



### **Interview Three: #K.M**

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#### **Abstract:**

*"I initially arrived with a scholarship, but soon realized it wasn't enough. My family had to send me money to support my stay. The language barriers at the university took me by surprise—everything was in French, a language I knew nothing about. In pursuit of a job to assist my family, I shifted my focus to a field with fewer studying hours. In the face of challenges, thoughts of illegal migration to Europe crossed my mind. But one day, in the metro, I saw someone selling food in the streets from a window. An idea struck me, a way to harness my culinary skills and bring a piece of home to Tunisia."*

#### **Story:**

K, a 26-year-old young man from Palestine, was a high school graduate who earned a scholarship to study abroad due to his outstanding performance in the baccalaureate exam, ranking first among his generation. Upon arriving in Tunisia, he faced financial difficulties as the scholarship provided to him was insufficient to cover his living expenses.

His travel to Tunisia presented several challenges. Coming from Gaza, which lacked an airport, K had to pass through Egypt via the Rafah border crossing. This route was often obstructed due to political reasons, causing him to lose a year in language learning. When he finally arrived in Tunisia, he pursued a two-month crash course to learn the language.

K's initial aspiration was to become a veterinarian, a field not available in Gaza. Yet, he discovered that in Tunisia, admission to veterinary school required passing through preparatory school, including challenging subjects in French, a language he didn't practice. As financial support from his family began to burden him, K decided to switch to a field with shorter hours and sought employment to sustain himself.

After three years, he graduated in biology and passed the national veterinary test. Though he was accepted, he felt it was too late, considering the financial support his family had provided for years. Restarting his educational journey was impractical as his mother urged him to return to Gaza and seek employment, a choice he refused due to war situations and structural restrictions in Gaza. Faced with limited opportunities, he took on various jobs to support his small family as he married a Tunisian woman using their scholarship money to fund their wedding. Despite his ambitions, K faced exploitation by various employers who withheld his wages, leading him to feel helpless.



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In his quest for a better life, K contemplated illegal migration to Europe. While discussing this idea with his wife during a metro ride, they noticed a man selling food on the street. K thought about the traditional Palestinian dish "kunafa". Encouraged by his wife, and with her support, he launched his culinary small street business.

However, this path was far from easy, as K encountered numerous obstacles, including discrimination from local shops and harassment from street troublemakers who urged him to leave.

Navigating the bureaucratic hurdles to obtain the necessary legal documents and a residence card proved to be a daunting challenge in Tunisia, K was desperate, particularly when facing economic recessions and racial bias.

Today, from being a jobless young man, K has transformed into an employer who provides jobs for seven individuals. His dreams extend beyond owning his own shop and conquering bureaucratic challenges. K envisions international success, where he can leave Tunisia, running his business in multiple countries while leaving a lasting impact on the world.

Despite achieving success and recognition, he found that the media often focused solely on his accomplishments, neglecting the numerous challenges he had overcome.

Participating in the case study of the SeHeMe project provides K with the opportunity to share his complete journey. He believes that today, migrants can finally have a voice and representation in the media, enabling them to communicate and support one another in overcoming the challenges, rules, and laws of their host country. He emphasized the significance of having an online "Home-away" magazine that would offer the host country a genuine insight into the lives and struggles of migrants. This, in turn, has the potential to facilitate the process of integration and foster solidarity among generations.



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