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MIGRATORY BIRDS

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ΙΑΡΥΜΑ ΠΟΖΑ ΛΟΥΞΕΜΠΟΥΡΓΚ
ΠΑΡΑΡΤΗΜΑ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ

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

Editorial

Citizens of the world! We are a team without borders!

We can't quite believe that the newspaper you are holding in your hands today is actually our fourth issue. And we never expected so many children, all so very different, to have joined our team. Each with his or her own unique personality, convictions and traditions. Can such a group really coexist?

Of course, it can! We are a team without borders, one that respects dif-

ferent languages and cultures and does not consider them an obstacle to communication.

So, in this fourth issue you will find messages to Europe, read about current affairs such as the oil spill of Athens, discover where to find the best falafel in town and have all your questions about international protection answered as you read the interview which we have secured for you. And what is more, we will whet your appetite with our delicious Afghan recipe!



Consequences of the oil spill in the Saronic Gulf

By Najaf Shabir

A short while ago, on September 10th 2017, a tanker full of fuel oil, named "Agia Zoni II" sank off the coast of Salamina, close to the port of Piraeus. It was carrying more than 2,500 tons of crude oil and 370 tons of marine gas oil, which spilled straight into the sea, attracting widespread media attention.

The disaster didn't just harm the Greek state; it also caused damage to marine life, the air, people's health, fishermen, tourism, the food chain and the beaches which turned black from the oil. In order to find out more, our editorial team visited various environmental organisations to hear what they had to say.

MOM/The Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal

We spoke with the biologist and founder member of MOM, Stella Adamantopoulou, and with the Head of Communications and Social Media Dimitris Tsiakalos

This is what they said: "We are asking people to notify us if they see a seal in danger. It is too early to say whether the seals have been adversely affected by the oil spill. Problems may well arise later, due to lack of food for example, if too many fish die and the seals can't find food in

the area. So far, we haven't found a seal harmed by the oil spill in the Saronic Gulf. In any case, even if the oil comes into contact with their fur it doesn't actually matter because they shed their fur regularly."

Hellenic Ornithological Society.

We spoke with Eugenia Panoriou, Environmental Education Officer at the Hellenic Ornithological Society.

This is what she said: "We don't yet know the exact number of birds that have been affected by the oil spill. Up to now we have found less than ten birds coated in oil, but we don't know how many bird species have been affected because they are hard to identify and are at quite a distance. The Saronic Gulf is very important for birds because it contains many small islands that birds use for nesting, stopovers and food. When a bird's feathers get covered in oil, the waterproofing is destroyed and this is what causes problems. We have plans to explore the area and all the small islands in order to determine the extent of the damage".

Mediterranean SOS Network

We spoke with Christina Kontaxi, the General Director of Mediterranean SOS Network. This is what she said: "As soon as this sort of disaster happens, not just in Europe but elsewhere too, a coordinated cleaning programme is launched. Right now in Greece, because of the extent of the spill, many private companies have already begun action in the Saronic Gulf and its shores. They are charting the area in order to find out how long it will take to remove the oil completely."

"All environmental organisations are following the matter very closely and we will maintain pressure until we find out exactly what happened to the tanker 'Agia Zoni II'. Justice will prevail."

"It is very difficult to remove oil from water, sand or pebbles because it requires specific equipment and specialist know-how. Of course, there are companies that do this and the oil that they retrieve can be re-used."



Right-handed vs. left-handed

By Nazila Ghafouri and Fatima Hossaini

Nearly one in ten people are left-handed. There have been many studies on the differences between right and left-handed people, usually to do with memory, thought process and social issues. New research is being carried out all the time.

One distinctive feature of left-handed people is that they are often considered cleverer. They are also more able to understand geometric and spatial subjects and to visualise things with their imagination. Negative behaviour and emotions are also more obvious in left-handed people. They are better at some sports, such as tennis and wrestling and left-handed players are more skillful. Left-handed people are more inventive and quicker to suggest multiple solutions to a problem, which they are then able to solve. They are better in the creative and artistic fields, such as music. Many well-known figures ranging from politics to the arts are left-handed: Barack Obama, Einstein, Charlie Chaplin, Bill Gates, Leonardo da Vinci, Angelina Jolie. Right-handed people solve problems in the following way: first they focus on one issue and solve that, and then they move onto the next one. In contrast, left-handed people can deal successfully with several issues at the same time.

Left-handed people are not more able than right-handers, but this might be because of certain problems they face. Some studies have shown that left-handed people are more susceptible to psychological problems and they have to cope with various difficulties. In olden times, especially in very traditional families, it was considered bad, almost shameful, to



have a left handed child. As soon as the family became aware of the child's "problem", it would oblige the child to write and only use its right hand and avoid using the left. In many societies all appliances and attachments are made for right-handed people, while very little attention has been paid to the needs of those who are left-handed. Some difficulties faced by left-handed people are: scissors, window handles and door-knobs, keyboards, computer mice and school desks. Another problem is that left-handed people cut the other way round. A very small percentage of people can use both hands equally. The human brain is made up of two sides, each one with its own characteristics. The right side controls curiosity, creativity, imagination and discipline, while the left controls logic, language, focus and attention to detail. In left-handed people, the right side of the brain is more dominant, and vice-versa.

