**INTERVIEW WITH STUDENT ESLAM AL-ALJIBWI**

**Q1. What is your origin?**

I used to live in Syria. My parents are from Syria.

**Q2. When did you arrive in Cyprus and who accompanied you? How old you were then?**

When we first came to Cyprus I was 4 years old. My dad was in Cyprus and after a few months i came with my little brother and my mother. Then my mum got pregnant and she gave birth to my sister in Cyprus. After my sister was born we left Cyprus and we went back to Syria, but my dad stayed in Cyprus to work. When I was 10 years old I returned to Cyprus with my siblings and mother.

**Q3. Why did you move with your family to Cyprus?**

We moved to Cyprus for two reasons. The main reason was the war in Syria and the other one was due to economic problems.

**Q4. What did you feel when you arrived in Cyprus?**

The first time I was happy because I came to Cyprus for holiday and I was not afraid of the unknown. The second time I felt anxious because I used to live in Syria at my house with my personal things, my friends and going to another country was not easy. I felt sad too because I left my cousins, my aunt, my uncles and my grandparents but at the same time I felt a lot of pain because I lost members of my family, some of them died because they were shot in the war.

**Q5. Did you feel any cultural differences when you came to Cyprus? if so, can you describe a few differences?**

I found a lot of differences between Syria and Cyprus. One is the religion. We do not believe in the same God, we do not believe in Jesus but we believe in Allah. Another difference is the celebration of Christmas and Easter. We don’t celebrate these festivities. There is also a difference in money. For example 1 euro in Syria is 1000 Syrian pounds, a lot of money, you can buy food and many things. In Cyprus with 1 euro you buy almost nothing. The last difference I want to mention is the way we dress. In our country we have to wear a hijab because of our religion. Hijab is a headscarf for Muslim ladies. Cypriot women don’t have to wear a headscarf.

**Q6. What was your house like in Syria and what is it like in Cyprus?**

In Syria we had a two storey house. The kids had their bedrooms, there was a kitchen and a bathroom. But my house in Syria was damaged because of the shooting. When I came to Cyprus I lived in a two storey house which had only one bedroom for all of us, a kitchen and a bathroom. Right now I live in a normal house where everybody has a bedroom. I am happy because I have my bedroom and I can spend time there, I feel more comfortable.

**Q7. How did you feel during the first days you went to school in Cyprus and how do you feel right now?**

At first I felt a little bit of fear and stress. I didn’t know anyone and it was also difficult because I didn’t know the language. I did not understand Greek very well. I liked the school, some people were very kind to me and they helped me a lot. Then I met other classmates, I felt good because I was not the only one from another country. There were a lot of kids from other countries and we became good friends. Today I feel better at school, I have very good friends from Cyprus, but my relationship other children from other countries is better because we share the same feelings.

**Q8. Describe an event you experienced which caused you shock.**

At the beginning it was very difficult because I could not communicate with my classmates. I used to spend time alone during school breaks, which made me feel sad. I was in the fifth class of elementary school when I came to Cyprus for the second time. My grades in Syria were very good, but in Cyprus they were very low. The reason for that was the language.

**Q9. Would you like to go back to Syria?**

I would like to go back to Syria to stay permanently because I would like to see my family and my old friends who I don’t even know if they are alive. I love my country and I want to go back there because I miss everything I had before I came to Cyprus. But I love Cyprus too, we found a house here after the war. I will visit Cyprus every year for holidays.

**Thank you very much Eslam.**

***The interview was taken by students Anna Musteatsa and Constantinos Mesimeris***

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