might have been targeted. The Syrians who were injured and killed in the neighborhood are those coming from Idlib. Turkish citizens were also injured and killed in the blast. The exact death toll in the area caused by the blast is not known. However, it is understood as a result of talks that 10 people were killed. Two of them are Syrian citizens, while the rest of them are Turkish citizens. And those who were injured are quite a lot.

The shops and settlements near the first blast were completely devastated. Some of them were totally destroyed, and some were partially damaged. Some 500 meters of Atatürk Street is full of damaged shops and destroyed settlements as a result of glass explosions, as well as fall of shelves and furnitures. In this neighborhood, window glasses of houses were broken, doors were shaken, and window frames fell.

The first and second car blast occurred 10-15 minutes in row. The second explosion occurred in front of the PTT building in central Reyhanlı. Office buildings, Halk Bank, commercial offices and teaching institutions are located on both sides of the PTT building. The PTT building is located at the beginning of Atatürk Street. On the one side is found Cumhuriyet Street, while on the other side is

found Kanatlı Street, former city hall, municipal passage, all kinds of shops and mosque in the city center. A massacre took place in that area. The neighborhood was completely damaged. There is a big financial damage covering the whole neighborhood. Also houses were damaged as a result of the blast. Some rooftops collapsed, and some balconies were damaged. There was a great number broken glasses. Shopkeepers were damaged to a great extent.

Causes of Death in the Second Explosion

The first cause: While it was a wide street where the vehicle was parked in the first bombing, the street where the second bomb-laden vehicle was parked on was a narrow street of maximum 20 meters, including pavements. The PTT building and the office buildings across, on the right and left of the building are attached buildings. When the vehicle blew up in this narrow area, it echoed a lot and residential areas were damaged.

The second cause: As the first explosion occurred next to the city hall, it both scared and worried people in the city center. Most people hopped on their vehicles, motorcycles and headed out to go to the city hall. However, the accumulation in front of PTT building caused to congestion of the street. It was how the explosion occurred. Taxi drivers, motorcyclers, people getting off their work, customers of coffeehouses nearby, students, and those waiting in the ATM line in front of bank... The whole crowd was stuck in an area of some 100 meters, and the bomb-laden vehicle was right in the middle. The traffic jam, and pavements full of people led to a disaster with huge death toll in the neighborhood. More than 40 people were killed during the second blast. Some two hundred people were injured. Hundreds of offices were destroyed and burned to ground.

The blast was planned to take place on Saturday. If it had occurred on a weekday, it could have been a second "Hiroshima" for Reyhanlı.



Because it would have been a total disaster for municipal employees, bank employees, other people who work in the neighborhood, police building, nursery school right next to the police building, shopkeepers, grocery, shops, bazaar. If it had been a workday or a pay day at Halk Bank or at PTT building, where the second car bombing took place, hundreds of people could have been killed.

Shipping companies were damaged most in the second blast. People were killed in the offices of those companies.

There are some 60 thousand Syrian refugees in Reyhanlı, and 75 percent of them are from Idlib province; while others are from Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus and Latakia.

In Reyhanlı, many restaurants that cook Syrian dishes, bread and desserts were opened between 2012-2013. Besides, there are goldsmiths, phone shops, second-hand equipment stores, taxi-cab and truck operators from Syria in the area. There are tens of people who make their living off peddling things at a stand. Those who cannot afford to buy it sell coffee, tea, cigarette, lemon thyme, turkish bagels, pastry, turkish delight and halvah on cardboards or in plastic bags. On the other hand, some Syrians do not own anything, thus work as porter, work in coffeehouses, restaurants and as agricultural laborer in fields. Among Syrian refugees, there were those who paid 1500 TL for rent to stay in a fully furnished apartment; and also those who rent houses in slums for 200-300 TL. Some of them collected fruit and vegetable from garbage at the end of bazaar in the neighborhood.

Aid organizations such as Kimse Yok mu, Ufuk-Der (Reyhanlı Ufuk Eğitim Derneği), İHH (Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief) and Syrian El Selam al-Ittihad and Al Arabit al Huv-

viyye have been providing the refugees with financial aid, food, clothing, refrigerator and blankets.

Some Syrians refugees in Reyhanlı have been receiving aid collected by people from Middle Eastern countries, as well as the U.S. and EU countries. And those who receive aid send them to both those who stay in Reyhanlı and also the tent cities in Bab al Hava and Atma.

As from the beginning of 2013, provocateurs were striving to drive a wedge between people from Reyhanlı and Syrian refugees. On Saturday 4 May 2013, a week before May 11th, some local people from Reyhanlı marched by chanting, "We don't want the Syrians here any more". Syrians were manhandled, and some vehicles were damaged. Hence, Syrians did not go out if not necessary.

The main reason why less Syrians were killed on May 11th in the aforesaid bombing than Turkish citizens is the fact that violence against Syrians in Reyhanlı started following the May 4th march. However, opposition parties did not reflect it as it was to their party members who came to Reyhanlı. There was a difference between the reality and what they were told.

It was not even mentioned that the march held on May 4th a week before the May 11th bombing scared and worried Syrians, and thus the fact that not many Syrians were injured and only a few vehicles were damaged, as well as Syrian refugees in Reyhanlı were even afraid of going out between 4-11 May was not reflected.

The local people in Reyhanlı have two different opinions about Syrians who took shelter in Reyhanlı. There are families who have mercy on Syrians, employ them, and provide aid. In Reyhanlı, the local people hired and helped Syrian refugees. Friendships have

been formed, some Turkish and Syrian people married and started a family. But also in Reyhanlı, Syrians were stoned, insulted, humiliated and threatened.

Syrians' leaving Reyhanlı and their moving to other Turkish cities began way before the May 11th blast and it still continues. Rich Syrians to all across Turkey, and the poor back to Syria. Those who continue to stay in Reyhanlı cannot go out, and live a prisoner's life through the help of their close neighbors who buy bread, food for them. They are waiting for the decisions taken by the government to be put into practice. They will act depending on the result. They will either go to somewhere else in Turkey or move back to Syria. They are also aware of the fact that Reyhanlı is split into two parts. Because while their neighbors in Reyhanlı are nice to them, other neighbors turn their back on and insult them. In some neighborhoods and streets in Reyhanlı, personal insults and attacks against Syrians still continue.

"You were shaken and wretched by the two bombings. You were shocked and lost yourself. We were subjected to tens of bombing attacks everyday. Hundreds of people were killed. We were not shaken that much. Our own government dropped bombs on us. You, on the other hand, are bombed by an unknown organization. You are in a great pain and you are right, but some people exaggerate the situation for Syrians," said a Syrian refugee for the local people in Reyhanlı.

Reyhanlı is my hometown. The local people are my friends, relatives, compatriots, my everything. The fact that the city burned into flames, people cried out in pain shocked me. I felt really bad and shed tears.

When the bomb-laden vehicle blew up, I was on the way home. I received a phone call from

my wife. My daughter was in the tutoring center. The one right across the PTT building where the second bomb exploded. "Go and find our daughter!" she said. When I arrived in front of the PTT building, casualties were everywhere in an area of 100 meters. Cars, shops were all on fire. The tutoring center was totally destroyed. The entrance door, windows, and rooftop had blown up, and the building was in flames. There were at least 150 students there. And my daughter was among them. There was neither door nor stairs to step in the building burning in flames. Smokes were everywhere. While looking at bodies, I was also looking for my daughter among other people batting around. But she was not there. I received another phone call an hour later. One of the parents had taken my daughter to hospital. Since the Reyhanlı Hospital was full, they had gone to Kirikhan which is the closest one nearby. I became weaker and started to cry when I arrived there. It was around 15:30 when we came home. My daughter was slightly injured. Broken pieces of glass had injured her hands. She was still in shock, and in a state of fear. But she could come back home safe and sound.

When I arrived in the neighborhood, I heard that 2 of my close relatives and 6 distant relatives on a tribal basis had been killed. We had 8 funerals. I participated in some 20 funeral ceremonies of neighbors, children and nephews/nieces of my friends. Reyhanlı Cemetary was bursting at the steams. On the one hand graves were being dug, and on the other hand bodies were buried. There was a tragedy among those buried side by side, cries, mournings, tears. Those who came to visit us to express their condolences told us about other people's death. Three dead bodies were found near PTT building on May 14th. Man-hole cover blew up during the bombing. 3 people fell into the manhole in that chaos and panic. Someone else who saw the manhole

cover open pushed and closed it to prevent people from falling down. But he could not see those who already fell down. Those three people were stuck there and died. And they were found only three days after the bombing.

