



SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN VISAS

SWISS RED CROSS

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A SIX-YEAR OBSTACLE COURSE TO SEE HER CHILDREN AGAIN

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) ran a humanitarian visa advisory from 2014 until December 2021. The service used to provide information on the legal framework, the requirements and the procedure. It also assessed the potential for success of individual situations and liaised with the authorities in a small number of highly vulnerable cases. Seeing very few humanitarian visas delivered despite of the needs and resources invested, the Swiss Red Cross closed its serviced but continues advocating for humanitarian visas.

“ *Mrs. Ali is under enormous pressure. The situation is taking her to the extreme psychological limit. Despite the great stress, she is trying to integrate well in Switzerland and is supporting her children as much as possible.* ”

Quote from volunteer

Ms. Ali has been living in Switzerland since 2015. Recently she successfully completed her training as a Swiss Red Cross health worker. However, a huge psychological burden weighs on her: the separation from her four minor children.

After being recognized as a refugee, she hopes to be able to bring her children quickly but her application for family reunification is denied. The ground is that the family had not been separated involuntarily through the flight, which is a legal requirement. Looking for solutions, Mrs. Ali contacts the humanitarian visa advisory service in 2020. A humanitarian visa remains the only chance for the children to join their mother in Switzerland legally and safely.

The SRC intervened directly to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) who responded positively. However, it took extraordinary coordination efforts between the SRC, UNHCR, the SEM, the embassy and the consular office, as well as the dedication of a partner organization who supported the children on the spot, before the request was finally registered and the visa issued. Travel arrangements were then organized through the SRC with the International Organization for Migration. The four children arrived safely to Switzerland, which marked the end of a real struggle for Mrs. Ali and the start of a new family life together.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The humanitarian advisory service receives around 2000 request a year. In 2020 the support of the Swiss Red allowed 26 people to obtain humanitarian visas and access protection safely.

PERCO

Platform for European Red Cross and Red Crescent Cooperation
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