

# Dan Rather Reports

**Episode Number:** 215

**Episode Title:** Exodus

**Description:** Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are fleeing their country to Syria in search of safety. But that's not their final stop. Many are being smuggled to Europe and beyond.

**TEASE:**

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
TONIGHT, THOUSANDS OF IRAQIS FLEE FOR SAFETY TO COUNTRIES ALL  
OVER THE WORLD.

IMAD MUSTAPHA, SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES  
I think this is a huge burden that almost no country, no country is fully equipped and  
prepared to handle.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
ALSO, THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN WHO DREAMS ONLY OF COMING TO  
AMERICA.

JOEY  
I have had that dream since I was 10 years old, you know. It would be an honor to be an  
American citizen.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
And easy asylum. One European country is welcoming refugees with open arms and  
wallets.

PAUL LAPPALAINEN  
But what is going to be a problem is an increasing realization that there is racism, that  
there is discrimination, that there is basically a lack of respect for them as individuals.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
EXODUS FROM IRAQ, NEXT ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

## **EXODUS:**

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING. TRY TO PUT YOURSELF, FOR A MOMENT, IN THE PLACE OF AN EVERYDAY IRAQI. IN THE PAST FOR YEARS, YOU HAVE ENDURED A HEAVY BOMBING CAMPAIGN, A FOREIGN INVASION, A STEADY DRUMBEAT OF BOMBS, ASSASSINATIONS, AND KIDNAPPINGS, AND- DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU LIVE- PERHAPS A FORM OF ETHNIC CLEANSING. MAYBE YOU HAVE A FAMILY, CHILDREN. MAYBE YOU HAVE A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, OR EVEN POSSESS ADVANCED SKILLS IN MEDICINE, OR SCIENCE, THAT ONCE ENSURED YOU A COMFORTABLE LIVING BUT NOW MAKE YOU A TARGET. MAYBE YOU EVEN WELCOMED THE U.S. INVASION AT FIRST AND MAYBE THAT, TOO, HAS NOW BROUGHT YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES DEATH THREATS FROM THE INSURGENTS AND TERRORISTS WHO HAVE BROUGHT DEATH AND CHAOS TO YOUR HOMELAND. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? WOULD YOU STAY IN IRAQ OR WOULD YOU TRY, SOMEHOW, WITH AS MUCH OF YOUR FAMILY AS YOU COULD MANAGE, TO GET OUT? IN EVER-GREATER NUMBERS, IRAQIS HAVE BEEN OPTING FOR THE LATTER- TO LEAVE.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT, WE'LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TIDE OF REFUGES THAT THE WAR IN IRAQ HAS UNLEASHED- WHERE THESE DISPLACED MILLIONS ARE ENDING UP, WHAT THE UNITED STATES AND OUR ALLIES ARE- AND ARE NOT- DOING FOR THEM AND FINALLY, WHAT IT ALL MEANS FOR THE PROSPECTS OF A COUNTRY ALREADY BROKEN AND DIVIDED BY WAR.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WE'LL TAKE A LOOK FIRST AT WHERE, FOR MOST IRAQI REFUGEES, THE VOYAGE BEGINS—ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE BUSES COME EVERY NIGHT - IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. FULL OF IRAQIS - SOMETIMES WITH EVERYTHING THEY OWN. THEY ARE FLEEING THE VIOLENCE THAT'S BECOME PART OF DAILY LIFE IN THEIR HOMELAND.

IRAQI MAN

"I sold all my belongings and I was defeated and I ran way and this is what I could carry with me."

IRAQI WOMAN

"They killed my husband and I fear for my kids."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY'VE COME SEEKING SAFETY—BY SYRIAN LAW ARABS DO NOT NEED A VISA TO ENTER THE COUNTRY. THEY ARE NOT IN CAMPS LIKE MANY REFUGEES AROUND THE WORLD—BUT LIVE IN INSTANT TOWNS THAT HAVE SPRUNG UP IN THE PAST 4 YEARS. VIRTUALLY ALL THESE APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN THE JARAMANA SUBURB OF DAMASCUS WERE BUILT AFTER THE IRAQ WAR STARTED.

THE STREETS BEAR THE NAMES OF IRAQI TOWNS. THIS IS FALLUJAH STREET. THIS BARBERSHOP, THIS FRUIT STORE—ALL IRAQI. THIS KEBOB SHOP WAS A WELL KNOWN BAGHDAD FAST FOOD JOINT NOW RELOCATED TO DAMASCUS.

THE UNITED NATIONS ESTIMATES THAT MORE 2 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE FLED IRAQ BECAUSE OF THE VIOLENCE—WITH HALF OF THEM—MORE THAN ONE MILLION—COMING TO NEIGHBORING SYRIA. MOST OF THEM TAKE THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS—THE HISTORIC, BUSTLING, SECULAR CAPITAL OF SYRIA.

IMAD MUSTAPHA IS THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES.

MUSTAPHA, SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

I think this is a huge burden that almost no country, no country is fully equipped and prepared to handle.

RATHER

In your country, I hear the refugees referred to sometimes as, quote, "visitors."

MUSTAPHA

Yes.

RATHER

Why is this phrase used?

MUSTAPHA

We dislike the term refugees. Those are our brothers and sisters. And they the moment they enter Syria they are automatically granted almost equal rights as Syrian citizens this is why we abstain from using the term refugees. We think it's in a way, rather pejorative.

LAURENS JOLLES, UNITED NATION HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES  
They were welcomed with open arms—they were—up to now—and I think that has to be recognized.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LAURENS JOLLES IS UNITED NATION HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, OR UNHCR, REPRESENTATIVE IN SYRIA. HE SAYS THE SYRIANS GET HIGH MARKS FOR ALLOWING ALL THE IRAQI REFUGEES IN.

JOLLES

You have possibly 20 to 30 thousand Iraqis coming into— sometimes even more— coming into Syria on a monthly basis—and that's a lot.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

REFUGEES STARTED FLOWING AS SOON AS THE U.S. CAME IN. AT THAT TIME MANY WERE WELL OFF BAATHISTS - PEOPLE WITH MONEY - SAYS IBRAHIM HAMIDI, DAMASCUS CORRESPONDENT FOR THE LONDON BASED AL HAYAT NEWSPAPER.

IBRAHIM HAMIDI, DAMASCUS CORRESPONDENT, AL HAYAT NEWSPAPER  
But now, some of them ran out of money. So they started to sell their properties. Their furniture, their clothing, their properties—whatever. Now, what will happen after one year, two years, when they run out of assets?

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND LAST YEAR, A NEW TYPE OF REFUGEE STARTING POURING INTO SYRIA, SAYS PIPPA BRADFORD WITH FOR THE UN'S WORLD FOOD PROGRAM. SHE SAYS THE BOMBING OF AN IMPORTANT SHIITE MOSQUE IN SAMARRA IN 2006 UNLEASHED A NEW CYCLE OF VIOLENCE THAT CAUSED SHIITES AND SUNNIS TO FLEE QUICKLY.

