

Affaf, Imas, Sabine, Riyam, Ruqia



Affaf (aged 27) was originally in Kuwait with her husband. As Iraqis they were treated badly and paid very poorly in comparison with others. She comes from a large family, 12 sisters and 2 brothers, her husband had a large family with sisters. Kuwaiti's would not permit intermarriage. So two of her brothers are married to her husband's sisters. Schooling in Kuwait was not free unless you were Kuwaiti, so as one of 12 girls, she never had any formal education.

Affaf is one of the 'people without'. She has no papers and no certification. As she had an Iraqi mother she and her husband went to Iraq from Kuwait. He left her to go the UK when it opened up opportunities for 'people without'. He has since abandoned her, marrying in the UK (because Affaf did not give him any sons) and has divorced her – although she has not asked for the papers as she was hoping to get to the UK, technically for re-union, and so would need him to go through the necessary process in the UK to enable this to happen. The British embassy seem to know nothing about him or his UK entry process for her to move matters along in Jordan.

She came to Jordan 6 months pregnant – desperately needing a doctor, as she was constantly bleeding. On the edge of death she was admitted and they gave her blood transfusions and the Christian doctor who was treating her, when he found out her position, paid for all her treatment. Her baby is just 1 now. She tried to do some cleaning work to support herself – but was very tired after looking after the children all day. Also on more than one occasion, men have tried to take advantage of her.

One day she went to Caritas – the NGO who helps refugees with health issues as one of the children were sick. Because she is a 'Person Without' even Caritas would not help her as she could not prove anything about herself. She burst into tears and had to leave the clinic. As she walked away a man approached her and gave her contact details for Global Hope – saying that they would not turn her away. He was a Christian. Global Hope visited her around six months ago and helped her move to a slightly better place – her rent has been paid for by a sponsor for 6 months. She has also stopped trying to work, as she is afraid that she could be compromised and then put in prison and then there would be nobody to look after her children. She knows she needs to maintain her integrity for herself and the children.

Affaf was given a fridge and oven by an Emirati man, but when he left Jordan an Iraqi woman who used to visit her and help her from time to time came and took them from her. She did not know what to do – as she did not want to lose the help of this woman. The woman never came back after that.

*Peter's comments: Affaf is gentle, quiet, has a lovely smile and tells her story without a hint of bitterness or anger. Her care for her girls is evident. But Affaf is also an extremely vulnerable person, used to abuse, without education or any form of personal or social support. As such she is an easy target for further abuse by unscrupulous people. Her living conditions are extremely poor – her furniture has been picked up off the street when being thrown out by others, the only thing to sit on in her room is one old bed. She has the loan of a cooker with gas rings (the oven does not work) – but must give it back. Her needs are many, her life really does consist of making it through one day at a time. She needs nurturing, the love of a family, the support of community and the opportunity to blossom as a human being, with all that entails.*