

# What now for the future and their dreams?

Struggle for Syrians doesn't end even after they've escaped conflict

**EAGER TO LEARN:** Lilas, six, and Mohammed Noor, 11, learn what they can at home. Inset their brother Mohammed Yaser, 14

Raddah Hassoon spent years protecting her four children as conflict tore apart their country. Now, she says, she faces a new battle just to give them a "normal life".

Raddah and her family fled their home in Aleppo five months ago to escape the civil war in Syria. They settled in Sharjah, hoping for a better life.

But, while they might have escaped war, the family is struggling to get the children into school.

The only schools they can afford, "the cheaper schools" in Sharjah and Ajman, are already full and the family say they have been told there are thousands of children on the waiting lists.

Raddah's son, Mohammed Yaser Al Mousa, 14, dreams of becoming an engineer, but he will struggle to turn his dreams into reality unless he receives an education.

His siblings, six-year-old Lilas, 11-year-old Mohammed Noor and 16-year-old Mohammad Azhari, also have dreams, but their futures are on hold as they wait for a spot to open up in one the schools their family can afford.

"Sometimes I feel like I can still hear the loud noises from the bombs and gunfire in our city in Syria," Raddah told 7DAYS.

"It makes me sad to see what's happened to my country, but I feel relieved that we have escaped.

"However, the problems don't seem to stop. My kids have been sitting at home. They read books and I teach them what I can, but they need to go to a proper school.

"We moved to Sharjah because we knew they had cheaper schools here and ones we could somehow pay for, but it's become a nightmare. None of those cheaper schools have space for more students.

The schools in Dubai and Abu Dhabi are too expensive for us." Mohammed added: "We have tried several schools in Sharjah and Ajman, but they are telling us they are full and they cannot take any more students. Those

kinds of schools are our only options because they are affordable for us. There are charity schools, but those are full too.

"We are worried we will not be able to go to school this year. Our father makes Dhs8,000 per month and that's not nearly enough to pay the bills and send all of us to school."

One of the schools Mohammed's family tried to get into was The National Charity School in Ajman. The principal, Hussan Khatib, said the school has 2,000 people on its waiting list, while 2,400 students currently attend.

Hassan Ibrahim and his family are facing the same problem. Their house in Manbij, Syria, was overtaken by ISIS militants and they were displaced in Syria for nearly two years.

Hassan has since been able to get his wife and four children into the UAE, but they have not been to school for two years. They have also been placed on waiting lists.

They lost all of their education documents after they were forced out of their home and walked eight hours over Turkish mountains before reaching to the UAE, as reported by 7DAYS last month.

Hassan said: "We are waiting to see if we get a call. My eldest daughter is supposed to be in ninth grade but they have not gone to school for two years.

"If they don't get admissions this year, we're not sure what we will do. But we are trying to stay positive." sarwat@7days.ae

**'Our father makes Dhs8,000 a month - not enough to send us all to school'**

- Mohammed Yaser, 14



Photographs by Sarwat Nasir

**'WE ARE FULL, THE CHANCES TO JOIN ARE VERY SLIM'**

One of the schools Raddah Hassoon tried to get her children into was The National Charity School in Ajman, however there are already 2,000 children on the waiting list.

Principal Hussan Khatib said the school, which provides for students from grades 1 to 9, has 2,400 students currently attending - students that are mainly from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Jordan and Palestine and have moved to the UAE to escape conflict in their home country.

"The school is full. We have 2,000 people on our waiting list and the numbers are growing. The chances of any new students joining the school are slim."

The school has morning and evening classes, with tuition fees ranging from Dhs1,300 per year for first graders to Dhs4,700 for ninth graders.

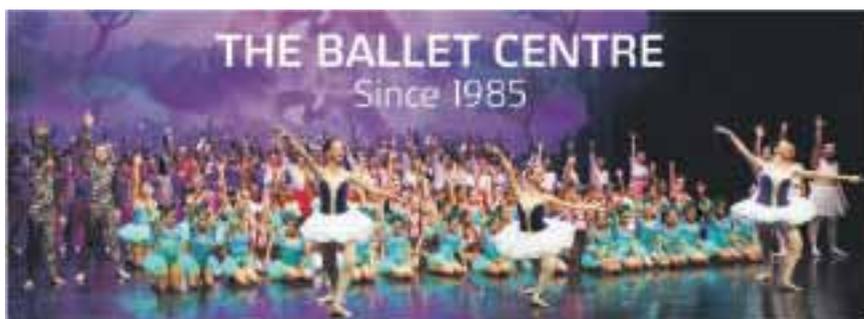
The Al Ahliya Private School in Sharjah is also full, with 1,300 enrolled and more than 500 students on the waiting list.

The HR manager, Hazim Hamad, said: "The school is usually full because we have a lot of students who are coming from conflict areas."

7DAYS placed calls to four other schools in Sharjah and Ajman, with tuition fees ranging from Dhs2,000 to Dhs6,000, and were told they were all full.



**HOME WORK:** Hassan Ibrahim's daughter Amal, 9, studies at home



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