

---

# Driving And Waiting: Taxi Service In Armenia Feels Influence Of Syrian Armenian Arrivals

By JULIA HAKOBYAN

ArmeniaNow - 24/10/2013

---

For two weeks Khose Teperjian, a jeweler in the recent times, is mastering a new profession of a taxi driver in Yerevan.

"The best part in this job is the attitude of the clients. They are very sympathetic. Many people would ask my phone number, as they say they appreciate the service and want to keep in touch," says Khose.

Enlarge Photo Enlarge Photo

Khose, the 37-year-old Armenian from Syria, does not think such kind attitude toward him is conditioned by his origin, but rather by his own attitude to the clients and to the work.

Still, the common opinion in Yerevan is that Syrian Armenians are very polite and respectable, they are qualified employees, no matter, in which sector they are engaged.

Taxi drivers like Teperjian, neat and well-mannered, unfortunately have become rare in Yerevan over the past years. The large number of taxi services operating in Yerevan did not create a healthy competition, instead, most of the taxi services offer dirty and defective cars, untidy drivers, who are violating traffic rules, often smoking or listening to loud music and reluctantly give back change.

Whether or not such situation is caused by objective reasons, given the fact that drivers are socially unprotected, work overtime, without proper agreements, many Yerevan citizens had an unpleasant experience with boorish taxi drivers. Some remember with nostalgia the Soviet times, when the sphere of taxi service was regulated by the state, the drivers had to pass professional and medical exams, to get permission for work, and all cars should have been examined before work.

"People ask me where I'm from, as soon as they get in the car," says Khose. "We speak of life in Syria, and here, in Armenia. Many people demonstrate good will, often left tips. I used to hear that local people are not very sympathetic to Syrian Armenians, but since being in Armenia, I have never seen an attitude, other than kindness."

Khose and his wife Gayane escaped from Syria last March, a year after they got married. Despite the war, the couple decided to have a wedding party and a church ceremony.

"When we were delivering invitations to the wedding, we would add "if you do not come, we will not be offended", 33-year-old Gayane remembers now with smile.

Gayane and Khose met at a jewelry workshop, where they both worked for 11 years; Khose was a jeweler, and Gayane was a manager.

"After getting married, we did not know either stay or leave. We had our honeymoon without water and light, and the situation was only worsening.

After all, we decided to leave, because, it is a hard task for newlyweds to make plans for the future in a time of war."

The family arrived to Yerevan and found a one room apartment for \$150 on Komitas Street. Khose found work as a waiter in a cafe. The daily fixed wage was \$5, plus tips, the amount, barely was enough to cover the rent and food expenses. Khose's friend advised him to work at the taxi service, where daily profit can reach \$15.

The Teperjian family is one of many Syrian families who have found refuge in Armenia since the conflict in Syria started. According to the Ministry of Diaspora, Armenia is now home to more than 10,000 Armenians from Syria.

Housing and employment are obstacles that still confront the new arrivals; many leave because they can't find jobs.

Those who stay, gradually adapt to the new environment in the historical motherland. The Western Armenian dialect, spoken by Syrian Armenians, could be heard now in dozens of bistros, restaurants and shops, opened mainly in Yerevan's center.

And more recently, the Syrian Armenians could be met among taxi drivers.

In the taxi service Orange, where Khose works, seven drivers out of 19 are Armenians from Syria. According to Movses Shahnazaryan, the manager of the taxi service, they are gladly cooperating with Syrian Armenians.

'All drivers in our office are decent and professional, no matter, if they are locals or not," says Shahnazaryan. "Yet the Syrian Armenians slightly differ. They are more disciplined and punctual. People often call to our office to express their gratefulness for the service. "

Despite the job Khose found, and the good attitude the family meets in Yerevan, the couple says they are undecided about their future in Armenia. The suitcases in their home are still packed and they regularly keep in touch with their relatives in Europe and United States to consider the various options for the future.

"They are so many good things we found out about Armenia," says Khose.

"We feel here, like it is our home. But the money I earn now, is neither enough to sustain a family, nor to provide a humble living. I would like to work at my profession. So, time will tell us what to do."

[http://www.armenianow.com/society/features/49485/syrian\\_armenian\\_refugees\\_yerevan\\_taxi\\_service](http://www.armenianow.com/society/features/49485/syrian_armenian_refugees_yerevan_taxi_service)

---