

The **'Migratory Birds'** newspaper was produced by the **Network for Children's Rights**, thanks to the cooperation and support of **'Save the Children International'**. The program is funded by the **UN's Refugee Agency, UNHCR**, and the **European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)**.



Funded by  
European Union  
Humanitarian Aid



## MIGRATORY BIRDS The newspaper of teenage refugees, immigrants and Greeks

# A forum for the communication between refugees and Greek citizens

*The second edition of 'Migratory Birds' is a fact! The newspaper, that enhances the communication between Greeks and refugees, is here again for you to read it. All that has changed is the group of children who worked for it. Now more children are on board.*

Is it easy to bring Greek citizens into contact with refugees lining in camps? The first step was made last April through the pages of this newspaper. After the release of the first edition of the **"Migratory Birds"** newspaper, and seeing our hard work pay off, we were delighted and encouraged to continue our effort. But the world is moving, and not standing still; some children, members of our newspaper team, have already move to other countries, alone or with their families. Despite these losses, which took place within just a few days, we are still here and we continue to write. Where we suffered losses, we have also some gains. The first boys are on board, under the multicultural and colorful "umbrella" of "Migratory Birds". These children, feel the same need for creating and maximizing their potential too.

Of course, all this achievement could not have been realized without the help of all those who support our newspaper team in a substantial and systematic way. Parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, are constantly on our side and undertake various additional work to make our effort easier. Finally, we would like to thank all of our readers both in Greece and abroad, who have spread the word regarding our newspaper either by republishing articles and tagging our websites through social media or through various "Network" websites where the English version is available. We also wish to thank everyone who contacted us via e-mail or has attended our weekly meetings to get to know the "Network for Children's Rights". Based on your feedback, we will try our best to evolve and improve.





# A letter to Mrs Merkel

by **Mahdiah Hossaini**

I am writing this letter in the hope that the wings of the “**Migratory Birds**” will carry it over the closed Balkan borders and deliver it into your hands. I’m not sure whether you will actually welcome this greeting, because I am an Afghan girl and perhaps I deserve to be deported, even though my country is in the worst possible situation. However, I would ask you to read my letter and hear what I have to say. I started reading your biography in order to learn more about this famous lady who cares so much about migrants. As I was reading, I came across the word migrant. I had no idea that you had had that experience. I read that you had emigrated to East Germany with your family, and I think that there are still scenes of that journey in your mind, although you were very young at the time. So we have that in common, because I carry migration with me from a very early age right up till now.

As a woman, I admire your courage for launching the idea of an open border for the first time in Europe. It was a humanitarian move that gave my people hope for a better future, something that had been so remote but which you brought closer. Yet, just as we thought that we had grasped it, this feeling of happiness became more elusive. In the end, the hope was offered to the Syrian people while the Afghans were left with walls and barbed wires.

Now I want to ask you why? Why was the idea of an open border turned into enforced closed borders? Why did this humanitarian action result in thousands of immigrants and war-torn refugees remaining in Greece and along the Balkan route? What is the difference between an Afghan and a Syrian refugee? Perhaps you have seen thousands of Syrian children, heard their complaints and have asked them about their experiences of war. But I wonder if you have ever spoken with an Afghan child. The answer that a Syrian child gives you will be about a four-year war, whereas an Afghan child speaks to you as a war analyst. He tells you about the 40-year-old war in Afghanistan, not just his own experiences but also those of his parents.

That said, I’m not a cruel person. I have sympathised and cried alone for

the Syrian child and wished him well. However, he has not experienced war the way I have, he has not had to be born outside his homeland, he has not been ostracized by strangers abroad like an Afghan child. He has come from his country directly to countries where he is welcome. A Syrian child, unlike an Afghan child, has not been bought and sold by his president.

I do not want to appear ungrateful because I know that many years ago you welcomed thousands of my compatriots into Germany with open arms. I don’t know the reason for this change, but it brings tears to my eyes. I have been told that immigrants have a strong feeling of peace in Germany, that it is like a mother’s hug, and I ask myself why would you deny me that hug?

I’m not sure whether the failure of this action was due to the lack of co-operation from other European countries. Or perhaps it was due to the large surge of immigrants who had heard, just like me, that Germany protects the children of immigrants and they have the same rights as German citizens. Of course, I hold my opinions from a very great distance.

