ICF-JUSTICE GATE (JG) LEGAL AND SOCIAL WORK CASE STUDIES

Ahmed* lost his father to a suicide bombing 3 years ago when he was 13. Ahmed dropped out of school and became the breadwinner for his widowed mother and 3 younger siblings. After landing a new job delivering food for a restaurant, he was suddenly arrested on charges of possessing a stolen motorcycle and held for 4 months. But Ahmed insisted he had paid for the motorcycle. JG's "street lawyers" helped prove Ahmed's innocence by investigating the case and presenting witnesses and evidence that the seller was the one that had stolen the motorcycle. The judge freed Ahmed to return home to continue caring for his family.

Noor*, a 13-year old orphan living in Baghdad, narrowly escaped early marriage. After her mother and father died in a terrorist bombing, she and 3 brothers went to live with a poor aunt. While begging on the street with her brothers, Noor was arrested for vagrancy and spent 3 months in a reformatory. Her aunt, desperate for financial support, decided to marry young Noor off for a sum of money. JG street lawyers and social workers were alerted by local adults (serving on "Child Protection Units") and intervened with the aunt. Through mediation, they were able to stop the marriage by helping Noor and her family set up a small clothing shop to generate income. Now, Noor remains free and no longer has to beg on the streets.

Five children - 3 boys and 2 older girls - were orphaned after losing their parents in a car bomb. They went to live with an aunt who treated them cruelly, forcing the boys to beg and the two older sisters to be prostitutes. She physically abused them, leaving them with burns and broken bones. The oldest boy escaped first, becoming homeless on the streets until police arrested him and took him to an orphanage. The two younger boys eventually fled from the aunt and wound up in a different orphanage. No one knows where the older sisters are. But thanks to another kind and loving aunt who returned to Iraq after living abroad, the story takes a bright turn. She began searching for the children, first finding the older boy and then the other two younger ones. But the orphanages would not release the boys to her care without their legal identity documents. JG street lawyers tackled the difficult challenge, especially since the previous aunt was missing. But today, the boys have their legal documents and are safely at home with the loving aunt.

Zahra* (12) is an orphan who had been living with an adult sister and working by collecting cans from the trash. When JG was conducting field visits, they found Zahra alone in a run-down mud home.   They learned that since police had arrested her sister a month earlier on prostitution charges, Zahra had been living alone. She was suffering from malnutrition, skin disease, and

tooth decay, and was in bad shape psychologically. JG's social worker took Zahra to the hospital and after asking her about relatives, discovered she had relatives living in another area. The social worker visited the relatives and asked if they would take Zahra in. After mediation, they agreed and Zahra moved into her new home where she can get the care she needs.

Bashar* (16) was arrested by police and charged with sabotaging public properties. He and 3 younger sisters live with their widowed mother in a homemade of mud, wood, and metal plates under a bridge. Bashar works collecting cans from the trash as well as anything that can be sold. One day, he attempted to take some metal panels from barriers that had lined the highway but now were broken and dumped on the side of the road. Many such barriers were broken by tanks when they moved through the streets of Baghdad after 2003, but now this teenager was being arrested and charged with sabotaging public property. Bashar was tried and sentenced to one year in prison. A JG street lawyer took his case and submitted an amnesty application for him, winning his release to return to his family.

Saad* (17) was charged with killing his big sister. He turned himself into the police and confessed he had killed her because the family discovered she had a sexual relationship with a young man. JG's street lawyer met with Saad several times and he denied killing his sister. He said his father and brother decided to kill the sister because she brought shame on the family and they wanted to save their honor. They convinced Saad to confess to the crime because, as a juvenile, he would face a shorter prison sentence. If the police learned that the older brother had committed the crime, the brother would face a life sentence or the death penalty. JG's lawyer persuaded the child to change his statements and tell the judge the truth, and the lawyer presented evidence to prove that Saad was not involved in the murder. The judge ruled that Saad was innocent and released him. The older brother remained a fugitive and wanted by authorities.

Ali* (16) lived in Najaf with his mother but left for Baghdad to find work. Five 5 months ago, Ali was arrested for stealing and sentenced to 2 years in prison. He has no relatives and his mother does not have a phone, so he was unable to let his mother know where he is. The detention center officials' practice is to inform the parents or families by phone only, so for 5 months, the mother did not know where her son was. She only knew he left for work and never returned. JG's social worker interviewed Ali who provided his mother's address in Najaf so they went in search of her. When they found her, they told her what had happened to her son and helped the mother travel to Baghdad to visit him.

Three juveniles – Husam* (16), Mohammed* (16), and Hassan* (17) – were included in a recent amnesty law and were slated for release. However, the authorities were delayed in their processing and the boys lingered in prison for an extra 4 months. JG street lawyers brought their cases before the Supreme Judicial Council which instructed the Deputy Prosecutor to take action immediately. The three boys were finally released.

(*alias to protect privacy of the child)   7/1/2017