

# MY HISTORY

We were a normal, humble and hard-working family that lived in a small village near Mosul, in northern Iraq. At that time my father, Ahmad, was forty-eight years old and he was a doctor in a clinic far from our home, my mother, Mahdubala, was forty-six, and was in charge of domestic chores. On the other hand, my little brother, Hashim, was going to turn eight and Me, Kaamla, was sixteen. We had a little dog named Zoe, who every day was waiting for my brother and me to arrive from the institute sitting at the door of the house. Everything went well, we had enough money to eat, pay bills and buy clothes, although sometimes, we lacked money. We lived in peace until that day, on January 21, 2015, was the worst Wednesday of my life.

That morning started normal, we woke up, my father went to take the bus to go to work. While my brother and I dressed, my mother prepared breakfast and lunch. After breakfast, we took our backpacks and my brother went to school and I went to high school while my mother started doing housework. I was already in high school talking to my friends when suddenly bombs and missiles from the sky began to explode in houses, schools, shops, hospitals, killing people, animals, babies and small children...The people started shouting and running, there were a lot of noise, the teachers told us to get into the assembly hall, which was the safest place and where we all could stayed. I was with my friends, but I looked around and they were all scared, so I thought about my brother, my father, my mother, the dog, will they be okay? I asked myself, but I couldn't know that.

After two hours of bombing, everything went silent, we left the institute with much fear and I ran to my house. On the way, I saw that the houses of my friends were destroyed, many people died on the ground, among them, people I had known since I was little, neighbors, relatives of friends, etc. Terror invaded me more and more. My mother, crying and with the bloody leg, was at the door with my dead dog in her arms waiting for me and my brother. I could not believe it, I could not believe what I was living, how can everything change so quickly? I looked everywhere and there were only people running, screaming, crying, terrified, wounded, dead...

My mother told me to go find my brother, because I could not. So he left my dog on the edge of the street and sat on the corner of the street. I started running to the school where my brother was, wishing that nothing had happened to him and that my mother had not gotten worse when we returned. I arrived at school, there were mothers with their children dead in their arms, children crying inconsolably trying to find their mothers, and others who had already found them but who were no longer alive. I entered the ruined building shouting Hashim, Hashim! but nobody answered me, so I went to my brother's class.

Here was he and his friends Ghâlib and Muhsin, I took my brother in my arms and with his friends behind, we left the school. They were very scared, they didn't understand anything of what was happening, because at the time that my parents put the news on TV, my brother is sleeping and he didn't know anything about the war we were living.

I took their two friends to their homes to find their families with the bad news that one of the bombs fell on Ghâlib's house killing his parents and his four sisters. Muhsin, he could stay with his father and his older brother, luckily they were all fine. Finally, my brother and I started the path that took us to our house, or what was left of it. While we were arriving, I tried to reassure Hashim by asking him things and telling him that Mom and Dad were fine, although I was not very sure about it. Finally we arrived to where was our mother, she was very happy to see that her son was fine, she luckily was still as I left her.

At the moment we were all well, my father was missing, we did not know anything about him. Then, it occurred to me to take my mother to a medical post near we were to try that the doctors tried to bandaged her leg. She tried to get up and walk, and with so much effort and after forty-five minutes we got to get there. There were a lot of wounded people and a lot of people and doctors trying to help the wounded giving them everything that they could needed. We had to wait a lot of time because there was a lot of people there, but the doctors treated us all very well.

It was already getting dark and we did not have a place to sleep, it was cold and we did not have anything to wrap us. We went home to try to get some blankets or jackets, but all we could get were several broken sheets and two scarves. We were very worried about my father when we heard a voice that said: Mahdubala, Hashim, Kaamla! It was him, he had several wounds in his face and arms, but he was fine. He told us that there was a place where we could stay to sleep that night, the sports center, it was a big and roofed place.

When we arrived we were given blankets and food, all that was given by some neighbors who had shops or clothing stores. We put ourselves in a small place that we found and we tried to sleep. Then I began to think how fast everything had happened and how we could lose everything in a few hours. I remembered the sky before being bombed, it was blue, bright, clean, but now it was gray, dark, and full of smoke and gases. I also thought about my dog, so small, adorable, eater and playful, with that curly gray hair so difficult to comb that always waited for us and gave us a lot of happiness as much as we lacked that night

It made me angry because she was not at fault, was a small innocent and helpless animal that died by a bomb that they threw for stupid reasons. But it couldn't be solved. I was very sad, terrified, insecure, overwhelmed, etc. But I guess my parents were worse. In the face of so much destruction and

desolation, I will always remember how people I didn't know came to help and assist women, men, children and old people who were wounded. That night nobody could sleep because of the fear of being bombed again. We had lost everything, there was no work, there was no school, no house, no pet, nothing, everything we had was gone, I didn't even have my friends.

