

## Neighborhood Tales: Kuwait Under Lockdown

The Neighborhood Tales: Kuwait Under Lockdown project sprouted out of a painful realization that even as history was sure to remember the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and its impacts on every aspect of our human life, there are some stories, some voices, some experiences that might never be recorded for posterity. In Kuwait, where history still struggles to break out of the official and mainstream narrative, there would be many who, if not completely unheard, would find their experiences subject to but an ephemeral burst of public interest in the newspapers and social media. They might be heard. But not listened to.

This project is an effort to prevent that loss. It's a community-based effort to document what we've lived through. So that we may all remember. But more importantly, so that we can act to bring change. What did we get right? What do we need to fix? Pessimism and conventional thinking come easy in crisis. And it's these two instincts we hope this project remedies against. We are guided by the belief that, no matter how challenging the times, there is always hope--waiting for us to wield it. Hiding, in unexpected places.

**MARGIE** - A Filipino beautician reflects on the importance of family and community in times of crisis

[In this clip, Margie tells us about some of the darker moments she faced whilst in lockdown, and how they then led her to volunteer her time as a counselor...]

Margie: You know that time... Because I am the one who is in total lockdown. Yeah, and then that one they make almost four months. So I don't have job. So I stay here only in my home. Sometimes I'm getting you know, stressed. Sometimes I'm getting depressed actually. Yeah. But-- yeah, always I'm thinking, always in my mind is my kids, is my children. Yeah. I'm getting, you know, to give up, actually. Sometimes I am talking to my friend, she's the one who's always make joke on me. She said, 'What you will do?' Then, I said, 'I will jump.' I said, 'I will jump here.' I didn't afford for whatever. 'Okay if you will jump, you will not die, [laughs] just maybe broke your bodies, but you will not die. Then? Who will suffer? Suffer your family and you also.' Then I, then, then I am laughing. Then again okay. 'Why I need to think like that? I need to think positive.' I said like that. But yes, that is the hard things, you know. Because I didn't earn money. Because I had responsibility to my family, to my children and myself also, here also. I have also responsib-- the rent! Because you know [buzzing sound], in this building we don't have any discount in four months. We pay full. Totally, as in, nothing, not any discount at all. But the good things is, because I'm the part-- I'm the one who, you know, I'm the member of [REDACTED] and same thing also, I'm an officer. So I'm here. I stuck up here inside the Mahboula area. So, some of them from the outside, they bring some, you know, relief goods. They keep here. They stock here, in my house. Then I gave it to the people who need here in, inside our area here. So after that, then, I think to myself, once they came here, then I give that food, you know I am totally

broken heart. Why? Because, they telling, once they get this one, yes, 'Now I can eat, because how many days we didn't eat, like that. If I want to-- if we want drink coffee, we make, you know, make, you know, the rice!' They will burn it, then they drink it. They put water, then it become coffee. Then I think to my-- I realize as in, I'm lucky, I said like that. Yeah because you know, okay, I don't-- I didn't earn money, no income at all, but yes, you know, the food is enough. We have food, we have friends here. We are talking. We are sitting. Like that. So you will not get, you know, feel lonely. Then I started that one, then I am the one who, you know, give you know, what we can say... inspiration to them. To those who's coming here. Then I tell, I tell my story. Then I said, no, no need to worry, no need to think something. Everything has a reason, I said, like that, why this happening. Because, especially, not only here in Kuwait, all over the world, I said like that. So just, you know, keep it at this[ph], okay just always pray. I said, like that.

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***Important Note on Privacy:*** All narrators have given consent to the public dissemination of their recorded and written testimonies. The audio files contained below capture only a snippet from the full recorded interviews. The latter will only be made available to researchers and educators upon request. In order to protect the anonymity of our narrators, all their names have been changed, and any identifying details have been redacted. Some of the narrator's voices have also been modified for additional security.

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