An immigrant apologises to the people of Europe

By Mahdiah Hossaini

Forgive me if your seas and waters have been polluted by the bodies of my countrymen.

Forgive me if thousands of my countrymen became food for the wolves in your jungles.

Forgive me if I have altered the face of your city lately.

Forgive me if your country became the embrace in which I found sanctuary.

Forgive me if I am feeling bitter, but my heart is full of empty places, the empty places of my loved ones.

Forgive me if you see a terrorist when you look into my face, your ears resonate with the sound of bombs and kamikaze when you hear my voice, and your pulse accelerates.

Forgive me if thousands of people that we call "immigrants" have appeared and spread fear and panic.

Forgive me if I inadvertently caused chaos in your country. It was the politics of all those countries that took part in the wars in mine.

Forgive me if there were times I shared my pain with you and you felt sorry for me.



Forgive me if my face is melancholy and my eyes are full of tears. Forgive all my ignorance about your customs and traditions.

Forgive me, not because I deserve it, but because you deserve to be at peace.

Forgive me so that I can learn to forgive all those responsible for all the apologies I have had to make.

Forgive me so that I can forgive all those who have unintentionally mocked my feelings, those who have been unable to hear the soft voice of the immigrant child in all the noise and racket of the city.

Forgive me so that you can be a teacher of forgiveness and I can be your star pupil in the class.



Perseverance and patience

By Dimitra Kaisidi

A life of rejection, but you still carry on fighting. This applied to me, but I was not alone, I had the invaluable support of my mother and my friends. Last June, I was preparing to sit my entrance exam for music school. Success would mean not having to go to my local school. I really wanted to pass. I practiced with my teacher all day long, and I would come home too exhausted to do my homework. The days passed and as the exams approached, I became more and more anxious. The daily routine, the worry and my nerves were all tiring me out. I remember being ill the day before the exam and spending it in bed, asleep. I woke up the next morning full of anxiety. I got dressed and left for the examination centre with my mother. I thought I was fully prepared, but I wasn't. My teacher and some friends who were also sitting the exams were already there, waiting for us. First were the written exams, they were easy. Then came the hard part – the practical. We had to sing in front of the examiners then play a tune on the xylophone. I didn't do well, and when I left the hall, I started crying. I knew I hadn't passed and I was right. The results came three days later. I had failed. As soon as I heard, I burst into tears and was inconsolable. Why? Why hadn't I passed? I felt terrible. I lay awake all night crying and thinking. I got to the stage of wanting to throw myself off the balcony, but I didn't. I couldn't bear the rejection. A week went by and my mother came to speak to me. She told me this had to stop. She decided to organise a party to give me a boost. I called it the "Rejects party". It was due to take place in the evening. About 20 people came and I couldn't believe my eyes. All my friends came to support me. The party went on till late and the following morning I woke up happy. I felt really well, which I hadn't done for almost a month. Two months went by and on the evening of August 28th, my teacher telephoned us to say that a new music school had just opened. As soon as I heard, I started jumping for joy. On September 9th, I sat the exams and passed. I got into a good school with good people. Sometimes I feel that we shouldn't give up so easily. We should carry on even if we know that we are not wanted by some people, because there are always others who love us and care about us.

A Day in Nature!

By Samiullah Fazaili

Saturday, September 10th was an unforgettable day for me. Mr Stefanos took all of us on an outing to Mount Parnitha. We were 18 children in total and we left by coach at around 1pm from the camp at Malakasa. We arrived an hour later, and took the cable car to the top. We could see the beautiful sight of Athens from the summit and it was one of the most memorable days of my life.

We then had to go to the nearby hotel where we would be staying, which was an hour away on foot. The hotel staff greeted us, gave us a meal and then showed us our rooms.

We rested for a while then looked around both the interior and exterior areas of the hotel. Finally, we celebrated our dear friend, Arash's birthday. The next day Mr Stefanos and Arash played the piano and sang. The hotel staff were particularly pleased when they found out we were Afghans, because the hotel cook is also from Afghanistan.

After a very enjoyable day we returned to the camp. The outing to Parnitha was my first without my parents and my first time in a cable car. All of us were delighted and gave special thanks to Mr Stefanos who took us there. He is a very kind person who has always helped us, always supported immigrants and never treated us differently from the other children.

I am Samioulah, from Afghanistan. I am a 15 year-old boy who lives in the refugee camp of Malakasa. I hope to learn Greek, but also to meet up with my brother in Germany. Finally, I hope Afghanistan becomes a safe country so that its people can live in peace.



A Mistake

by Madinah Zafari

One single error can be corrected before it becomes a big mistake.

My mother was always critical, but she also taught me how to correct my mistakes...

Instead of making corrections for me, she would first give me time to reread the words or sentences that I had written, so that I would find my own mistakes and make my own corrections. I would reread what I had written, looking for mistakes, which I would sometimes find and rewrite correctly. However, there were times I wasn't sure whether something was right or wrong, and this would lead me to write the word wrongly again.