Yes, I could feel your hospitality and your humanity despite the kilometers that separate us, and I see for myself the differences – which are psychological rather than financial -between immigrants in Iran and immigrants in Germany. It is very commendable that an immigrant in your country has found the peace and security that is denied him in his own. If you still believe that I should be sent back to my country, then you must consider it safe, so I ask you, if it really is safe, why are there foreign troops there? Do you believe that a safe nation requires troops? How can you judge Afghanistan to be peaceful when you have at least dozens of explosions and suicide bombers every day?

I have heard that you have repeatedly supported immigrants, but that you didn’t have public opinion behind you. Unfortunately, people are often unjust and I want to tell you about the life I am condemned to lead because of this injustice. I am talking of life under canvas. Here time passes slowly, I don’t know what it is like there. Here the old memories that keep repeating themselves have become tiring, I don’t know about there. If this injustice didn’t exist, perhaps my parents wouldn’t have had to taste again the bitterness of migration. Thousands of children and families, who were hoping for a better future with the support of Germany and its first lady, would have not lost their lives.

I have written all this not to complain about the distance but simply so that you can read it. And out of habit I say: See you again soon!!

# Twelve months here

By **Ferishte** and **Elham Esmaili**

**W**e have been living in the refugee camp for almost a year. The problems haven't yet brought us to our knees because hope grows inside us, just like the plants we planted in our yard grow. But I am tired, I want change and I want to feel happy. When we first came to the camp, we lived in tents. It was not possible to have a small garden for planting, we had no money to buy plants, nor access to water to water them. Later, when we moved into containers, my first thought was to create a small garden in front of mine. Having plants that you look after is a lovely feeling. It is also good for my parents' state of mind. Every morning my father wakes up and goes to care for the plants and that makes him happy. And when my father feels well through planting and caring for our small garden, then I feel happy too. In fact, our small garden has produced some of the vegetables that we need in our cooking, such as tomatoes, peppers etc., so that we no longer need to buy them. I hope our future will blossom alongside the plants. I hope we are able to go to university and have a better life.



## My struggle from Afghanistan to here...

By **Fateme Nazari**

**I** am Fateme, 13 years old from Afghanistan. My story begins in Kunduz, a city in Afghanistan. We had a lot of problems there. Women in my country are denied many basic rights such as the right to study or work. Women often suffer indignity and abuse. It is customary for girls to get married at the age of 15 or 16, and they are forced to have their children very young. Boys are not much better off because only the wealthy can afford to go to school. The rest have to take up arms and go to war. It is well known that the armed groups are some of our most dangerous enemies. If they like a girl, they abduct her or take her by force from her family.

The wars in Afghanistan started many decades ago. They are both external and internal, and they have forced many people to emigrate. For the same reason, we too left our country to go to Europe. We first went from our city to Kabul and then to Pakistan via Nimroz. The border with Pakistan was very dangerous; they held us hostage in a warehouse without food and water for thirteen days until we paid them money. We did not even have the right to go to the toilet. When we paid them and they let us go, we went to the border with Iran.

The border guards were firing in the air for a whole hour and we were all lying down until the shooting stopped. We then walked for hours in a dark forest until we reached a river. We crossed it and after more hours

of endless walking, we reached Iran. To begin with, we stayed in a town there. The Iranians did not treat us well. We left that town and went to the capital in order to head to the border with Turkey. To reach the Iranian border, we passed through the city of Gazvin. We managed to evade a police check because our driver hid us in a safe place until darkness fell and then he left us in the city of Oroomiyeh near the Turkish border. We crossed the mountains of Makou on foot. They were dangerous and covered in snow, and we saw corpses that had been frozen from the cold. Those images were appalling and terrifying. After fourteen hours of walking, we arrived at the border and from there we were transported by car to a place where we had to stay until we left Turkey. Apart from us, there were others, families, young girls, children. I asked a girl why they were being kept there. She told me they had not paid to continue the journey which is why they were being kept for months in those hard and unpleasant conditions. We then continued our journey to Ankara where we stayed for 15 days. From there, we went to Smyrna where the smugglers put us in a big inflatable boat along with 70 other people. The sea had high waves and it looked very frightening in the night. We did not manage to get to Greece because the Turkish Police caught us and turned us back. We tried another 4 times. In the middle of the sea, everyone was asking for God's help to cross safely and I was always worried about my family and my two little brothers who were very afraid. Finally, we reached Samos where we would get the papers that would allow us to travel legally to Europe. We spent fifteen days there in a closed camp for refugees. For the Syrians, the process was easier and they had more support. We did not manage to arrive at the open borders in time, before entry was forbidden to Afghans. I do not know why there is a difference between Afghans, Syrians and Arabs, since we have been at war for years, while in Syria the war only began four years ago. Many traveled illegally to the rest of Europe, but we have been living in the accommodation centre of Elliniko for a year and four months now. I hope to see my brothers in Lebanon one day and be reunited with my entire family.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to read the story of a traveler.



