

From My Story...

**An ambition
worth sacrificing**

Arya Haji



I started working, achieved financial independence, and chose to stay in Syria due to the complexities surrounding decisions made by some European countries.

My name is Arya Haji, I'm 32 years old woman from Derik, a city in northeastern Syria.

I've been a journalist since 2014 and became involved with civil society organizations in 2021. I also work as a trainer in several areas, including gender, gender-sensitive journalism and dialogue management, which are completely different from my academic background, as I hold a degree in biology.

Like any other young Syrian woman, I lived with my family in our small town. After 2011, during the wave of migration and family reunifications, some of my family members were able to move to a European country in 2014. Over time, others followed at different intervals—except for me, as I was over the legal age of 18.

After a year of waiting for things to work out, I realized I was wasting time that I could have spent pursuing my ambitions, which I once thought the war had shattered. That's when I decided to stay in Syria. Had it not been for my family's unwavering support and their complete trust in me, I wouldn't be where I am today. I kept working because they respected this decision although I had the chance to travel a few years later.



I started my journalism career as a program editor and host at a local radio station. Over time, I worked as a reporter and moved between several local media outlets. Eventually, I transitioned to administrative roles within these platforms, and today I serve as the Executive Director of the Nextory Platform for Development Information. Just as I was fortunate to be supported by my family, I have also been lucky to work alongside people who deeply believe in the issues we tackle.

Together, we've built a safe and supportive environment by all standards.

When my family left for Europe and I stayed behind, I became the first young woman in my region to go through this experience, drawing both amazement and scrutiny from those around me.

Repeatedly and daily, I would hear comments from neighbors, acquaintances, and even strangers who might cross my path insisting that I should do everything possible to join my family. They believed it was unacceptable for a woman to live alone, as the prevailing mindset dictated that any woman must be with someone, a family member, a man to complete her life.

I did miss family gatherings at times and longed to have my family by my side, but my ambition was worth the sacrifices. I wanted to reach my goals and then reunite with my family after achieving something—even if it was small—that reflected my passion for the career I entered by chance and gradually grew deeply attached to, and firmly believed in every case we took on.



From my experience, I have come to believe having the drive to grow and positively impact those around you is crucial. All of these factors are enough to help anyone succeed, even in the toughest circumstances.

I never imagined I would become someone who influences others and works in a field centered on raising awareness. That's why I'm proud of every step I've taken so far. I know I still have much to learn, but I'm dedicated to doing what's right and contributing to the community that I'm a part of, and that deserves my best efforts to help create meaningful change.

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