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My Journey from Lebanon to the UK

During my stay in the UK this week, first in Manchester—where I lived for nearly 20 years—and then in Birmingham, I've been reflecting on my journey from Lebanon to the UK in the mid-eighties. In a world full of uncertainty, finding a place that feels like home can be challenging. For me, that place has been the United Kingdom. My journey from Lebanon, particularly during difficult times, has been one of hope, opportunity, sacrifice, and profound support.

The decision to move to the UK was driven by my pursuit of a master's degree and a PhD at Loughborough University through a scholarship from the Hariri Foundation, not merely a job change. I ended up staying for nearly 25 years before relocating to the Gulf region.

I was fortunate to find a job at the University of Salford in Manchester, working with great people. This environment helped me progress from a research fellow to Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation. The support from local communities was crucial in navigating this new landscape. As I advanced in my career, I was honored to be elected President of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB). This role was not just a title; it represented the trust my peers placed in me and provided a platform to advocate for best practices in construction.

One significant aspect of my journey has been obtaining UK nationality. This step symbolized my commitment to my new home and the acceptance I felt from the nation. Being able to call the UK my home has given me a long-sought sense of belonging.

The warmth and hospitality of the British people made my transition smoother. From local gatherings to professional networks, I found a community that embraces diversity and fosters inclusion. The friendships I've built have enriched my life, turning the UK into a second home—a place where I could thrive and contribute.

The UK will always hold a special place in my heart. My journey from Lebanon was one of hope, resilience, and belonging not identity. The opportunities I received during difficult times have shaped my life in unimaginable ways. As I continue to grow both personally and professionally, I remain grateful for the support and acceptance that have made the UK feel like home. Here, I found a vibrant community that inspires me every day.

I am now in a new phase of my career in the Gulf region, currently in the UAE (the land of tolerance and coexistence) after living in Kuwait and Bahrain. I experience the same feelings I had while in the UK. I believe that identity is defined by the respect and support one receives, along with the loyalty felt towards the country you live in.

Despite this, I cannot deny my origins and the land of childhood and dearest families and friends. Lebanon and Anout, my little village, will always hold a special place in my heart, and my connection there remains nostalgic, but I have to accept that I am now a citizen of the world.



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