

"For almost two years, I was hoping for the immediate permission for the exhumation, but it didn't happen, until I had to leave Kuwait. Thank God a Lebanese friend arranged everything for me, and I am waiting for my father's remains to arrive here in Syria this Friday," Shagra told Kuwait Times.

When he decided to end his contract with Kuwait Times as a photographer, he calculated his remaining days in Kuwait and thought maybe he could go home with the remains of his father. "In 2017 I did not get permission, but I appealed and applied again in 2018. I realized things wouldn't proceed quickly, so I requested Kuwait Times to extend my visa for another year. That extension also expired, and I couldn't stay in Kuwait without a visa and work, so I asked my friend to take charge and secure all the permits and documentation," he said.

"In 2019 I had to leave Kuwait without the remains of my dad. Thankfully, my friend promised to complete the job for me and I am happy my father's remains will finally be reunited with my mother's on Friday," he added.

His father, Jerges Shagra, came to Kuwait in 1953. By the early 1960s, most of Jerges' children including Joseph were in Kuwait. In 1973, his father died and his mother left Kuwait and went back to Syria. "Most of my brothers and

sisters were here. I was the youngest. When my father died, my mother took some of my siblings back to Syria because they wanted to stay in Aleppo. I remained in Kuwait because at that time I had a job and was helping my uncle in his small business," Shagra said.

"We were seven members of the family (five males and two females) and our life in Kuwait at that time was simple but happy. But as the saying goes, everything comes to an end. But I remained hopeful and stayed in Kuwait until my twilight years," he told Kuwait Times.

Joseph said the arrival of his dad's remains is a gift for him and his family, after he nearly died because of the coronavirus. "I was infected with the virus from December 15, 2020 to January 10, 2021. I have now recovered but my legs are still weak. My mother-in-law, who also caught the virus on the same day, didn't survive. Thank God I am okay, and I am praying for my mother-in-law's soul. This corona is really very serious and I pray for everyone to be spared from it," Shagra said.



The Shagra family.