

# OUR LIVING AFTER SURVIVING

Al-Sakhour - East Aleppo / 2018

For seven years of the crisis in Syria, the reality has evolved and the situation has become harder than any expectations. In almost all areas, Syrians have faced and suffered tragedy in all its forms and images. And one of the most severely damaged areas in Syria is Al-Sakhour in the east of Aleppo, where there was a long siege that brought about horrible destruction; where there are no young people left. Now there is only rubble and tattered remains of the beloved ones who fled or even died.

People were short of everything: no food, no fuel, no medical aids or medicine. They were also deprived of education. Poverty, hunger and fear were the dominating features in this area and people could not find a day of peace.

At the end of November 2016, the eastern areas including Al-Sakhour came back under the authority of the Syrian Government. Therefore, citizens started to return to their homes after a forced evacuation to Idlib that lasted for one month and a half.

The scale and severity of people's needs were at the highest when the returning movement started. The whole infrastructure of the city had been destroyed and smashed which made it very difficult for the inhabitants to get access to food, water, electricity and health.



Each family in the eastern area of Aleppo has a different type of trauma; hundreds of those who managed to survive have found themselves facing a new obstacle, which is adapting and accepting their heavy losses. People are trying to go back to build their destroyed houses from the very beginning, sometimes in one leg or with one hand; they work around the clock, in continuous struggle to provide the minimum basis of life for their families.

## Figures & Statistics in AL-SAKHOUR



There are nearly **1900 families**; a family of five, on average.



Only three public **schools** have re-launched their services:

- Seif-Mahmoud
- Ghaza
- Ibrahim Al-Tounbi



The civilians in all the eastern Aleppo still suffer from the absence of the government's **electricity** and **water pumping** supply, and they are depending on other sources like costly private generators; 1400 S.P. for one ampere per week, running 10 hours every day. And they also depend on the water tanks which SARC have provided.



The number of households headed by **women** is countless due to the absence of many men who either died or fled a long time ago.

But the most dangerous feature is the withering of resilience, faith and the little remaining hope. Still numbers, figures or even stories are not enough to convey the sorrow of the people who are suffering in those areas.



## JRS RESPONSE

At the beginning of February 2017, JRS took the lead, intervening for those who were vulnerable and most needed and who were neither served nor helped by any other organization at that time. Volunteers from JRS have visited Al-Sakhour to assess the **needs** of the area and its residents through those **visits**. The damages and destruction were unbelievable; most of the families returned to their destroyed houses, where there were no walls, windows or doors.

JRS started to serve people through the daily distribution of **cooked meals**. The chosen place for that distribution was Al-Khairat Mosque in Al-Sakhour. The distribution started with about 400 families and reached its peak in May with almost 600 families per day. Most of them were returnees as the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) did not exceed 15% of the beneficiaries.



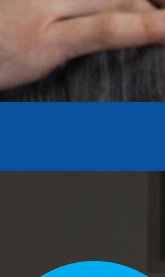
## COMMUNITY CENTER

Visiting the families in Al-Sakhour who were receiving the daily hot meals, was the first step to share the families' suffering, to identify the needs at all levels and to assess them on the ground. The citizens were in dire need of support and assistance.

The community center in Al-Sakhour started its services in November 2017. The activities included education, medical services, psychosocial support and cooked meal distribution.



**1239 Families**  
The number of the families that JRS serve is 1239 families, including the beneficiaries of the hot meals service which serves an estimate of 638 families.



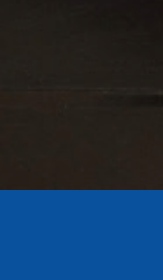
**40 Children**  
More than 40 children receive educational support to develop their knowledge in three main subjects: maths, English and Arabic language.



**1513 Patients**  
The number of beneficiaries in the clinic has reached approximately 1513 patients.



**72 Men & Women**  
Three groups for men with a grand total of 28 men, and four groups for women with a grand total of 44 women participate in the social development sessions.