Impressions from Reyhanlı II / 18 May 2013

On Saturday, 18 May 2013 at 13:45, opposition parties marched in Reyhanlı saying “Raise your voice for Reyhanlı”. Participants also took part in the march from various districts of Hatay and city center. The Syria policy of the government was criticized and they urged Syrian refugees to leave Reyhanlı.

Almost half of those who were killed on May 11th are shop owners. The rest of them were there either out of curiosity or with business purposes.

In the first bombing that took place next to the Reyhanlı Municipality building, barber Mustafa Kuday was severely injured, while his Syrian apprentice was killed and his customer Jamal Cunedioglu was injured. There was also a photographer's shop on the same route. The computer exploded as a result of the blast while working on a photo design on his computer, and he lost his eye. A shop owner next to the barber and his customer were killed and the shop was devastated. There is a grocery store 10 meters away from the building. The owner of the grocery Ahmet Kazan was injured. Everything in grocery store was destroyed. A three-floor building was completely destroyed. There was a restaurant next to the grocery store, and it was operated by Syrians. The shrapnel pieces hit the restaurant, and two people were severely injured. And a hairdresser right next to the restaurant, and he was also injured and he became permanently disabled. His employee was killed. The salon, on the other hand, was devastated. The

employees of the women's wear shop next to the hairdresser were injured. Patisserie and cell phone shop are located in the neighborhood. The casualties received ambulatory treatment after being slightly injured. But their shops were all destroyed. There were also peddler Syrians on the same route. Two of them were killed, and a Syrian peddler was injured. Those who were in the park were and those in their shops 50 meters away from the blast were injured.

The dentist Nihat Dağ in his clinic, and his patient Azize Yumuşak while getting out of the clinic were killed from shrapnel pieces after the bombings. The brothers who owned a cell phone shop were killed in their work places. Owner of a transportation company Ceyhan and Uyan as well as his children were killed in their offices. A father Mehmet Ceyhan was severely injured. After the bombing, Tahir Yumuşak and Hüseyin Çolak came from the bazaar to the PTT building to see what happened in front of the municipality building on their motorcycles. While waiting on their motorcycles in front of the PTT building due to the traffic jam, the second bombing took place and both of them burned to death. A student left the tutoring center a few minutes before the blast, and when the first vehicle exploded, he walked towards the PTT building and waited in front of the tutoring center. While watching the traffic progressing through the street, he stopped and was killed after the second bombing.

On May 11th, parents looked for their children but mostly could not find them there. They found them found them either in a wreckage or in a morgue after hours of searching. The parents or friends of the victims go to identify them, but they cannot, they do not want to, they can't believe their eyes. Parents do not want to accept the fact that their children were killed. They know that death comes at

the end, but they believe that their children's or friends' being killed is not fair.

We see injured people in Reyhanlı everyday. Those who were permanently disabled are the witness of the bombing in Reyhanlı. Their pain has left mark on the Reyhanlı people to remind them everyday of the May 11th attack.

In Reyhanlı, the cost of damage of shops and houses were assessed. Economic moral support was given to people. The cost of damages have been paid. The restoration and maintenance started in the city. The marks of the bombings have been erased.

The bazaars were set up, but the people had no courage to go there. Not many people went to crowded places. Right after meeting personal needs as soon as possible, people immediately go back to their homes or offices. Like every foreigner is regarded as a suspect, the local also started to look each other with suspicion. Because those events split the people into two or three. Because there was also considerable amount of abstainers.

Lake Yenışehir is found in Reyhanlı. It used to be full of people during summer. Syrians and local people in Reyhanlı used to live together before the attack. It used to be so crowded that you would think as if it was a touristic area. The bombing attack took place, and neither Syrians nor the local people are there now. The shops and tradesmen look one another, that's all. Life came to a standstill, there's neither joy nor income. It is also the same in city center. The people do not go to city center if they don't have to. Some people go to shop in the afternoon. Those who do not have a job, on the other hand, go to coffee houses. The city looks like a ghost town when compared to the scenes before the bombings.

Anti-Syria Demonstrations in Reyhanlı and Those Who Move Back

Although people who couldn't stand being subjected to bombardments, massacres of their own state officials in their own country and took shelter in Turkey knew that they would be killed back there, they fled from Reyhanlı and went back to Syria again.

Yusuf Ali al Hadj Ahmet

He is from Sermada village of Idlib province, Syria. As a matter of fact, Sermada is a town, but they call it our "village". He fled to Reyhanlı six months ago. He sold hot beverages, pita with pepper, and various kind of wraps in bazaar during winter. He began to sell ice-cream, cold-beverages as from 2013. He walked all day long to sell those. He went to bazaars in the neighborhood. He worked even under rain, sun etc. But he has been earning his living by his own efforts. He's been paying his rent, electricity and water bills, and look after his children.

When anti-Syria demonstrations started in Reyhanlı, people couldn't go out on Sundays anymore and when he could not sell anything, he could not pay his electricity and water bills anymore. He could not feed his children since he did not have any money.

"I fled from my country because of oppression, misery and bombardments. But we've witnessed bombing attacks here as well, also oppression, hunger and misery. I thought I would rather die at home," he said and moved back to his country.

He was crying as he was leaving, also his wife and four children. Because there was death. They could be subjected to bombing attacks on the first or the second day of their arrival in Syria, and they might be killed by the attacks of cruel army.

Mecid al Abid abu Rahmi and His Wife Zehra

They fled from Al Gab district of Hama, Syria to Turkey with great difficulty.

Their house was destroyed, their relatives and friends were killed. They achieved to arrive in Turkish border zone by bribing and sleeping outdoors for 130 km. 7 months ago. Death has no fear or shame. Death is everywhere. However, dying in misery and torture scared them as well. Macid worked in Reyhanlı. He had a decent life style. He had endeared himself to food wholesaler, and he worked there as a porter. He had 6 children. They went to work in fields along with his two daughters and wife in agricultural season. Daily wage of each of them was 23 TL. They bought furniture, TV, washing machine, refrigerator etc for their home. Even if they couldn't find what they lost in Syria, they were in good health, upheld their honor and dignity.

When the events started in Reyhanlı, they locked themselves in the house, could not go out, and they could not even go to grocery store. Macid made friends with a couple of people, and knew their telephone numbers, and asked for help by calling them. "Help me buy bread, vegetable, my children are hungry," he said on the phone. His friends bought bread and food for them, but he was scared and wanted to move back to his country. He also made friends with me. When he called, I went to his house and he told me by crying that:

"This is an unfortunate fate. I came here to save my wife and children from bombshells, but bombshells followed us. They lump us together with all Syrians, and some of the people in Reyhanlı consider us enemy. We are pointed out as the reason of people being killed. We became the target. I cannot ask for bread and

vegetable everyday on the phone. I cannot even open the windows at home. I cannot work anymore and earn my living here, so I have to move back." He left the next day.

Rıdvan al Isa abu Vasel and His Wife Muna

He is from Binnec district of Idlib province, Syria. He is a father of 5 children. He is a religious, modest and considerate person. He had been in Reyhanlı for more than 6 months. He worked as plasterer and painter. His children went to Koran courses provided by Syrians. He rented a very small house in the back of beyond in Reyhanlı district. It is located more than 3 kilometers away since the rent was cheaper. Everyday, he took his children to Koran course and then pick them up from school. When the bombing took place in Reyhanlı, he was working in a construction. He immediately left work and after picking up his children he locked themselves in the house. They stayed at home with doors and windows closed for a couple of days, and he called his friends to ask for vegetable and some food on the phone. Some people tried to intimidate him. Since his wife was veiled, it was obvious that she was Syrian. They scared her that they could be killed. Some people threw stones at their window. Some of them ran riot.

"The Binnec district, which is my hometown in Syria, is still under bombardment, but I will move to somewhere near my hometown. Death is everywhere. I am unemployed, children are hungry, and life is expensive here," he said and moved back to Syria, country of death, in tears.

Fuat al Esvad abu Cemal and His Wife Ahmel al Jabir

They are from Jabariya district of Aleppo, Syria. They have 4 children. Fuat al Asvad is permanently disabled, and his wife Ahmel tells;

"My eldest son Jamal brought us to Reyhanlı, and he went back to the armed group. He is fighting for freedom and our honor. Our house was in Aleppo destroyed. The events started in Reyhanlı as well. Some people threaten and disturb us. We've witnessed demonstrations on the streets of Reyhanlı twice. We escaped from trouble, death, bombardments, but we found it all here as well. We are neighbors. We are not enemy. We took shelter in Turkey, but people here do not trust us anymore. Negative actions of a few Syrians were attributed to all Syrians. Besides fear, I am also in misery. We're moving back to Aleppo, even if we die in the end."