# Contact Points

The publication of the newspaper is part of the parallel action programme of the **Network for Children's Rights** entitled "Points of Contact", which aims to bring refugees into contact with the real Greece and with groups of caring citizens, in order to foster social contact and understanding, and to bridge the gap between life within camps and the reality outside.

The program consists of

- Strengthening the dialogue within the camp community and preparing for contact with the outside world.
- Informing minors about the social and cultural European and Greek reality
- Promoting their socialization and freedom of expression through participation in social, cultural, athletic and artistic meetings and discussions together with Greek people
- Beginning the integration process by bringing them into contact with their Greek peers and groups with similar interests at sports and recreational events, language lessons, newspaper publishing, etc.

In this context, we accept invitations and welcome ideas and new proposals.

Please contact the teenage teams of the newspaper "**Migratory Birds**" and the "**Dandelion**" web radio of the **Network for Children's Rights** by sending an email to [migratorybirds@ddp.gr](mailto:migratorybirds@ddp.gr) or by calling +30 210 88 46 590.



## "Migratory Birds" at the 14th International Thessaloniki Book Fair

By **Samira Karimi**

On Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th May the newspaper team of "**Migratory Birds**" together with the **Network for Children's Rights** attended the 14th International Thessaloniki Book Fair. In theory, this was a work-related trip, but for us it was also recreational. The scenery throughout the train journey was very beautiful. The journey

took six hours and as soon as we arrived, we went to the house where we would be staying.

The house was simple but lovely. Since I had been living in a tent or in a container for a year and five months, I found the house like paradise. There were a lot of different booths at this fair and one of them was for us. We presented the newspaper in a workshop entitled: 'The creation of a newspaper: the example of "**Migratory Birds**", put together by Afghan refugee girls who live in the accommodation centre of Schisto'. It was an experiential workshop for the expression of thoughts and feelings and the assertion of freedoms and rights through the press.

When the workshop was finished both participants and non-participants made statements:

"I found this newspaper very interesting, a very worthwhile initiative. It was important to listen to those children's voices. No one leaves their homeland if things are going well. It is difficult conditions that drive people to a new country", stated Mr. Patsoglou Savvas, a school teacher in the west of Thessaloniki.

Mrs. Athina Papanikolaou, education coordinator at the Softex refugee accommodation centre in Kordelio, Thessaloniki, said the following when asked what she thought about our newspaper:

"It was delighted when I read the first issue of the newspaper and eagerly await the second. I would like to congratulate these young girls and hope they become professional journalists in the future".

The positive opinions and applause of people lifted our spirits and encouraged us to continue.

# The best Football Tournament

By **Mohammad Reza Hossaini**

**O**n May 5, 2017, the **Network for Children's Rights** organized a mini-football tournament for teenagers residing in the refugee camps of Schisto and Elliniko, which took place at the Sports Centre "Kiffisos Soccer Club". There were 5 teams in the tournament in different age groups.

Participating teams included:

- 1: Staff and youth workers of the Network for Children's Rights at Schisto
- 2: Teenagers aged 14-18 years old from Schisto
- 3: Staff and youth workers of the Network for Children's Rights at Elliniko
- 4: Teenagers aged 14-18 years old from Elliniko
- 5: Journalists from the EfSyn newspaper

One of the positive aspects of this tournament was that the youngsters had the opportunity to play together in a pleasant environment, away from the refugee camps. Three teams took part in the tournament and the winners were the teenagers from Elliniko. More important than the result were the friendly relations and feeling of solidarity between the teams. I have lived in Schisto for over a year, where there is no suitable outdoor space for ball games. We have to walk several kilometres in order to train. Teenage Afghans in camps do not live in the best conditions, so

they need motivation and activities, such as this football tournament to raise their spirits. Excursions and sightseeing can really improve an adolescent's mood.

Here are some interviews of tournament participants.

Hossain Hossaini (player in the Elliniko team):

1- How was the tournament? What do you think about future tournaments? It was a very good tournament and we would be very pleased if more were arranged.

2- What problems are there in refugee camps for those that want to play football?

We play there too, but it is always against each other so it is not interesting.

3. What dream do you have for your future?

Like all footballers, I want to become a famous player.

