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

We embrace diversity and build peace

The exciting journey of the 10th issue of "Migratory Birds" begins in tandem with the new school year. The news reports, stories and poems that you will read in this newspaper, combine to create a real-life encyclopaedia, which is updated regularly and reappears every couple of months, ready for your use.

What we have before us is a "parallel school", not only for our contributors but also for you, our readers. It is a powerful tool, which reminds us that a journalist's mission involves something that isn't always easy and doesn't necessarily come naturally: to try to obtain an in-depth, true understanding of people outside one's personal comfort zone, to communicate with an audience that isn't restricted to readers in our own circle, and to embrace diversity and build peace together. People can be taught to accept diversity. After all, that is one of the aims of our newspaper. We come face to face with stereotypes and difficulties on a daily basis, yet this is what gives us the strength to continue this vital work of ours.

The results are impressive, as are the gardens created outside the containers by residents in the refugee camp at Schisto, which you will read about in these pages. You will also read about expectation and love, a music festival for schools, and a unit of care for the elderly; about kindness that knows no bounds, the pain we feel in our damaged hearts, and the hope that was kindled inside us by a freedom fighter. All this, while three members of our team are busy preparing for the **Eurochild Conference 2018**, taking place in Croatia between October 29 and 31.

Happy reading!





Blood and Fire

By Mahdiah Hossaini

Our country is going through an unspeakable tragedy. [...] Greece is grieving and we are declaring three days of national mourning in memory of those who lost their lives". Those were the words of the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, spoken on television on July 24th, and they came as quite a shock.

Doesn't water normally put fires out? So how come water didn't extinguish this one? Why did the wind blow so violently? Why in the heat of the summer did the wind increase its speed and fan the flames?

Listening to the news took me back to that winter when I stepped onto the soft earth of your island with my frozen feet. You rushed to help me, you held me and squeezed my icy hands with your warm ones.

As soon as my eyes fell upon the beauty of your island and my heart sensed your kindness, I swore to myself that even if one day my eyes forgot, my heart never would. I prayed that one day I would be able to repay the kindness that you all showed me.

I wrote about you in this newspaper. "*You are a teacher of kindness and I am your best pupil*", I said. You were indeed my teacher and I, as the first-class pupil that I am, am hastening to help you. I wanted my help to run deep and to soak through you, and for my gratitude to flow in your veins. But while the fire was burning you, the flames of racism were shooting at me and burning me.

I went to a hospital in Athens to donate blood, but they told me that Afghans are not allowed to. I asked why and they said it was government policy and other such excuses that I didn't understand. I want to donate my blood, I said, and you need the government's permission? Am I to presume that the victims of the fire are requesting blood that is redder than an Afghan's? I walked out of the hospital with flames consuming my soul and fire burning my veins.

Dear friend, you must know that I rushed to you, as you did when I first arrived. I accepted your help with heart and soul, but my help was refused.

I went home with a broken heart, but also with the hope that the fire that continues to burn your lives, your possessions, your homes and your cities will slowly be extinguished.

Tell me now, how do you and I cope with our scorched hearts?



Freedom

By Noura Alfandli

Freedom is a much-misunderstood term. Some think it means that you can do what you like, even at the expense of harming others. Freedom however means doing what you like without harming others. It means expressing your opinion without having to die for doing so. It means living well and being vindicated, without having to pay money for justice to be done.

Most countries no longer understand the meaning of freedom because freedom of speech, opinion and life are totally suppressed. Clothes, hair, expenses, make-up, showing the hidden parts of your body, these are all superficial expressions of freedom.

As far as I am concerned, freedom is being able to exercise my rights as a human being, without crossing red lines. To be successful in my job. To express my opinions openly in society without someone saying that I must retreat into the kitchen because I am a woman and that I must stay

at home to raise my children. Freedom means living like a free woman without the ancient, barbaric restraints of society.

Freedom means deciding which is the correct path for you and then following it. To think and choose the things that characterise you without crossing the lines drawn by others. Then you will be free, but never forget respect, education and awareness of your mistakes.

