

## EXPLORING KENAN'S DILEMMAS TOWARD NATIONALISM IN *AS LONG AS THE LEMON TREES GROW*

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**ABSTRACT.** Nationalism, particularly during war, reaches its upheaval through the lives of civilians who are threatened and yet remain loyal to their country. Employing qualitative methods and critical analysis, this research examines Zoufka Katouh's *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* to explore Kenan's character and how his nationalism shapes the dilemmas he faces when leaving his country during the Syrian Civil War. The objective of this study is to interpret how Kenan's drive for survival, his responsibilities as a husband and eldest brother, and his growing awareness of the atrocities of war can contribute to his nationalism. The research scrutinizes his character as a loyal Syrian civilian faced with the difficult choice of involuntary migration, either surviving or fleeing the war and becoming a refugee while maintaining his love for Syria. The findings reveal that Kenan's sense of nationalism shapes his final stance, overcoming his desire to stay. In Kenan's case, staying meant sacrificing more of his loved ones, so he embraced the chance to flee yet remain bound as a proud Syrian citizen wherever he was. This study argues that civilian nationalism is intact through war, forced migration, and even life across borders. It further demonstrates that attachment to homeland continues to shape the meaning of home even in displacement. Kenan's character builds a family-priority perspective, while nationalism becomes part of his enduring identity.

**Keywords:** Dilemmas, Nationalism, Syrian Civil War, *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*

## MENJELAJAHI DILEMA KENAN MENUJU NASIONALISME DALAM *AS LONG AS THE LEMON TREES GROW*

**ABSTRAK.** Nasionalisme, terutama selama perang, mencapai puncaknya dalam kehidupan warga sipil yang terancam tetapi tetap setia kepada negara mereka. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan analisis kritis, penelitian ini mengkaji *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* karya Zoufka Katouh untuk mengeksplorasi karakter Kenan dan bagaimana nasionalismenya membentuk dilema yang dihadapinya ketika meninggalkan negaranya selama Perang Sipil Suriah. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menafsirkan bagaimana dorongan Kenan untuk bertahan hidup, tanggung jawabnya sebagai suami dan kakak tertua, serta kesadarannya yang semakin besar akan kekejaman perang dapat berkontribusi pada nasionalismenya. Penelitian ini menelaah karakter tokoh sebagai warga sipil Suriah yang setia yang dihadapkan pada pilihan sulit untuk bermigrasi secara paksa, bertahan hidup atau melarikan diri dari perang dan menjadi pengungsi sambil mempertahankan cintanya kepada Suriah. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa rasa nasionalisme Kenan membentuk pendiriannya, mengatasi keinginannya untuk tetap tinggal. Dalam kasus Kenan, bertahan berarti mengorbankan lebih banyak orang yang dicintainya, sehingga ia menerima kesempatan untuk melarikan diri tapi tetap terikat sebagai warga negara Suriah yang bangga dimanapun ia berada. Studi ini berargumen bahwa nasionalisme sipil tetap utuh meskipun perang, migrasi paksa, dan bahkan kehidupan lintas batas. Studi ini lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa keterikatan pada tanah air terus membentuk makna rumah, bahkan dalam pengungsian. Karakter Kenan membangun perspektif prioritas keluarga, sementara nasionalisme menjadi bagian dari identitasnya yang abadi.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** Dilema, Nasionalisme, Perang Sipil Syria, *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*

### INTRODUCTION

Dilemmas present two or more options, each carrying its own considerations for choosing or rejecting them. Meanwhile, the concept of nationalism often serves as a measure of a citizen's loyalty to their country. Civilians tend to be loyal to their country in any circumstance, life or death. To show it, sometimes common sense is put aside to

support their problematic government (Aldoughli, 2024) loyally. Other civilians in the country in conflict suffer from their betrayed love, their homeland destroyed. This condition puts civilians in a dilemma: stay or flee, questioning their own nationalism.

*As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* (2022) is a book by Zoufka Katouh, a Syrian-Canadian writer.

The book managed to provide an actual backdrop: the Syrian Civil War. It reveals the harsh realities of civilian life while the story explores political and psychological issues, as well as humanity and the family's inner conflict (Latumeten & Nofansyah, 2024). The political issue reflects on how the war encouraged people to negotiate their lives and become refugees. The plot is realistically depicted in its setting in the city of Homs, with explicit narration of the attacks and a concerning depiction of the medical conditions.

