



20-year-old Shahd escaped the war in Syria, only to lose her entire family in the earthquake. Now, we are trying to help her remain in university as she picks up the pieces. Please read Shahd's story below.

What follows is written entirely by Shahd. We've translated it into English.

My name is Shahd, I am 20 years old, from Idlib, Syria. I used to live in Syria with my family. A very beautiful life. Me, my mother, my father, and my brothers. Our house was very beautiful. I had friends. One day my house was destroyed by a missile. I miraculously survived that day and we fled the Syrian war to Turkey.

It was very difficult finding a home and settling down again and establishing everything from scratch, learning a new language, a new environment and new friends. Toward the end, I felt a sense of belonging and accepted my situation. I started to pursue my dreams, but it wasn't easy at all. I passed the most difficult university entrance exams and moved to a city that was a few hours away from my house to attend university. I used to talk on the phone with my family every day.

On the day of the earthquake I called my mother but the phone line did not answer and also with the rest of my family no one answers. I checked the news about the disaster and the earthquake that demolished houses at dawn while people were sleeping. I could not bear myself. I traveled to Antakya with great difficulty because the roads were closed and some were broken with gaping cracks.

After my arrival, I saw our entire building destroyed (see a photo of Shahd's family's home below). It looked like broken pieces of biscuits. Our home, once perched on the fifth floor, became equal to the sidewalk. Yes, I saw the window of my house. I knew the balcony from the

things in my house. I called my mother, my father, and my brothers, but no one answers. It was such a dark moment. I had hope that my family managed to escape before the destruction took place. I went to the shelters, calling and shouting. No one answered. Antakya is destroyed, people are in a state of shock. I wanted someone to help me to help my family from under the rubble, no one answers. With heartache and despair, I started taking out the rubble with my hands.



I wait with tears of sadness and grief. Two days later, rescue teams arrived and the priority was for the buildings from which human voices were heard. In the first two days, many dead people came out and some alive. My body shivered when anyone was taken out from the rubble and I rushed to see their face. No, this is not my family. Every day that passed, the percentage of finding alive survivors decreased. On the seventh day, the digging reached the floor of my family's house. Yes, these were my brothers. Yes, these were my parents. Yes, that was my family. My brothers died in the wreckage, completely crushed by the collapsed ceiling that once stood firmly overhead. How painful seeing all of this was.

Everyone was dead from the first moment of the earthquake, leaving no chance for the people of Antakya. The corpses swelled, and the smell of death spread all over the place. Yes, I found my family. My parents were amidst the wreckage, crushed by iron and stones. My family's belongings remained within the rubble. My mother was stained with blood. I lost my family.

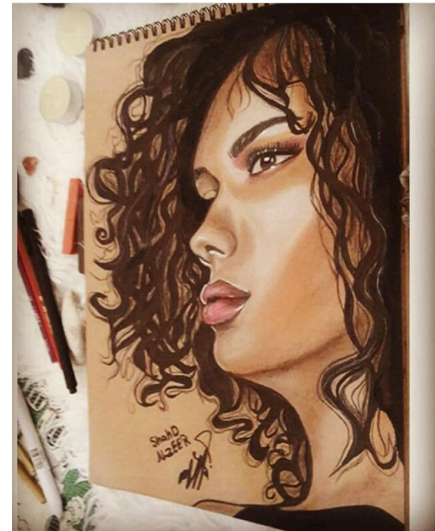
I feel sad. I cannot sleep at night. Every member of my family left this world. I buried them without knowing the meaning of burial. I am left with a profound sense of emptiness. As I knelt beside their graves, I yearn to be reunited with them under the very earth beneath my feet. I wish for the pain to be etched into my soul, to remain with me until I die. My world has become colorless and drained, a feeling of emptiness.

Who will bring my beloved ones back to me? Who will watch my graduation? Where are the dreams we built together? Abandoned in a frightening world, I feel shattered.

I had dreams, ones that I held close to my heart. I am a very dreamy person who loves life, but now, it looks like whatever seemed hopeful became hopeless. No father to support my successful milestones, no mother to clap at my achievements, and no siblings or loved ones to share my

journey. I live alone in Turkey without my family, which I pulled from under the rubble.

I had a dream. I am a talented and intelligent girl. I draw. I have a talent from God. I love designing. I am in my third year of university, studying interior design. This has been my dream since childhood, but I don't think I can reach my dream anymore. My family used to support me with everything, but now life supports me with its pressures, its unfair difficulties. I was a young woman brimming with hope, dreams and happiness, but now I see myself as an old woman waiting to die.



I love to travel, but because I was born in Syria, I cannot go to the places I wish. I love life, but life does not seem to love me back. I want to travel abroad to start a new life, where the world will care about my designing and drawing (one of Shahd's paintings pictured above). I hope I can make a living out of my work and drive home in my own car that I earned through hard work. I'll travel the world learning about different cultures, feeding animals I see along the way just like my mother used to do. I'll design houses for people, using my skills as an interior designer. I want to be a good person, make a positive impact on the world, live my life as an independent person and discover more about myself. I don't know if life will give me the chance, or if it will trample on me without seeing me.

***Additional notes: Shahd is in her third year of university at Konya Selcuk University located in the city of Konya, Turkey.**

**** We are currently seeking help to support Shahd. If you or someone you know wants to contribute towards supporting her and ensuring that she receives mental health treatment, please kindly make a donation on our website.**