

**Ramgavar Mamoul**

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*On the Run Again*

## **Syria: an Armenian Story**

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She had lost a lot of weight and her eyes had a haunted look about them. She had lost her house and everything in it. In that she was like many Syrians, who had suffered the same fate. Her house was in Jobar (one of the hot spots of Damascus countryside) and in the beginning she had seen the armed men a street away from her house brazenly walking around brandishing guns. She had informed the checkpoint also around the corner of her house, but they told her it wasn't their business to interfere! When a bullet just missed her brother, who was standing in his bedroom, they decided to leave the house until the area was a bit safer. At that point she never thought that she wouldn't sleep another night in her house.



**Heavy shelling in Jobar, Damascus**

Days later a soldier from the same checkpoint called her to tell her that armed men had entered her house and robbed it! They had stolen everything worth stealing. The accumulation of years of toil and hard work. The house it seemed was lost even though the Syrian army helped her retain some of her belongings. A fortnight later she heard that her house was being used as headquarters. Now nothing remains of what was – no memories, no comfort and no place to call home.

What makes this story particularly poignant is that the ancestors of this women in question had fled to Syria seeking sanctuary. They had been pursued and massacred by the Turks and had walked for endless days over mountainous terrain until they reached Syrian soil. Syria opened its arms wide for them and they were accepted and indeed became an integral part of the Syrian mosaic.

They are the Armenians of Syria and the woman in question is Yerado Krikorian, a Syrian of Armenian origin, who works for Syrian Arab Television. The Armenians had long suffered under Ottoman rule and it was because of the Armenian massacre, systematically denied by Turkey, that the Armenians fled to neighboring Syria.

The many Armenians who live in Syria, live in close knit societies. They are known to be hard working and professional and they all carry the scars of what happened to them by the Turks deep inside. Another Armenian – Syrian Armenian – Jack, who was a university professor at Damascus University, was never taught his language by his father, for fear that his language, Armenian, would awaken national pride in him and possibly a thirst for revenge. The scars left by the Turks ran too deep for Jack's father to take such a gamble.



**Yerado Krikorian**

And now the Armenians find themselves in a similar situation having to flee from the country that has long hosted and loved them. Targeted by armed groups some have little choice but to escape to Armenia. They do so with heavy heart and all our hopeful that they will return to Syria and soon – to the extent that the Armenian government has made an exception for those Armenian children fleeing from the armed groups in Syria and has allowed them to study the Syrian curriculum in Armenian schools. They carried their Syrian textbooks from Syria to Armenia so desperate are they not to fall behind in their school schedule when they return to Syria. There is no “ if ” here – for they want to return.



**Yerado Krikorian on television**

Hopefully, they will return and return soon to enrich once again the Syrian mosaic and who knows, perhaps Yerado too, one day will return to her house in Jobar with its blackened walls and its shattered windows! And Jack also, will feel safe enough as the shadow of menacing Turkey diminishes, to teach his children Armenian.

Damascus, Syria