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MIGRATORY BIRDS

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MIGRATORY BIRDS The newspaper produced by and for refugee, migrant and Greek youth

A whole year of Migratory Birds!

On April 14th, we celebrated the first birthday of the newspaper «Migratory Birds». We blew out the candle, cut the cake and made a wish for our «flight» to continue.

By **Mahdiah Hossaini**

A whole year has gone by with its ups and downs, smiles and tears, joys and disappointments.

This first anniversary of the newspaper brings back memories of a «film», which began in the vegetable garden of the camp at Schisto. 15 Afghan and one Greek girl took part in this film, seated on a piece of plastic under the shade of the trees, taking part in various photography lessons.

The trigger for the creation of the newspaper was the arrival of various reporters in the camp and their rebuttal by the inhabitants, who believed that any interview they gave would never reach the people it should. And even if it did go beyond the limits of the camp with the aim of contributing to the solution of various problems, nobody would actually be particularly interested.

And so, we decided to become reporters ourselves, to become the voices of the refugee world and to record those voices in our very own newspaper.

Our journalistic activities began with the newspaper that we named «Migratory Birds», because all the contributors cherished the hope that one day they would fly in the direction of happiness and joy. We never gave up; we persevered, despite being mocked and criticised.

Some girls in our team had to leave us along the journey because they flew far away. We shed tears but we also wished them well on their road to a better future. Meanwhile we devoted ourselves to the newspaper, whose first edition was the culmination of several months of hard work, during which we had to deal with disparaging comments and a variety of problems. Our Greek friend stood by us throughout all those ups and downs, through moments of tears and times of joy, encouraging us and supporting our every step.





Mahdiah Hossaini

What can one say about Mahdiah! There are not enough words to describe her talent, intelligence and broadmindedness. A gifted actress, she is so much at ease in front of an audience. At last, a woman from Afghanistan with courage.



When the newspaper was finally printed a few months later, it inevitably filled us with pleasure, satisfaction and pride. A proper newspaper, a supplement to the **Efimerida ton Syntakton**, a sweet thank you and a “reward” for all our efforts. In the end, our paper was very warmly received by people both in and outside the camp.

It was through our newspaper that people became aware of the true extent of our problems. They felt for us, cried for us and even cried with us.

I will never forget how one Afghan resident of the camp came to our container after having read the paper, congratulated us and declared proudly that he would support us. He expressed such wonderful positive feelings. That was when the Afghan men in the camp generally started to offer active support. I should also stress the warm welcome that the Greek people afforded us, and invited us to visit various schools and university departments. Another major success for us was that issues of our newspapers were on display at both the 14th and 15th Thessaloniki International Book Fairs.

Another interesting fact is that **“Migratory Birds”** is the first newspaper with articles in Farsi to be published in Greece.

All these things that I have mentioned have been steps that have helped us move upwards on our journey. We are also encouraged by the fact that Afghan boys have worked with us ever since the second issue. Moreover, we have discovered that slowly but surely, our newspaper is acquiring more and more supporters outside Greece, for example in other European countries such as Spain (where **“Migratory Birds”** appear in Spanish), Germany and Italy.

Certain articles have been translated and posted on various websites, even in the United States.

We write about the reasons and desires that lead to migration, and about our ambitions. We appreciate our supporters and show them the road to

hope that started in that lovely vegetable garden in the camp, while what we portray ranges from the results of one grandfather’s efforts to the complaints of Afghan women. One Afghan woman wrote a very positive review saying that the newspaper didn’t contain the simple words of an Afghan girl but of a very brave woman. That description was very satisfying because I was being indirectly called “the ‘brave’ Afghan girl”, but at the same time it saddened me because we Afghan women do not support each other as much and as often as we should. So how can we expect the men to believe in our power?

After the 3rd issue, the newspaper went from strength to strength with the involvement of young people from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Greece. Today, with its 7th issue, the newspaper **“Migratory Birds”** is moving forward with an energy that very few people could have foreseen.

In fact, we have just come to the end of our first year. We have flown to great heights and we would like to thank all those that have helped us, supported us and stood by us. We would also like to thank those who disagreed with us. Their point of view doubled our resolve to prove them wrong and meant that we valued our improvement and expansion even more.

We don’t know what the future holds for us, but we hope that our newspaper will be published for many years to come. And even if it does close down for whatever reason, we will still have the satisfaction of knowing that we wrote, described and revealed our memories and experiences, as well as the living conditions of refugees in general. It is enough for us that at some point you became a part of the pain of your fellow men and women and that you noticed us.

We wrote about the camp and you enjoyed the peace of your homes. We described the rainstorm and you believed in the rainbow that followed. And if we wrote about wars, you believed in the coming of peace.