**115 Women**  
The literacy workshops host 115 women.

Involving and sharing the problems and life issues they suffer constitutes a very positive development for the inhabitants of Al-Sakhour. This has been made possible through JRS initiatives and programs that aim at empowering them to tackle the difficulties they face and be effective members of their society.



Abd Al-Jabbar's Story

## A step towards a DREAM

**"I want to be the person who always dream to be, and I will."**

with this determination, **Abd-Al-Jabbar Rahme**, started his story - Al-Sakhour, East Aleppo.

With a childhood full of energy, they walk... With a hopeful smile, they continue... With an ambition to fulfill their dream, they learn...

The AL-Rahme brothers are two brilliant boys, who insist to be called survivors and not war's victims. They go to classes day after day in spite of their situation of displacement.

**"We used to live in Neirabieh - in rural Aleppo, and we have fled many times from one place to another until we settled here in the AL-Sakhour area."**

At his age of eleven, Abd-Al-Jabbar, who looks older than his age, describes, without complaining, the journey with his family as a travel to survival, not to despair.

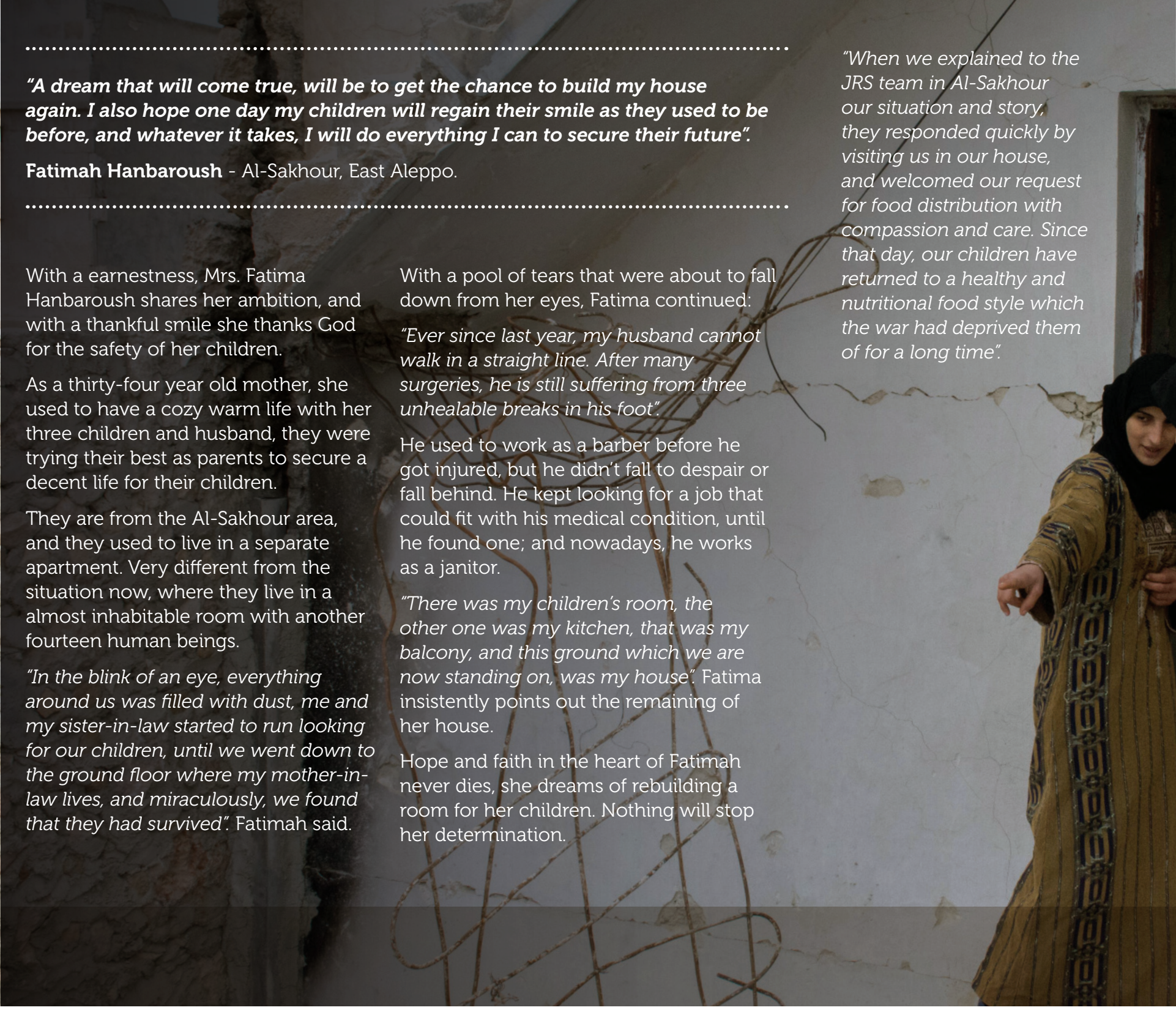
**"It was the time to flee, that's what my mother said that day, when a missile fell in our street and spread the horror in everybody's heart, it was like a nightmare. That day I realized what the word 'war' means, we used to wake up hearing the destruction hitting buildings around us and taking people's lives in front of our eyes"**

