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**KELOWNA**

# From life of fear, war to one of safety, peace

**Syrian family who fled war-torn homeland happy to be living in Canada, wish government would accept more refugees from Syria**

By **ANDREA PEACOCK**  
 The Okanagan Saturday

**M**ohammed Alshahoud abandoned life in war-ridden Syria and travelled across the world to bring his wife and children to safety. His hope is that other Syrian refugees will be as lucky.

"We came to Canada because the life in other countries is very difficult," said Alshahoud.

He and wife Sara and five of their 11 children arrived in Kelowna in May of this year. They escaped from Syria to Jordan in 2012, a year after civil war erupted in their homeland.

"We feared about our life in Syria," he said. "I think if I take my family to Jordan it will be safer."

At first, life was good in Jordan, said Alshahoud. But it became much more difficult when the Jordanian government made it illegal for Syrians to work in Jordan. It became impossible for many Syrians to feed their families.

"The life was very difficult," said Alshahoud. "The work in Jordan is forbidden to Syrian people. The refugees in Jordan don't have any help."

After two years in Jordan, Alshahoud got word from the United Nations that he, his wife and their five youngest children would be going to Canada.

Alshahoud was thrilled to hear this news because it meant a new life for his family. Just over a year later, the seven of them arrived in Kelowna.

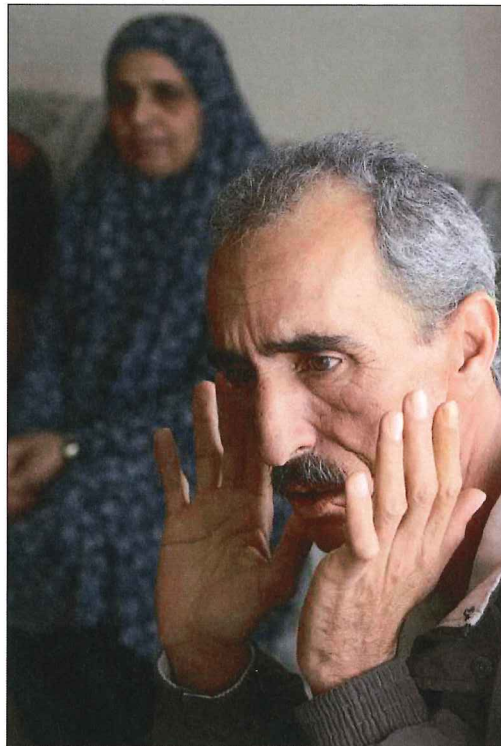
Six of his children and their families are still in Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, including a daughter who is eight months pregnant.

Her husband was deported back to Syria from Jordan last month after he was caught working.

She will have the baby in Jordan but will then return to Syria to be with her husband.

Alshahoud desperately wants all of his family to be safe in Canada, but there seems to be nothing he can do to get them here.

"We are afraid for them. I cannot bring them here," he said. "I (would) like the Canadian government to help the refugees



GARY NYLANDER/The Okanagan Saturday

**Mohammed Alshahoud says life is much better in Canada than in Syria. Alshahoud and some of his family arrived in Kelowna as refugees this past May.**

more and take more refugees from Syria." Millions have fled Syria since 2011, but fewer than 2,400 Syrians have resettled in Canada during the past two years. Canada has committed to accept 11,300 people. "This is a paltry figure relative to Canada's

capacity to help and compared to the number already taken in by Germany and Sweden," the Canadian Civil Liberties Association said Friday.

Continued on page A4

**FIREFIGHTING**

## B.C. asks Ottawa to target drones

**Tougher rules, stiffer penalties sought after drones hampered wildfire efforts**

By The Canadian Press

**VANCOUVER** — British Columbia wants Ottawa to get tough on drones after unmanned aerial vehicles grounded aircraft fighting wildfires this summer.

The province has asked Transport Canada to strengthen regulations around drones and impose stiffer penalties for violators, said Mike Morris, parliamentary secretary to the minister of forests.

The Forests Ministry wants several issues addressed, including privacy, how drones are registered, and certification of drone operators.

A drone flying above a wildfire near Oliver last month grounded eight helicopters and five planes for more than four hours while the fire spread.

"The B.C. government's message to these people is pretty simple. The presence of a drone near an active wildfire is illegal and we have a zero-tolerance policy for people who engage in this sort of activity," Morris said.

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— Milton Berle

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**KELOWNA**

## Prevention best way to beat mussels, board told

By **ANDREA PEACOCK**  
 The Okanagan Saturday

The Okanagan needs to take preventive measures against invasive mussels before they arrive, says a water treatment pilot plant specialist with the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Julia Lew was the keynote speaker at the Okanagan Basin Water Board's annual meeting on Friday morning.

She spoke about her experience

with invasive quagga mussels in Nevada and what is being done to combat them.

"The biology is very unpredictable with these mussels," said Lew.

She said quagga mussels were found in the Southern Nevada Water Authority's water source, Lake Mead, in 2007 and have been causing problems ever since.

Lake Mead provides drinking water to almost two million residents and another 40 million

annual visitors, she said.

The main issue from a water delivery perspective has been the clogging of water intakes and protection of water treatment infrastructure.

Although the invasive mussels have not been detected in the Okanagan, Lew said prevention is the key.

"If we could go back in time, prevention would have been the way to go," said Lew. "I know some think prevention is costly, but the

moment you don't have it and the mussels get in, it's devastating. The costs once they arrive are much worse."

The OBWB estimates an infestation would cost the Okanagan at least \$43 million a year.

The B.C. government conducted random checks of towed vessels at 19 locations around the province this summer, looking for zebra and quagga mussels. Four boats were quarantined and 26 others decontaminated.

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