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Alumnus and his family flee Syria

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I was hoping against hope that it would not reach the point where my family and I would have to end 20 years of living in Syria by evacuating, but, due to the escalating unrest and the government's violent crackdown on protesters and rebels, my worst fears came true shortly after I finished my final semester at Brevard College and returned home last December.

Even though I was risking my life returning, I decided to do so anyway, because I had a feeling it would be the last time I would see my home in the Syrian capital, Damascus. For those who are not familiar with the Syrian political crisis, it has been going on for over a year since mid-March of 2011. It all began rather quietly in response to the Arab Spring, a movement that sprouted up throughout the Middle East, beginning in Tunisia in December of 2010. Soon, other countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Yemen followed with anti-government protest against corrupt and dictatorial governments, and people demanded long overdue change and freedom. Despite violent and repressive responses from these governments, countries like Tunisia and Egypt were successful in overthrowing their tyrannical leaders. Although Syrians were at first hesitant, they too decided to join in.

Throughout the course of the conflict in Syria, the city of Damascus had remained strangely calm, partly because it is the nation's core, where the main headquarters of the government are located, but also because most ordinary Damascene people were peaceful, and did not want to get involved with the chaos. But last December bombs and other attacks began to happen in Damascus. Shortly thereafter, my father finally lost his job as director of an American Language Center (a position he had for 20 years) when the American Embassy, which had worked in close cooperation with his school, shut it down due to safety concerns about the worsening security situation in Syria.

A couple of weeks later, the U.S. Embassy in Damascus followed suit, closing down. Soon, my mother sold our apartment home,

where we had lived peacefully for 15 years, and we were given 3 months notice to vacate the premises. By mid March, my family was evacuated from Syria, and are now staying temporarily at my older brother's apartment in West Palm Beach, Florida, while we try to find a place to rent and decide on our next steps.

It has been a heartbreaking and depressing experience for us, to have to leave our home in Damascus (a city where we lived for 20 years)

and try to temporarily live in an unfamiliar place in Florida, with no income. Of course, we are now safe from the increasing dangers in Syria, but still, leaving one's home is never easy. My father has been especially devastated, mainly because of losing his dream job and the means of supporting our family.

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**30th
ANNIVERSARY
Party for Kathy Holliday**

**PLEASE JOIN US
FOR CAKE AND
PUNCH**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 23
MYERS DINING HALL
2:00 PM**

**Kathy has worked
for ARAMARK at
Brevard College for
30 years!! She
loves her job, but
most of all, YOU
are the reason she
enjoys what she
does. PLEASE COME
& CONGRATULATE
HER!**