Freedom is to respect the lives of others, not to disregard social mores, and to behave decently. It means defending the freedom of thought and expression, and if you disagree you should do so with respect. It means telling the truth and supporting what is good, without fearing people. It means upholding justice. Freedom means you are responsible for choosing your friends and your studies. It means being able to express yourself without having to pretend to be someone else just to satisfy those around you.

Freedom means being free to study and find a job that you like in order to insure your future. It means having a good impact on your country and your community. Freedom means taking on responsibility for behaving and expressing yourself within the bounds of reason.

Break your silence, but don't break your reflection in the mirror.

How do I describe you?

By Zahra Habibi

There are many ways to describe what a teacher does, but all teachers have just one vision: to ensure that their pupils turn out better than them.

Mrs Petrochilou, everything I say here stems from you and is for you. You are like a drop of dew on a tiny branch, wanting to impart your knowledge to your students. You have been to us like a mother to her children. Even though I don't like literature and history, your faultless teaching made me love both you and your subjects.

I know that the majority of pupils taunted you during your lessons but you

are so patient and kind that you forgave them. Even when something we did annoyed you, you would help us instead of getting angry, so that we would learn life's lesson well.

What I remember of you is your love for your pupils, the way you would explain the lesson so that we could understand it properly, and all the questions and answers during class. I remember your advice for today so that we could have a better tomorrow, and how you taught us to think practically about the realities of life.

You would bring us to the front of the class to help us learn your mother tongue. Daily repetition meant daily improvement. You taught me to strive for my dreams, to forgive because everyone makes mistakes, to smile so that people smile back. Not to give up because I was born to negotiate the darkness in order to reach the light that is life. To understand others, so that they can understand me.

Thank you for everything that you have taught me. I appreciate the fact that you light my soul, like an inextinguishable candle. Words cannot describe how much I value the extent of your love for us. I would very much like to be like you not only in words and deeds, but in every way!





Nelson Mandela

- the warrior who fostered hope

By Mohamad Alrifai

A short while ago I received a message on Facebook: “*On the centenary of his birth, we remember the former South African president as an advocate of human rights, dignity and freedom. Imagine the influence we would have if everyone followed his example and tried to affect the lives of others*”.

That made me think of how influential **Nelson Mandela** was and I began reading about his struggle in the name of humanity.

His official website, nelsonmandela.org was my main source of information.

Mandela belonged to the Madiba tribe and was born in July 1918. As a child, he would listen to stories of his ancestors fighting wars of resistance and he dreamed that he too would one day contribute to his people's freedom.

He studied at Fort Hare University and in 1952, together with **Oliver Tambo**, set up the first black lawyer's office in South Africa. He cofounded the organisation “**Spear of the Nation**” and was asked to lead the armed resistance movement.

He was later obliged to leave South Africa and he travelled round the whole continent. When he returned he was arrested in a roadblock outside Howick. The president of the **African National Congress [ANC]**, **Albert Lutuli** was aware that he had returned. Mandela was charged with leaving the country illegally and encouraging workers to strike. He was sentenced to five years in prison, but served only one month.

When the police raided Lilliesleaf Farm, which was where the **ANC** activists used to meet in secret, many of Mandela's comrades were arrested. In October 1963, Mandela and 15 others were sentenced to death. His famous speech of April 1964 from the courtroom dock has gone down in history.

“During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought

against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal that I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

Later his death sentence was overturned and in June 1964, he and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to Robben Island. 24 years later, in August 1988 he was transferred to hospital where he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. That December he was moved to Victor Verster prison where he spent the last 14 months of his incarceration. Altogether, he spent 27 years in jail. It is interesting to note that during this time, Mandela refused three offers of conditional release.

As soon as he was free, he began formal negotiations for the end of white rule. In 1993, he was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** together with F.W. de Klerk, the man who ordered his release. In April 1994, Mandela voted for the first time. When I discovered this, I was really shocked.

In May 1994, he became the first democratically elected President of the country, but resigned after only one term, as he had promised. He managed to restore national unity and put an end to racial divide.

His government put forward measures for agricultural reforms, the alleviation of poverty and changes to healthcare.

