



Meet Meathaq

Meathaq Alaunaibi is a refugee from Iraq, where she worked for government oil and agricultural agencies. After her home was attacked, she decided to flee the country but had to wait almost 5 years for visas. During that time, her husband was injured in a car explosion and her two twin daughters were not able to obtain visas. She now resides in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she dreams of reuniting with her family and one day opening a restaurant.

"Refugees are not dangerous," said Meathaq Alaunaibi, a refugee who arrived in the U.S. five months ago. "They have years of security screenings. My family and I left everything in Iraq. We have dreams and we hope that they will come true. I dream that the United States will allow my twin daughters who are still in Iraq to join us soon."

Meet Saad

Saad Omar Adam, 29, grew up in Sudan. He was studying to be a mechanic in 2004 when violent conflict forced him to flee to neighboring Libya, where he finished his studies and found work dismantling junked cars. After a few years Saad became the owner of the scrap yard. Amidst the turmoil during the 2011 Libyan Revolution, Saad left his career, his savings and his newfound home to seek refuge in Malta.

Saad did not waste any time in establishing himself as a community figurehead in his new place of residence. For four years, Saad imported Libyan clothes for other refugees living in Malta. Always the businessman, he continued to grow his operation until he was accepted to resettle in the United States as a refugee.

This time it was not civil unrest that brought Saad to a new place, but rather the opportunity to let his entrepreneurial spirits flourish, unhindered by overt anti-immigrant sentiment. “America is the paradise,” Saad says of his reasoning to come here. “There is law in America, respect. There’s not injustice. In Malta people say ‘Black? We don’t like black,’ ... [In the U.S.] all the people are the same. That’s the best thing.”



Edwin Harris/CWS

In the United States, CWS found Saad an apartment, oriented him to the local public transportation, enrolled him in English classes and in a matching grant employment program that incentivizes refugees to become self-sufficient through employment. With CWS employment staff assistance, Saad quickly found full-time work at an industrial laundry facility and he took driving classes. At the end of the 10-week course, Saad was CPR and first aid proficient. Only a few months later, he got a driver’s license and bought a seven passenger van.

As successful as he is, Saad’s dream of American paradise is far from over. He wants to improve his already-excellent English and go back to school. He talks about finding work as a truck driver. Saad says of his future goals, “I want to go to business school and start my own business.” One thing is certain: whatever Saad wants to do, he’ll find a way to do it.

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