PIPPA BRADFORD, UN FOOD PROGRAM

People were coming across feeling personally threatened. They didn't want to reveal the fact that they were leaving. So they weren't doing, you know, selling their house and goods and so on. And then they would essentially come across with very little in their pocket.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RIGHT NOW THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM IS FEEDING 6,000 IRAQIS IN SYRIA - THAT NUMBER, SAYS BRADFORD, WILL INCREASE TO THIRTY THOUSAND BY THE END OF THE YEAR. WITH JOBS DIFFICULT TO COME BY AND RENT PRICES SKYROCKETING, SOME REFUGEES IN SYRIA ARE BECOMING DESPERATE.

HAMIDI

Three kids were-- kidnapped. And the kidnappers asked for ransoms. This is new. And some—thieves killed—people for the sake of money. This is new in Syria. Normally in Syria the thieves or the criminals go to houses to steal. And they threaten people by killing but they do not kill them. Now we are witnessing new techniques of criminality which is new to the Syrian society.

BRADFORD

We're talking about prostitution, especially children being the ones most worrying to us and child labor and criminality is growing in this country. And this is something that Syrian government is highly alert to. And this could be the real trigger point if the Syrian

government does decide that this is too harmful to their own position, they may just say we've got to draw the line and this is something that nobody wants.

RATHER

We've been told that there are problems with juvenile delinquency. Prostitution, child labor and crime coming in that's refugee tied. How is Syria dealing with that?

MUSTAPHA

Look, let us first admit that these problems exist. Having said this, it does not mean that they are because of the Iraqis themselves. These problems always happen when a country become lawless, when there are several society—the social fabric is-- shattered and disintegrated.

RATHER

When we-- talk about the refugee crisis—who's to blame?

MUSTAPHA

We blame the United States, first and foremost. The United States is the occupying force in Iraq. And the policies of the occupation in Iraq--have caused the collapse of the Iraqi state. Law and order—do not exist anymore in Iraq. And you have to remember that these levels of violence are unprecedented in the history of Iraq. One thousand and four hundred years of the history of Iraq have never witnessed such sectarian strife. This is the first civil war in the history of Iraq.

IRAQI MAN 2

America did what? All this blood in the street of Baghdad.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IS NOT THE ONLY ONE BLAMING UNCLE SAM. THIS MAN WHO FLED WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN AND EVERYTHING THEY OWN IS ANGRY WITH THE U.S.

IRAQI MAN 2 (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

"America's responsible. I can swear to you on that. We're not just claiming that—we saw it with our own eyes. As long as America is in Iraq there is no stability."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS A DIFFERENT VIEW. I SPOKE WITH THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POPULATION, REFUGEES AND MIGRATION ELLEN SAUERBREY.

RATHER

Well when we were in Syria, we talked to a fair number of refugees coming into Syria, out of Iraq, and for the first time. And it was not unusual, when they got off the buses recognizing that our crews were American crews, to say— "you're the problem. You're

the reason we're here. You're the reason we're suffering." what would you say to them if they were in this room at the moment?

ELLEN SAUERBREY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POPULATION,  
REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

I would say that anyone that has had to flee—from their homes because of turmoil and conflict are going to be, having gone through trauma, are going to be extremely upset. But I think if you look at the overall situation in Iraq our goal there, and our fundamental goal, has got to be to create a peaceful, stable Iraq. The sectarian violence that occurred after the bombing of the Samarra Mosque—was not caused by the United States. And the reason for much of the outflow has been sectarian violence.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
AMBASSADOR SAEURBREY RECENTLY WENT TO SYRIA AND MET WITH  
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ABOUT THE REFUGEE SITUATION. IT WAS THE  
FIRST HIGH LEVEL CONTACT IN 2 YEARS.

SAUERBREY  
It was a cordial opportunity for us to talk about how the United States can provide assistance. We recognize that when you have these large refugee influxes into a country, that it creates significant problems.

MUSTAPHA  
She went there to tell us that the United States is concerned, and to urge us to, to open our borders to—allow more and more refugees to come into Syria. It's—ironic but it's also sad.

RATHER  
What aid, what assistance is the United States offering?

MUSTAPHA  
Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

RATHER  
You mean zero?

MUSTAPHA  
As far as we know, zero. They almost don't talk to us. So how—how can you discuss offering aid to us?

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT BUSH HAS A LONG LIST OF  
PROBLEMS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF BASHAR ASSAD: SPONSORING  
TERRORISM, ALLOWING INSURGENTS TO PASS THROUGH THE COUNTRY  
TO IRAQ, AND AIDING IN THE ASSASSINATING THE LEBANESE PRIME  
MINISTER. THESE ARE CHARGES THE SYRIANS HAVE DENIED AND

CHARGES THAT HAVE MADE RELATIONS COOL, IF NOT OUTRIGHT COLD WITH WASHINGTON.

SAUERBREY

We don't directly fund the Syrian government programs. What we do fund are the international organizations. And this is really the standard operating procedure for our refugee program worldwide. We don't give our money directly to a government. We give it to the International Red Cross—to UNICEF, to the world food program-- and primarily, in the refugee context, to UNHCR.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE UNHCR RECENTLY PUT OUT AN APPEAL FOR SIXTY MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE IRAQI REFUGEE SITUATION. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PLEDGED EIGHTEEN MILLION DOLLARS, ABOUT THIRTY PERCENT OF THE REQUEST. THE GOAL IS TO REGISTER REFUGEES, SO THEY MAY BE RESETTLED, POSSIBLY TO THE UNITED STATES.

SAUERBREY

People ask, "Well, what's going to happen to these two million refugees?" and, as you know, we have a robust resettlement program. We resettle more people than all the rest of the world combined, in any given year. And we have a very strong commitment to identifying the people who are the most vulnerable.

RATHER

How many Iraqis have been allowed to resettle here?

SAUERBREY

It's been a very small number, for two reasons. The first reason being that between 2003 and 2006 most of the effort was people going back to Iraq, not looking for resettlement in a third country. The other reason was that after 9/11, very difficult security clearance processes were put into place, that had not existed before. The enhanced security process—was so tedious, and took such a long time that UNCHR stopped referring Iraqi refugees to our program.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE NUMBER OF IRAQI REFUGEES THAT HAVE BEEN RESETTLED IN THE U.S. IS LESS THAN 500 SINCE THE START OF THE WAR—200 OF THEM LAST YEAR. THE U.S. DOES RESETTLE SEVENTY THOUSAND REFUGEES A YEAR WORLDWIDE. WASHINGTON RECENTLY ANNOUNCED A PLAN TO ACCEPT 25 THOUSAND IRAQI REFUGEES THIS YEAR. BUT THAT NUMBER MAY BE UNREAL - RIGHT NOW THERE IS A 9 MONTH WAIT TO EVEN REGISTER TO COME TO THE U.S. AND A HOMELAND SECURITY CHECK MAY TAKE MONTHS MORE.