At the end of his presidency, Mandela continued to be active and founded the **Nelson Mandela Children's Fund** and the **Mandela Rhodes Foundation**. He was always a keen supporter of democracy; he never fought racism with more racism, choosing instead peace and love as his weapons. Nelson Mandela was an inspiration for the oppressed and all those fighting injustice.

Before his death in December 2013, he managed to fulfill another one of his dreams when South Africa hosted the world cup in 2010. This was a first for an African country.

I began to ask myself why do we fool ourselves with wars and the arms industry? Why are we still trying to improve weapons of mass destruction? Why do certain things like colour, language and religious beliefs divide people rather than unite them? Why do we fool ourselves with the notion of countries and borders, rather than realise that we are all on this earth together and that this earth is one nation. Why don't all peoples of the world continue Mandela's struggle to make this planet a better place, where everyone lives in a democratic society? A free and peaceful society, with equal opportunities for all, in which people will coexist in harmony.



Love and Deprivation

By Nawal Hamdi

I am an unknown city that looks like my own city. It takes years to discover what I hold inside me. I fell in love with the youth of the days that grew in the valleys of my home country. I saw my dreams growing, just like a green bud in its mother's embrace.

Then came the nightmare of war that stole away the beauty of the bud. The roads disappeared and my dreams made me despair; the war ruined by childhood and took everything I loved, including the house I grew up in, where I used to find love and warmth. The war also took away a part of my soul, my brother, a victim of the injustice and sectarianism that exists between religions.

When my family was forced to part, the only thing left to hope for was that one day we would be reunited and go back to those days full of love.

Yet, I fear that this dream of mine will not come true because the distance between us keeps growing.

28/3/2015

On that terrible day, I and so many other children from Syria were displaced by the heavy bombing of my city Idlib. We never got the chance to realise our dreams because our future and that of generations to come was shattered.

Today is the day I leave my homeland, with no fixed date of return. I will bury my birthplace together with my dreams in a wooden boat that will cross the seas towards a new future. There I will start a new life, like a newborn baby.

The war ripped out the windows of our childhood and closed the eyes of our dreams. This is what happened to the majority of children in Syria. It was as if a hand holding the scythe of oppression stretched out and unearthed our roots from the soil of our homeland. That same hand slit the throats of our happiness and took us far away from everything we loved.

If we do go back, who will bring back our companions? If we do regain our rights, how will we regain those years of love and deprivation?

Report from the Refugee Camp at Malakasa

By Narin Meho*

The refugee camp at Malakasa is one of many in the region of Attica. It is a 40-minute train ride away from Athens and was set up in 2016 as a result of the huge wave of migration into Greece that year. At the beginning of this summer, the number of residents increased further, due to refugees arriving from various hot spots on the Aegean islands. As there were not sufficient containers to house them, these people were obliged to live in tents. This led to a worsening of the living conditions in the camp. In the summer, they were obliged to leave their tents as soon as the sun rose and to sit in the shade of the trees in order to cope with the heat. They were given lukewarm water, which became hot within an hour. This state of affairs was not picked up by the media till August 27th, when torrential rain led to the flooding of the camp with rain and mud, making things even worse for those living in tents. The heat wave and the rain caused people to lose their patience and that is why dozens of them marched in protest on the National Road, leading to its closure. They also blocked the entrance to the camp, which meant that those who worked there couldn't enter, and caused damage to the offices of the various organisations.

This article is based on both what I witnessed in the last five months at the Malakasa camp and on the information I obtained from interviews I carried out with residents and some of the managers of the organisations that agreed to talk to me.

On October 3rd 2018, I spoke with Mr **Kostas Kalemis**, Education Coordinator for Refugees at the Camp of Malakasa.

{The Malakasa Camp} was established as a refugee accommodation centre in 2016 following the surge in migrant arrivals that summer. People were accommodated in tents to begin with, but when the number of residents increased substantially, containers were brought in. Today, less than three years later, there are 192 containers, two oversize

containers (essentially two big white buildings), one in front and one behind the mountain, and about 40 tents. I say "about" because their numbers decrease every day. The aim is to do away with them completely and replace them with containers so that people are accommodated with similar standards. Those in containers have air-conditioning, private bathroom facilities and a kitchen for cooking. Those in tents have to use a communal bath and shower, they have no electricity and eat food brought in by the army. This creates an inequality of services provided. According to official lists, 1,410 people live here. There are also 40 unaccompanied minors, who are of serious concern. They live in specific sections of the camp, the majority in containers, although there are two that live in a tent close to people they know. They range from 3-4 to 17 years old.

