

Notes from the Jungle 8. Osman, family and UK law



Osman, Northern Iraq

'I came here yesterday. I had been in Paris with my family. They went to the UK, but I cannot get to the UK yet, so I had to come here.

'I lived in the UK for seven years. I worked there as an electrician. I had a good job, and it is where I met my wife, who is an English woman. We have two small children, a boy and a girl. They are English, they have UK papers and passports, just like their mother my wife, so they are all in the UK now.

'I moved back with my wife to Northern Iraq, to the Kurdish region where I am from, when I was offered a job with Gazprom.

'It was a good job. I travelled in the region and made sure things worked. I managed some engineering projects related to electricity. The money was good and I was happy.

'But my wife could not relax there. She tried hard, but she was scared. She didn't think it was safe. She heard explosions, and gunfire every day.

'I had thought our life would be nice, that she could see my homeland and I could work in my job and provide for my family, but she was not comfortable, so it would not have been fair for us to stay there. It was dangerous.

'She was right. There is fighting and bombing in Northern Iraq now every single minute, every single day. She was right to be scared and it is not a good place to try to bring up children.

'We left Iraq on 4th October. We went on a holiday, to Turkey and we were there for two weeks, in Istanbul. We then came to Paris, where we stayed for two nights. Then, I had to say goodbye to my wife and children. They went to the UK.

'I was extremely sad, but I told them not to cry, because I would be with them soon.

'I think I should be allowed to go to the UK, because I have an English wife and we have two very small children. I lived and worked in the UK already, and I am a qualified electrician and I have proved I am good at my job, successful and hard-working.

'The Gazprom job also proves that I am good at working for international firms, and so I think I should be able to go to the UK, live and work hard, and look after my family.

'But I applied to come back to the UK in April this year.

'It took many months – almost six months – and then they replied to tell me I had been refused.

'They said in the letter that when I had left the UK one of the papers I had signed said I couldn't come back to the UK until 2019.

'I didn't even know that was what it said. I wouldn't have signed a paper like that deliberately. I do not understand. I don't remember that being on the form, and I read the form before I signed it.

'Even if it was on the form, I have a wife and children. I need them, and they need me. And we left Iraq because of the fighting and danger there.

'I speak English and worked in England. I do not know why they will not let me come back to be with my family.

'So I have had to come here. Where else could I go?

'But this is not a good place to be. I thought I would be able to apply again to enter the UK legally, to explain the situation and help them to understand that I have reason to be there and I will be hard-working and useful.

'But there is no-one here who can even help me to get forms to fill in. I am trying to go past here, to go to the UK, to be with my wife and my children who I love. But I am stuck here because no-one will give any of us the chance to come.

'I am beginning to understand the people who try to hold onto trains, or underneath lorries. I don't want to do that – no-one wants to do it, it is terrible and dangerous – but what choices are there? How can I be with my family again?

'When I was in the UK, I worked. When I was in Iraq, I worked. I do not want to live a lazy life, a life where all I do is sleep, then wake up, then sleep, then wake up.

'And that is what life is here. It is not a life. I want to live my life.

'I want to get papers for the UK so I can have a job, a life and be with my family. I love them. That is all I want.'