We simply believe that matters of the heart will always touch other hearts. My closing wish is for the **“Migratory Birds”** to fly all over Europe, and even all over the world!

Mutual cooperation

By Abdul Rashid Mohammadi

I first heard about the newspaper “**Migratory Birds**” from my teacher at school. I learnt that a group of girls from Afghanistan had produced a newspaper and were also broadcasting a radio show, in which they described their daily lives and how they were hoping to expand their activities. Right there and then I decided I wanted to be part of the team, not knowing of course whether they would accept me or not.

Nevertheless, I tried to get in touch with them. At the meeting I saw that there were others that had come along to join the team. Aristeia and the girls explained how we could take part and how each one of us could undertake one aspect of the proposed expansion of the newspaper.

I registered and despite my nervousness at that first meeting, I was warmly welcomed the following week and made to feel very relaxed. I have been a member of the team since then.

I used to think that journalism was easy, but after getting seriously involved in it I now realise that it is quite the opposite. Nevertheless, I continue to be a member of the group. I have learnt a lot and I am still learning every day.

I am so happy to be a part of this team.



Abdul Rashid Mohammadi

Abdul Rashid was one of the first boys to join the newspaper. At one stage, he was the only male in a room full of girls, with all the awkwardness and difficulty that brings. He remains bold and is a great believer in change. He has overcome every difficulty and carved out his own path, with the full support of his mother. We really must congratulate him.

From disappointment to hope

By **Zahra Habibi** and **Morteza Rahimi**

The days go by, people come and go. Families, children. We arrived last year, now there are new arrivals. The place, however, is the same.

Two years have passed since Schisto camp opened, and we would now like to describe the conditions there.

We are two young journalists from the newspaper “**Migratory Birds**” and we live in the camp. We decided to discuss some of the issues with some of the long-term residents.

In the beginning, conditions were tough. The tents were surrounded by water, the summer heat was unbearable, and people faced many difficulties. There were not many residents to begin with, but their numbers increased in a very short space of time. At one stage, the entire family, including mothers and babes in arms, would have to stand in a long queue in the searing heat in order to obtain their food rations, which were actually totally inedible. Then in winter, the rain filled the tents with filthy water and destroyed everything.

Basic hygiene was virtually non-existent, resulting in the transmission of diseases, such as psoriasis, primarily amongst the camp’s young children. People had to queue to have a bath with cold water in the same way that they had to queue for food. Everyone felt unsafe; there was no sanitation, and no information. Nor were there any organisations to offer support.

As time went by however, various organisations began to come into contact with us.

Even so, nobody provided education for the young. Eventually, and despite adverse conditions, some people started offering learning support and giving lessons to a few of the children and youths in the camp.

A short while later, the desire for camp residents’ voices to be heard prompted some girls to set up and publish a newspaper. This contributed greatly to the necessary improvements that were carried out in the camp.

One year after Schisto opened, the tents were replaced by containers and the distribution of food was replaced by a small sum of money with which residents could buy what they liked. There is now a cleaning company.

The children now go to school, sanitary conditions are greatly improved – relative to how they were before – and things are generally better. We are visited by a variety of organisations that help solve our problems one way or another. However, the camp’s residents still don’t feel totally safe. There are nationals from the camp countries and there needs to be correct, accurate information for everyone about everything.

We spoke with Mr **Giorgos Kraloglou**, who works at the **Ministry of Migration Policy** and has been responsible for the refugee camp at Schisto for as long as we have been here.

What was this place before it became a refugee camp?

Schisto was an abandoned army camp. It took just seven days and nights of continuous labour by the army to turn it into a refugee camp. It was filled with individual tents as well as some larger ones, providing shelter for around 2,000 people. It began operating officially on February 22nd 2016 and housed Afghans, Syrians, Iranians and Iraqis.

What are conditions like now?

Containers have replaced tents and as you can appreciate, this meant that we had to carry out various other works, such as plumbing and electrical. We renovated the two pre-existing large buildings and created 22 rooms in one and six in the other. These rooms serve as classrooms for informal lessons for teenagers who don’t go to school. They are taught Greek, English, geography etc. We also set up a nursery school.

What is the present capacity of the camp?

Because containers take up more space, the camp can accommodate a maximum of 1000 people.

What is security like? Where can someone turn to if they have a problem?

If someone has a problem, we will help him or her. The Greek police are present in the camp and if someone doesn’t feel safe, they can report to them. The police will investigate and find a solution.

Finally, I would like to say that we do hope that people who live here are leading a good life.

The conclusion therefore is that tough conditions don’t last long. All we need is to have hope and the strength to make the necessary effort in order to eliminate them.