RATHER

Mr. Ambassador, when it comes to Iraq, and what's happened there, do you-- or not, subscribe to the idea that we, the United States, broke it, to use Colin Powell's phrase, and therefore it is up to us to fix it.

MUSTAPHA

That would be fair had it not been cynical. We care a lot for our Iraqi brothers and sisters and we cannot take a position in which we would say, well, the Americans wanted to do this against our advice. We told them, because we were on talking terms prior to the invasion of Iraq, we told the U.S., "Don't do this, you will end up solving one problem, which is the problem of Saddam Hussein, but you will create many, many more problems that you almost don't understand their nature. You will be unleashing forces that you really do not understand their true nature." The United States, of course, dismissed all our arguments and they decided to invade and occupy Iraq. It would be very cynical for us to say, "Well, they created those problems, let them pay the price for those problems, and let them suffer." The only thing we want from the United States is to reconsider its policies in Iraq and understand that a political solution is the only possible solution in Iraq. Bringing stability and peace back to Iraq will resolve this issue.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COMING NEXT, THE STORY OF ONE YOUNG IRAQI MAN WITH A DREAM.

JOEY

I ask only for one thing—it's just a dream I always had in my mind—just wanna go to the United States.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE INCREDIBLE TALE OF SURVIVAL OF JOEY - WHO WORKED FOR THE AMERICANS IN IRAQ AND PAID A HEAVY PRICE FOR IT.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S ESTIMATED THAT TENS OF THOUSAND OF IRAQIS HAVE WORKED FOR THE U.S. MANY OF THEM AS TRANSLATORS SINCE THE WAR BEGAN. THEY'VE BEEN THREATENED - KILLED - AND MANY HAVE FLED THE COUNTRY. SINCE 2003 ONLY FIVE HUNDRED IRAQIS HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S ELLEN SAUERBREY SAYS TWO THOUSAND MORE IRAQIS ARE CURRENTLY BEING PROCESSED FOR SETTLEMENT IN THE U.S.

SAUERBREY

The people who are being referred are the most vulnerable... And the vulnerable might be people who for whatever reason because of their ethnicity, their religion, may not feel that they have the opportunity to go home. But it is also going to be the group that we have the greatest moral commitment to and those are the people that help the United States, the people who the interpreters who stood next to our forces trying to build a



better country. And in cases where those people have been singled out for—assassination. And I see them everyday. I see those messages coming across. We are totally committed to creating as rapid a process as possible to identify them, and get them here.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE MET ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO SERVED THE U.S. HE GOES BY JOEY—A NICKNAME GIVEN TO HIM BY SOLDIERS HE TRANSLATED FOR IN IRAQ. HE IS 22 YEARS OLD AND JUST ARRIVED IN SYRIA. HE CAME FROM BASRA, IN SOUTHERN IRAQ, WITH HIS MOM. HIS GOAL IS TO GET TO THE U.S.

JOEY

I need a future. I need something better than Iraq. I'll never have that perfect life in Iraq but I want in United States. Because I had that dream since I was ten years old, you know? But I'd be honored to be an American citizen.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY SAYS HE LEARNED ENGLISH FROM WATCHING AMERICAN MOVIES

JOEY

Start with Sylvester Stallone's movies. Tom Hanks and Robert DeNiro. These kind of great actors. Nicole Kidman also, you know? Jennifer Aniston—so, that's how I start with the English and learn—learn—learned. Sometimes I watched the—British, so I got the British accent, too.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE ENGLISH ACCENT CAME IN HANDY WHEN THE WAR STARTED. JOEY WORKED AS A TRANSLATOR FOR THE BRITISH ARMY.

JOEY

How you doing, mate? Well, I was here doing a patrol to the Basra area. And we didn't see nothing, mate. Just the couple of kids and walking around—it's all great. No problem.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY IS A BOXER AND HIS IDOL IS SYLVESTER STALLONE.

JOEY

Yo, Adrienne! How ya doin'? Hey yo, Pauly!

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY LEFT THE BRITS TO WORK FOR THE U.S. MARINES IN BAGHDAD. HIS MOTHER WAS THRILLED.

JOEY'S MOTHER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

"I was happy when he worked with them and I was the one who pushed my son to work with them."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT JOEY WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE VIOLENCE.

JOEY

I was shocked after a while about the situation, how it got bigger and bigger, about the explosions. I saw 'em come from the patrol. They were bloody and it was horrible. I never saw that before in my life. So I couldn't take it. I couldn't take it.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE RETURNED TO BASRA AND HIS FAMILY AND WENT TO WORK FOR A CONTRACTOR TRANSLATING AT THE GATE OF A U.S. EMBASSY OFFICE.

JOEY

So I got the job in the embassy. And all started great, you know. See the maybe I got a chance to go the United States. "This is my chance," I say. 'Cause this has been the dream of my life to go—especially New York City. Sometimes I don't say go to the United States, say, "I'll go to New York City," you know? And get the perfect life and live on my own.

JOEY'S MOTHER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

"I used to wake him up at 5 o'clock and say goodbye to him at the door."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHAT JOEY DID NOT REALIZE WAS THAT INSURGENTS WERE WATCHING AND TARGETING ANYONE WORKING WITH THE AMERICANS

JOEY

And British they thought I was a spy. I wasn't a spy. I was workin' the gate to you know, see the people, what they need in the gate. Trust me.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AFTER 6 WEEKS WORKING THERE, JOEY'S FATHER PICKED HIM UP ONE DAY FROM THE EMBASSY OFFICE IN THE FAMILY CAR. JOEY NOTICED TWO MEN ON A MOTORCYCLE FOLLOWING THEM.

JOEY

Two guys on a motorcycle—big guys. And I'm telling dad, "What's with these guys?" he said, "Nothing. It's all right. Maybe they just passing through." So we went in the middle of the road. And we see car, four guys cross a car. We hit us in the road. There was no people in the street. So they had weapons. They start shooting us. My dad was screaming and said, "Son, they going to kill you. They going to kill you." He's pull the car back and he was jump up trying to protect me so the bullets went in the seats. I jumped again,

trying to protect him. The bullets went in my seat. If you see the pictures of my vehicle, you know, you won't believe this. Nobody's been—get out of a situation like that. Nobody. Everybody the militia's trying to kill them, they shoot them twice in the head and they kill them. Job's done. But not 15 shots. Fifteen shots.