The interview of Stefanos Konomi (youth worker and player in the Schisto staff team):

1- How was the tournament between the Elliniko team and the journalists? I am very proud; the matches between the youth workers, the children and the journalists were all very good. It was something different because the teenagers had previously only played with each other in their own camps.

2- What did the teenagers think? Did they like the game?

They liked it a lot, because they finally got to play on a proper pitch.

3- What do you wish for refugee children?

I hope to see them in a few years somewhere pleasant and safe, where they can build their dreams without fear.

Mohammad Reza Hosseini, from Afghanistan, high school graduate:

-I like football and I play for Hope Refugee.

# Security equals luxury

By **Sara Hossaini**

**I**want those who believe there is no war in Afghanistan to explain how my father was killed. Why were we orphaned? Why do I not have a father? If my country is safe how can people be killed every hour of the day? Why can't children go to school and why do explosions happen daily? Why have so many other children become orphans? The only thing I want from this world is to have my father back, but I know that no one can bring back all those people that have lost their lives. If my father, who was like a mountain beside us and supported his family, could come back

to life, then I would be convinced that Afghanistan is a safe country. But that is not the case. So why are our compatriots being expelled?

If our country were safe, we would never exchange our homeland with Europe or with any other country. We would never leave our homes to go to Europe.

If our country were safe, we would not let anyone offend us, mock us or decide our future. We would not have become a game in the hands of the powerful nations of Europe without being able to do something. If we had security, my father would never have gone to war.

If I had the power, I would never let innocent people die and I would have saved my country from injustice and war, but unfortunately, I cannot do anything about it. All I can do is pray to God to save us. I have very little hope, and there is nothing left in my life apart from sadness and the longing for a better future.

I hope that a miracle will happen to end all this. We, like all immigrants, are tired of this situation.

If you have the power to do something for our future, now is the time.



# Radio Dandelion

By Madinah Zafari

**W**hen there are words you need to say that cannot be said, they turn into tears and roll down your face. Day by day, they amass and grow heavy in your heart.

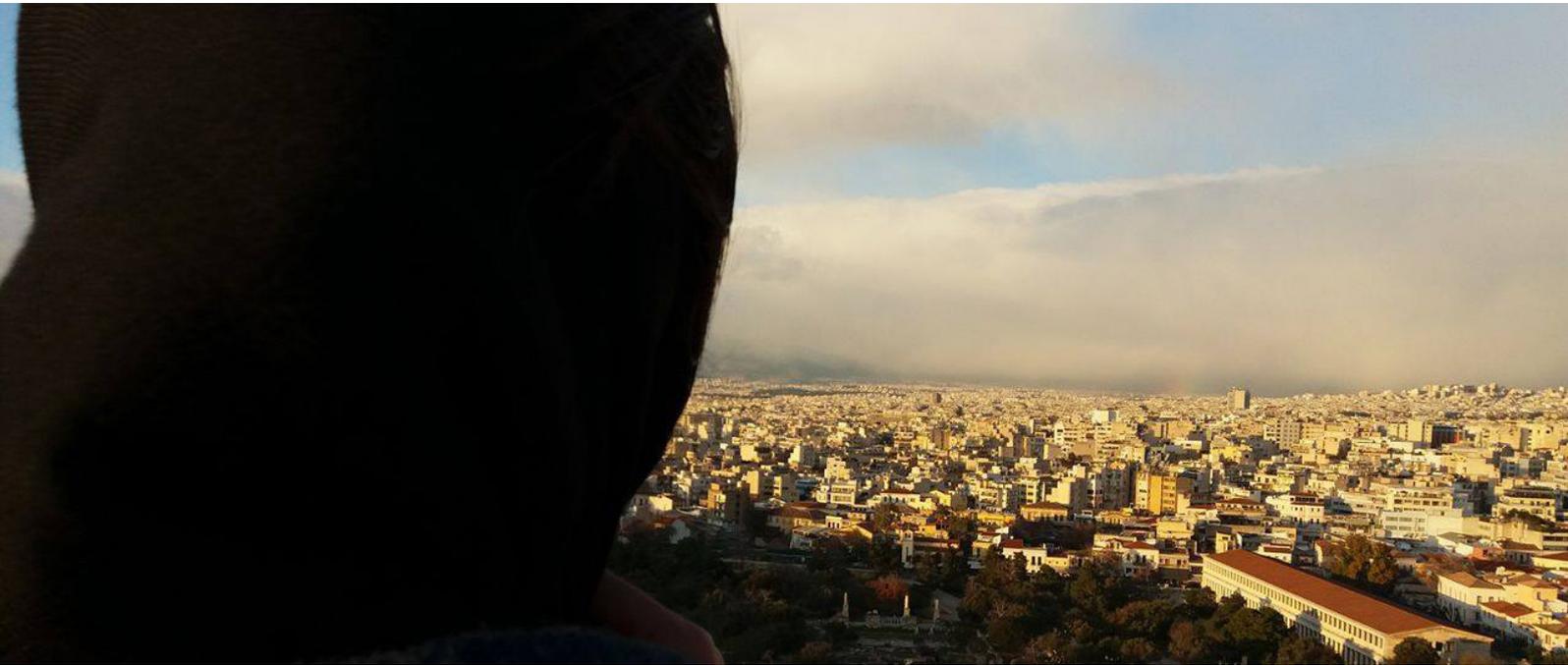
Afghan girls have hearts full of unspoken words, or rather words that no one has ever wanted to hear.