Zahra & Morteza

This is the first “**Migratory Birds**” collaboration between a boy and a girl. **Zahra** and **Morteza** have written an article together and are proud to be an example of one of the main reasons this newspaper exists.



Hand in hand for the best

By **Mirna Aslan**

Time is extremely valuable, not just for people but for society as a whole, and we usually express this concept by saying “time is money”. We therefore have an obligation to make the best of our time by doing something useful.

The wheel of time is constantly turning. It doesn't stop, it waits for no man, and so it is wise not to waste a single hour of one's life with no gain. I want to talk about a wonderful experience in my life.

Refugees in Greece, myself included, have nothing to do but make the most of our time by learning, occupying ourselves with our hobbies and undertaking activities that will help us overcome the trauma that has affected us all. I am talking about the war that left marks of fear and panic on our souls and left us trapped within four walls. Our only choices were to wait or to flee from a painful reality.

It tore us away from our studies, our work, our needs. Here I can find everything I need to build my new life, to carry on and progress further. I became a journalist in order to express myself and all that is hidden within me, to write, to draw, to speak and to be useful to those around me. I managed all this only after the newspaper “**Migratory Birds**” adopted us. Much has changed in my life and in the lives of others since then. We started by meeting many people from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Greece and Syria.

Later we became a team and shared ideas, sweet smiles, zest for work and love for the team. We have become one hand, although we each still have different ambitions and ideas.

All this happened through the newspaper, which celebrates its first birthday and is still growing and thriving thanks to the persistence and hard work of everyone involved.

I personally want to continue making every effort to offer my best each time. The success of a newspaper relies on cooperation, hard work and the unity of its workforce. I hope the success and spark of the newspaper will continue for many more years and that we will continue to offer our very best. I hope we succeed in keeping our reader's interest in everything new we write. We wish the whole team, including myself, progress, success and all the best.



Mirna Aslan

Mirna is the only girl in the family, with two young brothers. There is a great deal of strength hidden inside her, more than she herself can imagine. She expresses her hope not just through her articles but also by planning for the future. A true artist, she will soon reach great heights..





Parastou Hossaini

We were very moved by the news that **Parastou** managed to reach Germany and become reunited with the rest of her family just a few days ago. She made us all very happy with her contribution to the editorial team and the group responsible for all the photographic material. Photography is now a way of life for her and it will surely be her future. We will miss you!

Life looks different through a lens

By **Parastou Hossaini**

It was towards the end of 2016 when some of us Afghan girls living in the refugee camp at Schisto decided to produce our own newspaper. Each one of us undertook a specific job such as article writing, editing etc. We then decided that each article should be illustrated with photographs to add clarity to the subject matter. There was one condition: the photographs had to be taken by us. Because I have a particular love of photography and pictures, that was the task assigned to me. And that's how those happy days began. In my opinion, photography has a magical aspect and an orderly approach that can even save lives. It certainly did in my case.

Before joining the team, even before arriving in Greece, I was barred from taking part in such pursuits. Photography was a beginning, the spark that lit the way to additional activities, because it brought me into contact with people and society. With the publication of the first issue, which featured photographs taken exclusively by me, I observed a very positive and enthusiastic response by people. Their approval encouraged me hugely.

Taking pictures and having to decide how and where to place them according to the subject matter, brought me in touch with other people in the world of photography. Some offered well-meaning advice and helped me improve both my photography and how to position my photos. A further benefit from all this is that both my Greek and my English have improved greatly.

Nowadays, in this digital age, there is no excuse to avoid communicating and illustrating our memories. Also, when I take photographs I feel my self-esteem rising to new heights. I am living in an environment where I need to stand on my own two feet and meet my obligations and responsibilities. I try to improve as much as I can, to be creative and take pride in everything I do. Naturally, the more positive the feedback, the more encouraged and responsible I feel.

Throughout this whole time, people have made many productive and practical comments, and these have helped me hugely.

I can truly say that I keep my soul alive through photography. It releases my strength and develops my thinking. And whenever we undertake pleasant activities, all our worries dissolve away and our negative thoughts disappear.

It seems that the photographs I take also portray my personality. Some people find it difficult to reveal their nature and their thoughts by describing them, so they find some other artistic means to “present” themselves to other people. I try to maintain a specific style and format in my photographs so that they stand out from the rest and are therefore more recognisable to others.

Before starting to take pictures, I never imagined that my photography would become my career path and my future, or that they would be displayed in various media.

As we all know, photography is an art, so it definitely leaves a deep imprint on a person's thinking and imagination. Artists are always looking to create something new. All aspects of art – painting, pottery, sculpture and photography – play their part in the formation of the artists' thought process and attention. In my case, photography is what made my brain and my eyes function and operate concurrently. You take a photo of scene, you realise how original it actually was and how many emotions and subtleties it encompasses.