JOEY'S MOTHER (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

"My husband called and told me they tried to kill us I thought (my son) died and I went to the street running. I ran out of the house and even forgot my scarf. I don't even remember if I took a cab or how I got to where I was going. I was screaming as I was running."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY AND HIS FATHER WENT HOME—HIS DAD TOLD HIM TO HIDE IN HIS ROOM.

JOEY

He said you can't go anywhere. You can't go to the garden you can't go nowhere. You're going to stay here. We got you DVD and your iPod and everything you need in here - we gotcha so you can you know—but I was lonely and afraid.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DESPITE THE WARNING FROM HIS FATHER, JOEY WENT TO THE U.S. EMBASSY AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAPPENED. THEY GAVE HIM THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS—THE REST OF THE WEEK'S PAY.

JOEY

"This is what you got and we can't do anything for you. Wish you the luck. That's it." I couldn't get argument with him, "This is th-- all the best what you can do for me after all this? Can't-- help me to get me out of here? Or at least-- let me hide in the embassy or something like that?" said, "No, we can't do anything like this. Good luck." That's it.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY RETURNED HOME AND HID IN HIS ROOM FOR NINE MONTHS. HE WARNED HIS GIRLFRIEND, WHO WAS ALSO WORKING FOR THE AMERICANS, TO QUIT.

JOEY

I give her the phone call. Tell her, "don't go again. They're gonna kill you. They gonna—they tryin' to kill me. They're gonna kill you again. Gonna kill you." So she said, "it's all right. You don't have to worry about it." She didn't listen to me. So they shot her. They killed her, three shots in the head. That's it. And then, I lost my two best friends after the accident. They were workin' with the Brits. They we were working together when I was working with the Brits. And I got the news they'd been killed on the way home. I lost all the people I love. And I was that close to losing my father. But he jumped to try and protect me, and I jumped to try and protect him. For no particular reason, they're tryin' to kill us all. They're tryin'—they're tryin' to make reasons for k— killin' people. For what? Because we work with the British, 'cause we work the Americans. I don't understand this.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO JOEY FLED TO SYRIA. HE AND HIS MOTHER CAME TO STAY WITH A FORMER NEIGHBOR FROM BASRA NAMED BATOOL. SHE LEFT IRAQ THREE YEARS AGO AFTER ONE OF HER DAUGHTERS WAS KIDNAPPED AND HELD FOR RANSOM.

BATOOL (TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC)

“They kidnapped her from the school. As she was leaving school she used to take the bus to and from school. All the family stood by my side and friends and neighbors. They collected the money for me. I cannot remember what I went through because it's like a horror movie.”

JOEY

Last night, I was looking out of that window and wondering how all of this happened to me.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JOEY THOUGHT BY COMING TO SYRIA THAT HE COULD MEET WITH U.S. OFFICIALS AND GET A VISA TO THE U.S. HE HAS A SISTER WHO LIVES IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA. HE WENT TO THE U.S. EMBASSY THE DAY AFTER HE ARRIVED.

JOEY

In the morning, at 8:00am I went to the United States Embassy in Damascus. And I wanted to talk one of the in-charges 'cause I had the recommendation letters from the embassy in Basra and the British troops and all of it. So they tell me, "We can't do anything for you." I told 'em, "For God's sake, after all I did, can't do nuthin' for me? Do you know what I've been through? Do you kn— do you have any idea what I've been through this? To come down here, I've been locked in my room for nine months just to hide from these people watching me. I don't want 'em to know I'm still here. If they know, they're gonna come and get me. Life or death.

RATHER

This young man was in the car with his father. And they were shot at 15 times. And he was—he says he was given—the rest of the weeks pay and told to be careful. Do you know anything about that case?

SAUERBREY

I haven't heard about that case specifically. But I can tell you that all of our embassies have been given very clear—information and instruction in terms of their ability to make direct referrals to the refugee program, for any of their direct hires that they feel are in danger. And we are setting up a special mechanism that I will be talking to the governments in the region, to make sure that that they understand what we are intending to do. That will give people who have been employed by contractors, as well as the direct hires, a very expedited means of coming into the refugee program.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR JOEY, HOWEVER, THOSE ASSURANCES RING HOLLOW. NO ONE WOULD TALK WITH HIM AT THE U.S. EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS. HE DID GET AN APPOINTMENT TO REGISTER WITH THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER ON REFUGEES—NINE MONTHS FROM NOW.

JOEY

There's are thousands of people. I'm gonna stand in that line, for how long? Six years, two years? What is this? I mean, I totally understand there's a lot of people in my situation, but take a look at this. You're never gonna be able to get outta here. If you're not gonna be able to get outta here you're gonna go back to Iraq.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

A POSTSCRIPT—JOEY IS NOW BACK IN IRAQ—IN HIDING. HE COULDN'T AFFORD TO STAY IN SYRIA AND WAIT THE NINE MONTHS. HE INTENDS TO RETURN TO DAMASCUS TO REGISTER WITH THE UNITED NATIONS - IN JANUARY OF NEXT YEAR. JUST AHEAD - HOW IS A COUNTRY DEVASTATED BY WAR GOING TO REBUILD WITHOUT SOME OF THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST?

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR A NEW IRAQ TO SUCCEED, THE COUNTRY DESPERATELY NEEDS BRIGHT, YOUNG STUDENTS WHO WILL SOMEDAY BECOME DOCTORS, ENGINEERS AND COMPUTER SCIENTISTS. AND THAT'S WHAT THESE IRAQIS ARE STUDYING. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SCHOOL IS IN SYRIA AND MOST OF THE IRAQI STUDENTS HAVE NO INTENTION OF EVER RETURNING HOME. IT'S FORMAL NAME IS THE SYRIAN INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE UNIVERSITY FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY. IT WAS FOUNDED IN OCTOBER 2005 BY IRAQI ACADEMICS WITH SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY, COMPUTER SCIENCE AND SEVERAL OTHER MAJORS ON THE CAMPUS OUTSIDE DAMASCUS. MOST OF THE STUDENTS ARE FROM IRAQ. IN PROFESSOR DUNIA ALFAYED'S DENTISTRY CLASS WE ASKED WHO IN THE CLASS WAS IRAQI? PROFESSOR ALFAYED IS ALSO AN IRAQI. MARRIED TO A RETIRED IRAQI ARMY OFFICER, SHE TAUGHT AT BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY, RAN A SUCCESSFUL DENTAL CLINIC AND WAS A WORKING MOM. SHE HAD IT ALL.

PROFESSOR DR.DUNIA AL FAYED

You have your special world, special—emotions—dreams, imaginations. But everything is come—sorry if I—someone gets and take your life, complete life. Not on you—you, your children, your—poor, but you have no choice, but certainly everything is gone, and you must get out of your country, your home, seek for another job. Start from the first. Now the question is why? Every day I ask myself this question, several times a day really. And I cry several times a day. Why? All of this for what?