Impressions from Reyhanlı III / 25-26-27 May 2013

25 May 2013. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is in Reyhanlı. I am among Syrians in front of the municipality building, around it, and in or out of the meeting area. Syrians are excited and timid. They are wearing the caps distributed by the AK Party Youth Branch. Syrian men and women are all dressed like people from Reyhanlı. They camouflaged their looks. They do not wear a Syrian-like clothing. You cannot distinguish them from a local people if you haven't talked to them or did not know them in person beforehand. They are freely in a meeting in an environment that they have never seen and they are not used to. They all have a flag in their hands and a cap on their heads.

Reyhanlı has suffered a lot, and they are grieving now. But the day the Prime Minister visited the district, everybody left their grief at home. Those who came to the area seemed like they came to a wedding ceremony with joy, and by singing songs from their village. There are approximately 5 thousand people in the meeting. At least 500 of them are Syrian. The PM Erdoğan told Syrians that he continued his support for Syrians. And he asked

the local people of Reyhanlı to do their best to help Syrians. Those silent people were even more enthusiastic than members of AK Party Youth Branch. I look at the people. They applaud in tears, despite the fact that most of them do not understand the speech.

When the speech of the Prime Minister ended, and the crowd started to break up, I met a Syrian who was next to me. Sadiy al Tahir from Idlib. He started to tell right away;

"We missed such a democracy. You should be proud of the environment you are in. Our President opened fire on us, he has been killing his people. Here, on the other hand, your Prime Minister comes and gives you moral support. He heals your wounds. Our government destroyed our houses, work places. If we can go back to our country safe and sound, we will rebuild all of them. But, here the terrorism destroyed your houses, and the next, your government covered the loss in a few days. Everything was repaired as new. This is the difference between you and us."

The Reyhanlı meeting of the Prime Minister took place in Yenimahalle. On the same street, a Syrian family was sitting and drinking tea. They were afraid of sitting in the garden the previous day. However, when the Prime Minister came and expressed his support, their fears were gone. They are sitting in the garden in peace. I greet them and enter in after saying that "I would like to have a cup of tea with you". They invite me in. I meet Mahmoud Nesim Abu Ala. He came from Al Kellese district of Aleppo. He was engaged in trade before the civil war in Aleppo. He calls me "brother", and says;

"I saw those on TV who made Reyhanlı went through this disaster. Those people will be imprisoned and suffer the consequences. In Syria, on the other hand, they are executed in the

open right away. However, in Turkey, attorneys defend those people. Their families visit them. They can eat in prison, and take shower. In Syria, on the other hand, people who are put in prison without any legal grounds are tortured. They are not given any food, and not allowed to talk to anyone. Nobody knows where they are or hears anything from them for years. In Syria, the circumstances in prison are so terrible that, let alone terrorism or political crime, even those who commit petty crime suffer to a great extent. The families of those who commit an action in Syria similar to the one in Reyhanlı would be killed. Even their children are regarded as criminal. They are not employed. However unlike Syria, in Turkey only the criminal suffers the consequences of his/her actions, not anyone else.”

26 May 2013. I started to visit families in my neighborhood. I conducted interviews with those families. Some of them came home. Or we met and talked to some of them at parks or on the street. One of them is Maced Hamdan Abu Talal and his wife Munise. I talked to

them and asked their thoughts. “We’ve heard bad news from Binnec, Idlib,” Munise said. “Binnec is bombarded. Lots of people have been killed, and also many houses were destroyed. We have our friends, relatives there.” She started to cry. Her husband was moved to tears. I was also moved as well. We stopped talking about the civil war and massacres in Syria, and started to talk about Reyhanlı.

“We cannot go to work or grocery store for three weeks. We send our 15-year old child to grocery for bread. He runs to grocery to buy bread and then immediately comes back. We do not have sufficient income. We ran out of money due to rent, electricity, water bills and gas. Prime Minister made our day. The people in Reyhanlı give us moral support. Our neighbors try to comfort us. We are relieved, if a little. My husband Maced work as porter, while my two daughters and I work as agricultural laborer. Now we can go out without fear again. There is no fear or threat in Reyhanlı anymore. We are poor people escaping from bombardment,



hunger and misery. We fled from our country to survive. We are not to blame for the events, attacks here. May God punish those who are responsible for that."

I left there and went to another house I already visited once. They have Turkish flag flying on their window. Asım Abu Abdo lives in that house. He is from Muarra district of Idlib. He lives in a four-room house with garden with his son, daughter-in-laws and his grandchildren. His sons work. He says;

"I cannot go to Idlib to draw my pension. I gave procuration to someone, so that he can draw my pension and bring it to me. But each time, I give him 2000 SYP from my pension. Our money has no value anymore. It is not sufficient even for the rent. But we can stand on our own feet for now."

I ask them why they are flying Turkish flag on their window.

"When we saw Turkish people around us flying Turkish flag, we also wanted to do so. We asked and they gave us a flag. They did not reject and hurt us, gave us the flag. Turkey is our second hometown. Why wouldn't we fly the Turkish flag? The flag of a state which defends our life and honor is also our flag. We shared our food, talked to you about our problems, shared our secrets. You are more kinds to us than we would be. If you went through the same thing we've been going through, I am not sure if we would act the same way as you do now. I hope that nobody has to experience what we've been going through. We tormented Iraqi people in the past. We did not show such interest in Muslim Arab Iraqi people. Unlike what you did, we did not open our doors to them. You much better people than us. People are in a major grief in Reyhanlı. I see your feelings. I respect those who show reaction to us. But we are not to blame. The main problem

is to make the local people want to get rid of Syrian refugees and to point us as a target to Turkish people. They achieved their goals for a while. But you are merciful, smart, patient and mature people. Most of the people in Reyhanlı were not agitated. But we also understand and respect those who were agitated. I reiterate; if it happened in Syria, the consequences would be completely different. The Prime Minister gave us moral support and confidence. Life is back to normal. We will continue to go out and work to make our living. But we will understand the reactions of people if they insulted. This is our fate."

27 May 2013. We heard that barber Mustafa Kunday, who had been severely injured during the explosion that took place on May 11th and was hospitalized, passed away. According to official figures, he is our 53rd martyr. He had been injured by a shrapnel piece on his back and his internal organs had been smashed. He could not survive despite all the efforts. God rest his soul. We heard the bad news this morning. He will be buried after the autopsy. Reyhanlı deplored again upon this bad news. We talked to a Syrian refugee in the crowd. Hashim abu Suleiman is from Idlib. "We share your pain. There are many Syrians around. Nevertheless, nobody shows us reaction," he said.

"Many people were killed in Idlib. But we could not bury them as here. We couldn't set up a tent of condolence. The municipality did not provide us service. As a couple of people, we carried the bodies to bury in a cemetery in fear. When there were more than a few people, we could have been killed by jets. Not only people who were alive but also dead bodies were subjected to bombshells for several times in Idlib. Sometimes bombshells coming from far away fell on cemeteries. Bones of people were spread all across."

I talked to another Syrian in the crowd. He came from Binnec district of Idlib. “We hear that bombs were dropped on our town yesterday, and tens of people were killed,” he said.

“Funeral ceremonies are held for your martyrs in Turkey. Also government officials pay visit to their families. They are provided with financial support. Municipalities provide all kind of service. Believe it or not, but even dying in such an environment is a big chance for us. Because you can see bodies thrown out in the open like a carcass in our country. Sometimes it is only realized after it starts to stink. I share your pain. Everyone is going to die one day. But I hope and pray that nobody dies like Syrians.

Retired Imam Abdulkadir al Jasim decided to move back to Syria due to the neighborhood pressure in the aftermath of the bombings

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Abdulkadir al Casim abu Zeki: I am a father of 7 children. I am from Hamdaniya neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am an Imam. I became permanently disabled as a result of an accident before the civil war in Syria. I am a retired imam, and my pension is 18 thousand SYP. 18 thousand SYP valued 600 TL. Now, it values some 250 TL. It is not sufficient to pay my rent in Reyhanlı. I am already permanently disabled, my wife and children worked as day laborer in agricultural field and we could barely eat a decent food.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what you have experienced in Turkey and why did you decide to move back to Syria?

Abdulkadir al Casim abu Zeki: When the conflict started in Reyhanlı, my landlord wanted to throw us out of the house and start-

ed to exert pressure on. Nevertheless, I had paid 6-month rent in advance, and I still have 40 days left. However, he insists on throwing us out and not giving the money back. My wife and children cannot go to work, and a neighborhood pressure prevails. I have a house in Aleppo but conflicts still continue in my neighborhood, but I heard that there is no problem in Al Bab district of Aleppo.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

“My wife and children live like a prisoner at home. But living like a prisoner here is better than dying in Syria,” says Abud al Seyyid Musa.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and your life in Turkey?