Naturally, a photographer's visual angle is different than that in other art forms.

Photos of happy moments, such as a wedding, a journey, a gathering of friends or family, even a cookery lesson, can give us much pleasure. We will still be able to appreciate them in the distant future when they will have become memories of our lives.

Some people ask why I chose photography. The answer has its roots in personality, preferences and the individual's viewpoint. I personally chose it because I enjoyed capturing memories and also because I like the whole process: the camera, the shapes, the flashlight, even the tripod... they give me a strange feeling and put me in a good mood.

Some people think that photography is simply the pressing of a button, but that's not true. Photography is a work of art and it requires learning several concepts, information and techniques that will gradually give us the necessary experience.

I personally try to keep my pictures simple and to allow the simplicity to grasp people's attention. I adore black and white photography, because whereas I believe colour stimulates external emotions, black and white brings out the soul.

One thing is certain: life looks different through a lens.

How will the memory survive?

By Muhammed Najem

Hi. My name is **Muhammed Najem** and I come from the city of Arbin in Eastern Ghouta, the region around Damascus, and I am 15 years old.

Recently I have been trying to take videos with my phone camera in order to show the world what we are going through. I wanted to describe my plight and the plight of people here and to reveal what the regime is doing to us. I wanted to show the truth that this regime is hiding from the world, I wanted to change my situation and that of those around me, but I didn't know what to expect.

Since the beginning of 2018, the bombings against us have increased. The regime imposed an unprecedented blockade by increasing the prices of all goods to a level that we couldn't afford. The ghost of hunger began to threaten young and old. Later, around the middle of February a violent campaign started.

The situation in Eastern Ghouta cannot be described. Fighter planes carried out a ferocious campaign, targeting buildings. People went down into their basements and their hearts filled with fear with the intensity of the raids and the amount of destruction.

The fighter planes carried devastating missiles, which were followed by

weapons of mass destruction in the entire region. They fired missiles, carried out airstrikes, then dropped cluster bombs, "white phosphorous", barrel bombs, and finally "poison gases". I didn't have a clue about any of these, but slowly young and old began to learn the various types of weapons used.

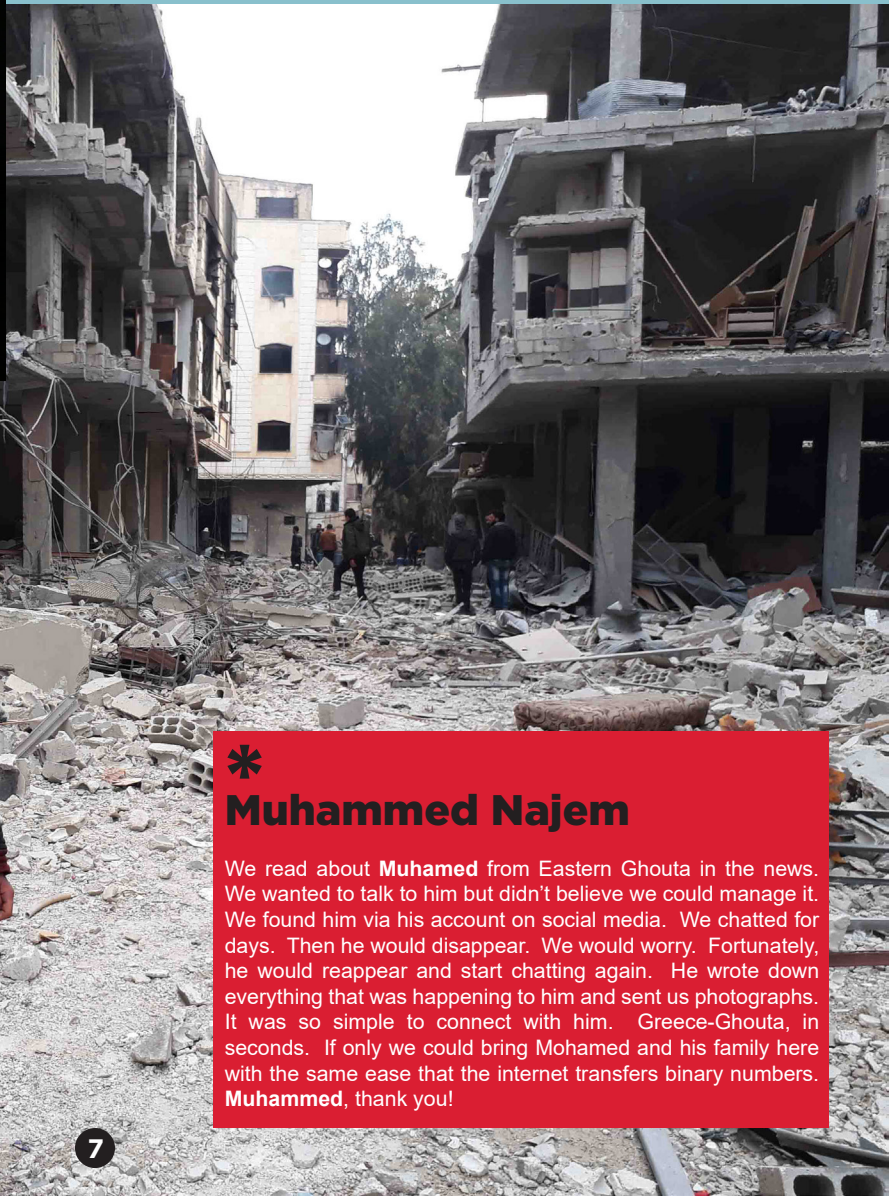
We lived in our basement for a whole month, unable to see the light of day or distinguish between day and night because of the intensity of the bombing. We suffered a great deal from lack of food and bread, as well as from illnesses such as bronchitis, and allergies.