The next day (October 4th), the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** gave a different answer to the same question.

"When the centre first started operating, it housed 500 people. Today there are 1,200 registered residents. The first increase in population happened in April 2016 with 1000 people then in June 2017 with 1,300. There are 20 tents and 200 containers. We expect that those remaining in tents will be moved to containers by the end of the month and the tents will be taken down".

So, what is it like to live in a tent?

Alaa comes from Syria. He left his country as an amputee in one leg and crossed over to Mytilini from Turkey by boat. He then came to Malakasa where he has been living in a tent since April.

"Life in a tent is awful. It's worse than being bombed and surrounded by destruction in Syria. The food is awful, totally unacceptable. The bread is stale. Conditions are bad. They cook the food, package it and bring it here. Sometimes it arrives raw. I am missing a leg yet they have placed me in a tent. What do you think my mental state is like?"

Fatima is the mother of three children from Afrin. She came to Greece five months ago. Three of those were spent on an island and the last two in a tent in Malakasa.

"They tell us that there are no containers. We left the island because we were classified as vulnerable, yet here we are. My two and a half year old daughter received burns from the cooking oil. I had to get the medicine and look after her myself. My children are young and won't eat the food they bring us, even if I tell them off. There is no kitchen in the





tent and no place to leave your children when you are cooking outside. I am pregnant and I fear for the baby I am carrying."

The Ministry of Defence provides the food for those that don't have a kitchen, i.e. all those living in tents.

When I asked Mr **Kalemis** what he thought about the food, he said:

"I have tried it, admittedly only once. I didn't find anything wrong with it. Maybe the quantity is too small for a young person. I don't really have an opinion, as it is not my responsibility. The truth is, this food is cooked for 4,000 people. Not just for this camp, but for all the camps in the region: Ritsona, Thiva, Inofita, Schimatari, everywhere. Our aim is to get everyone in a container by the end of October so they will have their own kitchen and will be able to cook their own food".

Beyond the issues of accommodation and sustenance, camp residents are also concerned about the question of doctors. According to the IOM, the **Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (HCDCP)** is responsible for medical welfare and treatment of camp residents.

I managed to speak with three nurses who work in the camp on weekdays under the community service programme of the **Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)** and more specifically at the Municipality of Oropos.

"Basically we are here to offer support to the HCDCP, which is the primary provider of health services and first aid to camp residents. We examine children and adults on a daily basis, always in the presence of a doctor, and we give vaccinations, also with a doctor present. In general terms, we provide assistance to the doctors who take all the decisions and are responsible for any incidents. There are two doctors and three nurses. If you are asking me whether this is sufficient, then the answer is no. According to the World Health Organization, there should be one doctor and one nurse for every 100 people."

When I asked the nurse who helps in the paediatric centre, what are the most common health problems faced by patients, she replied:

"I see children with skin infections, viruses and a variety of infections, but most of all I deal with emergencies. Skin infections are mainly due to a lack of hygiene education, because the children haven't learnt how to take care of themselves. Outbreaks of infections and viruses depend on the individual's state of hygiene and their living conditions. I presume that soap and water are available to everyone, which means that it must be the exhaustion of the refugees as well as their circumstances that prevent them from adopting good habits of hygiene. Use soap and water, wash, make sure the children and all clothing are kept clean. There is a laundry here and the lady in charge of the storeroom hands out detergent so that people can wash their clothes. People have to look after themselves and their children; everyone is responsible for taking care of themselves. I am fairly sure that there is a water supply, because I am asked over and over again, and as far as I can see, all the basics are provided. So it must

be a question of your own habits."