That is why adolescents from Schisto camp decided to set up an Internet radio station called Dandelion, through which they could speak out to people.

The **Radio Dandelion** team records its show every Saturday, having first agreed on what the subject for discussion should be. The discussions are broadcasted every other Sunday at 10 am and people can listen to them through the European School Radio platform.

Everyone has things to say that need to be heard, otherwise the words become a heavy burden inside them and this burden can last a lifetime. Many women in my country have things to say which they never had the courage or the opportunity to voice.

I hope that one day they will all have the opportunity to express everything they want to say and become free of this heavy burden.



## The road to Greece

From Hajar Azizi

**I** was born in Iran and I had a good life. I remember my parents did not like living in Iran, but we could not go back to Afghanistan because our country was not safe. On top of that, we were not welcome in Iran. There were no opportunities for Afghans to move forward and succeed in Iran, so my family decided to return to Afghanistan. In the beginning, it was very difficult to get used to things there, because I had got used to life in Iran and so I wasn't enjoying myself. But slowly, I started school and I found good friends, so days went by and I acquired good and bad memories.

Our biggest problem was that there was no security in Afghanistan. My mother always worried about us and never let us out of her sight. As for me, I always worried about my future, whether I could chase my dreams, because I knew there were many obstacles for women in Afghanistan. It is very difficult for women to make progress and succeed. Farhonte was an example of a woman killed because of Afghan men's indifference, who took her dreams to the grave. Like Farhonte, thousands of young women have lost their lives in Afghanistan. Despite all this, I loved my country, but my parents decided to come to Europe. I did not want to make this

journey. If my country had been safe, my parents would never have taken this decision. Even now, I hope that things will settle down in Afghanistan so that we can go back.

We initially went to Turkey, where we stayed for 3 months and then we came to Greece. Our intention was to leave from here too, but we ended up staying. Before I arrived in Greece, I had a different impression of it, but then I liked it and it seemed to me like nice country with many sights and very kind people. Here they look after and respect immigrants.

I go to school and have very good friends. I also have great dreams about my future that I hope will someday be realised. I couldn't succeed in Iran due to my nationality, or in Afghanistan because of my gender. In Afghanistan, they have the impression that a woman must only sit at home and be a housewife, but I want to be successful in order to repay at least some of the things that my mother has done for me. My family has always supported my attempts to reach my goals. Especially my mother whom I love dearly and regard her as my role model in life, because she is very patient and resourceful and I always ask for her advice. My mother says that in order to reach my goals I have to try very hard and not to be afraid of difficulties that might lie ahead.

I have been through some difficult and some beautiful days in my life. I have tried to learn a lesson from the difficult days and keep good memories of the good ones. Problems and difficulties are a part of life, they teach us patience and make us stronger.

My goal of living in Europe is not a just for a better life, but it is also to study. As time passes, I become more accustomed to Greece and I like living here. I hope that one day the situation in my country will calm down and we will be able to return there safely.

# I miss my melancholy

By **Mohammad Mahdi Hossaini**

**M**y melancholy changes daily and I miss it. One day I feel something heavy like a mountain on my heart. The next it is a knot in my throat. On another, it is a river in my eyes. Then a sweet dream in my mind. The melancholy that grows old and tall alongside me

And now in my youth  
Among strangers and sorrows  
I live behind the bars of sadness  
In a foreign world.  
Yes I live here.  
The cause for melancholy these days  
Is the uncertainty.  
Uncertainty for the future.  
But I think about my childhood ...  
My name is Mohammad Mehdi Hossaini. I'm 16 years-old from Kandahar.  
I live in Athens in the Schisto refugee camp.  
My dream is for everyone to be free of their sorrows and to rediscover the joy and peace they are looking for.  
I want to become a neurosurgeon.