Abud al Seyyid Musa: I am from Binnec district of Idlib, Syria. I’ve been working in the field of water and sewage. I am 42 years old, and married with 5 children. The district I fled from is still under bombardment. It is not possible to find 500 people in the district populated with 45.000 people. I settled in Reyhanlı with my family. Everything went to rack and ruin. Sunnis are considered enemy there. We fled from Syria to Reyhanlı.

ORSAM: Could you tell us what are the reasons that made you decide to move back to Syria?

Abud al Seyyid Musa: They started to consider us enemy after the blast. I was working. I rent an apartment at a cheap price. I was muddling along. Now, on the other hand, nobody hires me. None of my former colleagues help

me find a job. "Let me take you to İstanbul," someone said to me. "I will help you find a job," he says. I think I will go to İstanbul with him. My wife and children live like a prisoner at home. But living like a prisoner here is better than dying in Syria. I am not complaining about that.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Ahmed Yunus abu Talal was in that neighborhood before the bombing and he narrowly escaped death as he left the area when his friend invited him.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and also about your life in Turkey?

Ahmed Yunus abu Talal: I am from Carcanez district of Idlib, Syria. I narrowly escaped death, the blast. Also I narrowly escaped death in Reyhanlı. I guess my time has not come yet. My wife, children and I were at home when bombs were dropped on our village. First of all and artillery fire and tanks, then jets opened fire on our village. We could by no means go out. When I went out after a long time, I saw lots of houses had been destroyed, people were killed, some 10 houses had been completely devastated in our neighborhood and everyone inside had been killed. Miraculously we survived.

ORSAM: Where were you during the blast? What did you go through?

Ahmed Yunus abu Talal: I was sitting on a bench when the bombing occurred in Reyhanlı, and there were some other Syrians

and someone from Reyhanlı, and he invited us to have a cup of tea. At around 12.30 before the noon prayer, we went to have a cup of tea at his house. The azan was recited at 12.40. After we performed prayer together, we had just started to drink our tea and talk that the blast occurred at around 13.30. If he had not invited us over, we would not have survived since there was only 50 meters between the bomb-laden vehicle and us. It was a miracle.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Büşra Hamden who lives with her old parents says that they are planning to move back to Syria but do not know where to go.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, as well as your life in Turkey?

Büşra Hamden: I am from Al Hullok neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I live with my parents. We fled to Reyhanlı six months ago. We don't have any financial difficulty. Our district was bombarded, and our house was destroyed. Some people in our neighborhood were killed and some others migrated. As three families, we fled to Reyhanlı. We led a normal life in the beginning. But we do not have peace anymore.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Büşra Hamden: When we heard the blast in Reyhanlı, we cried and cursed for hours. Those who destroyed our house and tore our heart out now started to bother you. The only bad news we would like to hear is their death.

In our neighborhood, people know me and my old parents. There are some other Syrian refugees like us in our neighborhood. We do not protest, make a scene, nor disturb people. Most of them are women, children and elderly people. Young men are either in Syria or nobody knows where they are.

We opened neither window nor door for three days. Nobody stopped by. We had to eat just bread even in Reyhanlı. At the end, we opened the door and went out. Nobody reacted or minded. We went to grocery store, to bazaar and bought our needs. Then we locked ourself in the house again. We spend time at house by watching TV and reading Koran. We think of moving back to our hometown. But we don't know how and where to go.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

“We felt quite bad about the bombing in Reyhanlı. We understand your grief, because we suffered a lot as well,” says Gamra Kasım.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war and your life in Turkey?

Gamra Kasım: I come from al-Qusayr district of Idlib, Syria. I am 65 years old. My wife is 71 years old. We have a 35-year-old daughter. We cannot hear from our other children. We left our village in the beginning of the civil war. First of all we fled to Dene district of Idlib, and then to Akrobat village. We stayed in tent for months. Sometimes we couldn't even find water, bread. When we arrived in the border town, we started to receive aid. They provided us with food, blanket, and even heater.

People around us were hungry, and in misery. Children were sick. We witnessed everything I've mentioned. People dug holes to store water in their yards. We washed ourselves, and performed ablution with this water we stored. In fact, sometimes we even had to drink this water. Neither other people nor we could eat decent food except for certain food products. We crossed the border and arrived in Reyhanlı. My daughter has been working and looking after us. Some people help us. We live in a house in suburbs. Currently, we have been leading a normal life.

ORSAM: What did you think after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Gamra Kasım: We felt so sad because of what happened in Reyhanlı. We can understand your grief because we experienced great difficulties as well. Unless the government forces us to leave, we do not think of leaving Reyhanlı.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Halil Akram al Basravi who worked in a restaurant became unemployed after the bombings in Reyhanlı.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and also about your life in Turkey?

Halil Akram al Basravi: I am from Jabal Sheikh district of Hama, Syria. We arrived in Turkey on January 2013. One of my children was injured. After undergoing a treatment for a long time, he was able to walk again with a limp though. My other children go to a school for Syrian refugees in Reyhanlı. We started a new life here. With a friend from Reyhanlı,

we opened a restaurant. I could earn 50 TL on average per day. My rent was 400 TL. We were making our living without any problem. However, the bombing that occurred in Reyhanlı turned our life upside down. I had to quit the job.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think about it?

Halil Akram al Basravi: I have not been subjected to violence or insulted. But there is a problem. People here are allergic to Syrians. For instance my partner told me that he could no more work with me. He already owned the majority of equipments. I was working for him. Now I am unemployed. I cannot go out if I do not have to. We fled to Turkey to escape from bombing, violence etc. However, we've witnessed the same scenes in Reyhanlı as well. If it continued like this, I would have to move back to Syria.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Working as a driver within Municipality of Aleppo, Hamid Hadj Mustafa abu Rıda asserts that Aleppo is a dead city except for a few neighborhoods.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and also about your life in Turkey?

Hamid Hadj Mustafa abu Rıda: I am from Al Kellese neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 43 years old and I have 2 children. I worked as a driver within local planning authority of Aleppo Municipality. Aleppo was the last province that mobilized in the civil war in Syria. But it was also the one that was damaged most with the largest amount of martyrs.

It is easy to detect death toll in towns or villages. However the population of Aleppo is 5 million. It has a mountainous planning structure. 80% of the houses are old. The city is full of unauthorized building. The death toll is not known. It is not possible to count the number of dead bodies. However, I can tell you based



on my observations that more than 100 thousand people were trapped under wreckage in Aleppo. People are dying of thirst and disease. Some people are shot while stealing. In some tribes, enemy families shoot one another.

Aleppo has been attacked with all kind of weapons including barrel bombs, cluster bombs, tank fires. Today, it is not possible to find 2 million people in Aleppo. Some people move to all across Syria, and also across the world. Salaries of some city officials were cut off. And although some of them migrated, they come to draw their salaries/pensions.

Al Kellese, Jabiriya, Hullok, Bistanbaşa, Hamdaniya, Al Meydan, Furuza, Firdows, Sukariya are the districts with greatest number of bomb attacks. Houses, buildings were destroyed, streets and roads were blockaded as a result of the bombing. Therefore, people cannot go out. It is not even known whether they are still alive or not. Because there is neither phone line nor transportation. Aleppo is almost completely dead except for a few neighborhood.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Civil engineer Ihsan al Delle abu Raci thinks of moving to another city in Turkey since he won't go back to Syria.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and also about your life in Turkey?

Ihsan al Delle abu Raci: I am from new Aleppo, Syria. I am a civil engineer. I am 47 years old and married with 3 children.

I worked in a construction company in Aleppo. We were going to construct new residences and business centers on Damascus route in New Aleppo. After we started construction, Jaish al Hur and Jaish al Nasra started to enter in our district. Dwellers of New Aleppo are generally businessmen, rich families, retired people and artists. As the name implies, a new Aleppo was being built on southern Aleppo. But the regime's forces started to drop bombs on us due to the opposition forces in our district. Those beautiful buildings, commercial complexes were being destroyed. Roads were blockaded and barricades were set up. It became much worse than old Aleppo. Human tragedy began. Some people in our district fled to Latakia, and some others fled to Tartus. Some other families like us preferred Reyhanlı, Hatay. We lived in peace and quiet.

ORSAM: What did you experience after the bombing?

Ihsan al Delle abu Raci: We feel as sad as the people in Reyhanlı as a result of the bombing that occurred in Reyhanlı. We know that one of the reasons behind this massacre is our taking shelter in Turkey. However, we, people who escaped from bombing and oppression, did not commit this massacre. The Syrians who did not want you to give shelter to us did this. It is necessary to explain it to the local people in Reyhanlı.

