



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIRL WHO FORGAVE ISIS?

Iraqi schoolgirl Myriam, whose message of forgiveness for ISIS ‘captured millions of hearts’ when it went viral, urges Christians to pray and bring hope to refugee children. SAT-7 documentary *Sequel of Hope* broadcasted her family’s message of hope after returning to their hometown of Qaraqosh.

The world has changed since the testimony of 9-year-old Myriam went viral in 2014. In an interview with SAT-7 Presenter Essam Nagy, she inspired audiences around the world when she forgave ISIS for displacing her from her home in Qaraqosh, Iraq, forcing her to leave everything she knew for a refugee camp in Kurdistan. Myriam said she found comfort and strength in watching SAT-7’s children’s TV shows in the camp – programs that helped her grow in her faith and extend forgiveness to ISIS.

There are millions of Middle Eastern children like Myriam and her sister Zomorod. According to UNICEF, the United Nations children’s fund, 17 million children were displaced by conflict within their own country in 2017, and 13 million more children were forced to flee to other countries

for refuge. And perhaps because of the magnanimity of the crisis, Myriam and Zomorod’s story is no less remarkable or critical to the future of the region.

In 2014, there were three prayers on the heart of young Myriam and God has miraculously answered all of them:

- Going back to school
- Reuniting with her classmate and friend Sandra
- Returning to her childhood home in Qaraqosh

DESTROYED IN ONE MOMENT

Mother Alice reflects on witnessing the destruction of their hometown upon return: “At first I saw everything in our house was turned upside down. Then, I saw other people’s homes were burnt, destroyed, robbed. We were in shock to see all the efforts of our life’s work overturned in one day. Homes they’ve had

50 years and in one moment, burned or destroyed.” Homes and churches in Qaraqosh that hadn’t been demolished by rockets or burned to the ground were looted and still bear bullet holes in the walls. At a local building in Qaraqosh, militants shot a mural of Jesus, and spray-painted graffiti on a church reading “The ISIS caliphate shall remain forever.”

Myriam’s family returned to find their home looted and in disarray, all the while thanking God that the family Bible and structure were intact.

And as Myriam says, the hearts of the Iraqi people do not reside in buildings. She says, “Look, it’s not about the house. It’s about what you feel in your heart. It’s that God is always protecting and you can count on Him.”

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIRL WHO FORGAVE ISIS? - continued



DO YOU STILL FORGIVE ISIS?

When asked if she still forgives ISIS, Myriam says, “Of course I forgive them, like I told you. I love Qaraqosh. It’s where I was born and studied during my childhood. But the more important thing is that I love to see people believing in God.”

HOPE AND CELEBRATION

Having grown up watching SAT-7 Christian television, and even appearing as a guest on her favourite kids’ show over Skype, Myriam is touched that Director Essam Nagy and his wife, Magdoline, felt for her and cared about her family’s plight. After several years of keeping in touch through prayers, calls, and encouragement, they were overjoyed to be reunited during the Eastern Easter holiday. Mother Alice prepared an Easter dinner for the guests and father Waleed prayed over the meal.

On Easter day, the family attended church and dressed in festive attire for a massive Easter parade in the streets.

In a nation where Christian families have been murdered and hidden in mass graves, in a town that was once relegated to an insurgent holdout, Iraqis are rebuilding their lives. They gathered by the thousands celebrating Palm Sunday, triumphant in the hope and healing of life in Christ.

AN AFGHAN GIRL’S JOURNEY TO WATCH SAT-7

Taraneh* is a young Afghan girl who lives in Tajikistan and regularly calls in to SAT-7 PARS’ live children’s shows. Her family do not own a television, but she travels three hours to watch her programs at a relative’s home.

Taraneh’s inspiring enthusiasm and faith, despite her family’s difficult circumstances, shine through in her messages to the channel.

“We have to live out of town because we don’t have much money,” writes Taraneh on the messaging app she uses to communicate with the SAT-7 PARS team. “Our house where we live has nothing, we don’t even have a house number.”

NO TV? NO PROBLEM

The team had asked Taraneh for her address to send her a small gift. She then explained that her family does not own a television and she travels a

long distance to watch her favourite shows on SAT-7 PARS: “We have to travel three hours to go to my Uncle’s house to watch this program. I go to play with my cousin because I like it, and I go there to watch your program too.”

Taraneh and her family are from Afghanistan, but because of the many difficulties they faced in their home country they had to flee to Tajikistan. As a foreigner, her father is not permitted to work and this is a cause of financial hardship for the family.

However, these circumstances have not dampened Taraneh’s enthusiasm

and she shares what a treat it is for her to watch SAT-7 PARS children’s programs on satellite television every week.

THANKFUL – EVEN THOUGH...

Taraneh regularly calls into the SAT-7 PARS live children’s show *Golpand*, which means ‘beautiful or golden advice’, to participate in the games, or share a prayer or song. During one episode exploring what it means to be thankful, she called to say: “I give thanks for having a mum and dad, a family who are Christians, and that I have been freed from sin.” She went on to sing a worship song. “I send kisses to all you believers,” writes Taraneh. “My father is not allowed to work but he always prays about our difficulties and we all go to church every Sunday. The other week I read a poem at church and the others really encouraged me.”

“Sorry, I am going to school,” she concludes her messaging for now. It must be early morning in Tajikistan.

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