Salama Kassab, the main character, is a medical volunteer surviving PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) from non-stop torture that happened in her life (Marantika & Litaay, 2024). In the middle of the story, Kenan appears, a key character portrayed as a loyal Syrian citizen and the eldest of two brothers. Kenan then becomes Salama's husband, and his role is crucial in their decision-making as newlyweds during the civil war (Aliyya, 2024).

The Arab Spring, which began in the early 2010s, was marked by Tunisia's successful overthrow of its Prime Minister, Ben Ali. It substantially impacted the Middle East political development, as this circumstance spread to other countries, including Syria (Ahmad, 2020). During this period, Syria was entangled in a civil war against the authoritarian regime of President Bashar al-Assad. These political instabilities provided a fertile ground for the expansion of the terrorist group ISIS, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Biçer & Caşın, 2018). The Syrian civil war brought terrifying cruelty, where hundreds of people were killed. Every day, many civilians were detained, tortured, and abused (Kassab, 2018).

Many cities in Syria suffer from this condition, including the city of Homs, which endured the siege, recorded from May 2012 to May 2014. This siege paralyzed Homs, as mobility was hampered and the civilians were confined to their own homes. They faced starvation and water shortages, leading to malnutrition and forcing them to eat wild plants and rotten lentils (Armstrong & Trundle, 2019, p. 1). Even worse, Homs is under the shadow of snipers that control the activities of residents and a threat of bombs that can be struck at any time (Najjar et al., 2020). The city becomes the representation of Syria on how destructive the effect of the civil war is to the civilians, for many survivors are forced to leave to stay alive (Solymari & Gibarti, 2023).

*As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*, during its publication, has been the subject of a few research studies examining its story and characters. There is a

study about Salama's post-traumatic stress disorder (Marantika & Litaay, 2024), Salama Kassab's personality (Aliyya, 2024), an ecocritical reading throughout the book (Latumeten & Nofansyah, 2024), and the newest on the book romance formula (Machmuri et al., 2025). Meanwhile, for the broad topic of dilemmas, the studies are usually connected to its variation, from ethical or moral dilemmas (Cohen, 2007; Figar & Đorđević, 2016; Othman & Abdul Hamid, 2018; Sinnott-Armstrong, 1988) political dilemmas (Ackerman, 2023, p. 320; Clapham & Philip, 2021, p. 1), to social dilemmas (Komorita & Parks, 2019; Van Lange et al., 2013). Most importantly, dilemmas are deliberately used academically as decision-making (Pashiardis, 1995; Treurniet & Wolbers, 2021). Moreover, studies on war and nationalism focus on military concepts, for example, during the Russian-Ukrainian war (Kuzio, 2022), and on how war and the military are linked to masculinity (Christensen & Kyed, 2022).

Among the topics considered, narratives of dilemmas at war can be examined in the field of ethics, suggesting, in some cases, that they are unrealized and unsolvable due to the pressure the subject faces (Loewenberg, 1992; Schulzke, 2013). Other studies argue that nationalism could exacerbate a conflict that leads to war (Mearsheimer, 2021). Despite all that, there is still a noteworthy gap to narrow the scope of this topic to pivot more on the correlation between benign nationalism and dilemmas from the perspective of a loyal civilian during wartime. How does a civilian manage their nationalism in dilemmas between family and country? How did their nationalism determine when they became refugees? These questions underscore how these topics are less explored in literature, such as *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* (2022).

To bridge the focus on nationalism, commonly studied in military terms, to the fundamental dilemmas of decision-making, the study examines Kenan's stance as a responsible head of family and a loyal civilian from his ancestral land, Syria. It also explores how Kenan's realization of the cruelty of war could shift his mind to reconsider his priority scale between family and country, and the narrative confirms his belief in nationalism even as a refugee.

## METHOD

The prime focus of this research is to uphold the argument for Zoulfia Katouh's book *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*, precisely regarding Kenan's character toward his standpoint of nationalism. This

book was chosen for its recent publication (2022) and its widespread popularity worldwide. The starting point was to read the book comprehensively, then highlight the valued parts that involve Kenan - the last checkpoint marked by sorting those specific interactions or narratives that were related to be observed.