I couldn't go out for 5 days. I sent children to go shopping. Even my neighbors did not ask after. Those we talked to and ate together in the past did not even ask if we needed anything either because of the neighborhood pressure or maybe by their own will. It is not possible for me or people like me to go back to that oppression. I will wait for another while. Then I might go to Mersin or Bursa. Some friends live in those cities. You experienced this pain for a day, but we experienced

it everyday. We witnessed those bombs and dead bodies each day. We couldn't even bury dead bodies. In your country you are protected by your government, but in Syria it is just the opposite. This is the difference between you and us.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

“Going back to Syria means risking death. There are still conflicts in my district,” says Muhammad Halid Talavi.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria before the civil war, and also about your life in Turkey?

Muhammad Halid Talavi: I am from Al Rifa Jebel Sheikh district of Hama, Syria. I have 3 children. I've been staying in Reyhanlı for 5 months. I fled from Hama in the dead of winter. I went through great difficulties. I lost my house and whatever I had in Saye, everything was robbed. I pay 400 TL for rent in Reyhanlı; my son Musa and I both worked and we muddled along. The conflict broke out in Reyhanlı and we have no peace anymore.

ORSAM: What have you gone through after the bombing?

Muhammad Halid Talavi: We escaped from the oppression and tyranny of Assad. But some people in Reyhanlı put the blame on us or we feel that way. We live in fear, and lock ourselves in the house. We go out to work early in the morning and come back home after the sunset. Our lease contract expired, and the landlord asked for 3-month rent in cash if we wanted to continue to stay here. After I paid the rent, “You make us live like

in prison. Does a prisoner pay rent? Unfortunately in Reyhanlı we live like a prisoner and pay for it,” I said.

I will hang on, because moving back to Syria means to risk death. Conflicts continue in my district, and even if not, my house was destroyed. There's no job opportunity, and I cannot make my living. Even if I moved to another district, I would have to pay the rent. I would prefer to die in Reyhanlı, Turkey; but if I am forced to leave the country, I have no other choice.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

Mustafa Izzo decided to move back to Syria after the change in the attitudes of people in the neighborhood as a result of the bombing.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Mustafa Izzo: I am from Harim district of Idlib, Syria. I am a father of 6 children. Harim also had its share of the bombing, and besides according to the news from the district, we hear that people drink water from river due to the lack of drinking water; animals perish children get poisoned from this insanitary and contaminated water.

ORSAM: What did you think after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Mustafa Izzo: Reyhanlı made me afraid. People in the neighborhood turned their back on us, and changed their attitudes towards us. Nobody attacked me, but nobody helps me

either. Even the grocery store in the neighborhood is worried, and he is not selling me anything. "It would be better if you didn't come," he wants to say but he can't. Innocent people started to be treated like the guilty. I might move back home in a short while if I could pass climb over the wire fence. However, I also need to take my belongings along with me. And I need a vehicle to go back. I preferred to move back from Reyhanlı.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 17th, 2013.*

"People who used to employ us do not hire us anymore. People in Reyhanlı are looking Syrians with suspicion" says Nayyale al Fede.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through during the civil war in Syria?

Nayyale al Fede: I am from Kefersheikh district of Hama, Syria. I am 53 year old and married with 4 children. My husband, on the other hand, is 57 years old and a construction foreman. Bombs were dropped on our neighborhood in Syria for days, missiles were fired. Bombs were dropped on everywhere. Tanks entered in our streets. Armed forces entered in our village. 140 people were brutally killed. Hezbollah provides the regime's army with aid. They break into houses and kill people. Their clergymen gave a fetwa. He said that who kill a Muslim go to heaven. Thus, they lost their humane sentiments and have been rivaling each other in slaughtering people. This is an inhumane atrocity.

ORSAM: What have you experienced in Reyhanlı after the bombing?

Nayyale al Fede: We had found the peace when we first arrived in Reyhanlı. Then blasts occurred in Reyhanlı as well. We witnessed people being killed here as well. It is such a misery. However, we fled from much worse grieves. I only have my son here with me. I do not know where my other children are. Families members are dispersed and cannot hear from each other.

We have been living like a prisoner for 10 days. My husband is unemployed and we do not have any income. We are worried and afraid. People who used to employ us do not hire us anymore. People in Reyhanlı have been looking Syrians with suspicion since the bombing. Staying here means hunger and misery; and moving back to Syria means bombs and missiles.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

Widow Semra Gazel and her two daughters fled from their village to Turkey as a result of the civil war. She had to beg for help since she has no income in Reyhanlı.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Semra Gazel: I am from Al Bag district of Hama, Syria. I am 50 years old, widow and I have 2 children. We lived in a village back in Syria. We had 8 sheep and 8 goats. My husband passed away a long time ago. My two daughters and I eked out a living but lived in peace.

After the outbreak of civil war, we were subjected to bombing. Along with some other

people from the village, we fled to Idlib in the first place, and then to Turkish border town, Reyhanlı. We've been here for some 5 months. We've been paying 200 TL for rent, 50 TL for electricity and water, at least 300 TL for bottled has and food. Our monthly expense is 600 TL on average per month. This equals to some 40.000 SYP and two-month salary of a civil servant.

I met Semra Gazel in Atike Mosque's courtyard next to the city hall on 10 May 2013 after the Friday prayer. She was crying and begging. Some of the people on their way out of Mosque gave money to her. And I gave money after everyone left and asked questions about her life. After she told me her life story, I asked her how much she earned by begging. She counted the money before her, it was 26,5 TL. I asked her if she begged in somewhere else. She said she was begging in front of Büyük Camii every evening. The bombing occurred in Reyhanlı on May 11th, and I saw Semra Gazel in the same Mosque on May 17th. She said that she earned 7,5 TL that day, and she asserted it was because of the bombing. I gave her 2,5 TL and left. On Friday, May 24th, Semra Gazel was not in the mosque's courtyard.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 10th, 2013.*

Vasfi Mahmud al Dehham, owner of a clothing shop, asserts that while some people protected Syrian refugees after blast, many people started to consider them guilty

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Vasfi Mahmud al Dehham: I am from Al Safa neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. I am 53 years old, and father of 5 children. I am the owner of a clothing shop. While bombs were being dropped on Aleppo, one of them hit us. I lost my wife, my house and my job. My products in the shop burned to ground, were trapped in the wreckage, and robbed. I couldn't save anything from the fire and destruction. I have a married daughter. My other children live with me.

The build-up over years had disappeared. When I arrived in Reyhanlı, I had 250 thou-



sand SYP in my pocket and a car that valued 200 thousand SYP. Rent money, electricity and water bills, food expenses... Our family is crowded... Nobody is working. This being the case, I have 10 thousand SYP left now. We will probably run out of this money within 4 months. My children have never worked in agricultural field. They cannot work here. I have never worked under anyone in my life. Finally I sold my car to a Syrian for 1500 dollars.

ORSAM: Where were you when the blast occurred? What did you go through?

Vasfi Mahmud al Dehham: I was at home when it occurred in Reyhanlı. I heard everything from neighbors. Since everyone in Reyhanlı knows Arabic and we have relatives there, we preferred to stay here. The blast was organized to set us against each other and to target us. Some people embraced us after the bombing. But most of them started to consider us guilty. Who can stand a country which is bombarded with each passing day? Leaving conflicts in the city and bombs dropped by jets alone, thirst, hunger, pollution, horror prevails. We will not move back unless they want us out of here.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

“How long can we live without job, without income? I will leave when my lease contract expires,” says Peddler Vecih al Abbas abu Mustafa.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Vecih al Abbas abu Mustafa: I am from Nerab district of Idlib, Syria. I've been in Reyhanlı for 7 months. I work as a peddler near the city hall. I bring tea, powdered thyme, cigarette, coffee from Syria, and sell them on my mobile stand. My children do the same in various streets in Reyhanlı.

ORSAM: What did you think after the attack in Reyhanlı?

Vecih al Abbas abu Mustafa: The day when the blast took place, it was cloudy and a week before the explosion there was a march against Syrians. Some people did not want us in Reyhanlı. I couldn't work, and I just sent children to street alleys. The day when I was afraid and didn't go to work, a blast occurred and it was a miracle that I survived. I do not sell anything anymore, we've locked ourselves in the house here. How long could it last without a job and money? I will leave when my lease contract expires. I set up a tent under trees in my village. Death comes everywhere.

We were hopeful and happy, and felt safe in Reyhanlı, Turkey. However, the blast horrified us. We came here for our honor and life safety, and we've not hurt anyone; but we've met people who consider us enemy. It is not possible to stand anymore. People will start to move back to Syria.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

Zekiye Rafet al Buhi who stays with her married daughter asserts that she can barely help with her widow's pension.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Zekiye Rafet al Buhi: I am from al Masharka neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. My husband passed away years ago. I have 3 sons and 2 daughters. My children live in Hama, Damascus and abroad. I stayed with my married daughter. When the civil war broke out, we fled to Reyhanlı with my son-in-law, daughter and grandchildren.

