

Center for the Victims of Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.cvt.org/what-we-do/survivor-stories/khalid%E2%80%99s-story>

Campaign and Advocacy

Even after fleeing for his life to Kenya, Khalid says, I cannot give up.

Khalid* spent his childhood and youth in rural Somalia herding camels. Education was not a priority, nor was it readily available. He grew up in a remote area and his family lacked the means to ensure that he went to school. In his early twenties, Khalid left his rural home and moved to Mogadishu in search of a better life. There he had the chance of fulfilling his dream of receiving a formal education and bettering his chances in life.

However, the threat of conscription enlisting young men into the dreaded Al-Shabaab terror group by force intensified, and he had to flee the country. It was one of three options: stay in Somalia and die resisting, join Al-Shabaab, or leave the country, Khalid said. I chose the third option: my life.

He has been in Kenya for six years and sells drinking water across the numerous shopping malls in Nairobi's Eastleigh area to get by. I think that having no education has held me back in life. Even if I can do something more than I'm currently doing for myself, I feel that there will be a ceiling for me, a level I cannot get past, he said. Though he is very keen on pursuing education, Khalid's current life circumstances in Kenya as a refugee have not allowed him to do so.

But as part of CVT Nairobi's trauma healing through counseling, Khalid is exploring the new meaning he can create for himself after experiencing atrocities. This creation of new meaning goes a long way in the journey of healing. Khalid feels that in spite of the lost opportunity to receive an education in his own country, all is not lost. He has not abandoned the zeal and desire to pursue his goal, even now in his late twenties.

I've registered with an organization that provides various adult courses and would like to learn English the next time they have openings, he explained. Until then, I have to continue hustling. Apart from selling drinking water, I'm trying to see what other business opportunities I can pursue.

He says, I cannot give up.

**Name has been changed for security and confidentiality.
Photo by Dreamstime.*



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