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The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR TURKEY – DONOR IMPACT STORIES

‘DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT CANADA?’

Ankara- Turkey, October 2016 (UNHCR): Ahmad and his family are packing up their bags to prepare for their move to Canada. The family, identified as vulnerable due to the chronic health conditions of their daughter Dania and the grandparents, will join over 5,200 vulnerable individuals who have departed for resettlement countries so far through UNHCR Turkey’s resettlement programme in 2016.

“Do you know anything about Canada?” Ahmad’s younger brother Mohammed asks me. The family is bustling with excitement and anxiety, but also gratefulness for those that have helped make their upcoming journey a reality.

“Too many of my kids school friends were killed in the war, and we decided to leave Syria when my daughter Dania’s school was bombed while they were in class”, Ahmad tells me, “all we ever wanted is a safe place to live.”

By the edge of the door is twelve-year old Muhammed’s little backpack ready to go, sticking out is a little helicopter. This small broken toy helicopter that no longer flies, is the only thing Muhammed brought with him from Syria, and will travel with him to Canada. Muhammed’s grandmother says proudly, “Muhammed will mend the helicopter. He’s going to be an engineer”. The kids were not able to attend school in Turkey due to the language barrier and the lack of means to pay for the transport from their home to school. They will return to school for the first time in over a year since they left Syria, when they arrive in Canada.



Muhammed and his toy helicopter, Ankara, Turkey ©UNHCR/Esther Judah

The Government of Canada has contributed over 8.6M USD to UNHCR Turkey in 2016, which covered all types of protection and assistance activities for Syrians. This ranges from supporting community centers, child friendly spaces, safe spaces for women, education and livelihoods activities, identifying durable solutions (including resettlement), to providing core relief items and winterization support. In addition, Canada has also allocated 5,000 resettlement places for Syrians refugees through UNHCR’s resettlement programme in Turkey in 2016, which is a substantial commitment on top of the financial contribution it provides.

While resettlement is an important modality of international responsibility sharing, only a small fraction of the most vulnerable refugees will have access to it. The vast majority of the 2.75 million Syrians registered in Turkey will remain in the country until a durable solution is identified. Turkey has borne the brunt of the burden in hosting Syrian refugees since the beginning of the crisis. Therefore strengthened and sustainable support from the international community to refugees and the impacted host communities is of crucial importance.

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