



### **Roqaya's story – Jordan**

**Child/Adult**            **Roqaya Salamat (12), Ghassan Salamat (34), Huda Salamat (29), Victoria Salamat (63)**

**Themes**                Syrian refugees, psychosocial support

#### **Summary**

The family is originally from Hirak, Syria. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Roqaya's three younger sisters were killed in a shelling, Roqaya herself lost her left arm from the shoulder and her mother got injured on her foot resulting in it being amputated from the ankle. The three girls that died were called Hind (9), Asmaa (4) and Maria (1.8). Roqaya has been out of school for two years now. There are 13 people living in the 3 bedroom flat in Irbid. The family is not getting any financial support, apart from contributions from strangers and a monthly amount of 180 JOD from UNHCR, an amount those that still haven't been registered but are in the process of being registered receive. According to Roqaya's parents, their daughter needs a bone transplant in order to get a prostheses. Roqaya's mother already has a prostheses but says it causes her pain and that she needs an operation in order for her spine and posture not to be affected by the disfiguration/amputation of her foot.



### **Roqaya's story in her and her parents words**

"The attack occurred on the first day of Ramadan. I feel so much pain when I think of that day. Emotional pain," Roqaya says. "We were in a shelter but went out to get some fresh air and to go to the pharmacy. I held my sister Maria in my arms the moment we were hit. I was standing at the entrance of the shelter but was blown back instantly and fell backwards. My little sister died and I got shrapnel in my shoulder," says Roqaya.

"The children were exposed to constant shelling. And they're still traumatized. If someone knocks, or if the wind starts blowing. Hind, one of my three daughters that I've lost, was so afraid that she once said she wanted to die. At the age of 9. My youngest one, who was also killed in July; the first word she spoke was rocket. They died terrified, they never felt safe, they couldn't sleep," Huda explains.

"The Free Syrian Army helped us cross the border. They carried me and Roqaya. It was only a week since we got injured. I was terrified as we approached the border. It was during night. Although we were welcomed and treated well by the Jordanian soldiers at the border, I didn't manage to distinguish nor realize that they were Jordanian soldiers and not Syrian. I was crying and some of the Jordanian soldiers started crying as well. It felt like being born again," says Huda, Roqaya's mother.

"Our entire family is split now. An 8 month old son of my sister that has died, is apparently here in Jordan. We haven't seen him though," says Huda. "To begin with, we were treated in a field hospital in Hiraq. But a week later we got into Jordan where we were cared for at the Islamic Hospital in Amman. That was on August 1<sup>st</sup>. We were at the hospital for two months, receiving treatment."

"I never had a weapon. And they killed my innocent daughters. I've also lost my two brothers. At the end of the day, civilians are getting hurt," Ghassan says. "We're paying 180 JOD in rent, plus 40 JOD for electricity and water. We're being helped by good people, Qataris and Jordanians." Ghassan adds: "I have lost three of my four daughters. All I want now is to do everything in my power for my only remaining child, Roqaya."

"I was working in Beirut when we lost our three daughters. I had moved there some months earlier. I am a barber and I had run out of business in Syria so I had no other choice but to emigrate to Lebanon for work. I saw the bodies of my daughters on television, just after the attack happened. That is how I found out. I immediately wanted to go to Iraq but my wife Huda didn't want me to. She told me not to come, I'd get killed. Some days later, I left Beirut and went to the neighboring village of Hiraq and stayed there to get in touch with Huda and Roqaya. We then decided to leave Syria for Jordan," Ghassan says.

"The (Save the Children's) workshops do good to Roqaya. The bus comes and picks her up. It eases her mind, she is entertained and forgets momentarily about her trauma," her mother, Huda, explains. (Roqaya is now done with 9 workshop sessions).

"I wish I still had my sisters," Roqaya says. "That is the first thing I think when I wake up in the morning. And then I think about how much I want to go abroad to have an operation on my arm. Cause I know it cannot happen here in Jordan." "The operations are costly," her mother adds.

**Interview conducted by Hedinn Halldorsson, Red Barnet Danmark, during an assignment to Jordan in February 2012.**

### **Scene-setting information**

The interview takes place on February 11, 2013, on the first floor of a residential building in Irbid, close to the Syrian border. During the interview, we are shown a video the people of Hiraq have made; a song and footage from July 26<sup>th</sup>, with some graphic footage of bodies of women and children. Ghassan, the family father can recognise the dead bodies of his daughters. Ghassan also has recordings on his computer, shot immediately



after the shelling that killed his three daughters and wounded Roqaya, his fourth daughter, and his wife. He has a video of Roqaya's wound, before she was amputated. Together with Roqaya and her family, there are some more children in the flat; nieces and nephews that have been orphaned and they are taking care of. The flat consists of 3 bedrooms, a lounge, kitchen and a bathroom. During the interview, the family's bread is delivered to their door in two plastic bags. Sweet Arabic tea is served by one of the boys.

### **Project information and major issues**

The current cash assistance program is run in Amman and Zarqa, benefitting 2015 families. Around 5000 more people will be included in the next proposal of an extended cash assistance program. Save the Children is currently running in Amman and Zarqa, funded by ECHO. Roqaya and her family will be a part of the new program.