Ever since I was a young child, my mother taught me that it is sometimes very difficult to spot your mistakes, and that occasionally something that is correct might appear wrong.

Now that I look back on that period, I ask myself which points of my life I would erase if I had a rubber as well as the time that my mother used to give me to make my corrections.

I am going over my life, trying to find my errors.

Looking back, I realise I have made many mistakes without knowing it. I must correct them...

I opened the notebook of my life and my eyes fell on the biggest mistake of all: it was the day I took my mother to an old people's home, thinking I was doing the right thing. I took my rubber, erased this action with all my might, and a tear of joy rolled down my face.

Turning the pages of my life once more, I arrived at my other mistake, my first marriage... I thought how, if my husband and I had solved our small misunderstandings with a little bit of patience, they would not have assumed such large proportions and we would not have separated. So, I picked up the rubber once more and erased those days...

Every time I read my life's notebook and found a new page full of errors, I wondered how it was that I had made so many. I began to erase them one by one, but sometimes it was difficult to wipe them away completely and I would end up leaving a mark on the page.

I would find mistakes that resulted from previous ones, so in order to erase them I had to go back and erase others from earlier on in my past. That's when I remembered my mother saying that you have to deal with small errors before they turn into big mistakes.

Looking deeper into the notebook of my life, I come across all those errors – big and small – that created even larger problems later, however I no longer have a rubber that will erase them...

I sit alone and think about the past for hours, but there is no rubber with which to erase the mistakes of my life....

Now both my life and my notebook are reaching the end and I ask myself whether I am satisfied.

I wonder why my mother didn't teach me that life isn't so simple, that it's not like writing down a simple dictation, that, on the contrary, mistakes are expensive and you have to pay in order to correct them...

Today I looked back on my life and thought of all the people that have passed through it. Some of them led me to make mistakes.

As a result, I regret that I made so many. It doesn't matter any more because I don't have enough time to relive life from the start without mistakes, to go back to the time when I was young, when my eyes would light up if I wrote down my dictation perfectly.

My gaze often wanders towards my front door, as I wait for someone to knock and enter this house of loneliness. I wait in vain...

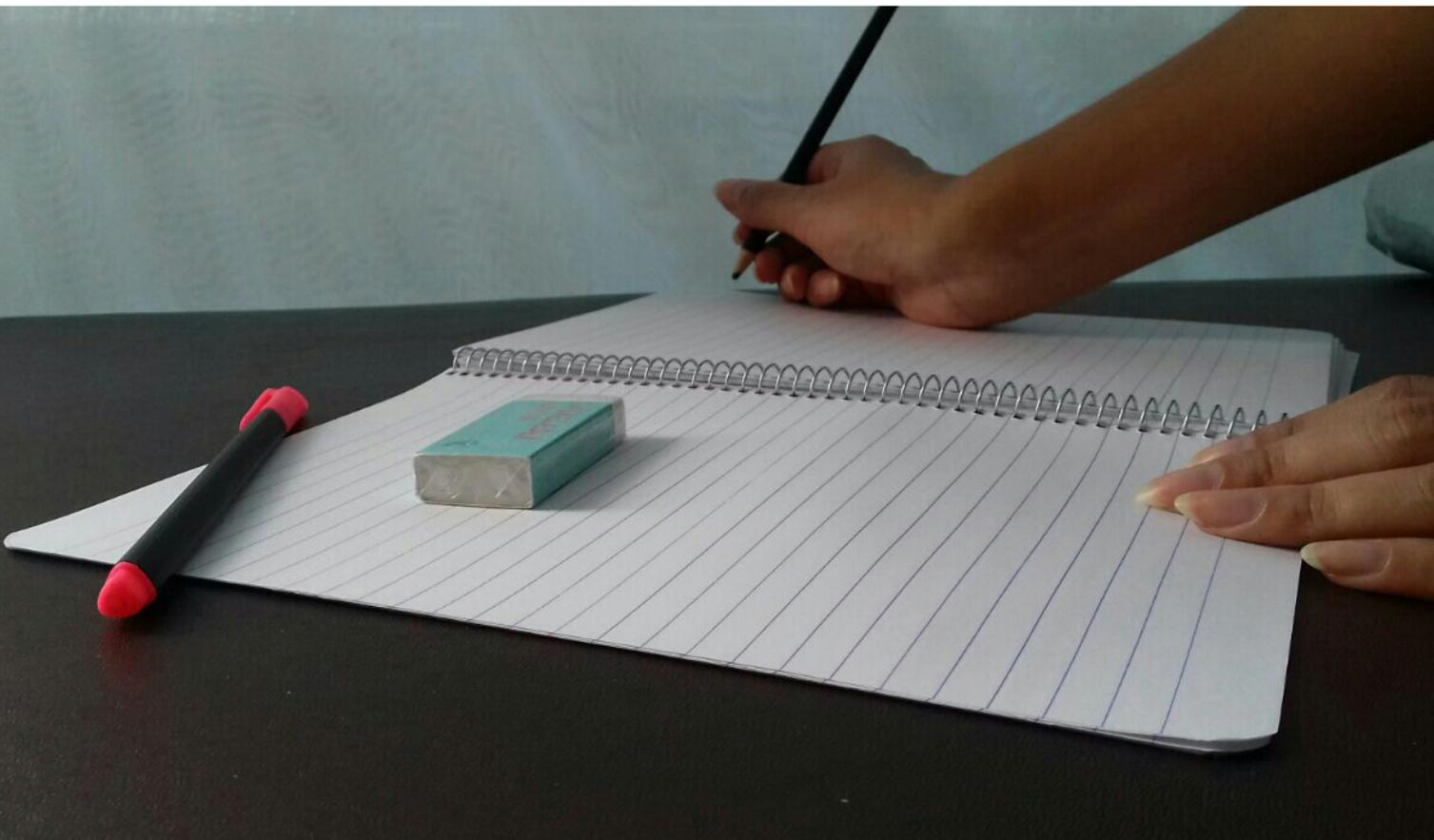
I am not sure which one of my past mistakes I am paying for so dearly with my present loneliness...