All this was nothing compared to our fear, which was unbearable. Fear paralysed our limbs and choked us. The regime began to target hospitals and basements. Our country witnessed many terrible massacres, we shed many tears and had no idea what fate had in store for us. We began to prefer death to this living hell. Hundreds of dead and thousands of injured, some serious, paralysis, mutilation and much more. Our country was totally destroyed and we were forced to flee.

The first time we emerged from our basement, we wanted to see the sun. Instead, we saw destruction all around us. It was a scene that made us cry more than we had done during the bombings themselves. Everyone went to see whether his or her own house was still standing or whether it had been destroyed. We lost everything; each family lost its house and at least one family member. People started gathering their belongings in despair, preparing to leave.

I arrived in Idlib with my family, not knowing what awaited us. What next? The unknown is preying on us. I stayed with my family in a small house. I had very few clothes. I was sad, but happy to be alive, to be well and to be with my family, my mother and my siblings, but I can never forget what I lived through.

If the body survives, does the memory also?



Muhammed Najem

We read about **Muhammed** from Eastern Ghouta in the news. We wanted to talk to him but didn't believe we could manage it. We found him via his account on social media. We chatted for days. Then he would disappear. We would worry. Fortunately, he would reappear and start chatting again. He wrote down everything that was happening to him and sent us photographs. It was so simple to connect with him. Greece-Ghouta, in seconds. If only we could bring Mohamed and his family here with the same ease that the internet transfers binary numbers. **Muhammed**, thank you!



Najmiah Hossaini

Najmiah, Parastou's sister, who has joined her in Germany, was one of the first editors of the paper, together with Mahdiah. It's as if a single day hasn't gone by since she left Greece: she writes, plans, contributes, advises and guides our team in her own inimitable way. You may be far, but actually, you are here with us!



The birth of a dream

By Najmiah Hossaini

Congratulations "**Migratory Birds**", you are the newspaper that soars above the blue sky, a sky that is and always will be blue for us, even though your sky was created behind barbed wire.

You were strong enough not to abandon your dreams and ambitions; you kept them all alive in your heart until you could get close to them and make them come true.

You knew that if your dreams disappeared you would turn into a featherless fowl, unable to fly.

You knew that all we migratory birds were ensnared in life's trap and were reaching the end of a hazy road full of barbed wire. But you never forgot how to fly, and by soaring over the tops of all those obstacles you managed to overcome the barriers that people put in your way and set yourself free.

14th April 2018

You began your beautiful flight a year ago today. May you enjoy the same wonderful feelings and experiences that we all deserve. You started writing about our problems and difficulties. Your stories helped alleviate our pain – at least in theory – and led us to look at our journey more positively, to put aside our negative thoughts, to overcome our sorrow, pain and tears, and to turn them all into determination. This determination conquered everything negative and filled us with feelings of optimism and hope, because we realised that someone was listening to us, someone was responding to our aspirations, someone was hurting for us. That "someone" is you. The newspaper "**Migratory Birds!**"

Today was unique because our tears did not upset us; on the contrary, they made us happy because they were tears of joy for your anniversary. We never felt as much joy in any of the last seven issues as we did when you first began circulating. Your launch made us so happy and hopeful that our dreams would come true and it really did spread our wings. The year that went by was no ordinary one; it was full of life, a huge memory and a long flight that lasted a whole year.

All this is just to say thank you and to tell you how grateful we are to you, our readers, for being the sweetest way to heal our broken wings.

"**Migratory Birds**" has taught us that as long as we can smile and love one another, life becomes more beautiful and the world around us more attractive and positive.



