Coping in Jabal Al Taj, Amman
2½ years in Amman, poor health and wish for education.
Sayah H. Mutawi is 65, and lives with his wife Khawla (57) and daughter Faizah (16) and his wife's two sisters in a two bedroom apartment in downtown Jordan. Barefoot, Sayah takes us into the main lounge room where his wife is lying in a large bed, with one of her sisters perched by her side.

Health condition and service
Throughout the conversation with Sayah and his wife, it becomes apparent that Khawla spends most of her days in bed as she is unable to move about freely due to severe health concerns. Sayah states that she has a long term illness (diabetes and high blood pressure) that was prevalent even when they were living in Syria, but has since become much more debilitating. Health concerns are the main topic of conversation as we were shown around the family’s home, through the barren two rooms and the kitchen where the family have kept some pots, pans and utensils that they managed to take with them from Syria. These belongings from their village stand out from the scarcity of the rest of the apartment, as stark reminders of the sense of home they left behind. Sayah explains that he has numerous health issues such as severe chest pain, heart condition and cataracts.

I visit the public hospital and I’m seen by the doctor but it is rushed. I am told to come back in one month. When I come back for my second appointment, I am told to come back in another month’s time without being seen.

Escape from Syria
Sayah begins to tell us of the family’s escape from Syria in 2012.
We used an ambulance to escape. My wife was sick, and an ambulance came and collected us to take her to get medical assistance outside of the village.
The family were fortunate to escape Syria early in the crisis in 2012. They were particularly lucky, given the fact that they lived in Yarmouk. The village was besieged throughout most of latter part of the Syrian conflict, with many starving to death. However, the family remembers Yarmouk with fondness, and they lament over the difficulties in their life now, in comparison to their easier life before the war.

Determined for an education
Escaping this fate, and now in the midst of limbo in Amman is Sayah and Khawla’s daughter who is in the 11th grade of high school. Faizah enters the room near the end of our visit to the home, and shyly introduces herself to us. When asked what her favourite subject is at school she mentions: I am interested in learning information technology (IT), and I wish to have a career in this field in the future.
The Syrian refugee children attending school have access to free education in Jordan, however it is also the small expenses that act as an impediment to them actually attending school. Sayah states: The school uniform and books cost 60 JD, and I cannot afford this.
The first day of school for the semester is on Sunday, and it is still uncertain as to whether Khawla will go back to school that day as her parents do not have the funds to buy a uniform and books. However, her determination and strength to succeed resonates through our conversation with her, giving us hope that there will be some way that she will get to school somehow.

Support for rental costs
Sayahs strength and perseverance propels him to make the hour long journey by foot to the Jordanian Red Crescent (JRC) offices, to seek assistance for his daily needs. The family receive 120 JD from the Cash Transfer Program for living expenses. This money allows them to cover most of the rent for the apartment, which amounts to 180 JD a month. The landlord presently wants to increase the rent substantially, and also charges the family a fee if they wish to have friends over to visit their home. This contributes to their sense of isolation. The family has also become vegetarian in the efforts to save money by not spending funds on meat.

Even though UNHCR registered refugees in Jordan have access to health care in Jordan, the health system is under so much strain, and the health needs of Syrian refugees are often complex and severe. Sayah hasn’t given up though, and continues to visit the hospital in order to try and have his health needs met. He mentioned that the Caritas hospital that once serviced Syrian refugees was extremely responsive and provided good care, however it has recently closed.

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