## I miss

By **Najmiah Hossaini**

I do not know whether I am upset, or have I simply become depressed? My heart beats somewhat strangely in my breast. Sometimes everything bores me: people, photographs, picture frames, memories. I get depressed whenever I wish that things were the way they used to be or that we could turn back time. If only some things could have stayed the same forever and others had never happened. Melancholy is silent, even though it has so much to say.

The tears that cloud my eyes instead of rolling down my face tell me I am depressed. On such days, I don't want to think of anything from my past, because it makes me see the world darker than ever. I laugh and I am alive, but I know that all those smiles are fake. I pretend to be happy to avoid upsetting those around me, while deep inside me there is a whirlwind of bewilderment and confusion and of dreams that seem so distant.

I say I'm fine, but do not believe me, because I miss my lost dreams, my genuine smiles and much more. I miss the days when I was really happy. There are times when I feel so removed from my past that I might just as well not have lived it.

I miss the sunlight caressing my face through the window of my room and not behind barbed wire.

I miss a house made of bricks and not of metal and fabric.

I miss a home that smells of my mother's food.

I miss those carefree smiles and eyes that are not full of tears.

I miss my lost freedom.

I miss the sky of my dreams.

I miss my tranquility.

I miss my happy heart.

I miss my memories.

Again, however, the sky of my dreams is cloudy and I have to paintfake smiles on lips that do not want to laugh.

Now, I want to ask a difficult question to my friends that feel the same and who are hoping to alleviate their feeling of melancholy through this newspaper. What do you miss most?

19 year-old Nazilla: I miss my personality, I want to be carefree, the way I used to be. I miss my old home and my girlfriends.

26 year-old Mahdiah: I miss all the things I had but never appreciated.

17 year-old Mantina: I miss my real self.

16 year-old Samira: I miss my friends and our house.

54 year-old Nashima: I miss my quiet life.

29 year-old Nazila: I miss my joy and calm.

20 year-old Farima: I miss my quiet life.

20 year-old Sokoufe: I miss my parents.

33 year-old Fahime: I miss visiting my brother's grave in Afghanistan.

39 year-old Narges: I miss the life I had a year and a half ago.

8 year-old Aktash: I miss Afghanistan.

11 year-old Mohsen: I miss my sister.

12 year-old Yunnes: I miss swimming.

18 year-old Mohamad Reza: I miss futsal.

12 year-old Fateme: I miss my dolls and our home.

11 year-old Zohal: I miss my mother and some cities of Iran.

10 year-old Arezou: I miss television and cartoons.

17 year-old Abdoltamil: I miss life outside the barbed wire.

15 year-old Gafour: I miss my mother.

# Visit to the Public Library of Nea Erythraia

We entered a library that was different from the ones we had seen before. We were impressed from the moment of our arrival when the children, aged between 8 and 10, greeted us with a smile. We were welcomed into the library, which was very peaceful. There was also a look of surprise on the faces of the children. We started introducing ourselves and got acquainted. They amazed us by writing the words that they knew in Persian on the blackboard. We were astounded by their questions. A boy of about 9 asked the first one, which broke both the ice and the silence in the entire library: "What God do you believe in?" After a moment's pause, we replied: "In Allah". They then told us they had prepared some activities for us. The whole experience was full of surprises; the children were impressed by the Persian way of reading, because we write from right to left. During this visit, we learned a lot from the children and at the end we received gifts. The memory of that day will forever remain in our minds as a lasting symbol of our friendship.



# Through Her Eyes

F. R. – 22 years old from Afghanistan

"Back home in Afghanistan, I was a student, but when the war started, we couldn't go to school anymore and girls had to stay inside the house all day. We fled to Iran but there we faced new problems. Afghan refugees were not welcomed. We were not allowed to obtain official registration in the country and we lived in fear of getting deported, so my family decided to continue our journey and try to reach Germany. We had learned that in Germany the refugees are free. They can study and work; and they will not face the same problems that we faced when we first arrived in Iran. However, the border closures have now left us stuck in Greece. We live in Elliniko Camp, but our life is not easy. It is not peaceful here, the men fight and there is a lot of frustration about our future. If I am lucky enough, I will make it to Germany eventually".

