

The Salimi Brothers: Trapped and Never Belonging



The only difference between living in a refugee camp in Iraq and a refugee center in Norway is the quality of housing and access to electricity. Apart from that, and of course the fact that there is no war, the stateless brothers, Sherzad and Behzad Salimi, see little difference.

Without proper identification documents, the brothers have no right to work nor have access to health care or studies. They not only feel trapped in the system, but they see no future for themselves in Norway.

“You breathe, but you don’t live.”

- Sherzad

Sherzad and Behzad were both born stateless in the Iraqi refugee camp, Al-Tash, after their Kurdish family fled from the Iranian regime. They came to Norway 11 years ago, and the brothers dreamt of a fresh start in Europe. But their dream of living a normal life in Norway was quickly crushed.

A glimpse of hope came with the first case they won against the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). However, unfortunately they lost the appeals case, after which there seemed to be no hope for the brothers.

Sherzad and Behzad live in a refugee reception center, far from any big cities, where they have to survive on less than 2000 kroner a month. If they would like to visit friends or family in Oslo or Fredrikstad it will cost them about 500 kroner.

According to the brothers, the days are almost the same in Norway as they were in Iraq, the only positive thing is that there is no war going on.

“We have faced difficulties in Norway, but it is not the same as in Iraq. It is very dangerous to live in Iraq.”

- Behzad

“It is hopeless, totally hopeless to live. You can’t see a future for yourself, it’s very difficult to not be able to attend school or anything.” Behzad says. The brothers have taught themselves Norwegian without attending school, which shows their determination to work and contribute to the Norwegian society.

The brothers compare living in Norway to living in a jail without windows or doors. Writing poetry and singing have long been Behzad’s passion. He has been invited to sing abroad, but without identity and travel documents, he cannot leave the country. Now, because of his situation, Behzad has lost the desire to write poems and sing.

Sherzad and Behzad’s situation is distressing, and they are calling for action.

“Norwegian and international authorities know that we are stateless and oppressed in every way. They know our story. So now again, we ask you to help us. We’re talking about basic human rights.”