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. ALFAYAD'S PERFECT LIFE IN IRAQ WAS SHATTERED THE DAY MEN CAME TO HER HOUSE SAYING THEY WERE FRIENDS OF HER HUSBAND AND HAD GIFTS FOR FAUISAL, HER SON.

AL FAYED

Now my husband with me on phone and said nothing please take care I think they are thieves, that's why my mother start shouting I start to shout.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE MEN, WHO DR. ALFAYED IS CONVINCED WERE KIDNAPPERS, LEFT THAT DAY. BUT SHE BELIEVED THEY WOULD COME BACK FOR FAUISAL. WITH IN DAYS, SHE LEFT HER HOME, HER CLINIC AND HER LIFE IN IRAQ AND FLED TO SYRIA.

AL FAYED

They are not human being, I believe they are not human being. When you say thief, thief can take your bag, your money, but your child he is not thief he is not even human being I think.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THESE STUDENTS, MAINLY FROM WELL OFF FAMILIES, ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY AND PAY TUITION RANGING FROM 3 TO 8 THOUSAND U.S. DOLLARS PER YEAR. HADIEL ALARADI IS A FIRST YEAR DENTAL STUDENT WHO SAYS IRAQ IS NOT A PLACE FOR A YOUNG LIBERATED WOMAN.

HADIEL AL ARADI, STUDENT

You know that the situation over there is very bad. And like—girls—especially girls can't live there anymore without a scarf or with a miniskirt or with a shirt. We can't even wear pants. And this—this meant for me that I have to leave the country 'cause I'm scared from kidnapping, from raping and stuff like that.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PROFESSORS, SMART YOUNG PEOPLE—ALL LEAVING IRAQ. AMERICAN EDUCATED DOCTOR HIKMAT SHAARBAF, DEAN OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL, SAYS THIS "BRAIN DRAIN" IS ESPECIALLY HURTING THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY.

DR. HIKMAT SHAARBAF, MEDICAL SCHOOL DEAN

It is as strong and big a brain drain in Iraq. First of all, many people have been killed from the universities and the number is increasing day after day. It is in tens and now in hundreds. And this is message to those who stayed home, to leave. And that's why many people left the country. And now I know that many of my colleagues in different specialties of medicine, in gastroenterology and cardiology—they are spread all over the Arab countries—in the Gulf countries, in Jordan and Syria looking for jobs there. So it is real brain drain—a real one.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
TWO GENERATIONS OF THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST ADRIFT FROM THEIR  
HOMELAND. FOR HADIEL, WITH HER PARENTS IN GERMANY, THE  
QUESTION IS - WILL SHE EVER GO BACK TO IRAQ?

AL ARADI  
To be honest, not really. I didn't—I don't know. It's not like before, you know. It's not the  
same old Iraq, like you have fun, you could go out. And even if it gets back to this,  
everything is damaged. It—there's nothing to do anymore, you know?

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
WHETHER RICH OR POOR, WELL-EDUCATED, OR NOT MANY OF THE IRAQIS  
WE ENCOUNTERED IN SYRIA RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY BLAME THE UNITED  
STATES GOVERNMENT FOR THE VIOLENCE SWALLOWING THEIR  
COUNTRY.

AL FAYED  
In the last night, I decided to write to Mr. Bush. Really, I swear. I want to ask him just  
big why, big why. All letter I try just to say big why, why he can't tell me why. Is he  
convinced, is he satisfied with these results? He think he thought he do the correct thing.  
No. No. Believe me no and if he want or if U.S.A. want something from Iraq, she can—  
let me say “she”—can tell us and take what she wants and give us peace, give us love,  
give us life, give us technology but by this way? No. It is not the correct way. I think  
history will never forgive her. I think.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)  
NOT ALL THE REFUGEES FLEEING IRAQ ARE STAYING IN THE MIDDLE  
EAST. THOUSANDS ARE GOING TO A SURPRISING COUNTRY IN EUROPE. SO  
STAY HERE WITH US.

## **IN STOCKHOLM:**

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)  
IT NEVER SNOWS IN BAGHDAD. BUT FOR THOUSANDS OF IRAQIS, A LITTLE  
SNOW IS A FAR BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO LIFE IN BADHDAD THESE DAYS.  
THIS IS AN ASSYRIAN CHRISTIAN EASTER CEREMONY IN AN IRAQI  
CONGREGATION SOUTH OF STOCKHOLM, IN SWEDEN. MANY OF THOSE  
WHO FLEE FROM THE IRAQ WAR COME HERE, TO A SMALL NORDIC  
COUNTRY THAT IS NOW THE LARGEST RECIPIENT OF IRAQI REFUGEES  
OUTSIDE OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

FATHER KLIMIS AL-SHIMANI CAME TO SWEDEN SEVEN YEARS AGO FROM  
IRAQ. HE'S GOT ABOUT 300 IRAQI FAMILIES IN HIS CONGREGATION. AND  
IT'S GROWING FAST.

FATHER KLIMIS AL-SHIMANI

Some of them are in danger—dangerous life. So they cannot stay in Iraq.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND IF THEY CAN AFFORD TO LEAVE IRAQ, WITH THE HELP OF HUMAN SMUGGLERS, SWEDEN AWAITS WITH OPEN ARMS. REFUGEES FROM IRAQ, OR ANY COUNTRY AT WAR, ARE ALMOST ALWAYS GRANTED ASYLUM HERE, GIVEN MONEY TO LIVE AND FREE HEALTH INSURANCE, AND THEY'RE COMING BY THE THOUSANDS.

AL-SHIMANI

There have families here, and they want to be together.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

NADIA SOUER ARRIVED IN SWEDEN A FEW MONTHS AGO TOGETHER WITH HER TWO CHILDREN. SHE USED TO BE AN ACCOUNTANT AT THE IRAQI OIL MINISTRY AND HER HUSBAND WORKED FOR THE ARMY. THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY RECEIVED DEATH THREATS NADIA FOUND A SMUGGLER WHO PROMISED TO GET THEM TO SWEDEN.

NADIA SOUER

Our neighbor told me there is a man can take you from Baghdad to Sweden he said, "I will take from you \$12,000 for each person." My—my husband can't—come with us because it's—it will be too much money.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY DECIDED TO TRUST THE SMUGGLER WITH THEIR LIVES. NADIA SOLD SOME JEWELRY AND THE FAMILY TRAVELED TO SWEDEN WITH FALSE PASSPORTS.

SOUER

He took us from the Iraqi airport to Jordan. We stayed there for two days. And he took us—to other European place. We don't know what is it. And we stay there also two days. And he remove for ten hours he drive it the car. And we he said, "Now we are in Stockholm. You can give me the money."

