

[Intro] The First Letter

(Mazoon reading a letter)

To my mother.

I left for your sake. You know how much I love you. I did not want you to suffer again because of my imprisonment, to struggle to gather money to bring me food. Unfortunately, many families of political prisoners in Egypt are suffering because of this.

Sometimes, I fear I won't be by your side when you leave this world, as I am a person who can never return to Egypt for the rest of my life.

It has been 6 years since I last saw you.

/ From an unknown place, your son Mazoon

[Part 1]

My name is Soliman Abdelrahman Mohammad, but I am called Mazoon. I prefer this nickname.

I was an Egyptian citizen, but now I live in South Korea as a recognized political refugee.

My life's goal is to fight against dictatorship, war, and capitalism, to make this world free of poor and sad people.

I was about ten years old then. I can't forget the day they raided our house at four in the morning. Egyptians called them 'dawn visitors.' They woke up my brother, who was a young child, with the back of a machine gun. Such incidents were common. My father and uncle, who opposed the military dictatorship, were arrested several times, and even my mother was arrested.

However, I grew up as an ordinary person. I majored in computer engineering at university, focusing on personal success. But my world completely changed starting from January 25, 2011, known as the 'Day of Rage'.

Tahrir Square was filled with many people opposing Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship, which had been oppressive for 30 years. In that vast square, I met and talked with people of various thoughts and

shouted slogans together. The revolution taught me to respect and understand differences. Ultimately, we are all the same humans.

Since then, I have been active in a small secret group called 'Union Garabia' with my friends, and later I was arrested for establishing this organization. I had to go in and out of prison while being investigated for a total of 17 years for charges of founding an organization to overthrow the state and spreading false information.

Just before the final verdict in court, I hastily left Egypt. The place where I was born, where my loved ones are, where I passionately fought for freedom, had now become a place that imprisons me.

On February 1, 2018, I left for Kenya. But since Kenya does not have refugee laws, I came to South Korea, the only country that issued me a travel visa, and applied for asylum.

[Part 2] The Second Letter

(Mazoon reading a letter)

To my dearest friend, Mohammed Al Karcas

I miss you a lot.

While I gained freedom outside, you are inside prison.

I can't rescue you, and here, where I have to be free, I feel just as powerless as you.

/ From Tahrir Square, your close friend Mazoon

Mohammed and I first met in the square during the revolution. Through him, my world expanded. Every evening, we talked about politics and daily life in a cafe and enjoyed traditional Egyptian board games. It was the happiest time of my life.

The day before I left Egypt, we had our last meal at a favorite restaurant. He reassured me, trembling with fear of being arrested at the airport, saying, "It will be alright." But after leaving for Kenya alone, I learned he had been arrested. My friend was in prison, and I had to keep moving to live. It was heartbreaking.

As soon as I arrived at Incheon Airport, I said, "I am a refugee and looking for the immigration office." I waited at the airport for about 14 days for an interview. Only then could I finally step onto Korean soil. The refugee center I contacted said there was no available space. Moreover, I had to

work 12 hours a day at a factory I started working at, with no time to focus on learning Korean. It was a really tough time.

[Part 3] The Third Letter

(Mazoon reading a refugee recognition certificate)

You are hereby recognized as a refugee according to Article 18, Paragraph 1 of the Refugee Act. You must return this certificate immediately if your refugee status is canceled or revoked, or if you are issued a deportation order under the Immigration Control Act.

/ September 24, 2021, Head of Seoul Immigration Office

Time felt endless, but 4 years later, I was finally recognized as a refugee. Fortunately, so.

However, there are many people who have waited much longer than me and still have not been recognized as refugees. Like the Egyptian couple I met at the refugee center near Incheon Airport when I first came to Korea. Their breastfeeding baby, who was then in their arms, is now nine years old and walking on his own, but they are still not recognized as refugees. What makes me different from them, why are some recognized as refugees and others not?

I feel guilty for being recognized as a refugee alone. So, I help others apply for refugee status. It feels like my duty and a debt I must repay.

People ask if my life has improved a lot. I am free from the risk of deportation, can have health insurance, and work legally. Of course, that's true. But in fact, I find it hard to imagine the future.

I am striving to be a proud member of Korean society, not a burden, working and paying taxes. But I cannot do most jobs due to poor health from torture in Egyptian prisons and post-COVID symptoms, and my limited Korean language skills. I recently went to work as a courier, but had to quit after 30 minutes due to shortness of breath.

To imagine happiness, basic conditions of life must be met, but I don't have them. I want to earn a living independently, share hardships with loved ones, and plan for the future, but I can't. It feels like the individual 'me' disappeared when I left Egypt.

So, my time mostly dwells in the happy past. My heart is still with family, friends, work, and political rallies. Even when soldiers shot live ammunition in the square during the revolution, I was truly happy at that time.

People I meet here ask me, "Mazoon, shouldn't you somehow find happiness in the present?" I want to ask back, how can I be happy here?

(Mazoon rises from the chair and leaves. The last letter is written on the empty chair.)

[Outro] The Last Letter

To myself, 5 years later.

Mazoon, I hope you have a stable job. I hope you have learned Korean well, made friends, and are no longer feeling lonely in this society. And I hope you are living in a beautiful house, reunited with your loved ones whom you haven't seen for a long time.

I hope you have finally found peace.

/ From a small room in Korea, Mazoon