



 | KARAM

# Karam Scholars Report



# The Karam Scholars Program

Our Karam Scholars program assists Syrian youth by providing gap funding, tuition support, and mentorship to refugees in Turkey, Jordan, and the US.

By providing guidance (through mentors and volunteers) and resources (to take exams, learn languages, and understand enrollment policies and procedures), Karam Scholars limits both financial and informational barriers to accessing higher education.

The Karam scholarship provides hope to Syrian refugee students by relieving burdens now and presenting opportunities for the future. This small investment is the difference for many Syrian young adult refugees between having the opportunity to attend university and not, and we are proud to be providing this life-changing support. These students are refugees who have faced trauma and displacement, but when provided with opportunities to overcome their barriers, they become agents of change within their own lives and the global community at large.

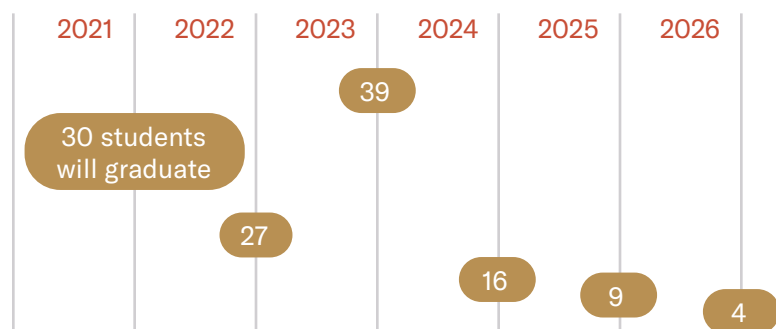
# KARAM SCHOLARS BREAKDOWN

This past school year, Karam provided funding to **115 students in Turkey** and **23 students in Jordan**. These students were enrolled in 44 different universities and are pursuing a wide range of majors:

Agricultural Engineering	Computer Programming	Mechatronics
Arabic Language and Literature	Dentistry	Medicine 
Architectural Engineering	Dietetics	Midwifery
Architecture 	Early Child Education	Molecular Biology and Genetics
Audiology	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	Nursing
Automotive Engineering	Engineering	Petroleum & Natural Gas Engineering
Bioengineering	Electrical Engineering	Pharmacy
Biology	Emergency Medicine 	Physiotherapy 
Biomedical Engineering	Film and TV	Political Science and International Relations
Biotechnology	Geological Engineering	Political Science and Public Administration
Business 	Graphic Design	Software Engineering
Business Administration	Healthcare Management	Translation
Chemical Engineering	Industrial Engineering	Turkish Language & Literature
Chemistry	International Business and Trade 	Veterinary Medicine
Child Development	Journalism	Mathematics 
Civil Engineering	Laboratory Sciences	Physics
Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education	Landscape Architecture	
Computer Engineering	Mechanical Engineering	

**This year, we are expecting 13 of our scholars to graduate university.**

In the coming years (excluding any newly admitted scholars), we will have the following graduates:



# KARAM SCHOLARS VOLUNTEERING

Karam Scholars are required to give back to their community through volunteer hours each semester. In fall 2019, 100 Karam Scholars completed 4,000 volunteer hours. 25 of these Scholars actually used their volunteer time to work with Karam Foundation, whether helping out with workshops at Karam House or working with kids in our Karam Families program.

## ADDITIONAL KARAM SCHOLARS PROGRAMMING

With the expansion of our Karam Scholars team, we have begun offering college-prep workshops for high-school aged students looking towards university. These workshops are offered for students who are involved with Innovative Education at Karam House or enrolled in our Karam Families program in Turkey. The workshops prepare them for this new step in their educational journeys and cover a large range of topics, from finding and applying to scholarship to what it's like to live away from home with a roommate. We draw upon our current Karam Scholars to provide support for the high school students through panels where they speak about their majors and experiences at college.

Earlier this year, we did a nine-week session with our students in Istanbul, where eleven students participated in workshops twice a week (for a total of 27 hours). In addition, these students took advantage of office hours and an open forum. We are now doing a remote workshop series with our students in Reyhanli, where ten students are participating in workshops twice a week. The topics covered include:

- What is college?
- How do I apply to college?
- How to write a personal statement?
- What do I study in college?
- How do I pay for college?
- What is college life like and what are important college skills to have?



