

## HOPE FOR A FRESH START

The story of Karzan R., 33 years, a voluntary returnee who opened his own welding business in Koya, a city in the governorate of Erbil, under the IOM project “Integrated Reintegration in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq”



Karzan R. working in his welding business

“My eldest son wants to take over my company one day and that is more than a father could wish for.”

Karzan R., 33 years

With his wife and three kids, Karzan R. had an enjoyable life in Koya, a small town in the governorate of Erbil. The family lived relatively well with the income of the 33 year-old welder. However, with the spread of ISIS to the border regions of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq combined with the worsening economic and social situation, the family decided to embark upon their journey to Europe. After eleven days of travel through Turkey and Greece, the family finally arrived in Berlin.

Their dream of Europe as a place of “milk and honey” was eventually crushed and the reality of this was disheartening. Although the family was safe, the frustration and the feeling of being “cooped up” constantly grew. Among all challenges, the most difficult of all was the father’s lack of employment prospects. Karzan had exhausted all his savings on the journey to Europe, nevertheless was eager to work again and be able to provide for his family. Arising from this sense of responsibility, he decided in April

to make his wish of returning to the area of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) into reality with the help of IOM. He filed an application for reintegration assistance and after his return he developed a business plan with the reintegration experts of IOM Iraq in Erbil.

With the in-kind assistance amounting EUR 4,000, he was able to get his initial welding business back on its feet. If he regrets something? “Yes, I do,” he stated. “I regret causing my family unnecessary difficulties. We learned however, what it means to be brave and to give our best and do something for our land.”

Karzan is happy to be able to pursue his original occupation as a welder. The greatest achievement for him is being a role model for his children and being able to teach them about his handcraft. His eldest son accompanies him to work daily. “That is more than a father could wish for”, Karzan says.