The literature analysis in this research employs a qualitative approach, in which qualitative data rely on theoretical resources and are presented in textual, non-numerical form (Moalusi, 2020). Furthermore, the analysis of Kenan's character drew on theories of refugee dilemmas and nationalism, as well as the concept of diaspora. Based on Wood's (1994) findings, one of the causal factors of these involuntary refugees is the escalation of war and persecution, which leads to their forced decision to flee from their homeland to cope. Involuntary migrations driven by nationalism involve complex decision-making processes and dilemmas. The research aligned with Malkki's (1995) findings on involuntary migration among exiles and refugees. Malkki suggested viewing nationalism from a civilian perspective, arguing that although they seem helpless, most civilians' nationalism remains intact. They simply do not have the option to stay in their country due to war or ongoing conflict, but they still belong to their homeland and are waiting for fate to allow them to return (Malkki, 1995). This research also included Avtar Brah's (2005) theory of diaspora, borders, and transnational identity as a complement to the further analysis of the basis of Kenan's decision-making. She believes diasporas, precisely those who were forced to migrate as refugees, are questioning the concept of home. They must adapt to negotiate with their new life in a new place (Brah, 2005).

In presenting the arguments, the data collection and the theories used were compiled in a narrative, qualitative manner that examines the research objective related to Kenan's character and his dilemma as a civilian trapped in war. Moreover, in the research discussion, the results were interpreted and discussed to gain an in-depth understanding of nationalism among refugees, while also comparing them with previous studies and explaining the causal relationship with family influence in decision-making.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Civilians at War: Dilemmas between Nation and Family Prioritization

First appears on page fifty-nine, Kenan Aljendi's character is depicted as the eldest brother of two: Yusuf, who became mute due to trauma, and Lama, a badly injured sister. They live in the city of Homs, Syria, where the military is destroying the town due to the civil war. His fate then aligned with Salama, the book's main character, when she had to perform surgery on Lama. The first impression Kenan gives is his care for his siblings. The impression continued until page ninety, where everything about the topic of nationalism began. There, Salama's mouth slipped, and she accidentally said she would be leaving Syria for Europe soon, although she still does not know the exact date. This moment marks the starting point of Kenan's dilemmas about staying or fleeing, which later can be read through the lens of forced migration and civilian nationalism.

Salama's words seem to provoke Kenan, leading him to demand an explanation from her and to defend his stance vehemently, insisting that he will not leave, no matter what happens. He said, "*This is my country. If I run away – if I don't defend it, then who will?*" (Katouh, 2022, p. 91). Kenan's refusal to leave mirrors Malkki's (1995) civilian-centered nationalism, in which civilians have a strong attachment to their homeland, even when circumstances force them to go. Kenan is a loyal civilian who is ready to sacrifice himself for Syria. His dedicated acts that kept him from fleeing were then revealed: he was a voluntary war correspondent. Kenan's decision to stay at this stage confirms Wood's (1994) view of civilians resisting and then being forced to displace when violence directly threatens family survival. He chose this neutral side to expose what happened in Syria and decided to blow up the truth as a purpose of his life to fight the war, even though his life was at stake (Hedges, 2002). To defend more, Kenan also said, "*I guess I love Syria so much that the consequences don't matter.*" (Katouh, 2022, p. 95).

At this point, Kenan challenges the Western view that nationalism is the primary cause of the war by invoking violent rebellion or government-sanctioned fanaticism (Mearsheimer, 2021). Having a strong national pride does not make Kenan into a villain. He aligns with Malkki's (1995) argument that civilian nationalism can serve as an anchor of identity during conflict rather than a source of aggression. Even though he built the main faith into his ancestral land and not really for political reasons, he is ready to stand still and fight for the right. With the power of a phone camera, he moves to

preserve the truth of the suffering country and to seek justice from the audience. He is a civilian who, in general, longs for peace and healing in Syria.

Furthermore, this research proposes that Kenan's deep-seated guilt leads to dilemmas (Harris, 2009, p. 197). The guilt took place on both sides, to his siblings and to Syria. Kenan's considered, selfish attitude toward Syria does not necessarily mean he entirely ignores his younger siblings' lives. It is shown when Salama repeatedly reminds that the threat is not only aimed at him, but also at Yusuf and Lama. Responding to Salama, Kenan argued that his siblings would not make it to the end, for they were still minors and could not flee without an adult. He kept believing that the situation would improve. "...This land is me and I am her. My history, my ancestors, my family. We're all here," he declared (Katouh, 2022, p. 95). At heart, he knows Salama has a point, and he feels the pressure of the dilemmas it raises.

Kenan begins to calculate every possibility and searches for a strong reason to flee. He chose to serve as a medical volunteer at the hospital and documented the victims there. He heard a story about Layla, Salama's sister-in-law, who had been the target of a sniper. Kenan then decided that he would send Layla and Yusuf to flee alone with Salama when he heard the boat carrying the refugees to Europe would leave in a month. He knows the cruelty out there, yet he continues to advance his nationalism.