Madinah Zafari

Best wishes from the team to **Madinah** and her family for a safe journey. We will hear further news of the trip and of her arrival in Germany in our next issue.

A New Beginning

By **Madinah Zafari**

Every arrival is followed by a departure, every road comes to an end, each dawn is followed by a sunset and every welcome is followed by a farewell.

The time has finally come for me to gather my belongings and prepare to move to another place and head in a different direction. When I first arrived in Greece, I did not expect to stay for so many years; years filled with difficulties but also many delights, years that left enough marks on me to strengthen me mentally and enrich my experience. This experience helped me realise that with effort, patience and self-assurance, success is always possible.

The birth of this newspaper is one example. When we started, we couldn't possibly have imagined how successful we would be. When I first settled in Greece I faced many hardships, but instead of trying to adapt and tackle them, all my thoughts were focused on finding an escape route.

This attitude made my life even more disagreeable.

It took a while for me to pull myself together and abandon this desire to flee. I became braver, which helped my quality of life as well as many other things. I met a lot of people and I made friends, some of which are now my favourite people in the world.

Yet, now the time has come to abandon this place and those people and move in a different direction. To continue the journey that began on the most treacherous paths imaginable. Had I known then, when I first set off, that I would end up here where I am now, I would have been unbelievably happy. Things are not as they were. I now have feelings for this city and for its people and my "goodbye" is proving rather difficult. I have packed both good and bad memories in my suitcase. Those memories were created during the best years of my life, where people who had the greatest influence on me played the biggest part.

Life is but a crossing. We all need to try our best to overcome any obstacles in our way, both the easy and the difficult ones, even if this means, as in my case, abandoning a country, loved ones and memories. One thing we should never do is cease trying.

I wish to end by saluting Greece and its people.

In a land far far away

By **Elia Sharifi**

Once upon a time, there lived a boy and his family under a blue sky in a land far far away. The boy lived with his mother, father and little sister. The boy had a friend the same age as him from a neighbouring family. They would go to school together, come back together and play together. They would return from school, rest, have their meal and do their homework. They were both very kind and would

forgive each other everything. After finishing their homework, they would both help their mothers with her chores.

In the afternoons, they would go out and their time was filled with play and laughter. They didn't know what sadness was and they would always resolve things between themselves very easily, as if they never had any problems. That attitude was the reason why they never quarrelled.

All the inhabitants of that place were so kindhearted and affectionate that it never occurred to the two friends to put each other down. There was a great deal of solidarity, affection and love between them. Everyone coexisted happily.

Everyone was faithful to the "bible" of that far away land, that had a name beginning with love. Years and years went by with people being fixated by that love. The story continued until one day....

* **Elia Sharifi**

A boy with the desire to keep doing things, to take part in presentations, interviews, lessons and who is open to any suggestions that might interest him. In this article, he transports the reader to such a calm and magical world. Suddenly, darkness! Such a distressing depiction of his life and then.... War!





Mourad Ayed

Mourad from Syria is shy and particular. But when he decides to talk or write, he is transformed into an unstoppable deluge of words, sentences and ideas.



A child denied his childhood

By Mourad Ayed

Children are not as weak as you think. They are not just interested in playing, but can contribute to society and its future. This is especially true of children born during wartime. Do you know how many children today are having to take care of their families? How many find themselves far from their loved ones in order to survive? How many of those children have lost their parents, been orphaned and forced to become guardians of their younger siblings? How many children are coerced into carrying weapons and fighting against their will? Today's children are not simply children; they are men, fighters and family guardians.

I will tell you the story of my childhood. I am someone who never knew what childhood meant, but I never once gave up hope, despite the difficult economic and social conditions that I experienced. I was born in a small village in the country district of Qamishli (Khirbet al-Thib). I never knew what it meant to play or what being happy was. I still don't know what childhood means, as if I had been born at the wrong time.

I am now a young man, whom life and war have forced to work since he was twelve in order to support his family, while also going to school. I sacrificed my childhood years for my father, mother and siblings because the war in Syria left my father, who had previously looked after our every need, without a job. I have two handicapped brothers, whom I had to look after and a third brother who has been missing since the beginning of the war and about whom nobody knows anything. I am the only one who helps and supports the family, even though I am the youngest.

I have had to hide my tears and sadness and bury my childhood forever. I have had to do it for my father, mother and brothers so that they wouldn't have to rely on someone else. I did whatever job was available; I went to school in the morning, worked in the afternoon and studied at night. That's exactly how my life was. I forgot that I was a child, all I wanted was to see my loved ones smiling and I succeeded despite the difficulties.

