



New Home, New Life

Iraqi family resettled in the USA with help of IOM's Resettlement Support Center

20 November—"My name is Lubna*," she says with a gentle handshake and an infectious smile. The Iraqi refugee and mother of four sits and scans the familiar walls of the room where she has attended various culture orientation sessions. Lubna and her family have been granted refugee status and will be resettled in the United States through the US Refugee Admissions Programme (USRAP), a programme which is implemented by IOM's Resettlement Support Center (RSC).

Her journey as a refugee started in 2005 when she and her family fled Iraq and came to Egypt after receiving threats to their personal safety. Since arriving in Cairo, Lubna has been the breadwinner for her family. "My husband is no longer in our lives and he was the provider. I did not work. In Cairo, I had to start selling furniture in my apartment to pay for rent and make ends meet. I then found out there was an Iraqi community here and decided I could make money by cooking and baking and selling my food to them," she says.

Lubna's story is echoed around the region; the Middle East and North Africa has one of the highest rates of human mobility in the world, being a region of origin, transit, and destination for migrants. Individuals fleeing conflicts in Libya, Iraq, and Syria have sought safety in Egypt.

USRAP was established in 1975 and has resettled more than three million refugees from around the world. Between 2007 and 2014, RSC in the Middle East and North Africa alone (through its processing centers in Amman, Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus) resettled more than 90,000 refugees to the United States. Resettlement is an important part of IOM's operations, and through a variety of programmes

IOM supports refugee resettlement to other countries around the world, such as Australia, Canada, Sweden, Finland, and the United Kingdom. Lubna learned of the USRAP through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who made the initial determination that Lubna and her family qualified for refugee status. They then referred her to IOM's RSC who processed the case and supported Lubna and her children through health assessments, pre-departure orientation and integration sessions, and travel assistance.

As part of its contribution to global migration governance, IOM promotes refugee integration through a range of resettlement services. Health assessments and travel health assistance ensure that refugees are fit to travel and meet the requirements of the resettlement country, while pre-departure orientations prepare refugees by providing practical information on country of destination. RSC also helps refugees set realistic goals and develop the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in their new environment.

Once refugees have been approved for resettlement and completed departure procedures, IOM makes arrangements for the refugees to travel to the United States. An IOM staff member will see Lubna and her family off from Egypt, and a representative from a resettlement agency funded through an agreement with the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration will receive Lubna and her children upon arrival in California later this month. This resettlement agency will support them through the initial adjustment period by assisting with housing, food, clothing, school enrolment, English language classes, employment, health screenings, and other public services.

When asked what she hopes her new home will be like, Lubna responds, "I'll be happy to live in a comfortable, secure home—one where we're not afraid to answer the door when someone knocks."

*Name has been changed to protect refugee's identity



Two of Lubna's daughters wait while she speaks with a RSC staff member. © IOM 2014

For further information, please contact Mervat Abou El Rous at mabouelrous@iom.int

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Tel: +20 2 273 651 40/1 • Fax: +20 2 273 651 39 • iommenanews@iom.int • <http://www.iom.int>