We were sleeping and eating at the sports center for a week, and then we went to a refugee camp in Mosul. It was much bigger, there was more food and water and we had better conditions to sleep. It saddened me to leave what had been my home since I was born because, as well as my brother and my parents, we left behind many good and bad memories that we had lived and many people with whom we had shared that moments they would never return. We not only leaved that behind, we lost all the things that meant a lot to us of our house.

After walking 30 kilometers because the means of transport didn't work, we arrived at the refugee camp, the first, and we got some beds to sleep in, food, and some bottles of water. My mother's leg was getting worse, because the journey was very long and the bandage was temporary.

We were several months housed in the camp, in which there were several bombings. I knew a friend from the institute and we were always together, I also met many people with very interesting and disastrous stories. We all supported and helped each other. My mother's leg was finished healing and my brother's, my father's and mine's wounds were already perfect. But even though we were fine there, we couldn't stay forever, so my father told me that we had to leave the country to try to rebuild our lives, but it wasn't easy.

In a few days there was a train that would take us to Ukraine, from there to Poland, and from Poland to France, which was our final destination. The next day we said goodbye to the people who had taken care of us and those we had met, we took some blankets, food and water, put everything in backpacks, and we went to catch the train. We arrived at the place where we were leaving and there were many people desperate to take that train, there were pregnant women, men, small children, babies, elderly people, animals ... Many of these people were ill or they lacked an arm or a leg.

After five hours of waiting, the train arrived and all the people rushed to get a place. Priority was given to pregnant women and young children, and large families. Then my mom put a blanket on her belly simulating she was pregnant to get a place, because we were so desperate and we had to get out of there.

They called the pregnant women or with small children, and there we went, we got in, but my father was not allowed to pass. The women and children were took first and the men and elderly people were left there until the next train will passed, which wasn't known when it would be. The train driver was my father's

friend, and with so much effort he let us all travel together to the same place. We were very lucky, because other families could not travel together.

We spent a month there, eating and drinking little, and unable to go out, except at noon to go to the toilet. The wagons were large, but we were more than two hundred and fifty people in each wagon, they only had a small window and a small light bulb that broke the second week of travel. The conditions were very bad; there were people who died in front of the eyes of my brother and me because of illness or lack of water and food. My brother fell ill with tuberculosis in the third week of travel, we were about to arrive, but he was very bad. After making the train change in Ukraine, after five weeks, we arrived in Poland. My mother, my father and I were very weak, tired, hungry and thirsty, and my brother was getting worse.

We got to France, and as soon as we arrived, we went to a medical post that had been installed near the train. There they saw my brother and they transferred him to the hospital quickly. We went with him, everything was new for us and, compared to Iraq, Lyon was a very luxurious and modern city. Thanks to the plan approved by the European Union for the refugees, we were able to start over. They spent three long months in which, welcomed by the Red Cross, we were able to recover. My father, being a doctor in Iraq, helped the volunteers to heal people.

With the pass of the time, my father was offered a job helping injured refugees like we were and my mother found a job cleaning houses. Later, when my parents saved money, they could enroll my brother in a school and me in a high school. Now the problem was the language, they spoke French, but I could only speak with them in English, so the teachers helped me a lot to learn the language little by little and to adapt to everything that was new.

It was difficult for me, my mother, my father and my brother to adapt, but we had no other choice, and among all the misery we had suffered, we were very fortunate.

Today, my family and I are very happy because we have a house, work and money to support us. We have suffered a lot and it has been hard for us to get out of here to come here, but now we could not be happier. Sometimes I still think about all that and I feel overwhelmed, it saddens me a lot to see on television and in the newspapers that my country is still at war and that there are many other people who are going through what we are going through.

I hope that all this will improve in the future and that important values such as tolerance, respect, human dignity and humility will never be lost, that there will be more and more good people in the world and fewer wars for power, politics or territories. Because we are all equal, we should have the same rights, the same freedoms and opportunities. There are very good and interesting people

in the world, are we going to waste the chance to meet them for things that do not matter as their place of origin or their religion?

Kaamla, 2/11/2020