As things stand, Kenan's stance is steadfast. Nothing seems to have bothered him about staying in Syria, even when he heard news about Hamza, Salama's brother, who, unfortunately, is still alive, detained in prison, and subjected to torture. This is related to the statement that when the agony of war is too much, many people hope that they or their loved ones who are detained will just get killed so they do not have to suffer in pain longer (Herman, 1992). The turning point in Kenan's attitude comes when, one day, Yusuf appears at the hospital with Lama, dehydrated. Kenan left in shock and devastated. He then admitted that the journey to the refuge of Salama, Yusuf, and Lama's in Europe would be perilous. It is for the fact that many Syrian refugees, when they are successful in reaching mainland Europe but have no backup, are mainly being exploited as labour. At the same time, the children are forced into early marriage (Yıldız, 2017). Again, this moment confirms the argument that decisions to flee are made when remaining in place and attempting to cope is no longer compatible with protecting loved ones (Wood, 1994).

Kenan feels defeated. His stance collapsed when he realized he could not guarantee Lama and Yusuf's safety out there, because he could not even save Lama from dehydration. Kenan's dilemmas reached their peak. He understood he had to leave, but the guilt held him back. "*Soon enough, there won't be anyone left to defend Syria.*" (Katouh, 2022, p. 229), but then he set aside his dilemma about nationalism because one of his family members suffered. Kenan made the final decision: he will flee together to Europe with Salama, Yusuf, and Lama. His choice illustrated how concern for family conditions can lead to family prioritization through attachment relations (Butler, 2004, p. 22). Kenan's siblings are still too young to suffer more in the warfare, for they are gambling with death, and Kenan does not want to mourn over a family lost.

From what has been explained, the nationalism of Kenan can be emphasized in the strong sense of belonging. Kenan is not even a member of the military. Still, he felt compelled to defend Syria in any way he could, including staying in the land of his ancestors and letting the world know about the conflict they faced. Meanwhile, from the very beginning, Salama's character became realistic; she had a strong will to survive and save her life from the trauma of war. She believed that wherever she went, the spirit of Syria remained with her.

Nationalism in civilian life, especially during war, is sometimes seen as a seed of danger rather than a noble ideal. There is a view among Western academics that nationalism is a driving force in wars, including World War I and World War II, because it undermines the liberalization concept (Mearsheimer, 2021). While conflict pressures civilians to make difficult choices (Wood, 1994), Kenan's nationalism is grounded in identity and not aggression, aligning with Malkki's (1995) distinction between civilian nationalism and nationalist extremism.

Kenan's journey through his dilemmas showed how deeply nationalism drove him in a counter-narrative to how it is interpreted in many studies. In *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow*, Katouh wants to prove that nationalism is not a crime, as long as it is not taken to extremes. It is a form of love for the country and has nothing to do with violence or war (Murod, 2011, pp. 45–46). Kenan and his siblings, as well as Salama, are all victims of the Syrian Civil War, and what they are actually longing for is peace and a whole family alive. They do not have the ambition to take sides in any of the conflicting parties, whether the government or the

rebel side. When the situation seemed too cruel for these war victims, with gunshots and bombs everywhere that threatened their families, they decided to leave to save their lives while still carrying the identity of their homeland in their souls (Alatrash & Abed Alsamad, 2020, p. 14; Wood, 1994). Their eventual decisions then form a diasporic identity, in which individuals negotiate safety and survival while sustaining a symbolic attachment to the word 'home' (Brah, 2005).

### **To be Refugees with Perspective on Nationalism**

As Kenan, Yusuf, Lama, and Salama prepared themselves to become refugees to reach mainland Europe, the one-month wait before the refugee boats arrived brought four unanticipated occurrences that helped them ride out their dilemmas, strengthened their resolve to evacuate, and helped build perspective on refugees and nationalism. This event also traces the shift from trying to endure the war inside Syria to accepting displacement.

The first circumstance is considered a tragedy: the use of chemical weapons in the ongoing war, sarin and chlorine, which killed many. This depicts the kind of escalating violence that Wood (1994) identifies as a key factor pushing civilians toward involuntary migration. Salama, as a medical volunteer, becomes extremely exhausted and angry because Syrian civilians do not even get their fundamental human rights and are left to suffocate. Also feeling pressured by the attack, Kenan's dilemma strikes again, even though he has already decided to flee.