I was happy, but war and fate stopped me from enjoying even that life. The war forced me to take the decision to leave my country and my family with all their difficulties behind. I left when I was 15. I decided to go to Turkey. As you all know, the only way to do that is to travel illegally.

I took endless routes, during which I didn't know whether I would survive

or perish. I made three failed attempts to cross into Turkey, all three on foot. We walked six to eight hours every day, but Turkish soldiers arrested us each time. They used violence against us, they hit us, then sent us back to Syria.

I managed to cross into Turkey on the fourth attempt but Turkey was not the end of the journey. I had to continue into Europe and Greece. I made two attempts to enter on foot but Greek soldiers arrested us and sent us back to Turkey.

We slept in forests, ate insects and spent endless nights in the cold and the rain! We would hide like rats in holes under the trees. We were like goods, bartered for by buyers and sellers. The traffickers would say to each other "How much for this piece?". They would trade human lives like animals.

In the end, I had no other choice but to try the "death boats". I boarded one, hoping to get to Greece. No matter what I say about that boat, you can never feel the fear or live the horror I experienced, because it's one thing hearing about it and quite another to live through it slowly and tortuously.

It was a freezing night, around midnight; there were around 25 of us in the small boat, which was less than four metres long. There were many women and children among us. We boarded the boat, but at that moment we couldn't think of Europe or a better life, only death, nothing else.

The boat began crossing the sea. It wasn't a 2-3 hour journey; for 6 hours we were in the middle of the sea and the only things we could see around us were darkness and the deadly water. It was that same sea that swallowed thousands of people who had attempted to cross before us.

I held the hand of a small girl, just three years old and I will never forget when she said to me "Uncle, I'm frightened". How did she know what fear was? "Close your eyes, little one," I replied, "and pray to God that nothing bad will befall us till six in the morning". Fortunately, we arrived in Greece after spending 6 hours in that deadly sea, but the journey does not end here.

I love Greece very much, but I am sorry to say I can't live here as long as my family remains in that difficult situation and needs my support. Besides, my life in Greece has become difficult.

That is the life of children from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and all the countries that are suffering as a result of war. We never knew peace nor did we enjoy our childhood. We may be young but war has made us appear older than we really are.

I hope my family will join me here and I hope that every child will be reunited with its own family.



Fatimah Hossaini

Fatimah was one of the first contributors to the newspaper and wrote her first article sitting on the ground under a tree in the camp at Schisto. She observed the reaction of parents when they heard that a group of teenage Afghan girls was going to produce a newspaper. She noticed changes in behaviour and saw strict fathers turning into the girls' most enthusiastic supporters. It was quite amazing!

Permanent guardian

By **Fatimah Hossaini**

Family is the most important thing in the world and I thank God for this blessing. My family has always supported me, regardless of the circumstances, including (and especially) the difficult ones. My parents and my family have done a lot for me. They taught me how to tell the difference between the right and wrong path and how I must always take the right one.

We had a lot of criticism when we first set up the newspaper, but my parents encouraged me and gave me much positive support. They

shared their own experiences with me so that I could use them in my own life. My parents are my best friends. If I am happy in what I do, I owe it exclusively to their love and encouragement. Without their support, I could not have become a member of the newspaper team. I was so afraid of failure on that particular road, but they taught me that every setback should be taken as a strong lesson on how to improve.

Despite the difficult conditions in the camp, my parents stood by me and created a conducive atmosphere, allowing me to meet the responsibilities that I had undertaken in the best possible way. I now want to thank them in this way for all the sacrifices they have made for me, for their love and guidance.

Essentially, parents put their own happiness second in order to help us achieve our goals. As **Desmond Tutu**, a pioneer of peace and fighter for human rights in South Africa said: "You don't choose your families, but they are God's gift to you". And so I thank God for this priceless gift and hope that I have been able to show my gratitude up till now, that I have managed to live up to their expectations even a little, and that I have made them proud.

Comments

Congratulations on the fantastic work you do. Your newspaper shows total professionalism.

4th Public High School, Nea Smyrni

Congratulations for this great initiative and the project «**Migratory Birds**»
6th Primary School, Aigaleo

That is a great media that shows the great work that **Network for Children's Rights** is doing. In **AYRE** we feel so glad for being a small part of this project.

AYRE Solidario-Asociacion de Ayuda al RefugiadoAsociación de Ayuda al Refugiado

We are in total awe of the work you are doing at the newspaper, and we request the right to republish certain articles.

