International Committee of the Red Cross

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**ICRC: Syria’s Decade of Loss – Mouna’s Story**

33-year old Mouna is the head of her family, looking after her children Fatima and Taleb with the help of her older brother. Her husband is alive but no longer supports the family.

She was in her early twenties when the conflict started. Her family had to leave their home during the conflict but returned several years ago to their neighbourhood in Aleppo. With her health problems and the crushing economic problems, life is extremely tough.

Before the crisis began, “we had everything - gas, diesel, services. Now we are cold and hungry, and we need to wait for gas to get warm, Sometimes we have to cook over a fire,” she said.

Mouna lost her leg when an IED exploded while she was walking home several years ago, a devastating moment for her and her children that they are still processing.

“To this day, every time it comes up they start crying, I try to comfort them,” she said.

The loss of her leg and the violence of the past decade has affected her emotional state. She describes experiencing panic attacks and feelings of depression.

“I always cried alone, feeling blue and depressed deep inside,” she said.

She currently receives physiotherapy and mental health support from an ICRC clinic in the city. As for the future, her children’s education is her focus right now.

Her daughter Fatima wants to be a doctor, to help her mother get a prosthetic limb. Her son Taleb wants to be a lawyer to defend human rights.

Her fondest memories of the time before the conflict are her schooldays.

“My ambitions were modest, I didn't want to be a doctor or a teacher. I only wanted to

learn to read and write and thank God, I've achieved that. Now I can read books t

my kids about biology, math and painting.”

**SHOTLIST**

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00:00:00 Mouna walks down the streets of Aleppo.

Soundbite: (Arabic) Mouna Shawat, Syrian Housewife

00:00:40 *“Before the last ten years we had everything - gas, diesel, services. Now we are cold and hungry, and we need to wait for gas to get warm. Sometimes we cook on an open fire.”*

00:01:08 *“Before those years, we had what we needed, now there is no electricity. You have to pay more to get it and it’s not stable.”*

00:01:23 *“You need it to do laundry. I have to wait about five hours to get my laundry done.”*

00:01:32 *“And there is no heating either, so I get really cold waiting to do it, then I have to cook and walk the kids to school.”*

00:01:45 Mouna goes to the ICRC physical rehabilitation center.

Soundbite: (Arabic) Mouna Shawat, Syrian Housewife

00:02:33 *“The only beautiful memory that I have from before the crisis (before the past decade) was going to school.”*

00:02:37 *“We used to go in the morning, it was safe, we weren’t afraid of anything.”*

00:02:46 *“We used to go to school from 7 to 12 o’clock then* *go back to home, we find our parents waiting for us and we spend some time with them.”*

00:02:57 *“There was time for everything; time for studying, playing and watching TV.”*

00:03:08 *“I studied until ninth grade, it was beautiful times. Especially waking up in my warm bed, resisting the cold morning with my mum's voice nagging us not to be late.”*

00:03:21 *“Telling us we have to go to school; we have to learn, reading and writing are very important.”*

00:03:26 *“My ambitions were modest, I didn't want to be a doctor or a teacher. I only wanted to read and write, and I achieved that.”*

00:03:39 *“Sometimes, I just open my kids’ books and read about literature, biology, and maths.”*

00:03:46 Mouna walks her children back home.

Soundbite: (Arabic) Mouna Shawat, Syrian Housewife

00:04:27 *“I got out on Friday and my kids visited me the next day. I didn’t want them to see me right away”. My son asked what was wrong with my leg. I lied to them and told them my leg was broken”*

00:04:38 *“I told them not to worry, all I need is a cast and everything will be ok.”*

00:04:44 *“I also lied to my father.” He came to see me three days later, they told him I fell from the stairs, broke my leg, and I have a cast on.”*

00:04:52 *“Days later, I was getting the wheel chair when my son told me he wants to massage my leg, he held my leg and started crying”*

00:05:13 *“He said: your leg is gone why are you saying it’s broken.” I told him it’s only bent.”*

00:05:25 *“He didn’t believe me and insisted to see it, finally I showed him.”*

00:05:31 *“He hugged my leg, cried, and told me: Mama don’t be scared I’m with you.*

00:05:41 *“My daughter Fatima can’t get used to it, but there is nothing to do, this is my destiny. She still cries about it”*

00:05:51 *“To this day, every time they see me cry, they cry too.” “They tell me: Mama stop crying we wish it happened to our leg and not yours.” “It’s hard, I tell them no you’re still young you have a lot to live for.”*

00:06:08 *“The hardest moment was when they hugged my leg and started crying.”*

00:06:24 *“Fatima wants to become a doctor; she wants to help me with my prosthetic leg, so I can walk and not depend on anyone.”*

00:06:35 Mouna helps her children with their homework.

00:06:57 Mouna has tea with her children.

Soundbite: (Arabic) Mouna Shawat, Syrian Housewife

00:07:14 *“I use to cry all the time, did not want to go out, and wanted to stay alone; I was a really depressed.”*

00:07:24 *“Sometimes, my brother and his wife used to take me out in the wheelchair.” “They took me and the kids to the park in their neighborhood.”*

00:07:37 *“But then my depression increased, I started getting panic attacks, I would stay for 2 or 3 days completely silent unable to talk to anyone.”*

00:07:49 *“I did not mean it, I wanted to talk to people, but I just couldn’t.”*

00:07:55 *“One time I got a major panic attack and they took me to the hospital. I was seeing my mother and other dead people in front of me. I was depressed and very exhausted.”*

00:08:05 Mouna cooks food for her family.

**ENDS**