## 2019 APPLICATION CYCLE

For the 2019-2020 school year, we received 2,876 applications for Karam Scholars. Out of these, 1,234 were determined to be complete and eligible. 193 students from these applications were invited to interview. Finally, 70 scholarship awardees were selected. These students:

- Range in age from 18 to 32 (average age is 23)
- Come from all over Turkey, representative of the applicant pool in general
- Are from 9 of the 14 provinces in Syria
- Left Syria between 2012-2019. While most left between 2012-2015, there were a large number that left in 2018 displaced from Eastern Ghouta, and had some of the strongest applications the team read this cycle
- Are mostly single (four are married, and three of those have children)
- Are mostly unemployed (13% had a job at the time of applicant)
- Mostly stated that their parents were unemployed
- Come from a wide range of universities. The majority are studying STEM fields, reflective of the overall applicant pool



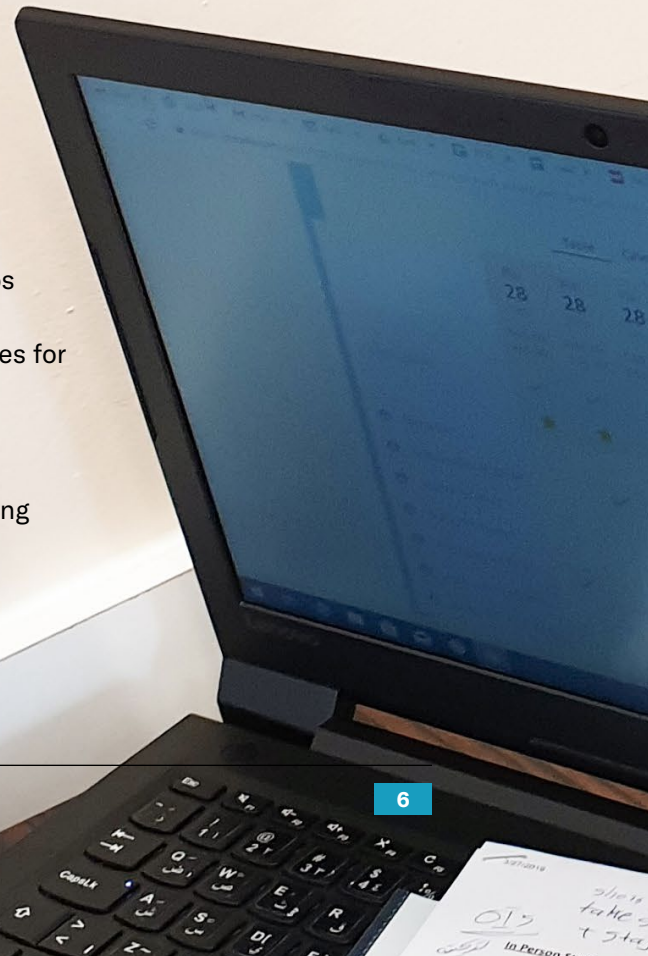
## THE CURRENT STATE OF KARAM SCHOLARS: COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, universities in Turkey and Jordan transitioned to online learning earlier this Spring. Each university has done so on their own timeline and has been able to set their own examination timelines, grading strategies, and other guidance. In general, this has caused students to feel uncertainty and fear, as many still do not know the implications of online learning.

To provide support during these trying times, we have adapted our programming and increased engagement with our scholars, including:

- Providing laptops for students without computer access at home to be able to complete their schoolwork and studies remotely.
- Hosting “all-student” meetings as an open forum for students to discuss important topics and conversations. The main purpose of these forums will be to create a space to check-in on the mental health of the students, discuss how they are coping with social distancing, and how their transition to online learning is being handled.
- Conducting biweekly individual check-ins with our Scholars. This can be in the form of messages or phone calls to see how they are doing. We also will be gathering information on university updates from them, as things remain unclear.
- Offering open virtual office hours for students to drop in.
- Hosting online student-led mini-workshops on specific topics or passions for other students to attend and participate in. Topics can be on student-identified issues such as “the role of Syrians in Turkey.”
- Exploring and identifying volunteer work opportunities with Karam House and Karam Families from a distance. This could take the form of providing support for the online college prep workshops, providing educational support in the form of videos to supplement elementary and secondary learning that is now also occurring in distance, and creating infographics and guides for students related to the college admissions program.

As the crisis continues, our Karam Scholars program will continue to adapt. We are listening to the needs of our students and assisting wherever we best can.