The salary of my son-in-law was cut off as he did not go to work anymore. He works as agricultural laborer, which he is not used to at all. I receive widow's pension, which is monthly 18.000 SYP (220 TL). It is only the half of rent money of the apartment we stay in Turkey. But at least I can help.

ORSAM: What did you think after the attack in Reyhanlı? What did you experience?

Zekiye Rafet al Buhi: Low-income, poor Syrian families who have no profession are those who have been most affected by the blast in Reyhanlı. We are one of those families. Sometimes we receive food aid etc. from the aid organizations. Some people in Reyhanlı are nice to us, and some others make face. As if we wanted this to happen. People have been martyred in our country, we suffered. We know what death is. I understand what people currently feel. But we had no other choice but to take shelter in Turkey. To go back to Syria means to die. If everything gets back to normal in Reyhanlı, we will continue to stay here; otherwise we will move back to Syria. We have no other choice.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

"I have lost my hope to stay in Reyhanlı, I am glad that I did not bring my family here

with me. I will go back to my hometown," says Farmer Hattab al Jasim abu İbrahim.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Hattab al Jasim abu İbrahim: I am from Al Etarib district of Aleppo, Syria. I am a 46-year-old farmer, and father of 4 children. I have barley cultivated on a 70 decares of land, of which I own 30 decares and other Syrian immigrants have a share of 40 decares. Farmers couldn't harvest their crops last year. Breeding is common in our district, and I only cultivated barley, but there was nothing left except for tiredness. Because I was just about to harvest the crop that the missile fell on the land and everything burned to ground. The crop was wasted.

In the village, I have an old house inherited from my father, an old-model tractor, and a motorcycle. When the crops burned to ground, I had to sell my tractor and motorcycle to pay the rent to people, from whom I rented the land. I was left with 14.000 SYP (100 dollars).

I stayed in the woods that is 3-4 km away from the Tulel village near the border town for months. Everyday, I went to village and buy bread, as well as tea, sugar and vegetable when needed. Today, a bunch of bread (8 loaves of bread) costs 25 SYP and vegetable prices range between 25-50 SYP. There is no opportunity to work in the neighborhood, and my children and I became miserable due to the lack of water and also the climate conditions. I fled to Turkey on my own. It has been two weeks since I arrived. I've been looking for a job and house; but I couldn't find yet.

ORSAM: What did you think after the attack in Reyhanlı?

Hattab al Jasim abu İbrahim: When I heard what happened in Reyhanlı, I was left with no hope. I am glad that I did not bring family along with me. I will go back to my hometown. I will live whatever is destined.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

Farmer Tahir Ali Abbadabi abu Salah fled to Reyhanlı due to economic conditions, but he asserts that it has become harder to live here as well.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Tahir Ali Abbadabi abu Salah: I am a farmer from Muarritel Numan district in Idlib, Syria.

I have a tractor, combine harvester. I work as farmer with my two adult sons. I've been working as a farmer for years. Our district is full of fertile soil; and wheat, barley, lentil and chickpea are grown. Farmers could not harvest most of their crops last years, and crops burned to ground. There is no means to go near airports, near military zones. Nobody can give their lives for work or assets. Last year, people had to bribe to harvest their crops in certain lands, but it was not possible to do the same this year. Many lands couldn't be cultivated, and they couldn't be irrigated, pesticides were not applied, or hoed. Thus, crops could not be harvested.

Besides life security, farmer needs also fuel, gas, tyres, oil, and transportation. None of them exists. Farmers in Idlib province of Syria are in a miserable condition, and they are in a



financial loss. Lots of people like me fled to Reyhanlı, but it is not possible for us to live here either. Because horror, violence and terror prevail.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

“The bombing in Reyhanlı once again made us feel the pain and fear,” says Rasha al Hasan al Asasiy.

ORSAM: Could you tell us how did yo decide to come to Turkey? Could you tell us about your life in Turkey?

Rasha al Hasan al Asasiy: I fled from Aleppo, Syria along with my son Enes to save his life. I am 50 years old. Either the regime’s army or a mujahid group or gangs will throw him to the lions. My son doesn’t even know how to use a gun. My wife passed away years ago and I only have my son in this life.

We rented an apartment with a family from Aleppo, and live together. I have an older brother in Saudi Arabia, and he send us money each month. My son and I work as day laborers. Aid organizations provide us with food aid.

ORSAM: What did you think after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Rasha al Hasan al Asasiy: While we were muddling along, the bombing in Reyhanlı once again made us feel pain and horror. We are worried, but no matter what, here is much safer than Syria and I do not want to go back. But if I am forced to, I have no choice but to leave. I would move to a village in Syria.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

Mustafa Abrash al Hilveni abu Mehdi who owns a fabric shop is now selling desserts and pastries by peddling in the streets in Reyhanlı.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Mustafa Abrash al Hilveni abu Mehdi: I had a fabric shop in Aleppo, Syria. I have 4 children; my eldest son is a student at Aleppo University, my daughter is married and my other two children are at high-school. I had my own house, and shop back in Aleppo. I lost both. And everything inside the shop burned to the ground.

When someone is homeless, unemployed, and has no money in his hometown, he/she feels like in a desert; but I wish I had been in a desert, because there would not have been missiles, bombs etc. People would not have been killed, and injured. I witnessed the whole tyranny. My colleagues, neighbors suffered like me, and some parents lost their children.

I’ve been in Reyhanlı for 5 months. I started a new life here. My wife has been baking pastries and desserts at home; and I sell them on the streets.

ORSAM: What have you gone through after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Mustafa Abrash al Hilveni abu Mehdi: There were lots of Syrians before the bombing in Reyhanlı. Most of the Syrian refugees withdrew, and shops owned by Syrians are closed now. Nobody spends money for pastry

or dessert. We sleep on sponge mattresses, and we use them as a sofa during the day. We have neither chair nor table. All we have is a couple of kitchen utensils. The bombing in Reyhanlı left us with no money and we had to lock ourselves in the house. However, there is no means to go back either. In Reyhanlı, there are not many people from Aleppo and most of those who are from Aleppo are poor. The rich people from Aleppo predominantly stay in Mersin, İstanbul and Gaziantep. I borrowed from a few people, but how much longer we can go on like this? The civil war and conflicts are all across Syria; bombs are dropped, and I can no longer fight.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

“The attacks in Reyhanlı tore our hearts out. We cried with you. We are used to cry and pain but it has been too hard for you,” says Makbule Hamdi, who has a retired husband.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, your life in Syria before the civil war, and also your life in Turkey?

Makbule Hamdi: I am from Aleppo, Syria. I have 5 children and 3 grandchildren. My husband is retired. My children and I rented a house for 300 TL, and we can barely pay the rent with the pension my husband receives, and also my children and I work in various jobs. We received an aid card that has 200 TL credit from an aid organization. We can buy food products from grocery store with this card. If it had been cash money, I could have bought more from somewhere else. Yet, I am grateful.

Our house in Aleppo was destroyed, and we lost 3 people in our family. My neighbors and I lived in wreckage for a while, and it was really a rough time. Our state cruelly dropped bombs on us. People in groups were in each street and nobody knew anyone and who supported whom. There were also mujahids and gangs. We had to leave Aleppo and we fled to Turkey.

ORSAM: What did you think after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Makbule Hamdi: The bombing in Reyhanlı tore our hearts out. We cried with you. We are used to cry and pain but it has been too hard for you. We locked ourselves in the house. Although nobody hurt us, we did not feel comfortable. We are still worried.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 22nd, 2013.*

“When something terrible happens to you, wouldn’t you run to your neighbor in the first place? So, we ran to you,” says Dahir Abbas abu Mustafa.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Dahir Abbas abu Mustafa: I am from Jabal district of Hama, Syria. I’ve been in Reyhanlı for 5 months. I came here neither to visit my relatives nor to travel. I came here to save and defend my honor. We took shelter in here. You welcomed us.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think?

Dahir Abbas abu Mustafa: We witnessed lots of tragic events here. As a matter of fact,

you should have understood us better after the bombing. You went through the same we did in Syria each day. But some people reacted the opposite way. They targeted us. When something terrible happens to you, wouldn't you run to your neighbor in the first place? So, we ran to you. We couldn't eat for worrying ourselves to death and for fear of being kicked out for a week. We couldn't even open the curtain. Our children cried ceaselessly.

Then the Prime Minister came and supported. He lightened the mood. We can go out again. We can work again if we find a job.