**"We were surrounded by fear, our life was threatened, therefore my family chose to flee for the sake of our safety", he added.**

Despite all the suffering Abd-Al-Jabbar experienced, he chose to use his faith to help him recover and heal his trauma. Today Abd-Al-Jabbar and his brother Zain, are excellent students, in the center of JRS.

**"Finally, we have learned the alphabet pronunciation as we should; finally we have a place to go to, where we learn correctly. Our schools are crowded, there is no place for a student to ask a question and get the answer. We do not need people to remind us of the war which will kill our dreams; we do need people who remind us about those dreams, so we can rebuild what the war has destroyed."**

Then Abd-Al-Jabbar tried to stop talking about war with all its negativity and he jumped as he expressed his dreams and ambitions **"I want to be a doctor, an officer, or a volunteer like you, when I grow up"**. He does not know what he wants to become, but he knows very well what the word **"future"** means.



## GRATEFUL for a second chance in life

Fatimah's Story

**"A dream that will come true, will be to get the chance to build my house again. I also hope one day my children will regain their smile as they used to be before, and whatever it takes, I will do everything I can to secure their future".**

**Fatimah Hambaroush** - Al-Sakhour, East Aleppo.

With a earnestness, Mrs. Fatima Hambaroush shares her ambition, and with a thankful smile she thanks God for the safety of her children.

As a thirty-four year old mother, she used to have a cozy warm life with her three children and husband, they were trying their best as parents to secure a decent life for their children.

They are from the Al-Sakhour area, and they used to live in a separate apartment. Very different from the situation now, where they live in a almost inhabitable room with another fourteen human beings.

**"In the blink of an eye, everything around us was filled with dust, me and my sister-in-law started to run looking for our children, until we went down to the ground floor where my mother-in-law lives, and miraculously, we found that they had survived"**, Fatimah said.

With a pool of tears that were about to fall down from her eyes, Fatima continued:

**"Ever since last year, my husband cannot walk in a straight line. After many surgeries, he is still suffering from three unhealable breaks in his foot."**

He used to work as a barber before he got injured, but he didn't fail to despair or fall behind. He kept looking for a job that could fit with his medical condition, until he found one; and nowadays, he works as a janitor.

**"There was my children's room; the other one was my kitchen, that was my balcony, and this ground which was my house"**, Fatima insistently points out the remaining of her house.

Hope and faith in the heart of Fatimah never dies, she dreams of rebuilding a room for her children. Nothing will stop her determination.

**"When we explained to the JRS team in Al-Sakhour our situation and story, they responded quickly by visiting us in our house and welcomed our request for food distribution with compassion and care. Since that day, our children have returned to a healthy and nutritional food style which the war had deprived them of for a long time"**



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**When a window of chance is being opened to the future...**

**When patience is overpowering the trauma of war...**

About a mother of five children who became orphans after their father passed away two years ago by a missile that hit the street he was walking in.

The thirty-seven-year-old woman used to have many dreams; but she in the space of few years has seen all her dreams, hopes and aspirations vanishing into thin air!