According to Fatimah however *"there is nothing. I gave my daughter a bath in the communal toilets and she came out in spots. Now I wash my children behind the tent, by boiling water and standing them up in a bucket."*

18-year-old Mohammed from Iraq spoke to us about the hygiene services. He has been in the Malakasa camp for about a year now. *"There is a medical centre and there is a doctor", he said, "but the medical centre is small and the team is not big enough. There is a Farsi interpreter but not an Arabic one. Half of us here speak Arabic. There is a month's waiting list for a hospital appointment. By then the patient is dead"*.

The nurses agree on the subject of interpreters.

"Our organisation doesn't provide interpreters. We don't provide doctors either, so we are not considered a medical team. We provide medical services under the supervision of the team that does provide the doctors. And they are the ones that can answer your questions regarding the provision of services. All I can say is that I work for 7 hours and 40 minutes every day, and during that time, I never get a break long enough for me to be able to say that I stopped and did nothing."

When I asked Fatimah how the doctors responded to her daughter's case, she replied:

"They told me to take her to hospital, but how was I meant to go? This is not where I grew up, I don't know where the hospital is, I don't speak Greek. They don't send ambulances. Unless you are dead."

Alaa's had this to say about the doctors:

"They don't care, they don't get involved with anything. If anyone goes to see them they just give them a couple of pills, Allah be with you, they don't ask how you are, there is no care, you can't even find an interpreter. You have to wait for one to be found. The way you have to wait if you need one of the camp's employees."

There are many people who regret coming to Greece. They say that had they known things would be like this, they would have stayed at home with the bombings going on overhead. We will not accept humiliation, injustice or exploitation. We do not deserve to be treated like this. Many things are not done correctly but they won't stop unless people start getting punished. I hope that all of you who read these words will get a sense of what is going on and can understand how hard things are for us. I hope that in the end we can go back to our country safe and sound.

As a new member of the **"Migratory Birds"** team, I decided that my first article should be about conditions in the camp in which I have been living for the past five months.



Schoolwave Festival 2018

Always on time, the musical wave that has been wowing Athens since 2005, emerged this year as well. For the 13th year in a row, **Schoolwave Festival** embraced 24 school and university bands, in the early days of July. This year's meeting point was the imposing Vrahon Theater in the municipality of Vyronas, during the weekend of 6th, 7th and 8th of July.

Every young band, dreams of being able to express itself and communicate with the audience, which is exactly what happened this

year too, as the **Schoolwave Festival** is one of music but also of bridging any differences. A big stage, professional sound and lights and an audience that never stopped dancing, even when the rain came falling down, were the key ingredients of the weekend. The **Young Journalists** of the **Network of Children's Rights** were there on the first day, enjoying the music, taking pictures but also interviewing the young musicians.

It all started with **Over 9000**, a skate punk band from Piraeus. Next the **Young Journalists** got to talk with the Athenian rap and hip-hop duo, **Mistrios Tipos** and **Thlimmenos**. Last but not least **Cis Madiam**, a girl band from Serres, shared with the Young Journalists their love of traditional music.

You can hear the whole interviews and find out what the Young Journalists talked about with the bands on **Dandelion Radio**, on the show dedicated to **Schoolwave Festival**.

“My Journey”

By Elias Sharifi

A group of us went to the presentation of “My journey”, a story created by the workshop entitled “Fairy-tale days - Creating my own story”. We spoke with the team of people working at the Centre for the Child: Mr **Dimitris Mimarakis** who is in charge, Mrs **Aggeliki Nakou**, an educationalist, Mrs **Ioanna Koutsouki**, a nursery school teacher, and Mrs **Stavroula Pentarvani**, a psychologist.

“We decided that we wanted to do something different”, they explained, “There are so many children who enjoy reading stories, so we thought it would be a good idea for them to create their own. Even the illustrations have been drawn by the children themselves. When we explained our

idea to the children, they showed a lot of interest. They accepted our proposal and so we started”.

The project coordinators also revealed that “Most of all we liked the fact that the children were very cooperative and reliable and did whatever we asked. It was such a pleasant experience that we would like to repeat it.”

Finally, the team explained that the meaning of the story is the children's hope for the ideal migrant journey. Everyone's life consists of good and bad things, and both have to be faced positively and optimistically, so that things turn out well in the end.