*“Salama, I feel so helpless. I'm leaving them behind. And after what happened today?” Pain sears in his eyes. “Syria needs me, and I'm abandoning her.” (Katouh, 2022, p. 245).*

Kenan is back with his dilemmas. He cannot leave the rest of the Syrian civilians feeling abandoned, for he has a strong sense of belonging. Salama, on the other hand, offers another perspective. She assured Kenan that his own fight could continue out there.

*“...but whose minds are you changing here? You can do so much from the outside. You can physically reach the people leaving the comments on your videos. With your talent for weaving stories, we need your voice to*

*amplify those here. That's how you fight.” (Katouh, 2022, p. 245).*

Salama's statement is justified by the view that refugees often seek safety and the possibility of justice from outside their homeland when conflict limits their ability to protect themselves or others (Wood, 1994). The perspective on nationalism in Kenan's case is to secure justice and return, to rebuild the ruins of war. Salama said this affirmation to convince Kenan of his faithful leap.

*“And we will come back,” I say, my voice wavering. “Insh'Allah, we will come back home. We will plant new lemon trees. We'll rebuild our cities, and we will be free.” (Katouh, 2022, p. 245).*

Salama is very absorbed with the idea of returning to Syria, and Kenan affirmed it, emphasizing the impel they were faced with to run from the civil war just to wherever safe (Wood, 1994, p. 616). Their journey becomes a form of diaspora, and their idea of “home” becomes the most significant hope and imagination of new beginnings, aligning with feelings of familiarity (Brah, 2005, pp. 192–193). Moreover, Brah's (2005) study also sought to break down the background of the consideration of the location chosen by prospective refugees. The area is not a blind choice for Kenan in this case, since he had extended family in Germany who are ready to accommodate them if they manage to make it out alive. Even though Brah (2005) argued that a homing desire differs from the concept of homeland, Kenan's case can still be related to her following statement. Kenan means he had another place as his potential new identity and a new “home” for the family, although it is not the same as his sense of belonging (Brah, 2005, p. 197).

The second occurrence turned out to be Salama's and Kenan's feelings. When they attend the protest during the Syrian revolution anniversary, Salama, who is stressed because Kenan is still documenting the protest, expresses her feelings to Kenan: love. Her heart will never take it if Kenan gets arrested. As expected, her love was reciprocated, and they married the next day. Kenan fully understood he could no longer force his will to stay, for he had one more family member to worry about, but even under his proposal, he still voiced his love for Homs, for Syria.

*“...let’s find our happiness here in Homs. Let’s get married in our country. Let’s make a home here before we make one somewhere else.”* (Katouh, 2022, p. 280).

Kenan demonstrated his responsibility for his family's lives, but he also shared his perspective. He needs to uphold the idea of getting married in their true home, Syria, amid the revolution. He wanted to always maintain his burning nationalism, alongside their marriage days as newlyweds and refugees-to-be, marking a personal event to be remembered as a historical marker of what is left (Nora, 1989).

The third circumstance becomes the shocking truth for Kenan, which makes him fully admit to taking his fight over Syria from the refuge. It is about Salama's post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Salama finally admitted she is not okay since the PTSD affected her so much. She had a vision of Khawf after her mother died. Khawf, introduced as an unreal person from her imagination, represented her fears and traumas, revealing her regretful memories as her coping mechanism (Aliyya, 2024). Another shocking fact is revealed after Kenan, Lama, and Yusuf moved into Salama's home after the marriage. Salama is getting ready to introduce Layla, her sister-in-law, whom she has always been told about. When Kenan is about to meet her, he only sees Salama talking alone without anyone responding. *“Salama, no one’s here. There’s no Layla. I can’t see her,”* he said (Katouh, 2022, p. 305). It turned out that Layla had been dead for five months as a sniper victim. Salama's brain refuses to acknowledge that she is all alone, so she changed reality by forgetting the truth and fabricating memories with Layla, where she could still be seen, touched, and present, alive, even though it was all a lie. In this situation, Kenan is so worried about Salama that he still remembers the fight he put up on his own.

*“...You said it yourself. The fight isn’t just here. You are needed outside just as much as I am. And I can’t sit back and watch you be in pain like this and not know how to help.”* (Katouh, 2022, p. 315).

