International Committee of the Red Cross

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**ICRC: Syria’s Decade of Loss - Rami’s Story**

Rami Asfar, 29 years old, moved to Aleppo in 2014, hoping for a fresh start and new opportunities.

His hometown Hama had been badly affected by the conflict and it had become impossible for the then-22 year old to continue his studies or find a job.

The decision to leave was one he will never forget.

“It was so hard for to say goodbye, I didn't know when I would see them again (his family) again. Would it be a long time? Would I return to my city? Everything was unknown.”

He didn’t see his family again for another year.

Now settled in Aleppo and making a living as an artist and designer, he says the conflict upended his life.

“This war changed my life completely. I’m changed where I live, my ambitions, all my plans. I even changed my university major. I’ve been forced to find better conditions in these bad ones.

He says the worst part of the war was the psychological impact.

“I don’t have any physical injuries. For me the psychological and emotional damage was the hardest part. I’ve tried to get over it but it left me with scars. This wound will live with me for a lifetime.”

He is fiercely proud of Syria’s history and culture, even as he says he doesn’t see himself staying in the country.

“I wish the world could see the reality in Syria, which is very different from what’s on social media. Syria is the cradle of civilization, history and arts. We are real people. Now all you see is war, destruction and people in need.”

**SHOTLIST**

Location: Aleppo, Syria

Filming Date: 04.02.2021

Languages: Arabic

On-Screen credit: ICRC

Producer: Ammar Saboh

Camera: ICRC

Editor: Christopher Nicholas

Copyright: Access all

Restrictions, if any: No

Production Reference: 20210204-Syria-Rami

**SHOTLIST**

00:00 Rami Asfar at home in Aleppo leaning out of window

SOUNDBITE: (Arabic) Rami Asfar, Syrian artist

*00:31 “It was so hard for us to say goodbye. I didn't know when we would meet again. Would it be a long time? Or would it be soon!? Will I ever go back to my city? Everything was unknown.*

*00:50 At that time I felt really bad about leaving my family in a very dangerous situation. Those times were really hard and I can’t let go of the thoughts that are stuck in my head from that time.*

*01:00 The moment I said goodbye was so difficult. I didn’t see them again for a year. These last ten years were a huge crisis for me.*

*01:15 These 10 years were psychologically draining. Starting from ashes, everything was gone, everything was destroyed and we had to rebuild on top of rubble.”*

01:33 Rami at home having coffee with a friend.

02:00 Rami leaving home and going to a local shop.

SOUNDBITE: (Arabic) Rami Asfar, Syrian artist

*02:49 “This war has changed my life completely. I've changed where I live, my ambitions and all my plans.*

*03:04 I changed where I live, I moved to another city, and all of my memories have changed. Even my goals are different - I changed my university major in this war.*

*03:25 I’ve been forced to find better opportunities in these bad times.*

*03:31 It forced me to create another reality which was both hard, and yet good for me at the same time.*

*03:41 My life before the Syrian crisis was like anyone my age. I had many ambitions, childish dreams. I wanted to study, work hard, and achieve good things.*

*03:55 Our ambitions knew no bounds, and life was easy. But now we're forced to accept the reality and follow the only route we have.*

*04:11 Whatever we tried to do during this time there were always obstacles in the way.”*

04:18 Rami in the workshop where they manufacture the design pieces he creates to sell in his gallery / shop.

05:45 Rami in his gallery / shop in Aleppo, arranging the merchandise and talking to a customer about his artwork.

SOUNDBITE: (Arabic) Rami Asfar, Syrian artist

*07:06 “I didn't have any physical injuries. For me the psychological and emotional damage was the hardest part. I've experienced many bad things.*

*07:30 I tried to get over it but it has left me with scars. These wounds will stay with me for a lifetime.*

*07:42 You can’t erase your emotions. The physical damage was nothing compared to the emotional wounds.”*

07:50 Rami painting in his studio adjacent to the gallery / shop

SOUNDBITE: (Arabic) Rami Asfar, Syrian artist

*09:38 “The thing I miss the most is hanging out with my buddies. There were eleven of us. We grew up together, went to the same school, and did everything together.*

*10:02 I wish the world could see the real Syria which is very different from the reality people see on social media. The reality is very different.*

*10:10 Syria is the cradle of civilization, history and art. The people of Syria are real.*

*10:21 Now all you see is war, destruction and people in need, what really needs support is our mental health, that's all we need.”*

10:37 Rami walking around outside in Aleppo.

**12:20 ENDS**

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