

Haithem, Tamara, Farah (13) Fehmi (10) and Karam (8)



They are from Mosul – a big family – they lived with brothers etc. and had the same jobs. In 2003 they owned factories – quite big businesses – extremists threatened them and demanded ‘taxes’. They felt it would be too dangerous for them to send their children to school. Then in 2005/6 Haithem was kidnapped for 3 days and had to pay a ransom to be freed. After release, the extremists still came to their house and started shooting

outside their door. Fortunately, nobody was injured.

The next day they left Mosul because their neighbours said it was too dangerous to stay. They went to the village of Bartella. They left everything behind, their home, furniture, the factory etc. They tried to start a new life in the village. Farah and Fehmi were still toddlers and Karam was born there. They felt safe enough for the children to start going to school.

In 2010, they managed to start a new company. They kept in touch with the folk in Mosul. A senior employee (a good guy – and Muslim) claimed he had rented the factory from the boss - if owned by a Christian it would have been taken. If Haithem had shut it down – the extremists would have looted it. So the business in Mosul carried on – but not like when he was there running it. The factory built machines for other factories.

Then in 2012, his brother who had also moved to the village had to go to Mosul to get certification for his new baby. He was kidnapped and his brand new car stolen. He was held for 70 days. The ransom demanded was \$500,000. Haithem did not know if he was dead or alive. He paid the police, army, and everyone he could think of to search for his brother. On the 69th day, some terrorists were caught and arrested. So a deal was done – return the terrorist plus \$200k for the life of his brother. They had tortured him. They had beaten him over the head with the wooden cross he wore around his neck and burned his body too. He was sold from one gang to another and they tried to force him to change his faith. He was destroyed by it all. He applied for a visa to Jordan – but could only get out to Lebanon.

The family faced many threats over the years – but his father who passed away after the move to Bartella, had dedicated his whole life to build the factory, and the boys had started work there early – on the shop floor doing the hardest of tasks. He had also built up a chain of six garages that made lots of money. The extremists wrote an N on the house and the garages to identify it as belonging to a Christian and then cunningly called him using the phone from the factory office. (He would not answer calls if he did not recognise the number) “Hello Uncle Haithem “ started his employee – then the extremist took over and said that everything they had identified would be given back to him if he came back to Mosul and converted to Islam. They said they did not want to be unfair! It was not easy to walk away from all this, but they did.

Away from Mosul – in Bartella they started a new life – they managed to get a factory going and even had two cars – one being a smart black Land cruiser, which he proudly showed us on his phone. They also had several houses, a new one that they had moved into just 6 months previously. They did not know that the Kurdish forces would leave

September 1st 2014 ISIS started bombing the town. The journey to Erbil would normally take about 30 minutes by car. It took them 10 hours. They were lucky as they followed the retreating Kurdish forces who were pushing their way through the checkpoints and roadblocks.

When in Erbil, he had another call from ISIS – asking him to come back with his brothers – convert and it will all be given back to you.

Jordan was a shock, the family had grown used to comfort and wealth – they lived in a 300m house – each child had their own bedroom, Karam's bed was a racing car and Fehmi's room was like a fairy tale princess. Their two sons do not really understand that they cannot have anything they want – Haithem had to work very hard for his father in the factory and he really did not want that for his children.

A lawyer friend in Erbil contacted him and said that the family should put together a list of all the property and businesses that were taken from them – so that at some point in the future they just might be able to get some recompense or compensation. He called his brother in Lebanon to ask him to do it. A few days later, his brother called back and said that he could not do it – he was too upset by it all and why had Haithem asked him to do it. Haithem's response was that he too could not do it – that is why he asked him.

In Iraq, the family had only really focused on making money. When they arrived in Erbil Haithem was seriously depressed, then they got to Jordan and from October to May, he was in a bad state. Then he started going to church and now he is able to talk openly with us. So it was only after they arrived in Jordan they came to understand what it means – 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but then loses his soul'.

Their prayer requests: For speeding up of the UN IOM process: Their health: The needs of the people of Iraq.