

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF COUNTRY

By George Abudeeb

A long time ago, when I was almost six years old, I remember that I had played with my cousin in our popular, small neighborhood. Suddenly, he stopped and told me, "I love my country." I asked him, astonished, "What is your country?" He answered, "It's the city of Damascus where I live with my parents in our cozy home." Then, he asked me, "What is your country? Is it this home town?" I was surprised and I didn't answer him. But I ran quickly to my father and I asked him, "Dad, what is the meaning of country? How can I find my country?" He laughed, and didn't answer me. However, I didn't forget this childhood question and I spent most of my years looking for the answer to it. I left Syria to work in other countries, and I started to experience different feelings and meanings of country. I asked myself, "Is country just land, houses and stones? Or, is it memories with people who loved us, and who we loved? Or is it a regime and a constitution?" I have learned from that complicated, childhood question, on that sunny day in Syria, that country is the place where you can follow your dreams, and where you can take in your worth. It is the place which will help you to be strong and contribute to building it. Where you don't have to be a burden, and you are not allowed to be a victim. You're protected and have all your rights... Country means freedom under the law, country is dignity. I have learned during my trip in life that the most important value is education and science which comes before money because we can build our mind and our personalities and skills through education more and more, and increase our skills which is the way to make more money and reach our goals.

I have read a proverb that says: "You have to know something about everything and everything about something." However, I say that: You have to know something about everything, and you have to know all things about two things which are: your specialty and yourself. Only then will you be able to build yourself and build your country, the place which holds you. In the end, you have to know that life is a continuous battle against negativity. I cherish the memory that I challenged the dictatorial Syrian regime to learn as much as I could, and to be more and more free. I cherish that I refused death and hopelessness despite the propaganda from a criminal regime. I cherish that I have a dream and a plan, and I'm on the right track. I cherish that I didn't allow the criminal regime in Syria to kill my dreams, my future and my personality, when it tried to convince citizens that being educated by the Syrian public schools was a burden on our country, and that we owed the regime because it gave us rights. Therefore, we carry our science, our dreams and all that we have to contribute to building other countries. As long as our country is occupied, we have a duty to keep working to release it.

Finally, I have to say one word that completely contests all dictatorial regimes slogans in the world and history which is: "Country Is Life." This word will summarize all the

meanings of a country. No need to die to make others alive, it's unfair at all, on the contrary, you have to love yourself first to be able to love others and help them to live better.