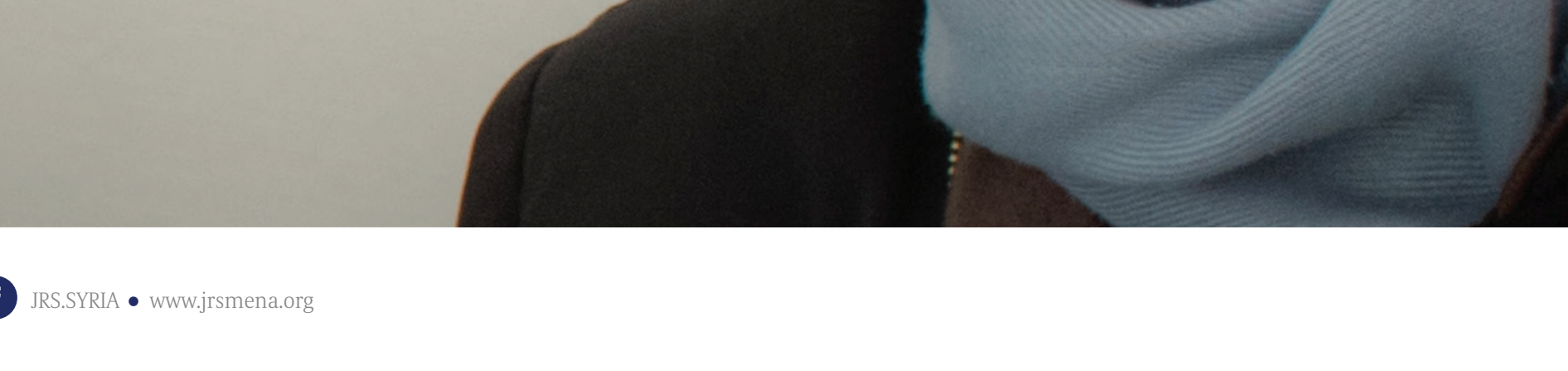
**"It was a day to remember when my husband went to buy bread and he never came back to us. My little son, Moussa, was with him that day and due to the severity of the bombing, he flew several feet away and fell off, forcefully, on the ground. This has brought about two years of continuous surgeries on his hand and two years of suffering from too many medical examinations"**

Unfortunately, when conflict broke out in Syria, access to education became harder, and in some places impossible due to the unsafe schools areas, or the destructions of school buildings.

**"I was forced to drop out of school when I was in the fifth grade in order to manage my family's needs. After my mother gave birth to Moussa, she got ill and was forced to stay in bed for a long time. I had to take responsibility of the household back then."**

**"I am twenty-one years old now; I totally forgot how to even hold a pen to write, or to spell a simple phrase correctly. When JRS announced that there would be literacy workshops, my sister and I decided to attend the course. Now I can read the Quran without making mistakes"**, Youssa added.

She spoke and finished her words, being quietly confident that she will go on, that she will not miss an opportunity to learn anymore.



**"Here in Al-Sakhour, after the siege was over, we didn't have a place to go. The war has made us forget how to live without thinking of the worst worries of life."**

Finally, we have a space to express ourselves, and someone who listens to us, who sheds light on topics of concern for us. Somehow, through the social sessions that JRS have implemented, we have felt like getting out of the war that we were living.

Then she added, **"The social group sessions have opened for us a free space not just to talk about our problems; most importantly, they also gave us the chance to create solutions to fix them. By the solidarity of JRS and that of ourselves, we have undertaken a lot of initiatives that have benefitted all of us in return"**.

Since the community center of JRS launched its services, Mrs. Aziza has been participating in the social sessions for women, and her three children (Moussa, Youssa and Rabia'a) have attended the educational course and the literacy course respectively.

**"I have never seen my little Moussa living his childhood as he is now; it's like his smile has been reborn on his face. The schools here usually neglect children like Moussa's case because of their disabilities, but JRS have welcomed Moussa with a lot of love and care."**

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## When the LIGHT enters their life...

Aziza's Story

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