The team from the **Centre for the Child** came up with the idea of the workshop, which was held at **Patissia Single Entry Point**, in collaboration with **City of Athens Directorate for Social Solidarity and Health**, in the context of the **ESTI@** project. The workshop also received funding from the **EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSi)** (2014-2020).





Ticket To Hollywood [part II]

By Morteza Rahimi*

The most important thing is to believe in your dreams and you are halfway there. I had finally got the chance to make my dreams come true. The casting director made me over excited. I couldn't believe I was really selected for a Hollywood series, but the problem was the distance and probably my parents would never allow me to travel there. If they did, it would be after my school as it was my last year of highschool and my exams were about to begin. I couldn't lose my chance to become a star so I had to find another way.

I needed some money to get the ticket as soon as possible so I started looking for a job. "What is seek is seeking you" is absolutely true as my neighbour was looking for a babysitter. Although I am not much in to children, I was being paid well. It was my first day of work but my

neighbour's kids were not less than a trouble. The three kids drove me crazy and in just a single day I quit my job because I couldn't tolerate them.

I got experience of working as a delivery boy and paperboy since I was an adolescent and hadn't finished my education yet. What other jobs could I expect?

After all my endeavour I finally made enough money to buy me a ticket to Hollywood. I was completely ready, my bags were packed and I was going to buy the ticket. Then I realised that what I was going to do was escaping my house, leaving everything behind, especially my parents.

Anyway, I kept consoling myself that my dreams were important and that my parents were wise enough to understand me. So I contacted a travel agency and I got to know that they don't sell tickets to teenagers. To be honest, that was what I wanted to hear. Of course my dreams mean a lot to me but without my education done, I am sure, I wouldn't become a good actor nor would I get a good job.

That's what my parents were trying to tell me. They believe in me and I will be a superstar one day. Do you want to know what I did with the money I earned? You have to wait for the next issue of Migratory Birds.

Well, that was a joke. I spent them on a new bicycle.

**Morteza wrote this article in English*



Pain of Heart

By Ihtisham Khan*

Cry and cry how can I describe the pain of heart
Palpitation and palpitation how can I describe the pain of heart
Sad and sad how can I describe the pain of heart
Pain and pain how can I describe the pain of heart
Hopelessness and hopelessness how can I describe the pain of heart
Anxious and anxious how can I describe the pain of heart
Smile and smile how can I describe the pain of heart

Laughing and laughing how can I describe the pain of heart
With jokes how can I describe the pain of heart
In front of somebody how can I describe the pain of heart
In sad mood how can I describe the pain of heart
To God how can I describe the pain of heart
No one is here to describe them the pain of heart
Not even my love to describe her the pain of heart
Cry and cry how can I describe the pain of heart

Describe it to yourself Khan because you are the one
who feels the pain of heart

**Ihtisham wrote this article in English*

At the refugee camp of Schisto, you may find the most beautiful gardens in Attica

By Morteza Rahimi*

From beginners to master gardeners there's always something new and fun to discover about home gardening, but this time it's a different story.

Afghan people have a clean habit to make themselves busy all the time. In their country, they were always busy working the whole day, but here life is way different from Afghanistan. The men are unemployed staying in the same place the whole day, which makes them feel bored so they decided to cultivate their own gardens in a refugee camp in front of their containers.

Nobody dreamed that a refugee camp would become a newspapers attraction. The camp's council has declared that people cannot build and make anything farther than their given space, as a way to preserve the camps look, otherwise the camp will look blocked and the people would not be able to cross their ways.

The majority of those who live in the Schisto Refugee camp are Afghan people. Protecting the camps unique feel and community is something that is important to locals. We talked with some of the people living there and asked them about their beautiful gardens.

How long it took to complete this garden?

Well, it took me almost two years to complete it. People first said this is

waste of time but when I finished all those people who said this is waste of time are appreciating me today, I have different kinds of flowers like lilies, roses, sunflowers and more, said Mr. Hashim...

What's the opinion about your garden?

My name is Farid and I'm from Afghanistan. In my country I had a small Garden, so I thought why not here!? I made my own tiny garden with plants like boston ivy, areca palm and dracaena.