Leila's family did not have enough money to try to reach Germany together so they decided to send her youngest sister, who is now 16, to Germany and then apply for reunification. The young girl lives in a camp and as Leila proudly describes "is taking part in a lot of courses and learning a lot". In the meantime, her older sister was caught when trying to flee Iran and is now trapped there.

## My Life in Athens

I live in a camp. From my understanding, it must have been some sort of sports centre before it became my home. I think it used to be a baseball or a hockey court. Now it is filled with tents in rows. The living conditions are hard. I sleep with my family in a tent. Sharing one tent with five persons is difficult. You are never alone and do not have

much space.

I myself don't mind it however. It is not so bad for me. I am an adult who can understand what is happening and why it is happening. Mostly I am worried about the children. They don't have toys or playgrounds and they play with empty cans and stones. Sometimes when it is too hot, you cannot sit inside the tent, so children go and play by the sea.

Across the street, there is a beach and children go there to freshen up a bit. Afterwards they come back to the camp and fall asleep.

For me, it is long walks outside the camp that make my day. In Afghanistan or Iran I could never do this. I always had to walk with a man and I couldn't go wherever I wanted to go. In Greece, I enjoy this freedom. At first I didn't feel very comfortable. I felt like people were staring at me. I would sit on a bench and the person next to me would leave. But as the days went by, things started changing. After all, maybe it was me who felt uncomfortable and not the Greeks I met on my walks. I take long walks by the sea and in the city centre. And I love the fact that I can find flowers everywhere.

My favorite time of the day is when the sun goes down. The colours of the sky make me feel a bit blue but at the same time calm. Every evening I get this feeling. It is like a deep sadness.

But then I take my long walks and see how beautiful life around me is and I feel better. Like the life of this couple I met in a hill close to the Acropolis. They are safe and loved. I wish someday all of us will be like them, safe and loved.

*This story is part of the Photography Project "Through Her Eyes" implemented by CARE International in cooperation with the Melissa Network, which aimed at giving you the opportunity to view urban life for refugee women and girls in Greece through their eyes.*



# Students impression from the 4th High School of Alimos

By Alexia Mavronikolaki & Eleanna Tila

One spring afternoon on a Friday two weeks ago, sixteen exceptional girls came to our school. We had known them only through their newspaper, but we immediately felt at ease with them. They made us feel as if we were their guests, as if we had gone to visit our friends. They shared their stories with us and we could have listened to them for hours. They appeared confident, dynamic, self-assured and lively. They were striving to realise their dreams more than any of us. They reminded us that if we really want something, we should try our best to achieve it; that we have the whole of our lives ahead of us and that we must not let some unpleasant moments bring us down; that however different we may be, we are all human beings with experiences, dreams and aspirations. We thank them for all of that and hope to meet them again very soon.

## Dessert Recipe: Date Balls

By Fahime Nazari

Ingredients:

1kg dates  
Half a pack (250gms) of biscuits  
2 tablespoons cocoa powder.  
1/3 cup rosewater  
200gr cooking chocolate  
1 teaspoon ground cardamom  
1/3 cup ground pistachios

Start by removing the pits from the dates, and then warm them until soft. Blend half the biscuits, the cocoa, cardamom and rosewater into the dates and knead the mixture by hand to bind the ingredients together and create a smooth dough.

Make small balls out of the mixture. Melt the chocolate. Dip the balls first in the melted chocolate then in the ground pistachios. Leave them for an hour in the refrigerator.

This is a simple and tasty dessert.

# The electric railway, one journey, a thousand pictures

*This action was part of the parallel program of the Network for Children's Rights, entitled "Contact Points"*

The project was started following the desire of teenagers living in the

refugee centers of Schisto and Elliniko (as well as in apartments throughout Athens), to get acquainted with the city. This led to the idea for a series of photographic excursions to the twenty-four stations of the Electric Railway from Piraeus to Kifisia and the areas around them. The aim was to familiarize the teenage refugees with the city in an active way, through the photographic lens. Photos were taken with their mobile phones, as teenagers are particularly comfortable with these. Beyond their acquaintance with the city, the aim of the project was to bring the teenagers into contact with local residents, passers-by and in general with the social and natural environment. It was also a means of recreation, communication and observation, allowing them to present the city through their own eyes. (We should not forget how important some of the railways stations, such as Piraeus, Omonoia, Victoria, have been to their personal journeys within Greece).

The photographs were taken by looking towards and away from the railway stations, also inside and around them. The outings were carried out weekly, with the participation of 10-20 teenage boys and girls, 2-3 youth workers and one interpreter from the "Network for Children's Rights".

