



Press Release

01/09/2015

Syrian Ph.D. candidate and refugee alleges discrimination over visa processes

Mohamed (not his real name), a Syrian Ph.D. candidate at the University of Manchester Business School feels discriminated against by the Canadian embassy because of his Syrian nationality and refugee status. His visa application to attend the “academy for management conference” on 7 August was denied without explanation or right to appeal.

This conference is considered the most important one in his field in the world. He worked very hard with his supervisor to be accepted in this conference and to get funding for it. Attending the conference would have hugely affected his current degree and future academic career.

The visa application process cost him over £2000. He was required to travel from Manchester to the VFS office in London on both occasions to give support evidence of accommodation, plane tickets, financial support and a support letter from his university supervisor. He was also required to pay the £113 application fee and provide his biometrics on both occasions despite them already having confirmed his identity. Mohamed says that he was meticulous in ensuring that all the information given was correct and that all the required evidence was provided to prove his identity, residency in the UK and that he has no desire to claim asylum in Canada. Even with this, he was rejected.

Mohamed tried contacting the Canadian embassy for appeal by phone, email and even personally went to the embassy in London, but the response was the denial of the visa, saying everything was considered.

He says that *“the experience has been humiliating and stressful”* and cost him and the university *“materially as well as denting my morale because the opportunity of attending the conference is irreplaceable.”* He says he was *“working very hard to be one of only few students at the school to be invited to the leading conference in the field”* which attracts over 8000 academics from around the globe.

Syrians refugees have faced discrimination at airports and have been refused visas because of the stigma surrounding the conflict in Syria.

Mohamed may be contacting a lawyer to consider suing the Canadian embassy for discriminating against him because of his Syrian identity.

He is currently trying to claim the hotel costs and the plane tickets which were wasted as a result of the two visa refusals. The costs of his time, effort and morale will never be compensated.

Mohamed is available for interview.

ENDS

For further information and press enquiries, please contact advocacy@rrsoc.org

Rethink Rebuild Society has established itself as a non-profit organisation that acts as an umbrella for the Syrian community in Manchester, and endeavours to clarify the Syrian cause to its audience in the UK and the wider public.