Death is a matter of time in Syria for anyone. There are always bombing attacks. We are attacked randomly. Our houses were destroyed. Please don't turn your back on us. Don't make us move back to Syria under these circumstances. We will already go back when things calm down. We love Turkey and the Turkish people.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Emen Hadj İbrahim's husband went back to Syria to harvest crops, and he was arrested and put in prison by the regime's army.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself?

Emen Hadj İbrahim Ummu Mustafa: I am 60 years old. I've been in Reyhanlı for 3 months. We came from Cercenaz district of Idlib. My husband went back to harvest his crop. He hit town to take his money back from his friend. The regime's army caught him and put him in prison. That is the only thing I hear from him. Now I am alone with my two daughters. I have relatives here. But they are not in a good shape either. They are needy as well.

There is no such thing as adjudication in Syria. Some people live long enough to get out



of prison. But it is not known whether they get sick or become permanently disabled until then. Nobody dares to ask someone else's doom.

ORSAM: Where were you when the blast occurred? What did you go through?

Emen Hac İbrahim Ummu Mustafa: During the blast in Reyhanlı, my daughters and I were at home. We shared your sorrow. Then we locked ourselves in the house. I called my relatives and tried to find out what happened. We were scared and worried. I am grateful that the neighborhood mukhtar came to ask if we needed anything.

We were glad that the Prime Minister came to visit. We got rid of the fear, and went in front of the city hall. It was like a feast day, we were so glad. We are innocent people. Those who escape from death and oppression do not intend to kill anyone. We know how it's like to suffer. We do not make others suffer. We just want the people in Reyhanlı to understand us.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Attorney Muammar abu Ala asserts that even 50 years is not enough for Syria to reach Turkey's democratic level.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and the reasons why you came to Reyhanlı?

Muammar abu Ala: I am from Hama, Syria. I am an attorney. I live in Gaziantep. I came both to see PM Erdoğan and to meet the attorneys in Reyhanlı on May 25th, 2013. In Reyhanlı, there are 3 Syrian attorneys. I met them and then we went to listen to Prime Minister.

ORSAM: What did you think after the bombing in Reyhanlı?

Muammar abu Ala: I will tell you what happened from the perspective of a jurist. Even 50 years is not enough for Syria to reach Turkey's democratic level. It will never reach Europe's level at all. As Syrian attorneys, we held meetings both in Gaziantep and in İstanbul. We couldn't find a middle ground. We couldn't even agree to designate a spokesman to represent us. If we cannot designate a leader in an environment of civil war, I guess we can by no means designate one when we find peace.

The PM apologizes for his late visit to Reyhanlı. He explains the reason why he did not visit earlier. And the people applaud enthusiastically. In our country, a minister of PM does not apologize the people. On the contrary, he attacks and kills the people. We do not expect them to apologize indeed. It is enough if they just stopped bombing.

The Syrian refugees in Reyhanlı went through some trouble. But they regained their confidence. Lots of people were killed. But everyone greeted the leaders of the political parties they support calmly. In Syria it is not possible to greet a political party's leader even in a wedding ceremony.

In Turkey, on the other hand, compensation is paid for the houses, shops that are damaged and for people who are killed and injured. If there is a mistake in calculating the damage, you have right to complain, and to claim compensation. There's no such thing in Syria. Indeed, we don't have guts.

As an attorney, I can by no means defend someone who commit a crime against the state. In Turkey, on the other hand, attorneys can defend people who commit all kinds of crimes. This is democracy.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

When shopkeeper Murshid abu Mustafa arrived in Reyhanlı, he opened a shop that is registered to a Turkish citizen.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Murshid abu Mustafa: I came from Aleppo. I am 36 years old, and a father of 2 children. Although I applied for a job in Syria, I was not employed as a civil servant. Because I do not know anyone from the Ba'ath group. I come from a poor family. I fled to Reyhanlı 6 months ago. I opened a shop that is registered to a Turkish citizen. In return, I gave the Turkish citizen a share.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think?

Murshid abu Mustafa: After the bombing, I had to close my shop. I was not at a financial loss, but my income came to a standstill. I've been going out only to perform Friday prayer for two weeks. Nobody attacked me at all. Yet I locked myself in the house to be safe. After the bombing, a negative atmosphere prevailed. People provoked one another. They started to consider Syrians enemy. Some shopkeepers set their eyes on our income since we caused to a competition environment. The licensee of my shop from Reyhanlı came to visit the shop from time to time and seemed like my partner. Otherwise, some people might even want to hold to ransom. I was already a quiet and timid. After all we went through in Syria, we were further depressed. We were scared and worried.

PM's visit to Reyhanlı eliminated our fear all of a sudden. The people became tolerant as

before. If a Syrian had been found guilty as a result of the bombing in Reyhanlı and if it had been heard, many Syrians here would have been negatively affected. But when no Syrian was accused of committing the bombing, we were relieved. We ran away from the oppression and bombing. We learned how painful it is before you did.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Farmer Rahman Yaser al Bishe fled from Nerab district of Idlib with his crowded family.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Rahman Yaser al Bishe: We fled from Nerab district of Idlib to Reyhanlı last year. My parents, brother, sons-in-law... In total we are a 27-member family. Our house was bombed. We lost 5 members in our family. We came here without harvesting our crops. We do not know who seize our land right now. We have nothing left back in Syria. Everything was destroyed. We had rough times in Reyhanlı for a while, but everybody was nice to us when we first arrived. Some neighbors gave us mattress, some others blanket. Some of them brought flour, some of them bread. There was a nice environment in Reyhanlı. We were forgetting our pain. Children started not to consider here abroad anymore. Furthermore, there are even Syrian children who are learning Turkish while playing with their friends.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think?

Rahman Yaser al Bishe: We were as sad as you were, and we cried with you. However, we

are not responsible for what happened. Our town in Syria is most dangerous among others and located nearest to military troops, airport. Yet we cannot leave Reyhanlı.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Carriage Driver Shekib al Hasan Abu Nafi lost his son in the civil war.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Shekib al Hasan Abu Nafi: I am from Idlib province of Syria. I am 54 years old. Bombs were dropped on our village in Syria. I worked as a carriage driver. I have two married daughters, and had a 26-year-old son. My son was an electrician. When the civil war broke out, my son fought along with his friends, and he was martyred. I fled to Reyhanlı. I work in temporary jobs. I receive aid from time to time. I live in misery, and sometimes I beg for help.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing?

Shekib al Hasan Abu Nafi: I locked myself in the house for a week as a result of the bombing in Reyhanlı. I cannot hear from my daughters and grandchildren.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Talal al Hamdi abu Rağib who works in a pharmaceutical company says that he shuttles back and forth between Syria and Turkey

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Talal al Hamdi abu Rağib: I am from Aleppo. I fled to Reyhanlı 7 months ago. I worked in a pharmaceutical company in Aleppo. The company was a big business. I had a profit share. Every month I go to Syria. My company partners come to Hatay. I have no problem in financial terms.

ORSAM: Where were you when the bombing took place? What do you think about it?

Talal al Hamdi abu Rağib: I was at home when the bombing occurred in Reyhanlı. I reside in Yenişehir neighborhood. I did not set foot outside for 10 days following the bombing. My car was parked outside. People broke the car glasses, and crushed the bumper. My son got beat up on his way to bakery. I understand the mood of people. We were scared and worried. I saw a group of people protesting against the Syrians.

When the PM came to visit Reyhanlı, we overcame our fears and worries. I went to the square where the city hall is located, and watched. There was an enthusiastic and reassuring crowd. The Prime Minister protect us. Turkey protect us. It all makes us forget our sorrows.

Terror has spread to all Muslim countries. I hope that we won't see such things happen again. I condemn those who commit these actions.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

“The Syrians in Reyhanlı have nothing to do with terror. All we ever want is life and honor safety,” says Farmer Beshir Hadj Ali.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Beshir Hadj Ali: I came from Salkin district of Idlib, Syria to Reyhanlı 5 months ago. I am a farmer. I rented 100 decare of chickpea-cultivated land in my district in Syria. And I have 15 decare of land. I need to harvest the crop, but I cannot go. A friend of mine went to Syria, and he will harvest the crop if he can find an opportunity; but the bombing still continues in our district. Everyday, I hear people migrating and somewhere being destroyed. I fled to Turkey without my passport, and the controls became more strict as a result of the bombing in Reyhanlı. Furthermore, I cannot even go out unless I have to.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think?

Beshir Hadj Ali : I was negatively influenced by the bombing in Reyhanlı to a great extent. Besides the fear and worry I felt, I locked myself in the house for 10 days. If you want us

to leave Reyhanlı, it comes to mean that you send us to death on purpose. The Syrians in Reyhanlı have nothing to do with terror. All we ever want is life and honor safety. People in Syria either were killed or lost their honor, there is no way out. Women are being assaulted, being raped before the eyes of their husbands. They put a knife on their children's throat, they will either sacrifice their honor or their children will be killed. At the end, they will be raped or killed. You cannot send us back to such environment.