What does your garden mean to you?

My garden reminds me of my backyard in Afghanistan. I used to have sheeps, ducks, and chickens, but here I have only 2 white pigeons and a pair of rabbits. I do have different kinds of vegetables and herbs though, like parsley, mint, oregano, bell peppers and tomatoes in my garden here, which I use for salads. In the evenings when I drink my tea, this garden reminds me of Afghanistan. My garden means a lot to me, said Mr Samim.

Beautiful garden!?

I'm not sure that I have the best garden, but I can clearly say that I have the best flowers in different colors. I have azalea, begonia, rosemallows, sunflowers and roses.

There were people though who decide not to have one.

Why don't you have a garden, like your neighbor?

i don't have the garden because in some months I'll leave Greece to go to Germany with my family. It has a lot of responsibility but I would love to have a garden or yard.

While i was researching for this article, I talked with someone special, a teenage boy from Afghanistan. He came to Greece all by himself. Alone. He said, "I used to help my father while gardening, so I learned from my father how to grow plants and give them water and how to take care of my garden. One of my friends helped me while planting. I have a bench and a table so I can sit in my garden with my friends and enjoy my afternoons. I dedicated my garden to my mother".

I really enjoyed talking to them.

**Morteza wrote this article in English*



Humanity breaks the borders

By **Mohammad Nasim Haidari & Mohammad Sharif Rahmani***

There is love and humanity in the hearts of all people. But sometimes love and humanity go beyond borders and examples can be seen in the hearts of noble Europeans who welcomed the war-torn people of Afghanistan and Syria.

For example, we spoke with **Pablo Fernandez**, the manager of a Spanish NGO in Greece. Let's see what the organization is about and why they are here.

Could you please introduce your organization Remar and what you are doing in Greece?

Right now we are in two camps in Greece, one is here in Malakasa and the other one is the Moria camp in Lesbos. In Moria we are in charge of food distribution. Here in Malakasa we do different activities, like preparing soup and tea or providing clothing. If there's also something else that we can do for refugees, we will do it, because we are here to serve them.

Who is supporting the organization financially?

The organization is mostly supported by its own funds, but sometimes we receive private donations as well. Right now, private donations are very difficult to find, because refugees are not in the news anymore.

How many people work in Malakasa and Moria?

It is about 8 to 10 people in Malakasa and about 10 to 15 in Moria. After the summer it will be less than that.

This is a Spanish organization, are all the volunteers from Spain?

No, most of the volunteers are from Spain because we talk with them more frequently. We also have volunteers from Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and a few from France and England.

What kind of feelings do you have when you are helping the refugees?

I have been here for three years now helping the refugees. I have seen the difficulties they are going through and that's why I feel useful helping them.

What is your message for the refugees and the people of Europe?

Well, this is a very difficult question, it needs hours to be answered. For the Europeans who don't accept refugees, I would say to give, at least, a chance to the refugees because we are all humans. To the refugees, I would like to say to be patient and not act badly because the answers to their applications take long. Also, they should know that Europe is not paradise, they should be patient and try to get on well with the Europeans.

This was a kind of humanity that the noble people of Spain and Europe had with us. I know that refugees will answer this goodness with goodness for those people who have humanity.

**Mohammad Nasim & Mohammad Sharif wrote this article in English*





A question of yours that I will never answer

By Dimitra Kaisidi

A rainy night, and no lamps shining. I am surrounded by darkness and you are not there to hold my hand. One evening, you told me that you would never leave me and that we would always be friends. But we are apart now. Lies... they were all lies.

What is an open space without trees or flowers? A mountain or a valley? What is a man without feelings? An animal or a human? An animal is more timid than that kind of person. Animals mean wildness but also innocence. Humans mean tameness but also cunning. Men's cunning means hatred, malice, harshness. Perhaps if men were more like animals, our world would be a better place. But are animals really better than men?

It's a question that I will never be able to answer.

I know what you are going to tell me. Is what you say really possible? Of course it is! Everything is possible in this world.