If only I could give everything I have as a "fine" so that I wouldn't have to carry this heavy weight on my shoulders any more...

Try and correct the mistakes of your life from the start, before they lead to bigger ones, because later on you will not have the time to correct them.

Even if you have regrets, it will be too late to do anything.

Not all mistakes can be corrected.





Love in Crisis

By Mohammed Saleem

This is a story like so many others that occur on a daily basis and concern love, separation and pain...

Even when we argued, I was still hopeful, I kept my promise and continued to love you, I remained yours, I didn't change.

I was the one who told you one day: I promise I will never leave you, that I will always love you, that I can cope with anything and anyone to please you. I meant it and I didn't leave you, even though it I was not being true to myself, even when you made me live both with and without you at the same time.

Sometimes hope hurts, and it makes us live a lie until we become disappointed. It's natural for you to live well, to enjoy life, to live with someone else, but you must know how difficult it is for me. It's hard for me to put myself in your shoes and to think the way you do, in order to understand why you reacted that way. It is also hard for me to justify mistakes you made at my expense, when you yourself don't take me into consideration. It's hard for me to be the one that is hurt for the umpteenth time in your life, and then let you mess up mine.

We know that you are a difficult young woman, unusual, unlike any other. You are peculiar, self-centred and you think that there is no one quite like you... I know that if you were facing me now you would tell me that you loved me for the way I am, in any case you have confessed this to me, you have flirted, you have written to me, you have painted me.

Yes, indeed. That's how you are and that is why I fell in love with you. You sometimes say things that make feel that you are finishing everything. But you also say things that I love hearing and when you don't say them, I still feel the same. You contradict yourself, you said. No, you contradict yourself. What is happening to me? Am I talking to myself? Yes, that's what always happens when I miss you, when I miss your stubbornness and the problems you create, because that is when I hear your voice everywhere inside me, whether you are near or far. I hate you!

I can't take revenge. I could do what you do, simply to go against you and hurt you. But I don't want to.

Do you know something? I want to reach a decision that will justify you in my eyes, but I just can't. It is not possible for me to label you as a good companion or as someone cheap, probably because I don't want to think

of you as cheap, even though that's what you have become.

I am so used to defending you even when you make me angry. I justify you; I have sympathy for you but not for me. Just explain this. Take a look inside my heart and answer me. Tell my heart you never loved it; say it was just something to lean on to help you walk and that later you threw it away and went as far away as it was possible to go. To a place where I will continue to love you but which I can't ever reach. The place I hate when I miss you. Where I embrace you. Then I leave you to go some place else, where I imagine you slapping me and then coming to kiss me. The thought of the slap and the kiss hurts me. I can't identify that place in my mind, I only see you. The problem is that you aren't anywhere specific. I hate you and could take revenge but I don't want to....

I said that was the last time we got angry with each other and broke up. But it didn't happen like that. Yes, it was the last time we got angry with each other but we got back together, we didn't get angry again but we got back together once more. I learnt that when a girl says, "I hate you" it means something else, I have to understand that it means, "I love you", so why did you make me hate you? I really do love you but my soul never expected to be burnt by you. We must think hard about words of love before we judge them. The way you didn't believe that I hadn't been unfaithful. Who did I speak to when you were away, where did I go, who did I see, who did I fantasise about...

The only way for me to live is to experience you in reality and in my imagination, in your presence and your absence, when you are satisfied by faithfulness, manliness, warmth, but also when you are pampered and spoilt...

It is not essential that you be the innocent party and I the one that doesn't understand you. Perhaps you are the one who doesn't realise that you are human? You might make mistakes but it was I who taught you that whenever you make a mistake, I am the one to say sorry.

The same is true when you love me even though you think I am unfaithful, do you accept it, does your conscience allow it?

I don't want to carry on in this vein: first me, then you... I want you to feel alone so that I can feel too ashamed to repay your lack of kindness. Love is a beginning; it would be a shame for it to lose its value, a shame for it to end up in oppression. A shame for me to feel oppressed and to oppress you...