Many Syrians had family fights. Their peace was disturbed. Syrian women, as well as girls, have no intention to go back to Syria. They say they prefer to die here rather than being raped in Syria. When the Prime Minister came to visit Reyhanlı, we got our hopes up, and now we can go out. Everything is not back to normal yet, but I feel it. Although nobody disturbs us, no one in Reyhanlı welcomes us either. I used to buy bread everyday before the bombing, now I am afraid to go out often; thus I buy bread once a week. All Syrians are worried.



** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Construction worker Hasan al Dashir who fled from Aleppo is married for 3 months.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Hasan al Dashir: We come from Aleppo, Syria. We are married for 3 months. Our families met here in Reyhanlı. We got married with imam marriage. We have no means to perform a civil marriage. Our families signed an agreement for 100 thousand in cash and 100 thousand for later on. In Syria and other Arab countries, this is the way how people marry before the civil marriage. The money received in cash is used for trousseau, and the rest of the money is a caution. In case the farmers divorce, woman receives the alimony. The alimony depends on the financial possibilities of families, some of them are millions; while some are 100-200 thousand SYP.

Poor families allocated two rooms for us. We use plastic chairs, table, rug and mattress, TV, refrigerator in common with the family. Two bracelets and rings were given to the bride. A tray of baklava was served, and then al-fatehah was said. I work as a construction worker, and my wife works in agricultural field as day laborer.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Hashem Hadj Abdullaho abu Zeydan who fled from Tayba district of Hama narrowly escaped death.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and your life in Syria and Turkey?

Hashem Hadj Abdullaho abu Zeydan: I come from Tayba district of Hama province, Syria. I am 48 years old. I have 5 children. Lots of people were killed in Syria, but my family always narrowly escaped death. When Tayba and Baniyas were being attacked, we were there; and also the day when the bombing occurred, we were in front of the city hall.

ORSAM: Where were you during the bombing? What did you go through?

Hashem Hadj Abdullaho abu Zeydan: My son peddles cigarette, coffee, tea and packaged Turkish delight. Generally he stops in city center, in front of the city hall, but he was in the park in front of the city hall the day when the bomb-laden vehicle exploded. My wife and I were in front of the office of an aid organization providing aid for poor Syrians next to the city hall, but it was closed. When the azan was recited, I went to mosque for noon prayer, and my son and wife went back home to have lunch.

There are 100 meters between the mosque and the crime scene. The azan was recited at 12.40, we performed the prayer, and the people went out of mosque at 13.00. Everybody went back to their homes. When I arrived home, I heard the blast. Then the second blast. Of course, I did not go out. I heard the news afterwards. If we had been half an hour late or if the aid organization had been open, we would be either injured or killed. It is called destiny. One cannot escape from death by fleeing from Syria. Because there were Syrians in that square; some of them sold Syrian meatball, some of them sold wraps, and some other waited for someone. Some people in that square were injured and killed.

We lived like a prisoner for a week. I live in Kurtuluş neighborhood of Reyhanlı. At least 300 Syrian families live here. Some of them worked in agricultural field, and some others worked as construction workers, while others peddled vegetable, fruit.

Those who have cars parked in front of their houses removed the license plates. Those who have backyard hid their cars. Because the vehicles with Syrian license plate were attacked and destroyed. People were manhandled. None of the Syrian refugees even went to mosque for the first two days. Then we started to go to mosque for evening prayer. Syrians went to Friday prayer a week later. After the Prime Minister visited to Reyhanlı, we felt safe like the day we first arrived in Reyhanlı. As if we did not suffer enough in Syria, I believe that the blast occurred to get rid of us and to make us suffer in Reyhanlı as well.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

“Some people know that we are innocent, We have nowhere to go and we will not leave Turkey until the end of civil war,” says Nesrin Abbadi who is a widow and mother of two children.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself, and your life in Syria and Turkey?

Nesrin Abbadi: I come from Sarmin district of Idlib, Syria. I am 43 years old. I have two children, and my husband was killed. I’ve been in Reyhanlı for 7 months. I arrived here on a tragic day, and went back to Syria also on a tragic day. Because I had lost my husband the day I arrived here. My older brother died two days ago. I went to Idlib to his fu-

neral. I suffered a lot, my children were too young, they were still students. When the civil war broke out, I took them from school and brought to Turkey along with me. If we hadn’t fled to Turkey, they would have to join either the army or a mujahid group. There was no other way out in Syria. They work as porter here. I am grateful that we are alive, I don’t want anything else.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think about it?

Nesrin Abbadi: We fled to Reyhanlı, Turkey to find some peace, but the violence, bombs followed us. When my neighborhood were in pain, I shared their pain as well. I met a few families, and visited them to express my condolence. It is horrible to die for nothing, to lose one’s children, husband and siblings. Those who go through the same understand it. When the Turkish PM paid a visit to Reyhanlı, all Syrians had a field day. As Syrian refugees, we are not to blame. The bombing was organized to set us against you, they wanted to create trouble, and some people were deceived; while some of them know our innocence. We have nowhere else to go, we will continue to live in Turkey until the end of the civil war.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

Saha Huseyin-al Masri who comes from a rich family collect and send aid to poor people in Syria as well as those who stranded in Syria.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Saha Huseyin-al Masri: I come from Aleppo, Syria. Our family name is Masri, because during the Ottoman period my family moved from Egypt to Aleppo. We were a rich family. My wife passed away at a young age. I have 3 sons and a daughter. My sons are all university graduates; my two sons are doctor, and one of them is engineer. They live in Gaziantep in Turkey. I live with my daughter Rayye. She is married with 2 children. My son-in-law is literature teacher. My daughter is also a university graduate, but she did not work. We are from Reyhanlı. My son-in-law is a teacher in school for Syrian student, he is striving for the education and future of those children rather than to earn money. We lost everything because of the war, so he wants those who survived to have education and to shape their own future.

We left Aleppo due to the barrel bombs dropped on our neighborhood, civil war and conflicts in the streets. There is nothing left from Aleppo. Would you call a place without roads, school, hospital, trade a city? I can't, because Aleppo was destroyed.

Those who are in a good shape send aid to those in need who are still in Syria and those who fled to Reyhanlı. There are lots of benefactors, generous, devoted people among us. We help our citizens as much as possible. We collected and sent lots of food aid, utensils, and whatever is needed for children etc. in vehicles. There are many rich families in Gaziantep. We collect aid and send them to Aleppo for those who are poor and stranded.

When I arrived in Reyhanlı, I identified 18 poor families. I told it to my children. They sent 200 dollars for each family. We helped some people, if not a lot; there are thousands of poor people only in Reyhanlı. They live in misery. Some of those families do not have even mattress or blanket. If a guest came,

they wouldn't have even a mattress to sleep on. They have nothing to treat either. I feel so sad for children and women. There are people who have nothing to cook in their kitchens. They have to eat the same thing every day. This is tragic.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

“In my country, villages and towns continue to be bombed,” says Agriculturalist Yaser Dahham abu Mahmud.

ORSAM: Could you tell us about yourself and what you went through in Syria and Turkey?

Yaser Dahham abu Mahmud: I worked as an agriculturalist in Jabalkırad district of Latakia, Syria. I have 2 daughters and a son. My wife passed away before the civil war. She fell sick; and although I did my best to have her treated, she died. I haven't married anyone else. I am an expert in pruning vineyards and orchards, applying pesticide, and fertilizing agricultural lands. I had a decent life. After the outbreak of civil war, I fled from my hometown just like villagers in my district and other local people in the neighboring villages.

I worked hard during the tree trimming season in Reyhanlı, and made a good circle here; and those for whom I worked were also pleased with how I worked. I muddled along. However, we felt worried due to the bombing in the square. I felt like we were in Syria. I started afraid of dying and losing honor.

ORSAM: What did you go through after the bombing? What do you think?

Yaser Dahham abu Mahmud: I was offended by only one of my Turkish neighbors in

Reyhanlı. I did not understand what he said but he swore. He wanted me to leave Reyhanlı. I locked myself in the house with my children. We felt very happy after the Turkish PM came to visit Reyhanlı. I did not go to listen to him that day, but I asked the neighbors the next day and called Syrians. They said that everyone is going out, so I did too, as well as my children. It was like a step from prison to freedom. Thank God I work whenever I can

find a job, and we are not afraid anymore. In my country, villages and towns continue to be bombed. I hear someone being killed each day.

** This interview was conducted by Feyyat Özyazar in Reyhanlı district of Hatay on May 27th, 2013.*

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