



Lagadikia, (IHA) 7 December 2021



Bilal Shukri, 39

In 2003, I left Mosul, in Iraq, where I had lived.

I left because of the war against Saddam Hussein.

There were bombs falling and things were terrible, but also there was the risk that Saddam Hussein's supporters would attack us.

I came by car to Greece. I came across the Evros border, got to Alexandroupoli and was put in prison for three months. When they released me, they gave me a paper which said I had to leave Greece in a week.

At this point, Greece had no refugee camps or other places for refugees.

I went to the UK, but when I got there, they said that because I had come from Greece, and had been fingerprinted there, I would have to be sent back there.

As soon as I got off the 'plane in Greece they put me straight in prison, for four days.

When I was released, I went again to the UK, and they sent me back.

By then, the war had ended and so I went back to Iraq.

I stayed in Iraq for a long time. I married, and had a daughter, who is five years old.

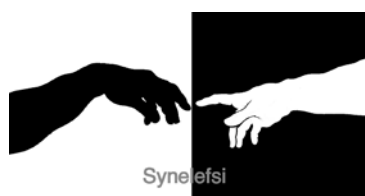
I was in Mosul, working in a restaurant, in 2014, when Da'esh came to the city. It was a very big risk, extremely frightening. If we stayed, we would have died. We did not want that.

So I moved to Northern Iraq in 2014, which is where I met my wife and where our baby girl was born.

But while I was there, I got into some trouble. There were a number of Kurdish groups there. I wasn't involved with any of them, but this meant each of them suspected I was involved with another one. Three times, I was caught by different groups.

But the worst was yet to come.

A boy aged 17 was found dead in a river. People thought he had been drowned deliberately. One of the groups caught me and said I knew what happened. Of course, I didn't.





They let me go again, but the family of the child said I belonged to a group they thought had killed their child, the PDK (Kurdistan's largest political party). They thought I had done it. They came after me. They threw rocks at our home, breaking our windows. They threatened me. We were very scared, and this is why we left.

We went to Turkey, late in 2019. We stayed for two months, and in early 2020, we came back to Greece, and I was put in Filakia detention centre for 14 days.

They gave me a paper for six months and told me to leave. I came to this camp, Lagadikia, in February 2020.

There were 90 families living in this camp when I arrived. Eighty families were given ID. We got a negative decision.

We are forced to live in a tent at the camp. We have a five-year-old daughter. And when we wake up, we are not allowed to stay inside the camp. We have no food and no money. In the camp, some families receive food, and if they have more than they can eat, they give it to us. When that happens, we do have enough food.



The real problem is that it's so cold. There is me, my daughter and my wife. My wife is pregnant, and it's so cold. But I have had two negative decisions, so I can't do anything about it.

One frustrating thing is that the lawyers and the court claim to believe us. They say they know we are in trouble and cannot go home, but they say everyone from my region is in the same trouble, and they refuse our claim. It makes no sense.

There are fewer people in the camp now. I have tried to find a way to leave. To get a job and money to live somewhere else. But there is no way.

It's so cold, and the camp is empty. There are 40 containers with no-one inside. I asked if we could have one, my young family, and the camp manager said no. He said if I got one, people from Germany and Switzerland would take one. But the court already accepted we come from a dangerous place, and we can't return to Iraq. I would die there.

All I really want is for my family to go to school and have a good life. I want to find a job.

Here, **IHA** has a lawyer. I am hoping something will happen with this. It's the only thing I can do.

On Sundays, there is a women's space here in the **IHA** centre. But my wife cannot come to it. She is not even allowed to come inside to get warm, because she has no COVID vaccine.

We both went to get the first jab. We do not want to get sick. That was no problem. But we got our second rejection from the government before the second injection, and because they stripped us of our health number, we have not completed the vaccine.

We are not allowed to. We do not want to be sick, and it is winter. We are not even allowed to go inside a building to get warm after sleeping in a tent.