Words of Wisdom

By Najmiah Hossaini

When hope dies...when you see that even the smallest of hopes has been lost... An empty space with a dream... You create stories out of small thoughts and childishness... Just so that you can carry on living (Jean-Paul Sartre)

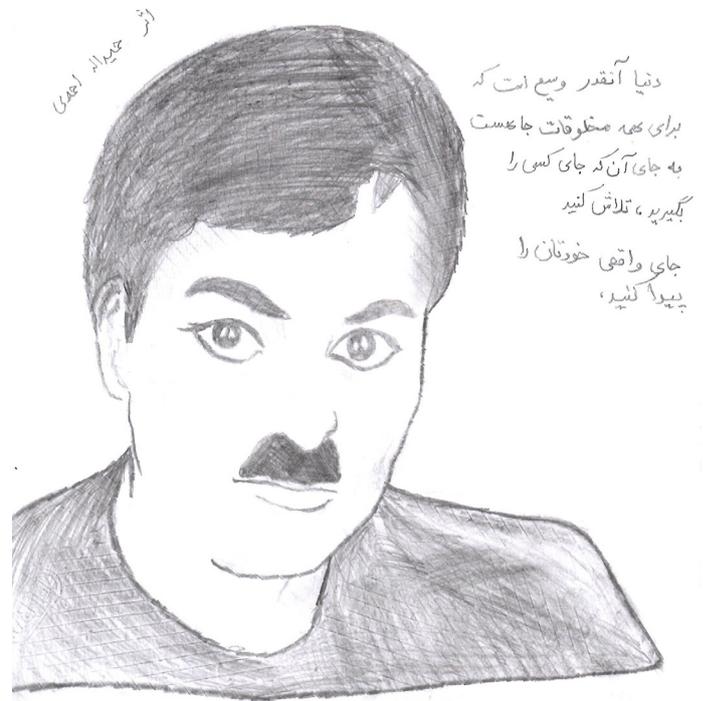
And so I am writing a few things that for better or worse are associated with lack of hope and with the lack of human freedom...

When you go to war, both sides lose, observed Yoko Ono. This is what has happened to many people, simple people who never took part in the decision to go to war, yet their dreams and way of life vanished. Defeated by all the fighting, anxious and desperate, trying with all their might not to lose their dreams, they emigrated in order to regain their lost freedom. But, what they don't know is that this world is a dangerous place, not because there are people who are evil, but because there are people that don't try to stop them. (Albert Einstein).

We are not talking about simple things like leaves changing colour ... we are talking about people with blood on their hands, who hide them when others are present... The things man does to man, no animal would ever do to another... Kindness is dead...Love is dead... Compassion is dead (Fereydoon Moshiri).

Charlie Chaplin observed that it took just one apple to fall for the world to learn the laws of gravity, but millions of people have fallen yet no one has learnt the meaning of compassion. How many innocent people have lost their lives searching for freedom and compassion, or trying to realise their dreams?

Che Guevara said: I don't belong to any country; my homeland is where people and compassion are not locked behind bars! Most people dream of living with compassion and freedom and they walk on challenging



paths in order to achieve that. Yet even though they dream of better days and of having the opportunity to relive their lives, they are too fast asleep to do anything about it. Freedom is an inalienable right of man. Che Guevara believed that if you see people sleeping you shouldn't wake them because they are dreaming of freedom, whereas I want to wake them to talk about that freedom. We kept a minutes silence in honour of freedom, but we fell asleep (Che Guevara). Yet life with all its difficulties carries on. The best revenge is to be happy (Che Guevara). Everything I have learnt from life can be summarised in three words: Life goes on (Robert Frost). We must not get disillusioned. When Gabriel Garcia Marquez was asked what he would write in a 100-page book on hope, he answered that he would leave the first 99 pages blank and at the very bottom of the final page, he would write, "Hope dies last".

If you feel you have reached the bottom of that last page, remember, this may be the moment you begin.

A Slow Death

By Abdul Rashed Mohammadi

My name is Abdul Rashed Mohamandi. I come from Afghanistan and have been living in Athens, the capital of Greece, for the past year and a half.

Narcotic drug use: Research has shown that 190 million people worldwide are illegal drug users, the majority of them young people. The question is why does someone become a drug user? Some young people who are driven out of their own country by war and arrive in Europe, may well feel that war and misery are over for them, but they soon realise that not even European countries can offer them a comfortable life. They run out of money and have no one to help them... In their despair, they fall victim to drugs... We spoke to one young man to whom this has happened.

His name is Yiasin, he is 22 years old and comes from the war-torn country of Afghanistan. He came to Europe two years ago, and for the time being, his only home is a park.

I asked him why he took drugs. He replied, full of anguish...

When I arrived in Greece, I could only speak my mother tongue. I wanted to leave Greece and go to Italy. I spoke to one of the traffickers who told me he would get me there. He took me to the city of Patras and hid me in a lorry. At midnight, the lorry driver discovered me and called the police, who asked for my papers. I didn't have any, so they sent me to prison where I stayed for 13 months. During that time, I began to suffer from depression.



One night, another inmate asked me why I was so sad and I told him my story.