The last situation was the two attacks on the hospital. The first attack came from the five soldiers of the military who were spreading terror through the tank's rifle and pointing guns at the patients. When Kenan and Salama tried to defend those potential victims, Kenan was injured, and Salama was sexually

assaulted and almost killed if the Free Syrian Army had not arrived. The second attack happened right on the day before the boats that would evacuate them arrived: the hospital bombing. These four circumstances led to the dilemmas and wrapped Kenan's final idea that being refugees is the best decision, for the agony is too much to handle, and his mental state is in freefall.

The long-anticipated day of evacuation finally arrived. Kenan, his wife, and siblings are about to face a long journey of borders before getting to the boats to reach Germany and finally starting a new life as refugees. *“We’ll come back,”* Kenan said his goodbye (Katouh, 2022, p. 370). The fate of Kenan and his family as refugees in Germany is considered good and well-off, as they are supported by the presence of Kenan's uncle and aunt there. Other Syrian family refugees without any relatives are mostly unlucky or face complicated policies, in which many are dispersed according to the policies of the countries that accept them (Katouh, 2022, p. 411; McNatt & Boothby, 2018). This indicates that Kenan gained refugee status in freedom, for he does not need to be ashamed of his status as a Syrian migrant, which may disadvantage him or be stigmatized (Malkki, 1995, p. 160). Yusuf and Salama can continue their schooling in Germany. After connecting with Hamza's (Salama's tortured brother's) friend on Facebook, Salama and Kenan moved to Toronto to continue their education.

*It’s a small one-bedroom apartment. ...One wall hosts Kenan’s ongoing work on a map of Syria.* (Katouh, 2022, pp. 412–413).

Even in Toronto, Kenan's map of Syria demonstrates what Malkki (1995) describes as the persistence of national identity among refugees, preserved through daily life. This study suggests that Kenan and his family seem successful in obtaining identity documents, such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee identity cards, because Kenan's aunt and uncle, who are also Hamza's friends, are relatively wealthy (Malkki, 1995, p. 172). This study also argues that Kenan and Salama are asylum seekers who are not seeking permanent citizenship in Germany or Toronto, given Kenan's strong sense of nationalism and the couple's determination to return to Syria as soon as conditions allow. Kenan always mentions Syria in almost every quotation about his life's purpose. Kenan longs for the freedom of his country,

and his sense of identity remains loyal to Syria, even as a refugee (Malkki, 1995, p. 172).

## CONCLUSION

*As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* explores the reality of life during the Syrian Civil War. This study reveals it in the environment from Kenan's perspective. Drawing the focus on dilemmas through Kenan's role as a civilian trapped in war, this study's analysis reveals the complexity of nationalism. This study argued that nationalism is sincere, especially among civilians. The findings emphasize the concept of benign and positive nationalism, underlining Kenan's character as a victim whose love of Syria has nothing to do with the war going on there. Nationalism is a form of a nation's love, and it depends on how people respond to this idea and how they execute it, either positively or negatively. Kenan's loyalty emerges as an identity shaped by history, family, and a sense of place. He dwells on the idea of a loyal civilian and refuses to flee to another country in search of refuge. Kenan's first idea is to stay as a war correspondent, and he becomes so persistent about it that he risks his life and his siblings'. This struggle shows how difficult it is for civilians to decide whether to stay in their homeland and protect their families' lives. The research then proposes that Kenan's striking dilemma stems from his family's suffering, which led him to set aside his ego and prioritize his family immediately.

Kenan's changed mindset leads to another highlight of this study, which aims for a nationalism that remains intact wherever the people of one's country are. National borders do not limit nationalism. As refugees, Kenan and his family hold tightly to this concept. Their experience shows how national identity can continue even across borders and in unfamiliar places. Settling into their new lives in Toronto, they affirmed their true identity as Syrians without hesitation. The research opens a new perspective on how a literary work can positively comprehend the concept of nationalism. The study also emphasizes the view of dilemmas, especially when it comes to family prioritization and emotional dilemmas that could lead to a change of mind. It is necessary to see these issues to shift the view of civilian refugees from someone seeking safety to someone more noble. They are waiting for the right time and for the conflict to recede before reclaiming their ancestral land. Their hope to return home shows how powerful the idea remains, even when they are forced to rebuild their lives elsewhere. It supports new viewpoints about forced refugees and their

nationalism. Furthermore, this research may have implications for the political and sociological fields. It supports the importance of scrutinizing these broad topics of nationalism and refugees from the political side on how nationalism can be viewed as something non-threatening, as well as from the sociological side on how being refugees could encourage someone to maintain their national identity beyond borders.

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