



The Profile of a Syrian Refugee: In Hope of a Newfoundland Future

by Luke Power and Jordan Hattar

A deceptively sunny Tuesday morning descends upon Jordan's Zaatari Refugee camp, situated ten kilometers from the Syrian border. Sulaiman wakes up to the sound of his three children playing a game of tag in their caravan. Sulaiman gets up to fix his family's breakfast and brews a cup of coffee for him and his wife, Anagheem, before starting his work day and preparing their kids for a day of "at home" lessons.

Despite a seemingly routine morning, COVID-19 restrictions prevent Sulaiman and his family from leaving their caravan, spanning 3 x 5 meters. During the height of the pandemic in Jordan, Sulaiman worked from "home" in the same caravan that his kids "attended school." All they saw of the outside world was the little portion of the camp seen from over the wall, which Jana, his oldest daughter, climbs every morning to look over.



Sulaiman's children Jana (Top) and Ahmed (Bottom) looking over the wall during lockdown.

Before entering the Zaatari camp, Sulaiman was a student of economics and commerce, pursuing his master's degree at the University of Damascus. Sulaiman had plans to enter the business world upon graduating where he would use his newfound skills to find a well-paid job to support his family. However this dream came to a screeching halt in 2011, when the Syrian conflict began.

Due to his age and gender, Sulaiman was given two choices, take up arms and kill the Syrians that he loved, or escape to Jordan to live in peace. He chose the latter, leaving behind his studies, his family, and his dreams.

*"The thing that makes me most happy in life is to help people."
-Sulaiman*

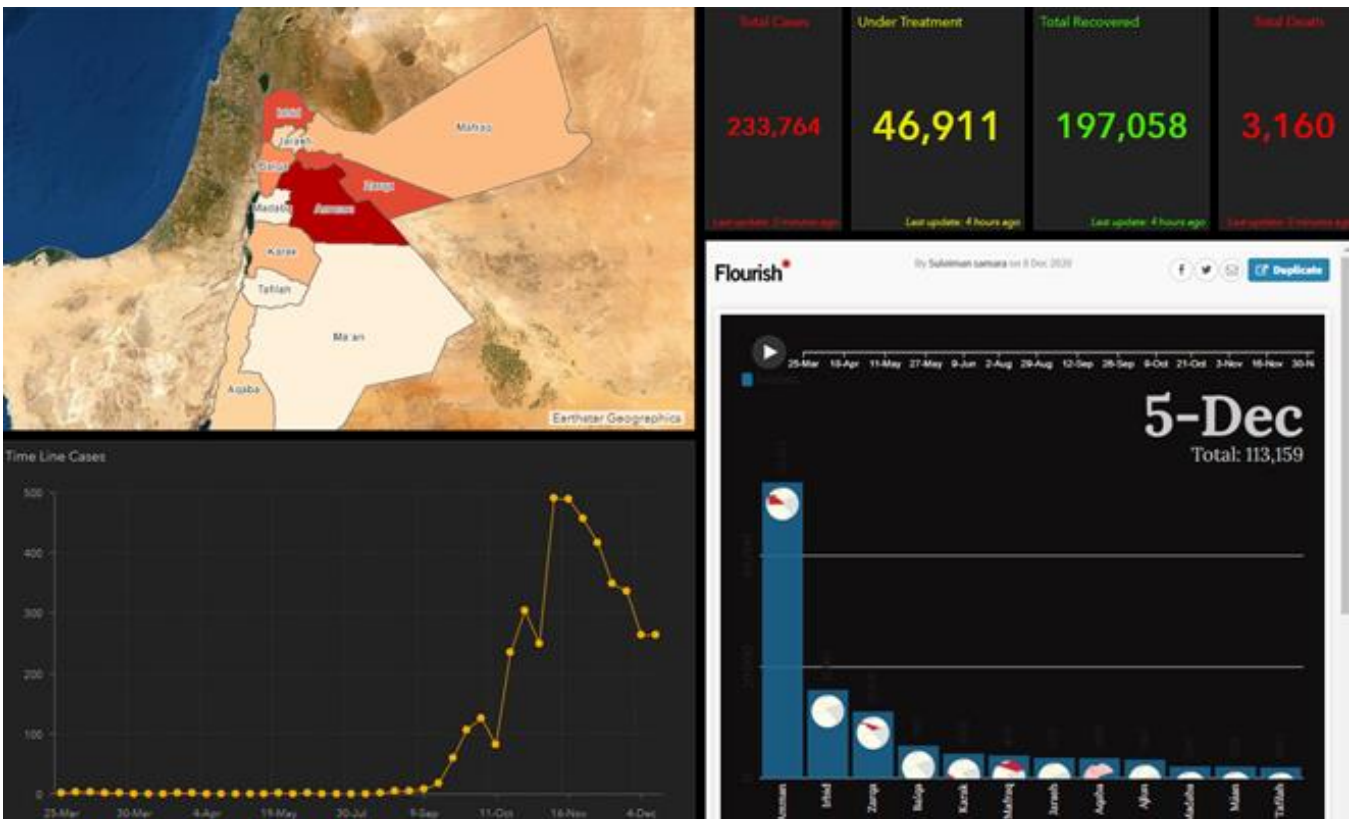


Despite leaving behind his family, livelihood, and possessions, Sulaiman insists on giving back to the community and helping others in any way he can, which is why he has taken part in so many volunteer opportunities inside the very refugee camp he lives in. Sulaiman particularly enjoyed his time volunteering with the International Medical Corps as a health educator for people with chronic diseases.

The volunteer positions helped him gain experience which led him to landing a series of coveted jobs inside the refugee camp (not every refugee who wants to work inside the refugee camp can find work). From 2015-2017, he worked with a humanitarian organization called ACTED, in

which he served as a health educator, providing classes to refugee camp children. He then transferred to another organization, International Relief & Development (IRD), where he still currently serves as a Geographic Information Assistant inside the Zaatari Camp.

Through Sulaiman's work with IRD, he takes part in the RefuGIS project, building a dashboard that helps break down COVID-19 data by cases, deaths, and hospitalizations across Jordan. Sulaiman's work is currently in the process of being showcased to the Jordanian government in effort to use COVID-19 data more accurately.



Screenshot of Sulaiman's COVID-19 dashboard

Search for a better life


While working, volunteering and raising his family, Sulaiman has set time to learn new skills for the new technological world, including learning how to code using languages such as Python, HTML, PHP, SQL and VPA. He has also taken the time to understand Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Sulaiman and his wife hope to find a new home in Newfoundland where they can raise their three children: Jana, Ahmed, and Najah (pictured below). Sulaiman and Anagheem hope to further their education at a post-secondary institution in Newfoundland, picking up where they both left off before their lives were interrupted by war. Living in Newfoundland is a dream of theirs; they look forward to cod tongues, jiggs dinner, shed parties, and hiking on the East Coast Trail.



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