He was very friendly and gave me a pill saying it would cheer me up. We met regularly and I kept taking the pills. When I was released from prison, my whole body hurt. I was angry. I had no idea I had become addicted. I only realised when I went to a hospital in Athens.

My final question to Yiasin was: what do you have to say to those that come into contact with narcotics for the first time?

I would tell them not to play with fire. I want to say to all the young people that come to Europe, that they must try to put into practice all their good ideas, even if the system gives them very little help. For example, the first thing that young people want to do when they arrive is to go to school and become successful. That is what they should do.

My Imagination

By Elham Esmaili

I personally find the idea of imagination fascinating. I really like the fact that I can accomplish things in my mind that I haven't yet achieved. I think of my future all the time and this keeps me busy wherever I am. It's a way of forgetting about the past.

Now I would like to share some of my daydreams with you.

My imagination is at work most days and nights and I can't stop dreaming. I would love to be a bird and fly wherever I want, the way birds do without being imprisoned in a cage. I would love to dance in the air, like a dandelion, and find myself up in the sky. I imagine a lot of things. Sometimes I think that all my dreams have come true, but a few moments later I look around and start laughing when I realise this isn't so. Why do I think like this? I pretend I have thousands of pairs of shoes, a myriad clothes and brightly coloured handbags. I imagine dressing differently every day,

the way well-dressed girls do. I like these thoughts. In general, girls daydream a lot. The colour pink, make-up, pretty clothes, a carefree world just for children... I imagine that I am a citizen of Korea, that I have learnt their language and can talk to the people there. I imagine that I am a professional volleyball player and that I take part in volleyball games. I imagine myself in Canada with my family, where we are living a better life and all my wishes have come true. I would like this dream to become a reality.

I write all the things I imagine in a small notebook, I think about them and would like them all to come true. I work on my imagination in this way. I also hope that all the girls from my country can turn their wishes into reality and that nothing negative will prevent them from accomplishing them.

We read...

By Samiullah Fazaili

"Slavery"

This is what I learnt from this book on slavery...

Slavery is a curse, something awful that no one should ever have to experience. Through no desire of their own, some people live in an open prison; they are free in body, but their mind is incarcerated and that can never be a good thing. Obviously no one on this earth wants to be a slave. And yet, there are countries that find themselves in that situation, while "others" turn away and ignore them.

In this book, the author uses a different approach to show how people deal with the refugee crisis, which is due to various conflicts in Asia, and all the problems associated with it. As I have already said, the message of this book is that imprisonment, slavery and lack of freedom are things that are hard for anyone to endure. Unfortunately there are many people who suffer like this every day. I would like everyone to be free and for all of us to live as one. People shouldn't need to ask for this kind of help.



Conscience

By Mirna Aslan

I want to talk about a delicate matter, which concerns every member of society. I am hoping to sensitise people and awaken their sense of compassion, especially since we are so used to hearing stories so painful that they are hard to believe.

We come into the world frail, weak and helpless, unable to do anything. But God gave us a gift: "our mother".

When we were young, she did her best to satisfy us and make us stop crying. She would wipe away our tears, feed us when we were hungry, did everything she could to put a smile on our faces, then she would talk about the meaning of love, respect and faith. We became stronger as we grew older, we took care of ourselves, we made many friends but unfortunately, we forgot all the good things, the love and care, that our mothers had provided for us. Mother's embrace used to be our security blanket, but if children grow up and forget her, she becomes nothing, and that is very painful.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates what today's society has become. A true story, and I quote the words of the person who told me: I was on the beach and I saw an elderly lady sitting on a rock. She was leaning on her arm and staring at the sea, as if she was talking to it. The waves were coming towards her and wetting her worn-out warm brown coat. The fish swam near her, offering solace to her sorrow. It was past midnight. I was curious so I approached her and said:

"What are you waiting for, mother?"

"I am waiting for my son who left, but will be back shortly..."

I had my doubts. I wasn't sure what was happening to this woman and why she was sitting there. It was late and I couldn't believe that someone would come in the middle of the night. I waited for a whole hour and no one came. I approached her again and she said:

"Oh my son... My son left, but he will be back any moment now..."

Just then, I noticed a piece of paper next to her.

"Will you allow me to read what is on this piece of paper?"

"It was left by my son who told me to give it to anyone that came here".

I took that piece of paper and read it. What did it say? It said:

"Whoever finds this lady, please take her to the old people's home".

In conclusion, I would like to say something to all people: We must ask the authorities to legislate so that crimes like this get punished. I hope God will awaken our consciences.





An interesting afternoon at the Asylum Service

By Zahra Habibi

For all those wishing to emigrate, Greece is the gateway to Europe

A few days ago, our team went to the Asylum Service in Katerhaki Avenue, where we interviewed Mrs Eleni Petraki, head of the PR and Communication Department.

After introducing ourselves and exchanging information about the service, we started asking our questions:

What rights will a refugee have once he or she has been legally accepted to live in Greece?

To begin with, all the information that an asylum seeker or someone with refugee status needs, can be found in the Asylum Service's website www.asylo.gov.gr and on the mobile app Asylum Service Application (currently only for Android devices). The information provided by the app is available in seven languages and is free.

