

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN REFUGEE GRANTED ASYLUM IN CANADA

Hassan al-Kontar has been granted asylum and arrived in Canada on 26 November 2018 after having been stranded in Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia for about seven months. Arrested on 1 October for being in a “forbidden area” of the airport, Malaysian authorities initially considered deporting him back to Syria.

Hassan al-Kontar landed at Vancouver airport on 26 November 2018, after being granted asylum and permanent residency in Canada earlier that month. Media reports state that he will initially be staying at the house of a Canadian citizen, who co-sponsored his refugee application along with the B.C. Muslim Association, and that he has been offered a job at a local hotel. It is unclear when he was officially granted asylum, but according to media reports, his lawyer informed him of this decision a few days before he left for Canada.

Hassan al-Kontar overstayed his Malaysian tourist visa in March 2018 and paid a penalty fee before attempting to depart. According to media reports, and his social media posts, Hassan al-Kontar lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for 11 years working to avoid the war and compulsory military service in Syria. He was expelled from the UAE after outstaying his employment visa. He first arrived in Malaysia in October 2017.

When his three-month Malaysian tourist visa expired, Hassan al-Kontar tried to go to Turkey and Cambodia but was unsuccessful. After being stranded in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) for about seven months, he was arrested for being in a “forbidden area” of the airport. Unable to come to an agreement on his case, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs publicly confirmed on 4 October 2018 that the Malaysian authorities were considering deporting Hassan al-Kontar back to Syria, where he would have been at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, among other things. He spent nearly two more months at an immigration detention centre in Malaysia before travelling to Canada.

With help from Canadian volunteers, Hassan al-Kontar applied in April 2018 for a refugee sponsorship in Canada, which can take almost two years to be processed and without guarantee of acceptance. In a video he posted on his Twitter account a day before he arrived in Canada, Hassan al-Kontar said, “The last 10 months, it was very hard and cold. I could not do it without the support and the prayers from all of you... Thank you all. I love you all... Let’s keep the prayer for those who need it the most, in refugee camps and detention camps all over the world. I hope they will be safe and legal as soon as possible, too.”

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 180/18. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa28/9220/2018/en/>

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