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SWEDEN IS A WORLD AWAY FROM SUN-BAKED IRAQ. IT'S COLD AND DARK FOR ALMOST SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR. A GOOD PORTION OF THE NINE MILLION SWEDES ARE BLONDE, HEALTHY AND SEEM TO BE LIVING WELL; AT LEAST WHEN THE SUN FINALLY COMES OUT. SWEDEN HAS VERY HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING AND TAXES TO MATCH, BUT THE GOVERNMENT TAKES CARE OF ITS CITIZENS FROM THE CRADLE TO GRAVE WITH A MINIMUM OF SIX WEEKS VACATION AND EIGHTEEN MONTHS OF MATERNITY LEAVE. IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS PEACE AND SERENITY IS AN IRAQI REFUGEE COMMUNITY THAT IS GROWING EVERY



MONTH. BEFORE THE U.S. WENT INTO IRAQ IN 2003, THERE WERE ALREADY 80,000 IRAQIS LIVING HERE. NOW SWEDEN EXPECTS THAT BY THE END OF THIS YEAR ANOTHER 40,000 IRAQIS WILL HAVE ARRIVED TO CLAIM REFUGEE STATUS FROM THE WAR. WHILE MOST OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE CLOSED THEIR BORDERS TO FLEEING IRAQIS, SWEDEN IS TAKING MORE REFUGEES FROM IRAQ THAN ANY COUNTRY OUTSIDE THE MIDDLE EAST. MOST OF THEM ARRIVE WITH THE HELP OF SMUGGLERS THAT ARE PART OF ORGANIZED CRIME RINGS OPERATING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST.

LEIF SVENSSON, SWEDISH NATIONAL POLICE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER  
First, I think—Damascus is a key point for human smuggling to the European Union countries. They go to northern of Iraq into Turkey, into Greece, and then you are in the European Union.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LEIF SVENSSON IS AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WITH THE SWEDISH NATIONAL POLICE. HE IS ONE OF ONLY THREE AGENTS WHO ARE WORKING TO COMBAT THE SMUGGLING OF REFUGEES INTO SWEDEN. THE FIRST THING THE SMUGGLER PROVIDES IS A FAKE PASSPORT, OR A VISA.

SVENSSON

When you are in Europe, there are no passport control. So that's a problem for Sweden because they let almost 95 percent apply for asylum inside the country and without document. I know they have entered the European Union south of Sweden. But if they have the possibility to choose where they should apply for asylum, for many of them, it will be Sweden.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHEN THE REFUGEES ARRIVE, THIS IS THEIR FIRST STOP—THE SWEDISH MIGRATION BOARD. WHEN WE MET HOSAM AL-SAMAWI, OUTSIDE HE HAD JUST ARRIVED IN SWEDEN TWO DAYS EARLIER WITH HIS WIFE AND SON. HE USED TO BE THE HEAD COACH FOR UDAY HUSSEIN'S KARATE TEAM, BUT DECIDED TO LEAVE IRAQ AFTER MORE AND MORE OF HIS TEAMMATES TURNED UP DEAD.

HOSAM AL-SAMAWI

Many friends with me, died. One killed in 2004. Second one killed in 2006. Maybe 2008, somebody kill me. I can't—go outside.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE TOO, HIRED A SMUGGLER AND TOOK THE TURKEY ROUTE.

AL-SAMAWI

I went to North Iraq for approximately ten days. And then in Turkey, I buy car. From Turkey to Stockholm by plane. That's it. I sell everything. I sold my equipment, my—my furniture to come—to come here.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NOW THEY'RE BROKE.

AL-SAMAWI

I don't care about money. My, my brother. I have my brother. I need to take a break to open my mind to start again.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND EVEN THOUGH NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES ARE GIVEN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING BY THE GOVERNMENT, THEY USUALLY DON'T LAND IN HOMES WITH ANY STUNNING VIEWS OF ANCIENT STOCKHOLM. MOST OF THE IMMIGRANTS END UP IN THE LESS WELL-TO-DO SUBURBS SOUTH OF THE CITY, WHERE SUICIDE, DEPRESSION AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES ARE HIGHER THAN FOR THE REST OF THE POPULATION.

THIS ONE BEDROOM APARTMENT IS SHARED BY SIX IRAQIS FROM TWO FAMILIES. GHASSAN IS A 23-YEAR-OLD CHRISTIAN, WHO WORKED AS A TRUCK DRIVER IN BAGHDAD; DELIVERING FRESH WATER INTO THE GREEN ZONE. WHEN TWO OTHER CHRISTIANS WHO WORKED THERE WERE KILLED, GHASSAN'S FATHER PAID A SMUGGLER TO SEND HIM OUT OF THE COUNTRY. LEITH, WHOSE MOTHER TOOK IN THE IRAQIS, CAME TO SWEDEN SEVEN YEARS AGO. FOR MOST OF THAT TIME, HE'S BEEN UNEMPLOYED.

LEITH

I work, I drive a car for six months and say to me, "Go." No work.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND HE'S JUST ONE EXAMPLE. THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG IMMIGRANTS IS TWICE AS HIGH AS THE SWEDISH BORN POPULATION.

PAUL LAPPALAINEN, DISCRIMINATION SCHOLAR

What they're going to encounter when they first arrive here is going to be what's considered to be very generous—it will be generous. But what's going to be a problem is an increasing realization that there is racism, that there is discrimination, that there's basically a lack of respect for them as individuals.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A GENEROUS ASYLUM POLICY DOES NOT MEAN GENEROUS, WELCOMING PEOPLE, SAYS DISCRIMINATION SCHOLAR PAUL LAPPALAINEN.

LAPPALAINEN

Racism has long history here. On the other hand, like most European countries, people have wanted to deny that as part of their history.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LAPPALAINEN WROTE IN A REPORT TO THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT THAT SWEDEN REMAINS ROUGHLY AT THE LEVEL OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1960'S, WHEN IT COMES TO RACISM. AND WITH THE RECENT INFLUX OF IMMIGRANTS HE SAYS, IT'S ONLY GETTING WORSE.

TOBIAS BILLSTROM, MINISTER FOR MIGRATION.

I should say that it is unfortunate that we have seen a rise of these ideas.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SWEDEN'S NEW GOVERNMENT MINISTER FOR MIGRATION IS TOBIAS BILLSTROM.

BILLSTROM

But I should also say that I think that they are best fought on the same lines that we now try to fight unemployment. And that is to say that people need to work.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS JUST PUTTING IMMIGRANTS TO WORK RESEARCH SHOWS.

LAPPALAINEN

The preferred employee in Sweden is somebody who's blond, blue-eyed, somebody who's born in Sweden, somebody who is educated in Sweden. The whole issue in Sweden in terms of, in particular labor market is that the darker your skin is, the greater chance you'll be discriminated against.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT IS DEVELOPING NEW PROGRAMS TO TRY AND COMBAT THAT DISCRIMINATION, ACCORDING TO MINISTER BILLSTROM. BUT HE SAYS CLOSING THE BORDERS IS NOT THE ANSWER.