What criteria does one need to fulfill in order to be granted asylum?

The criteria are set out by the Geneva Convention, International and European Law and Greek legislation. A refugee is defined as someone who finds him/herself outside his/her country and has a well-founded fear of persecution due to his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. He/she is unable to return to his/her country owing to this fear. Economic migrants are able to return to their country whenever they wish, whereas refugees can not return until the situation there changes and they are able to return safely. Only those who are not refugees are able to return to their country.

Are these criteria different in Greece from other European countries or are they the same everywhere?

Refugee law is the same everywhere and we are all obliged to implement it. All countries are required to abide by these laws.

Why are some claims for asylum denied?

They are denied because the people in question are not refugees. A claim is denied only after the correct procedure (which includes an interview) has been followed and the applicant is deemed not to have refugee status, i.e. that he/she does not fear persecution and is not afraid to return home. It's a question of not being able to prove fear.

What happens if a refugee breaks the laws of their country of residence? Anyone given refugee status by the Greek state has the same rights and obligation as a Greek citizen, with the exception of the right to vote

living illegally in Greece. In this case, the process of repatriation to his/her own country begins.

If a refugee manages to get a passport issued, can he/she travel to any country and can they work anywhere?

If someone is officially recognised as a refugee and has an identity card from the Greek state, as well as his/her passport, then yes, he/she can travel as a tourist to other Schengen countries in Europe, just as Greek citizens do. However, he/she must return to Greece because this is where that person has been granted refugee status. According to the law today he/she can not settle or work in another country. The law is a European one, not a Greek one.

No one ever replies on skype. If someone has a serious problem, how do they get in touch with you? What if they have no internet?

From 1st August 2017, the Skype line is available 25 hours per week for applicants who are under the jurisdiction of the Regional Asylum Office of Attica and 23 hours per week for those in the rest of Greece. When there are too many calls and you keep trying but get no answer, it doesn't mean that the Skype line is dead.

There is a rumour that those whose application has not been successful during the past year and a half will be expelled from Greece. Is this true? No it isn't! We don't listen to rumours, we ask responsibly and we find out. In any case, we said that those who are not granted refugee status will be returned to their country.

What is the process by which unaccompanied minors apply for asylum?

According to a law governing the whole of Europe, a minor is anyone under the age of 18. In many European countries marriage under the age of 18 is forbidden for both boys and girls. I am telling you this by way of introducing the question of protection for unaccompanied minors in Greece. If we discover that a young person is under-age, a protection mechanism is immediately set in motion and the state is obliged to place unaccompanied minors in safe accommodation. The child is assigned a representative who will accompany him/her to the Asylum Service in order to submit an application for International Protection. If the applicant is under 15 years of age, we do not take his/her fingerprints, nor do we interview them. The Asylum Service has a separate place for unaccompanied minors to submit their applications, and this is on the first floor of the Old Garrison headquarters opposite the metro "Larissa Station". The Asylum Service has a small team of staff there who register unaccompanied minors and vulnerable individuals. In the case of over-15s, the interviews are carried out at the Regional Asylum Office of Attica.

What percentage of asylum applications are granted?

In the first seven months of 2017, an average of 44% were successful. For Syrians this goes up to 99.5%, for Iraqis 72.8% and for Afghans 63.6%

Why does it take so long from the day I submit my application to the day I receive a reply, even though I have all the original correct documents?

The majority of people who come to the Asylum Service to request International Protection usually have no documents at all. No originals, no photocopies, nothing. Others may have had theirs stolen on their journey here, some may have thrown theirs into the sea, or they may simply not want to present them. There is therefore no official requirement for someone to present their documents at the time of registration. It is the interview that will reveal whether the applicant is telling the truth or not. There is usually a time-lag of a few months between the registration and the interview and then it normally takes about two to three months from the date of the interview for the decision to be announced. Sometimes the decision takes longer because it might be a particularly complicated case, or we have to wait for some health certificates, or the applicant has been a victim of torture etc.

How does Greece decide about refugees who want to go to Europe through the family reunification programme?

Greece follows the «Dublin III» regulation for family reunification. Unaccompanied minors can be reunited with their parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, grandparents, or spouses. In exceptional circumstances, such as a serious health issue, or if someone very elderly requires a relative to look after them, parents can be reunited with adult children.



or stand for elections. So, if I steal or break the law, and Fatima or Mohammed do the same, the law will treat us equally. The same is true if one of us is a victim of crime, injustice or violence. We have the same rights. The fact that I am a refugee in another country does not mean that I have fewer rights than that country's citizens. We must assert our rights wherever we are.

What happens when someone makes repeated applications for asylum which are constantly denied?

If it has been proved that the applicant does not fulfill the relevant criteria for refugee status, the claim is denied and the person is considered to be

Life without Wi-Fi

By Parastou Hossaini

Access to the internet has become one of life's basic necessities for people all over the world. Wherever we go, the first thing we do is to ask for the Wi-Fi password because we find it impossible to live without the internet. It is now so widespread, that the majority of shops, restaurants hotels and shopping centres offer free Wi-Fi in order to attract more and more customers.