Dragonera Rossa [dragonerarossa.gr]

All of us here at the NGO **More Mosaic** in Sweden would like to extend our warmest congratulations for the amazing work you have done in the newspaper «**Migratory Birds**». There is no better way to describe the daily life of refugees than their personal testimonies and their own very vivid accounts of actual events, which touch every reader. What is more we believe that the supplement gives readers such as us the ability to obtain a picture not only of what these people are going through but also of what they are feeling, because it gives us the opportunity to reassess our own lives. Respectfully yours

The More Mosaic Team

Let us take this opportunity to congratulate you on the initiative and all the hard work we know it requires. We would very much like to give the **TEEN SPIRIT** Facility for unaccompanied teenagers the chance to participate.

Nostos

This is so beautifully done. We would love to republish two of these stories on **Refugees Deeply**.

Refugees Deeply

I read your article about the mutli-lingual story "Little-I-Am-Me" in the

January 2018 issue of "**Migratory Birds**". Thank you so much. I am its Greek translator and I would really love it to reach all refugee children. I am available for any help and assistance you may require.

Respectfully yours for the work you do and for the magazine.

Anastasia Kalantsi-Aziz

We are writing to thank you most sincerely for kindly sending us the information pack and more specifically the newspapers relating to refugee matters. You have contributed greatly to the need for information and education of the children living at the "**Frixos**" Accomodation Centre for Unaccompanied Minors" run by **ARSIS** in Alexandroupoli. You have made it possible for them to access some of their most basic rights, and have simultaneously supported the work of the social centres and projects of **ARSIS**. We deeply value your assistance, because your generosity contributes both materially and morally to the success of our social work. Together we can try to bring some small relief to the daily needs of people.

ARSIS – "Frixos" Accomodation Centre for Unaccompanied Minors

Please accept our warmest thanks for the excellent presentation of the issues relating to the rights of children and the publication of the newspaper "**Migratory Birds**" (...) on Thursday May 19th 2018, during our Themed Week.

Neo Faliro High School

Congratulations yet again for the excellent work that you do. **Organization Earth** is delighted to offer you as much support as possible.

Organization Earth

It was a pleasure talking to you, but I feel happiest for the children that come into contact with you!... Congratulations.

Petros Golestani

Hi! I read your March issue, which really thrilled and moved me! It may be written by young people, but it is aimed at all ages, and I say this as a 68 year-old. Tomorrow, I plan to take the latest issue to the town's (Ierapetra's) old people's home and read the article on **SUCCESS** to the residents. It's fantastic! Thanks to all of you! Carry on pursuing your dreams!

Susanne Halikia

I am sending you a PDF version of the news report we did of your visit to Chania and the newspaper you produce. I personally enjoyed talking to you very much. Keep well, and carry on with your efforts!

Dimitri Maridakis – Chania News



Migration and adversity in Afghanistan

By **Fatime Sedaqat**

Living conditions in Afghanistan get worse by the day, putting the lives of thousands of children, young people and their families in danger. Many of them, who have lost their homes, seek refuge in neighbouring Iran, where the same language is spoken. However, they are not welcomed there, nobody pays them any attention, and so they are forced to attempt the great move, the frightening and high-risk journey that threatens the safety of their children and families. What is more, when they arrive in Turkey they find the borders closed. And then their hope evaporates.

In Turkey, there are many families, including newborns, who sleep rough on pavements, and many of them lack food and water. According to a report by Deutsche Welle they are hoping that international organisations and the European Union will rescue them, but the Turkish government turns a blind eye to their plight. In many cases, the authorities send them back with the logic that this might put others off trying to migrate.

The question is, if these people felt safe, would they really put their own lives plus their children's lives in danger in this way? It's so obvious that the reason they do this, is quite simply because they are hoping for a better tomorrow.

Let's ponder on this in a humanitarian way, let's make ourselves aware of the misery of these people, who are going through hell in order to find one small glimmer of happiness and hope in your country.

We saw and heard that on the 22nd April 2018 57 people lost their lives and thousands were injured in a terrorist attack. What do you know about the 57 dead, about their families who are mourning them, about the injured and their families who are also suffering? People are executed and murdered every day. Had that fatal attack, which took place in Afghanistan, happened in another country, would the reaction of the international community have been the same?



Fatime Sedaqat

If you ask the youngest member of the group, known as **Fatime Jun**, how old she is she will answer 12. That has been her reply since 2016, when we first met her. Always the same. She makes us laugh and reminds us that we grow older by the day, even if we do not want to! **Fatijun** no longer wears a headscarf, she goes to school and we see how proud her father is of her at every meeting of the team's parents. Very soon, her articles will be written directly in Greek.



MIGRATORY BIRDS

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The opinions expressed in the articles of the newspaper «Migratory Birds» are those of their authors and are not necessarily those of the Network for Children's Rights, UNICEF, the European Commission, the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – Office in Greece, or the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation.

If you use our newspaper for educational purposes or as part of any other activity, kindly let us know by emailing us at migratorybirds@ddp.gr

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