

Finding home in refuge: thirty moves in eight years

Having a roof, a window and a comfortable bed might not sound like much, but for many refugee families in Lebanon those have become an unattainable luxury. In fact, since they fled Syria eight years ago, finding a home has proved to be the most daunting task for Safaa and her family.

As there are no formal camps in Lebanon, refugees from Syria have to find and arrange their own accommodation with over 80% of them renting their housing. Many families found themselves renting shelters lacking safety conditions, and adequate water, sewage systems, as well as electricity. Safaa, 45, a mother of seven, fled with her family to South Lebanon where she moved from one area to another, never managing to settle in one place.

Desperately hoping to pull his family out of this dire situation, Safaa's disabled husband tried relentlessly to find a job but in vain.

Just before winter hit Lebanon, Safaa and her family were evicted from their house after failing to pay rent. This was not the first time the family had to pack their belongings, move out and look for a new 'home'.

"The landlord wanted to rent out the house to another family who could pay him. We had no place to go and we begged him to stay until the end of the winter but he refused and locked us out," Safaa explains. Left with no other option, the family built a small tent in a nearby agricultural field out of timber and plastic sheets, with no bathroom or kitchen. With the first storm, the rain, snow and wind battered the tent. Safaa feared for her children's safety like no other time before.

In 2018 there was a deterioration of conditions in which Syrian refugees live in Lebanon, with an increase in refugees moving to non-residential and non-permanent structures such as informal tented settlements, especially among female headed households. Adequate shelter assistance is essential for refugee families, like that of Safaa, to live in dignity.



Credit: Norwegian Refugee Council

“ We had to move out of 30 houses in the past eight years, as we struggled to pay rent ”