WELCOME TO THE UK!

For hundreds of years, people escaping war and persecution have been welcomed by British communities. We chat to Marwa, 9, and her dad, Abdul, refugees from Syria who have found a new home here in Britain.

Marwa: I don’t really have many good memories before the war. I like looking at photos and playing games. The accent! For example, the word water is pronounced as “wahver”. It’s funny and I like it.

Abdul: Myself and my wife’s dream is for our children to be the most successful, achieve their goals and become good members of society. Maybe one day, I can become a lawyer, like I was in Syria.

What’s the best thing that’s happened since coming to the UK?

Abdul: There are no bombs here and it’s safe, so that’s the best. I also like how kind people are.

Marwa: I’d like to be a midwife. I have had a lot of practice looking after my youngest brother.

Abdul: I am a lawyer. Before I came to Britain, I was a lawyer in Syria. Life was very hard and we had to leave.

Marwa: Where in Syria are you from and why did you have to leave?

Abdul: We’re from the city of Homs, which is the third biggest city in Syria. We had to leave because the violence got worse and it was an unsafe place to live.

Marwa: Do you remember much about that time, Marwa?

Abdul: I don’t really have many memories of Syria, because I was two years old when the war began. It spread really quickly and there were a lot of bombs dropping by our house. It was risky for us so we had to leave. My brothers tell me stories about what it was like before the war.

Marwa: I imagine it was really exciting to come, because people said it was a good and safe place.

Abdul: It was. The accent is different, whereas I have a slight accent. Sometimes Marwa speaks in half English and half Arabic.

Marwa: Yeah, and sometimes I get confused and say the opposite of what I mean to say.

Abdul: It’s funny and makes us all laugh. Were there any things you found strange when you first moved here?

Marwa: The accent! For example, the word water is pronounced by some people as “wahter”. Another one is “think” instead of “thinking”.

Abdul: There are many foods that we didn’t have before, like Kabsh (mixed rice with chicken) and Mutabbal (similar to hummus), and celebrate the same holidays. Like Eid. But we do enjoy picking up new traditions from the British culture.

Marwa: I really like Christmas. Are there any other UK traditions you enjoy?

Abdul: We still eat a lot of the same dishes, but my baby brother never left me alone to feel upset.

Marwa: We were not treated properly. We were laughed at and they told us we were beggars.

Abdul: Did you know much about the UK before coming here?

Marwa: I didn’t know anything! But we were all really excited to come, because people said it was a good and safe place.

Abdul: What do you like about being in the UK?

Marwa: I like that it’s clean here, and the place.

Abdul: What are your plans or hopes for the future?

Marwa: I want to learn English quicker than me.

Abdul: My children definitely picked up speaking English faster than me.

Marwa: Was it difficult to learn English?

Abdul: It’s more difficult for my older child, whereas I have a slight accent. He pronounces English words really well, whereas I have a slight accent.

Marwa: What does your family do when you first came to the UK?

Abdul: We found out about it during Refugee Week last year. There was a Taekwondo demonstration at an event in Coventry, and my children were interested. Marwa took it very seriously, and only two months after starting, she won bronze in the national championships! Wow, that’s amazing. What is your biggest achievement so far?

Marwa: The silver medal! The next competition is an international one. If you win gold in that competition, our coach said it’s basically like winning a world championship!

Abdul: That would be great. What are your plans or hopes for the future?

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