

Letter to the World from Moria (No. 9)

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I am mother

I am the mother of three children and the wife of a sick husband. He has a hernia on his backbone. He cannot walk. Neither should he get tired. So, I must look after our entire family on my own.

I am a woman, softer than flowers, but this life makes me harder than rocks.

Every day, as the sun rises, my mission starts. I wake up at 5am. I spread the blanket over my children. Then I go to get food. I walk 800 meters to the food line. The line starts at 6:30am., but I want to be up front, the first one among a thousand women.

All this waiting for just 5 cakes and one liter of milk, which I suspect is mixed with water.

My boy has a kidney infection for five years now. He cannot tolerate hunger. I must go back as fast as I can.

Once back, I gather all the blankets and spread them on the tent's floor.

I sweep in front of my tent. With my own hands I made a broom from tree branches.

I wet the soil with water to prevent the dust and dirt from coming inside.

I am barely finished when, once again, I must run to the food line to take lunch. The queue starts at 11:30am although they distribute the food at 13:00pm. So the whole waiting process, in unbearable conditions, starts for me again. In the line for hours, I do not know what happens to my children: Are they well? Are they safe? Has my son's pain started?

We have been here for 200 days. And every week, we eat the same food – repetitive, tasteless, with no spices, little salt and oil. Three times a week beans, once meatballs, once chicken and once rice with sausage – we don't know for sure if it is halal. But I force my children to eat so they won't stay hungry.

Securing meals is only one of my tasks. I must also wash my family's clothes.

As my children are outside all day, their clothes get really dirty. Trying to clean the stains my hands get all chapped, the skin cracks. I need to rub them with oil every night.

I hang the clothes and, tiredly, I walk, once more, to the line for dinner—dinner only by name. Dry bread, one tomato and one egg. We must wet the bread to chew it. This is no dinner. When we have nothing to eat, we have to eat onion with bread (it's hard for children but we try to eat it cheerfully).

When my day finishes, I am really exhausted. But I do not want my family to notice. I fix my face. It should show no sadness, no fatigue. I hide my chapped hands from my husband and my children.

Sometimes, I don't make it to the food line, because of the long queues I must stand in to visit the doctors. I go there at 7:00am, but the process is very slow and, usually, every patient takes about 20 minutes inside. Then, the situation of my child gets worse than it normally is, because of his exposure to the sun and the polluted air outside. We need a specific permit to go and get some drinking water.

Waiting in a queue for four hours, without any toy or game, is very hard for children. It is equally hard for pregnant women like me. I know my husband is not happy when he sees me trying to manage on my own every day. But there is no other way. We don't have anyone to help. Only ourselves. And he cannot.

I am my family's strength, their courage, their hope. If I lose hope, who will stand by them? Who will help them? No one.

When the sun sets and darkness spreads, I am filled with fear. I fear also when it becomes cloudy and it rains. I fear the wind, I fear the cold. How will I protect my family? With what will I protect them, when we have nothing?

When you don't have resources, what are you going to do? I collect the blankets from the floor and spread cardboard instead. The blankets are our covers at night and the carpets during the day.

I am a mother and a wife. My children are the pieces of my heart and my husband is my blood. They are all I have in my life. But who am I for myself?

I don't have time to even see myself in the mirror. I don't have time to comb my hair once a day. I don't have time to brush my teeth in 24 hours. I can't take care of my skin. I can't be a woman.

I am content to sacrifice myself to make a comfortable life for my children and my love, my husband. Because I am a woman. It is my choice to be like

this. Life is hard here and there is nowhere good to go.

I was given the documents to go to the mainland. But I canceled my ticket. On the mainland, the authorities will put us in a hotel, far from hospitals or clinics that we depend on. What am I going to do there with my sick child and my husband and myself pregnant? We need (specialised) doctors. We need protection and care.

I am sorry that I don't have time to speak with my family as a mother, as a wife and as a friend. Because I don't have more power. I can't do more in 24 hours, than bring food, go to clinics, stand in lines.

I have had enough. I can't continue anymore. Truly, if I didn't have my children, I would have committed suicide. I live only because it is worth living for them. And now, I am pregnant and I carry one more life inside me.

I am one for myself, but four for my family. Soon I will be five...

Parwana

p.s. For all the mothers!