BILLSTROM

Well, Sweden have a very long-term—good track record when it comes to helping people who are prosecuted and oppressed in their countries of origin. And we are very proud of that. We, the government which I represent, do not intend to change the rules and regulations in that regard. However, we have to accept the fact that we are a country of only nine million inhabitants. It's impossible for us to help all people who are in need all over the world.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT'S WHY, HE SAYS REFUGEES FROM IRAQ CANNOT ONLY BE A SWEDISH CONCERN.

BILLSTROM

I think that all countries in the world have a responsibility. Because what we are now seeing is an exodus. And it is the largest so to say, displacement that is taking place in this region since 1948 and Palestinian situation. So yes, I think that all countries in the world have a responsibility.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

EVEN THOUGH SWEDEN RANTS REFUGEE STATUS TO ABOUT 80% OF THOSE THAT APPLY, THE EUROPEAN UNION AVERAGE IS ONLY ABOUT 10%. BRITAIN FOR INSTANCE A COALITION PARTNER REJECTED 9/10 IRAQIS WHO CAME THERE IN 2005 AND BRITISH AUTHORITIES HAVE EVEN DEPORTED PEOPLE BACK TO IRAQ. SOME FOR WHAT THEY SAY ARE SECURITY REASONS. AT A CONFERENCE IN GENEVA LAST WEEK, THE UNITED NATIONS PLEADED TO THE WORLDS COUNTRIES TO HELP SOLVE THE REFUGEE CRISIS. THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES UNHCR ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 4 MILLION IRAQIS ARE ON THE RUN. ALMOST 2 MILLION PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY LEFT THE COUNTRY AND ANOTHER 2 MILLION HAVE FLED THEIR HOMES INSIDE IRAQ.

SYRIA HAS BEEN LED BY A SECULAR GOVERNMENT FOR DECADES. PRESIDENT BASHAR ASSAD, LIKE HIS FATHER, HAS GONE TO SOME LENGTHS TO KEEP RELIGION OUT GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS. BUT IN RECENT YEARS WITH THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM, THE WAR IN IRAQ AND THE SUBSEQUENT REFUGEE SURGE, A KIND OF PERFECT STORM HAS BEEN GATHERING THAT COULD CHALLENGE THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND FURTHER DESTABILIZE A REGION THAT IS ALREADY IN CRISIS.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TRAVEL TO DAMASCUS AND YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO SEE CHANGE EVERYWHERE. SYRIA WAS A DRAB CLIENT-STATE OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, WAS UNDER STRICT AUTHORITARIAN RULE FOR DECADES AND STILL IS OFFICIALLY CONSIDERED A TERRORIST DICTATORSHIP BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND SOME OTHERS. HOWEVER ONE THINKS ABOUT THAT, MANY OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE ARE MORE UP TO DATE, MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN THEY'RE GIVEN CREDIT FOR. YOUNG PEOPLE OUTSIDE THIS UNIVERSITY WEAR JEANS AND JEWELRY— AND SOUND LIKE TYPICAL AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS.

LIWAA AL HAYED

I study sociology—it's my fourth year and I hope this year I'll be graduated.

LINA HINEDI

And I like fashion designing. I study Spanish and I do some dance and some sports. I work now as a babysitter.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LIWAA AL HAYED AND LINA HINEDI ATTEND DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY AND LIKE TO WATCH AMERICAN TV SHOWS.

HINEDI

All the series—“Friends” and things like this—“Oprah.”

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS MORE AND MORE WOMEN ARE WEARING HEAD SCARVES - OR HAJIBS AS THEY ARE CALLED - A VISIBLE SIGN OF A SOCIETY BECOMING MORE AND MORE RELIGIOUSLY CONSERVATIVE. THERE IS A QUIET FUNDAMENTALIST REVIVAL BREWING. REEM AKIRI WEARS A HAJIB AND RUNS A HIGH END GIFT SHOP WITH HER HUSBAND IN A FASHIONABLE DAMASCUS NEIGHBORHOOD.

REEM AKIRI

I felt there I had something to do it with my God. I have to be close to my God.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

REEM INTRODUCED US TO HER DAUGHTERS AND ONE OF THEIR FRIENDS. ONE OF HER DAUGHTERS WEARS THE HAJIB—THE OTHER TWO DON'T—YET.

REEM'S DAUGHTER

I want to do this step—but I don't have the will to do it—I need courage—I'm working on myself.

MUSTAPHA

In Syria you are absolutely free to—to worship or to practice the way you want.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IMAD MUSTAPHA IS THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES.

RATHER

It wasn't that long ago when you could see some women, by no means all, but some women in Damascus, in other parts of Syria-- dressed in mini skirts. Now I don't think you'd deny head scarves are coming very much back into vogue. Is this or is this not a sign of change, fundamental, and dangerous change in Syria?

MUSTAPHA

If you want to put hajib, you can put hajib. If you want to wear a mini skirt, or go to the pool and put on a bikini, it's up to you. Nobody interferes with anybody in Syria. If you

want to drink alcohol in a restaurant in a public place in Damascus, you can do this. If you choose to go to an Islamic restaurant in—in Damascus that does not sell alcohol, it's also your choice. Nobody interferes. This is the Syrian secular system. Having said this, nobody can deny that, not only in Syria, but across the model Middle East, fundamentalism is on the rise.

RATHER

And you're worried about that or not?

MUSTAPHA

I can't deny that we worry a little bit about that. Our concern and our fear is extremist groups that can capitalize on the feeling of despair among the Arabs, and the feeling of exasperation, and the feeling of anger towards U.S. policies and western policies in general so that they can recruit people to their extremist organizations. This is our own concern, and our serious worry.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE RECORD SHOWS THAT DURING THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN TERRORISTS ATTACKS IN SYRIA, INCLUDING ONE ON THE U.S. EMBASSY THIS PAST SEPTEMBER.

SAMIR AL TAQI

Al-Qaeda is trying to build up its own network now in Syria.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SAMIR AL TAQI IS A CARDIOVASCULAR SURGEON WHO ALSO RUNS A SYRIAN THINK TANK THAT STUDIES INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. HE'S A SECULAR MAN WHO LIVES WITH HIS WIFE AND FAMILY IN A MODERN HOME IN DAMASCUS.

AL TAQI

There is a raising fear of—this fundamentalism in—in our society, especially among secular middle-class working people, educated people, intellectuals. There is a fear. Still, it is not concrete. We do not feel it in—in daily life yet. But it is— we see some beginning of these signs. And this is a big danger for us

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IBRAHIM HAMADI IS DAMASCUS CORRESPONDENT FOR THE LONDON BASED AL HAYAT NEWSPAPER. HE SAYS SYRIAN SECULARISM WAS INFLUENCED BY THE SOVIET UNION. THERE'S STILL A RUSSIAN CULTURAL CENTER IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS.