I know that I don't know everything, but as a human being, I have an instinct about certain things. Just as an animal senses danger, so does man. Don't tell me you know about feelings. Only cultured people know about these things. What is a cultured person? As far as I am concerned, it is someone who is mentally mature, he doesn't have to be educated!

Cultured people exist only on remote islands. Those islands are far away. In order to travel to the depths of your soul, you will have to embark on a long journey. You need time, strength and patience.

I haven't managed it, but there are others who have. The island is called "the soul" (though people can give it whatever name they want). Hopefully one day, I will reach my destination. I'd like to see what it is like. What will I find there? Only my soul can know.

I know that all this sounds crazy to you, but this is the reality hidden by words and rhetoric. Every time I realise who we are and what we are concealing, my mind, my heart, my thoughts and my whole being are filled with awe.

I am aware that you are laughing at me because of all the things I am saying, but believe me, they are true and I do hope that you too will find a moment to travel to the depths of your soul.

Hand in hand, we will restore harmony to nature.

By Elias Sharifi

This article recounts a personal experience of mine. My bus trip to the region of Magnesia, and its capital Volos, lasted four hours. The closer we got, the more we were surrounded by countryside. By the time we arrived, I was so enchanted by the beauty of the landscape around me that I completely forgot how tiring the journey had been.

However, while on the bus I had noticed something really upsetting: that people were throwing rubbish from their cars. Actually, that was the purpose of the expedition: to remove rubbish from roads and the surrounding countryside. We did this for four days, working five hours per day.

The burning summer sun made the task quite challenging, but the force of nature both invigorated and calmed me. I joined this outing as a volunteer and I learnt quite a few things that I hadn't previously paid attention to.

Of the 100 bags of rubbish that we collected, 90% consisted of plastic, 5% paper, 2% metal and 3% various other materials. The result is that our planet has become very polluted. A large part of what we throw away is not biodegradable; consequently, our planet is being slowly destroyed.

The main cause of this damage is purely and simply overconsumption and people's disregard of the consequences.

Unfortunately, a large number of people are unaware of these negative effects. In some countries, there is no access to information about the impact of these practices, nor about the causes.

The main drawback in environmental preservation is that it does not have enough supporters to hold the problem in check and ultimately reduce it. Our planet is on a daily road to destruction, yet no one appears to give adequate attention to this very serious matter.

And this begs a very interesting question, which concerns me: Who is responsible and who is answerable for the rights of future generations?

As far as I am concerned, we ought to concentrate on this problem, to go forward hand in hand in order to restore harmony to nature and become an example for the generations of tomorrow.





Anticipation and love

By Sayed Ghasemi*

On 19th April 2018, we visited an old people's home in the centre of Athens and we had the pleasure of spending time with some exceptional people.

I tried to find the meaning of life through their words. I realised that it wasn't necessary to reach their age in order to understand and feel for them. Sometimes life takes you by the hand when you are much younger and leads you to an unknown place, whether you like it or not.

We spoke to four people. One was a woman who told us that she had been there a week. The truth was in fact very different, and it turned out that she had been living in the home for about a year. Who knows, maybe she has lost her sense of time. Or she is waiting for something that will never come. She told us that her son was going to visit her the following day and take her back home. We wondered whether her son

would indeed come and whether she would ever again be able to read her poems, which were sitting in the library in her old house. Perhaps that is how she spends her days in the home, with optimism.

I asked her to imagine her life as a poem and herself as the poet. What would be the main subject of the poem? *"Love, love, love"* she replied loudly and with total conviction.

I asked one of the men the same question.

"When I was young", he said, *"someone older told me that the meaning of life was to be a good, genuine human being."*

It makes me think that we are all waiting for something. Love, justice, freedom and peace. For the journey that will bring us closer to our loved ones. It's difficult, however. Life is full of hardship, occasionally never ending, but we need to try.

We must live as human beings with everything that the word means, and we must fight for what is fair, regardless of colour, race or religion. We must bring this waiting to an end and finally arrive in a world full of love and beauty. We must love others as well as ourselves, because that is the only way life has any meaning.

*18-year old Sayed comes from Iran and came to Greece two years ago. Apart from Farsi, he wrote this article in Greek himself.

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