What is Wi-Fi? It's a popular wireless facility that offers high-speed access to the internet via radio waves.

In many developed countries, free Wi-Fi in public places such as parks, squares and bus stops has become commonplace. Municipal wireless networks are capable of offering high speeds for third and fourth generation networks (3G and 4G), which are often free, and can be used even by devices that don't have a sim card, such as laptops and tablets! This is why many municipalities have tried to respond to people's needs by offering free Wi-Fi hubs in central parts of town. Recently even public transport has become equipped with Wi-Fi.

Access to the internet has become a basic requirement of life and we are all dependent on it one way or another.

Wi-Fi is particularly appealing to the young, who use it not only to communicate, but also for entertainment. Of course older people have learnt to use it too, but it is the younger generation that spends more hours of the day connected to Wi-Fi. Use can sometimes border on the addictive, as happens with drugs, and this can ring alarm bells in the family.

That is why we need to know how to use the internet correctly, especially during adolescence. When you don't have access to Wi-Fi you feel like a caveman living thousands of years ago. In fact some people believe that life without Wi-Fi is a life with no entertainment. But that's not true: we can enjoy the warmth of our family by talking to each other, watching a film, even doing housework together. For example, a friend of mine told me that if she ends up with no Wi-Fi some day, she will take up sports.



She loves long distance running and it makes her happy.

She visits friends because personal contact is more meaningful and much more interesting than Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp. She also goes to theatres, museums, concerts and other cultural events. Of course without Wi-Fi you don't have access to news and information from the rest of the world.

Even though today it is impossible for us to imagine a life without electricity, internet or mobile telephone, it is quite possible that continued exposure to the radiation these devices produce may have negative effects on our health. However, even if we turn off our Wi-Fi, there are a myriad other signals and sources of radiation that we cannot escape from. These could also have a detrimental effect on the human body and might cause headaches, tiredness, sleep disorders, digestive problems, brain and memory disorders, anxiety, even depression.

Recipe for Bolani

By Farangis Zafari

I want to give you the recipe for an Afghan dish called "Bolani". It is very popular in Afghanistan and is widely known, with many fans all over the world.

Ingredients

1kg flour
2 bunches of spring onions
Olive oil
A few fresh peppers
1 sachet dried yeast
Salt and pepper

Method

Dissolve the yeast in warm water and add the flour and salt. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and allow the dough to rise. Cut the spring onions with a sharp knife, salt them and allow them to stand for half an hour. Then rinse them and put them in a colander to allow all the water to drain out. Add some salt and pepper to the spring onions and squeeze them between your hands till there is no liquid left. Knead the dough and shape it into small balls. Then roll each ball into a thin round sheet. Spread the spring onions onto one side of each sheet and fold the other side on top to form a semi-circle. Heat some oil in a frying pan and fry the bolani. You can enjoy your bolani with yoghurt or tomato chutney.



Recipe for tomato chutney

Ingredients

1 unripe, green tomato (or one hot green pepper)
Celery
Garlic
1 fresh hot pepper
Vinegar and salt to taste

Method

Mix the tomato, celery and pepper in a blender then add the vinegar and salt. You can also use a red tomato. Afghans, especially those from Kabul, love spicy food. You can also make the chutney with a hot green pepper.



my own here in Greece so that people could learn about Arabic food", remarked the Syrian entrepreneur. "It wasn't easy", he continued, "for various reasons. For a start, I didn't speak Greek. Then my financial situation wasn't good and in order to make enough money to open my own business I had to do several jobs. In the end, I learnt Greek and managed to save up the money I needed to open the restaurant".

He claims that the key to his success so far is the fact that he uses top-quality oil, and very fresh vegetables, his establishment is very clean, he looks after his customers and is committed to quality and flavour.

Talking of food, one of the most popular dishes that all Arabs and quite a few Greeks and tourists love is falafel. "Falafel is well known in the Arabic world," said Hamid, "all Arabs like it and Greeks have taken to it too, some of them even make it at home. As a result, I have European as well as Arab customers."

Other countries famous for this well-known dish are Egypt and Lebanon, although it actually originates from Palestine.

Luckily for us, Hamid revealed his recipe for the famous falafel. "The ingredients are: chickpeas, onion, garlic, salt, spices, black pepper, coriander, cloves, flour, sesame, parsley and oil for the frying pan. Mix all the ingredients together and put them in the fridge for a quarter of an hour. Then shape the mixture into small balls, heat the oil and fry the falafel. Serve it with a salad of tomatoes, cucumber and spearmint."

Hamid from Syria has managed to turn his business into one of Athens' most popular destinations. He also thanked the Greek people for helping refugees. "My advice to my young compatriots is to respect the country they are living in, and to learn Greek so that they do not rely on handouts from the government. They need to earn their own living."

We thanked Hamid Abu for his time and made an appointment to return for lunch the following day.

The best falafel in town

By Mohammed Majbur

A lunchtime stroll in the centre of Athens was exactly what was needed before heading to Hamid Abu's in Vathi Square. Hamid came from Syria in 1999, in search of a better life. He dreamt of opening his own business, fell in love with Greece and stayed! "I have always worked in restaurants which is why I decided to open

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