HAMADI

In the '70s, '80s, the Syrian government used to send thousand, thousand of students to--the Eastern Bloc, Soviet Union to study, to get some higher education. Now all of them

when you used to come back to Syria, all of them definitely-- they were a very open, very liberal, very like-- like-- social minded people. And all of them were teachers-- either in the schools or universities. So in a way they brought the culture back home to spread it in Syria.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THEN THE DISENCHANTMENT WITH SECULAR PAN ARABISM, THERE DEVELOPED AN IDEOLOGICAL VOID. PEOPLE WERE LOOKING FOR AN IDENTITY AND MORE AND MORE THEY SEEM TO BE FINDING IT IN FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAM. THE FAMOUS MARXIST BOOKSTORE ACROSS FROM THE RUSSIAN CULTURAL CENTER IS NOW AN ISLAMIC BOOK SHOP.

HAMADI

Now the turning point was after the Gulf War. 1991. You remember, Syria took that position to be part of the international coalition to get Saddam out of Kuwait. And the Syrian/Saudi relations started to be to be warm, to —to improve. Because of that, all Gulf countries decided to facilitate Syrian teachers to go to the Gulf states to get money, to get higher education. Now those teachers we are talking about tens of thousands of teachers, after a few years all of them became you know, conservative.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. TAQI SAYS WAHABISM, A VERY FUNDAMENTALIST FORM OF ISLAM BASED IN SAUDI ARABIA, IS BEING SPREAD INTO SYRIA BY ISLAMIC CHARITIES.

AL TAQI

It is estimated that in 15 years that were before the 9/11 there had been invested in Syria about 1 billion, \$100 million-- for the spread of the Wahabbi version of Islam.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM? AL TAQI SAYS IT'S "PETRODOLLARS." THAT'S MONEY WE IN THE WEST PAY FOR GASOLINE FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER GULF COUNTRIES, WHO, SAYS AL TAQI, FINANCE RADICALS THROUGH ISLAMIC CHARITIES.

AL TAQI

We can estimate that there are in Syria about 75,000 families that are supported by different kinds of charities, religious charities. And those families are—are exposed completely to the influence of those who are practically supplying the money. And in itself, I think it is increasing the fundamentalism, increasing this feeling of the need to stick more to the religion, etcetera. In its Wahabbi form. And it's a less tolerant form.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO, IN MORE THAN A BIT OF IRONY WE MAY BE FUNDING THE RADICALIZATION OF A COUNTRY WE CRITICIZE FOR MISBEHAVING -

SYRIA. WE MAY ALSO BE FUELING RADICALS IN THE REGION BEYOND SYRIA WITH OUR ACTIONS IN IRAQ

AL TAQI

Some of those fundamentalists, practically, and in the region, will not only direct their arms against the occupying—occupiers of Iraq, like the Americans. They are beginning to have their own national agendas in each country to try to upheaval secular regimes like in ours, and to try to implement their understanding of a new for example, Taliban system, which is-- which is in itself very dangerous for everybody in—in this region.

RATHER

Are you or are you not concerned that a continuing tide of refugees from Iraq will bring violent radical Islamic fundamentalism to Syria?

MUSTAPHA

It's, it's a legitimate and understandable concern. And of course we are concerned. This is why we tried to tell the U.S. administration, stop this petty approach towards us. Stop accusing us of—of doing this or that to Iraq. Try to understand that we have a stake, a national stake, in trying to stabilize Iraq. And try to change your position. Try to engage with us. And see if we can work together.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STAKES IN IRAQ ARE HIGH FOR AMERICA, SYRIA AND THE REGION, SAYS IBRAHIM HAMADI. A HASTY AMERICAN PULLOUT, HE SAYS, WOULD EMBOLDEN THE RADICALS.

HAMADI

This is-- will be the best-- the best-- inspiring story for the-- for the Islamist in the whole region. That we liberated Iraq. We defeated the Americans. So since we defeated the Americans, we have to impose our discourse. We have to impose our vision on the whole region.

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BASHAR ASSAD'S GOVERNMENT IS IN A TOUGH POSITION. THEIR NEIGHBOR IRAQ IS ON FIRE AND FUNDAMENTALISM IS SEEPING INTO SYRIA - BOTH OF THESE THREATEN THIS SECULAR REGIME.

AL TAQI

There is lots of anger and humiliation among people. They feel humiliated because they thing they had been not able to face the overwhelming force of the United States and it had just lead to a complete defeat. Destruction of the state, destruction of society in Iraq. This is breeding hatred, anger, humiliation and frustration. And if you have, this is the fuel. With one spark which is fundamentalism, you will inflame it.



DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

THE REFUGEE ISSUE RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS--ABOUT IRAQ, AND ABOUT THE NATIONS WHO HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD IN INVADING AND OCCUPYING THAT COUNTRY. FOR IRAQ, WHAT DOES THE DEPARTURE OF ITS MOST SKILLED, BEST-EDUCATED CITIZENS SAY ABOUT THAT NATION'S FUTURE, AS IT STRUGGLES TO HOLD ITSELF TOGETHER AND REBUILD, IN THE MIDST OF WAR? AND WHAT DOES THE SUCCESS OF THE INSURGENTS AND TERRORISTS IN TARGETING IRAQ'S MOST VITAL CITIZENS SAY ABOUT THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE U.S.-LED OCCUPATION?

TONIGHT, WE HEARD THE TOP U.S. OFFICIAL FOR DEALING WITH REFUGEES SAY THAT, UNTIL LAST YEAR, THE FOCUS WAS ON GETTING REFUGEES OF THE IRAQ WAR TO RETURN TO IRAQ. BUT IF WE CAN'T KEEP IRAQIS SAFE IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, DO WE OR DO WE NOT OWE THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE A CHANCE TO COME TO THE U.S., OR TO BRITAIN? WHAT ABOUT THOSE IRAQIS WHO FIND THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN DANGER PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY HAVE HELPED US IN THE OCCUPATION OR REBUILDING EFFORT? FINALLY, WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY OUR ALLIES IN THE REGION, NATIONS WE HELPED TO LIBERATE AND PROTECT IN GULF WAR I? KUWAIT IS REFUSING TO ALLOW ANY REFUGEES IN AND SAUDI ARABIA IS GOING SO FAR AS TO BUILD A SEVEN BILLION-DOLLAR FENCE TO KEEP IRAQIS AND THEY SAY, TERRORISTS OUT. SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER, AS THE REFUGEES CONTINUE TO FLOW FROM A COUNTRY TORN APART BY WAR AND SECTARIAN HATREDS.

FOR HD NET, DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOOD NIGHT.