

## **Syrian Christian Whose Family Was Targeted By ISIS Implores Americans to Not Reject Muslims**

*The following is a transcript of an Omaha World-Herald [interview](#) with Rula Jabbour, a Syrian Christian, who left Syria and now lives in Nebraska. Several U.S. politicians have proposed banning Syrian Muslim refugees. She responds to these proposals at the end of her account. This is Part 5 of our series highlighting what Syrian refugees are saying. Click [here for Parts 1-4](#).*

My father is a catholic, and he is the head of our family, the Jabbour family. The Jabbour family is a big family of almost 600 or 700 members, and my father came from a village Kinsibba which is 40 minutes from Ladakh if you are driving. And that village is a Christian village surrounded by Muslim communities and Muslim villages. So when ISIS took over that area, people were forced to be expelled, and whoever is not with ISIS is against them.

In July 2012, my father received a call at 4:00 am, and it was one of the members of ISIS who used to work for my father. My father had huge farms in the village, so he called up and told him, "They (ISIS) are after you; they will come to you and kidnap you; and will take you to the village. They will teach by executing you, a lesson for everybody who is not supporting them. So they will have a public trial and behead you in front of everybody. So please escape."

So this member, he used to work for my father in the farms before and just for the old time sake, just as a loyalty gesture calling [to tell him] to escape.... My father had to come to United States because he faced death in my country, so he had to escape and come here. And he is the one who applied for asylum status here in 2012. He felt that he turned his back to his family: "I should have stayed back and protected my family, tried my best to protect them and even if I get killed its fine."

For us its not a heroic thing now, if you get killed you are not going to be a hero, you are going to be just a number, so instead of 1500, it will be 1501 people killed in Syria....

My cousin, she was 26 years old by that time. She was new bride, and she was 4 months pregnant with twins. She suffered a lot to get pregnant and her parents, you cannot describe their happiness knowing that she was pregnant. She was talking to her neighbor in the balcony in Damascus and the rocket hit her and she was shattered into pieces. She was catholic, she was not in the battlefield, she was not on the street, she was in her home, in her balcony talking to her neighbor. Really there was nothing left from her body and her mother asking to say goodbye to her. Her name was Soulafe, and I cannot describe how that period was bad for us, for my parents, for our family.

I have a question for governor. In 9/11, most of the people who committed that horrible crime were Saudis. Why you did not stop Saudis from coming to United States after that? So as I told you the problem is not the people. Those are poor people escaping the hell of ISIS not to live in another hell. It is enough for people, they are facing problems from the bureaucracy of this country. They do not wish to go back to ISIS; they are coming here to live American dream, to achieve that dream. When you are turning your back to them, you are marginalizing them and telling them that ISIS was right about us, we don't like Muslims after all.

I am a Christian. But this is very wrong to say that you know some politicians say that we are going to welcome you as long as we prove that you are Christian. So you are telling me that the United States is becoming an exclusive club for Christian people. Who told you that Christian people are better than Muslims?

This is not right. Bad ideologies are everywhere and you cannot generalize to the population. They have lost everything, but not hope. Give them hope. So please help those poor people. Do not turn your back. This country is of refugees. This country was built by refugees and immigrants. We have no right to turn our backs on them. We are going to achieve what ISIS is looking for.

ISIS is just endorsing the idea that, yes, the West is evil, and they hate all Muslims; and they do not want that Arabic civilization should flourish, and we are telling them that we are becoming exactly what they are telling the people about us. Do not let ISIS win this is my only request.... Our nation used to welcome everybody. When we change that, then we are not the United States anymore, and we have changed, and ISIS has achieved what they want.

*This transcript has been edited slightly for clarity.*