

REPAIR PROJECT

AUSTRIA

ABDULRAHMAN'S STORY



Formerly a teacher in Syria, Abdulrahman Ghadban sought asylum in Austria in 2021, applying for reunification with his wife and son once his claim had been accepted. Despite considering himself very lucky compared to others, his family have still endured extended separation and hardships even after being reunited in Austria.

„My name is Abdulrahman and I am from Syria. I am 35 years old and have been living in Vienna since 2021.

In Syria, I was a teacher. I have a 13-year-old son and a wife who now also live in Austria. I left Syria in 2013. I lived in Lebanon for about 8 years before coming to Austria.

I am attending a German course at level A2 and volunteer with the Red Cross and Caritas. I have worked as a television presenter for a channel serving Syrians in Austria and I also write poetry.

I carried out the family reunification to be with my wife and son. A year after I arrived, they arrived in Austria too – so the process was relatively quick.

We only had to wait a year for me to receive my residence permit and for the family to arrive, so we are actually very lucky.

In general, it takes people a year just to receive an asylum decision, and family reunification beyond that can take several more years.

Because of delays at the embassy in Beirut, to help speed up the reunification process my wife and child travelled from Lebanon, where we had been living, to Tehran, where we understood the Austrian embassy would be able to process the request more quickly.

Even so it can still take a long time to get an appointment at the embassy, and there are people who exploit this. They make appointments for themselves and then offer them to other people for a fee. They get these appointments for free online and then sell them when they go to the embassy. It's annoying that they profit from it while others have to wait in line. The government should not allow people to be exploited to get an embassy appointment.

Iran can be intimidating, especially when you're there alone like my family was. People who have



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AUSTRIAN RED CROSS

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Online Toolkit



Online Report

been there can tell you about the difficulties they encountered there.

There was someone I knew in Iran who I paid to take care of my family - for food, meals, and accommodation. As foreigners, the rental prices and other expenses were quite high.

When my family left Iran they had to pay a fine of around €9 for every day beyond the three-month limit they had stayed, in total this was 15 days, so around €135.

This was manageable and we paid the fine, but other families are forced to pay much more.

In Iran, my family was often insulted, sometimes even by the police. They were treated poorly and discriminated against, constantly being asked why they were there and why they stayed.

When my family was there without me, it was really scary. If there were internet problems and I couldn't contact them, even if it was just a few minutes, I imagined ten scenarios of what disasters could have happened to them. That wasn't easy for me.

Sometimes I worked as a volunteer at Caritas, which gave me something else to concentrate on and helped reduce my stress. Being able to help other people really helped me.

After my family arrived, we had problems with accommodation, but now it's going better. Now we're all together at home and everything has actually gone relatively well.

I was supported in the search for an apartment by the organisations Diakonie and Caritas. There was no accommodation for us when my family arrived. They had to go through a lot of formalities just to get a place to sleep.

It took nine months until we were all together in an apartment. I asked the authorities for my family to stay here in Vienna where I was already studying, but first they were transferred to Graz, where they were moved from one accommodation to another. It wasn't easy, but eventually we were able to all live together here in Vienna.

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The Austrian government has accepted people from war-torn countries around the world and for that I am grateful, but there are many things that could be better.

My son goes to school and has learned German – now he speaks even better than I do. My first priority is to integrate into the job market. Then I will make sure that my son decides on an education at some point, and I will help him with that.

The Austrian government has accepted people from war-torn countries around the world and for that I am grateful, but there are many things that could be better.

The policies pursued by the authorities are flawed and could, in my opinion, be much improved.

Once it is agreed that a family will stay in Austria, why continue to make things unnecessarily hard for them? It would be better for the families themselves, and the country as a whole, if the government made it easier for families to get back on their feet as quickly as possible, rather than throwing up obstacles at each turn.

During my work with the Red Cross, I have heard many stories that involve a lot of suffering and difficulties. I wanted to share my experiences with others so that people can see firsthand what we have been through.”

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