A photography exhibition will take place sometime in the next few months, resulting from the approximately one thousand photographs taken, while some of the material may be published in the "Migratory Birds" newspaper.



# Herat Traditions

By Zahra Habibi & Atefe Sarvari

**H**erat is one of the four major cities in Afghanistan and the second biggest after Kabul, the capital.

The city has excellent architecture, as it is the most important cultural and artistic centre of the country. Also, because it is on the border with Iran and Turkmenistan it is strategically placed for industry and is therefore one of the largest industrial and commercial centres of Afghanistan.

The great river Hari flows next to the city. The inhabitants of Herat speak Farsi. Since 1991, many people have moved there from all over Afghanistan.

In addition to good fruit, the city of Herat has very good vines and is famous for its saffron. In general, the traditional foods of Herat are very tasty. Examples are Yitsbari and Yalour Tors.

Herat's traditional clothes are handmade and sewn by women. Women's clothes have patterns and flowers, while men usually wear a hat and traditional costume.

Ramadan is one of the months that is of particular importance to Muslims. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an and Muslims believe that in this month God forgives all sins. Everyone fasts during Ramadan, while Iftar gives people the opportunity to hand out food to the poor and those in need. They pray and read the Qur'an, ask for forgiveness from God, and cleanse their body and soul. Muslims believe that the Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadan and that during that month they are guests of God. In Herat, every evening during Ramadan, all the relatives gather around the table when the day's fasting is over, they eat together and pray.

The end of the month of Ramadan is a great festival and in Herat people make special preparations for it. They clean their homes and buy sweets, wear new clothes and cook nice food. They go to the cemeteries and pray for their loved ones who are no longer with them. Some go to their grandparents' homes and eat together. The end of Ramadan is a three-

day holiday. During this time, families who have engaged daughters and sons make special preparations and send gifts and food to the bride and the groom.

### Weddings in Herat

In Herat, the boy's family decides how and when their son must marry. The groom has to ask the bride's family for her hand and this is typically done three times. If the bride's family does not give its consent, the wedding will not take place. The groom always takes flowers and sweets when asking for her hand. In some areas, the bride and groom do not see each other before the marriage. In Herat, they are allowed to talk together before the wedding.

If the answer is positive, both families will then go to the market to buy clothes and wedding rings. It is customary for the bride's family to make some demands on the groom, such as to pay the "Mahr" and provide a dowry for the bride. If the groom agrees to the requests of the bride and her family, the first celebration, the "sweet feast", takes place. Then comes the engagement to formalise the relationship, followed by the wedding itself. This is a huge feast, attended by many guests.

### The Eid

Eid or Ghorban is the second most important Muslim festival. It commemorates the story of Abraham, when God ordered him to slaughter a lamb. At this feast, everyone in Herat goes to the mosque to say the Eid prayer, they then embrace and wish each other a long life. They buy lamb and sweets and go to their relatives' homes.

### Noruz

Noruz is an ancient festival. People buy new clothes and "Haft Seen" nuts and sweets as part of the preparations. Noruz lasts two weeks.

### About us

Zahra Habibi 17 years old from beautiful Herat:

I have many dreams, but above all I wish for peace and security in my country. I love my family and I wish the best for them.

Atefe Sarvari from Herat:

I hope the women in my country will be free and successful. I love my family and I wish them the best.

I hope to become a dentist in the future.

Problems exist, but they are not the end. Life goes on.



# MIGRATORY BIRDS

## Editorial board

Aristea Protonotariou

Mahdiah Hossaini

Najmiah Hossaini

## Contributors

Atefe Sarvari

Elham Esmaili

Fahime Nazari

Fateme Nazari

Ferishte Esmaili

Hajar Azizi

Madinah Zafari

Mahdiah Hossaini

Mohammad Mahdi Hossaini

Mohammad Reza Hossaini

Najmiah Hossaini

Samira Karimi

Sara Hossaini

Zahra Habibi

**Greek to English translation and editing of English texts:** Kalliopi Karousi

**Translation of texts in Greek:** Greek association of interpreters and translators of rare languages

**Final editing of Farsi texts:** Negin Torfinezandian

**Photographer:** Parastou Hossaini

**Logo:** Michalis Papantonopoulos, Dimitris Gazis

**Contact us at:**

migratorybirds@ddp.gr

*The opinions expressed in the articles of the newspaper 'Migratory Birds' are those of their authors and do not necessarily those of the Network for Children's Rights, Save the Children, UNHCR, the European Union and the European Commission.*