

Exilium

I lost my husband. I could not find him during the firing in Hama. I took my ID with me, and my four children. My mother and my 13 siblings live in Turkey. I am told life is easier there. One day I hope to join them. My name is Hayam. I am 37.

The most important thing I took from Syria is my SIM card for my old phone, which is inactive now, but I keep the SIM card. When I reached Lebanon, all I had with me was a plastic bag. My name is Ahmad. I am 25.

I took fear with me. When it strikes, I take my children and run. When we ran the first time, we took a plastic bag with documents and photographs. My daughter took her Tweety Bird. She keeps her eye on it and in the evening she puts all the candies she has inside it. My name is Muhammad. I am 38.

I took photos of my family and friends when I left our house in Tel Kelekh during the gunfire. Bullets perforated the walls. After crossing the border with Lebanon, I saw on YouTube that our house was demolished. My name is Joanna. I am 22.

I brought with me a wooden box which I bought in Bab Sharqi, a district of Damascus. The box is decorated with mussel shells. I keep my guitar picks in it. My name is Adnan. I am 25.

I took with me my fiancé's lighter. It is an ordinary lighter. He wanted it back, but I never gave it to him. I did not tell my fiancé I was leaving. He supported Assad. I supported the revolution. We did not talk about politics, to avoid conflict. My name is Noor. I am 21.

I keep prayer beads, called *tasbih*, which means “to travel swiftly.” I had them on my neck when we left the house in Al-Raqqah. I take them off when I shower. There are 99 beads for 99 names for Allah. My name is Halima. I am 45.

I took golden bracelets from our house in Aleppo with me. I sold them to buy a tent in Lebanon. My name is Mariam. I am 23.

We took a kerosene lamp. We knew there were power outages in Lebanon every four hours. My mother, Fawza, took her sewing machine, which she’s had since childhood. We also took an old mortar. [the name missing]

I took a key with me. I come from Tel Kelekh in Homs province. Fayez, 25 years old.

Even though we left in the summer, I took a red winter jacket, a present from my father. Ruba, 4 years old.

I could not take my pigeons from Daara. My brother told me how to raise them and train them. I fed them out of my hands. Hussein, 16 years old.

I took my radio with me. I don’t let anybody touch it. When I leave the room, I close it in my wardrobe. I know the frequency & exact time of broadcasts. It is like being lost in the sea. The waves take you in all directions. I know the sea. I live in it. Ali, 70 years old.

I took a scar on my belly. Ahmad, 65 years old.

I took a photo of my cousin, who drowned in the river while crossing the border with Lebanon. Khalil, 24 years old.

I took a cloth, *tantal* in Kurdish. My sister made it. The light beams out of it. Juma, 33 years old.

I took the Koran with me. I keep it in a special suitcase. Haj Zaher, 51 years old.

I took a photo of my lost son. He was 16 when they arrested him. I have not seen him since. Ibtissam, 40 years old.