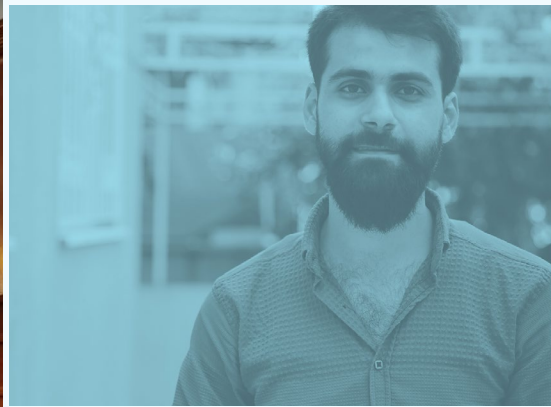






# Meet Our Scholars

Read some of the stories and updates from Karam Scholars below!







## Khaled Habosh

Pharmacy, 1<sup>st</sup> Year

Life as a pharmacy student means Khaled is always busy. In addition to maintaining his grades, he volunteers with Karam House Istanbul and his local neighborhood association. His focus is primarily his education; Khaled was cut off education for many years and is always scared to fall behind. His continuing academic success is a testament to his dedication and hard work.

**IN HIS OWN WORDS:** “Nothing is impossible with determination and faith.”



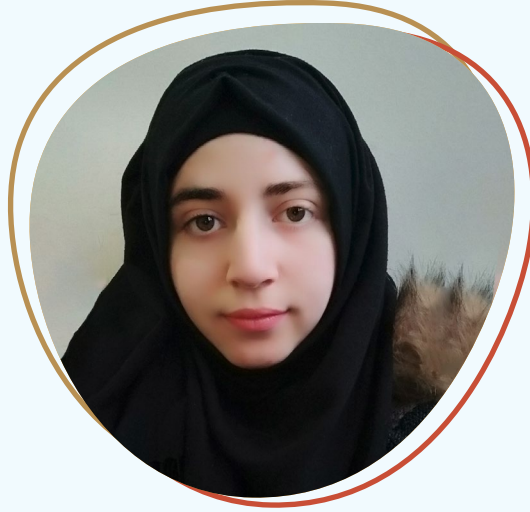
## Amal Sawwan

Architecture, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

Before she was forced to stop due to COVID-19, Amal was volunteering regularly with a children's rights organization in Edirne.

Since shelter-in-place has been put in place in Turkey, Amal has started translating documents and tutoring schoolchildren who can benefit from her Turkish proficiency. She is most proud of the work that she has completed this year: building upon her portfolio, translating a book called "Yunus" which was showcased at the Sharjah International Book Fair, and getting use to online engineering courses!

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** "There will always be difficulties ahead of us, and we shouldn't wait for someone else to solve them."



## Sena Mokresh

Medicine, 1<sup>st</sup> Year

In addition to studying medicine, Sena has taken the time this semester to do online trainings in programming, epidemiology, and other fields that she believes will supplement her education. Additionally, she joined a social work volunteering group where she helps children and adults learn Turkish, and provides guidance in navigating life in Turkey: at hospitals, schools, and universities.

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “Knowledge is what remains.”



## Nermin Kaya

Computer Engineering, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

Nermin has been translating Coursera course material from English to Arabic to help her classmates who do not speak English. Additionally, she tutors students who need a little extra help and regularly hosts exam review sessions where she helps first year students prepare. She has taken advantage of being at home during the COVID-19 shelter-in-place in Turkey by taking part in various courses through Coursera and other MOOC platforms. She has completed data science certificates and worked on developing her Arduino skills. She and her friends specifically have started a Women for STEM group to combat the idea that computer engineering and other STEM fields are not appropriate or friendly for women. Additionally, she continues to update her Github portal and has even started helping her friends make LinkedIn profiles!

**IN HER OWN WORDS:** “The secret of happiness is giving more than receiving. Giving, without the expectation of getting anything in return.”



## Abdalkafi Ghalioun

Civil Engineering, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Abdalkafi is an active volunteer with the UNICEF Youth Council.

Since COVID-19, he has been working with this group to provide relevant and accurate information about the spread of the virus and how to protect oneself. This semester, he has focused on improving his English language skills as he recognizes how important it is to be able to enter the workforce successfully. He is dedicated to improving himself, and it shows in the number of activities that he is involved in.

**IN HIS OWN WORDS:** “What we call a normal life is a blessing, and we should try to improve our lives without being resentful of them.”

[www.karamfoundation.org](http://www.karamfoundation.org)

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