



Katsikas (Habibi.Works) Wednesday 26 January 2022



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Kabul, Afghanistan

I left Kabul in 2018. I had problems there. When I was nine years old, my family including me left for Iran, and then five years later, when I was 14, we returned to Kabul.

My wife had a problem I would not like to explain now. It is between us, and private. We left Kabul together as a result, with our two boys, who are now nine and five.

We travelled to Pakistan, then Iran, then Turkey and then here to Greece.

We arrived in Greece by sea. There were 50 people in a nine-metre boat. It was very difficult. WE were so low in the water and sometimes the waves were higher than the boat.

From Afghanistan to the boat, we went sometimes by car but mostly walking. It was difficult. It was cold and we carried the children. We were so tired. It took three months.

We arrived on Lesbos and we lived in Moria, where we stayed for 14 months.

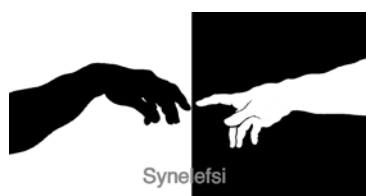
Every night there were problems. It was very very very cramped. No-one had any space. The capacity was 3,000 {in fact, 2,757} people, but at times there were 25,000 people there.

You can't expect people to live normally like that. People's tempers were frayed and people got angry. There were fights every night. It was hard for everyone. People would throw things at one another, hurt each other. Those who fought got hurt and everyone was scared.

I used to sit at our door at night to make sure no-one would come in. To try to protect my family and our possessions. What few things we had.

It was not our container. We had to share it with six other families. Every night one of us would guard the door.

Moria was a very very very bad place. The food was terrible, and often rotten. It was a bad place for me, for my wife and for my children. It was a very very dirty place. Very often the toilets overflowed: there was toilet water and waste all over the floor and people had to walk through it so it would be carried all over the camp.





During Covid, people were crammed together. There was no distancing. There were 25,000 people. Every day, 400 families had to queue to get food. People would arrive at 4am to begin queuing. It was so sad, and so hard.

It took until 24 April 2020 for us to have our first interview. Then we got a red card after three months, which meant we were allowed to be there, but not to travel. Then, we got a new card which meant we were allowed to go to another city. It took 11 months for us to get a ticket.

It was quite frightening and frustrating to wait so long, when we knew we were allowed to travel, and it meant we lost everything we owned.

We had been at the camp for 14 months when the fire happened.

We had a little money, some clothes, a few items of jewellery which we had brought with us because they were important heirlooms, and some other family things like photos.

They were all destroyed. The clothes for my family. Everything. At the time you do not think, you just have to act: get out to escape the fire, and then fight to find somewhere to stay and sleep when you are safe from the fire. But now, the things we have lost are more important. They are our family things. Pictures and items that tie us to and remind us of our lives and our homes. They are important. That is important. But it is lost.

And it was worse for other people. One family, who had a son my son was friends with, got trapped by the fire. Their son, my son Hamid's friend, was killed. That should not happen, to any person or any family. Hamid is my oldest son. I tried to protect him. I said 'he has gone away, to live somewhere else'. But he said 'no, dad, he is dead.' He was very sad, very depressed. We all were sad, but it was his friend. He lost someone close to him, who he cared about. That should not have happened.

We spent ten days living on the street. We had no other option. I thought that when they realised and became organised, they would let us travel at last, but instead on the 11th day, they sent about 100 police officers in the morning and marched us to a new camp.

People fought against the police. The new camp was terrible and the police were rude and aggressive. When people resisted they hit them, and used pepper spray.

After 20 days in that camp we were finally moved, to Grevena.

We spent five months there but the hotel was emptied when a person died there.

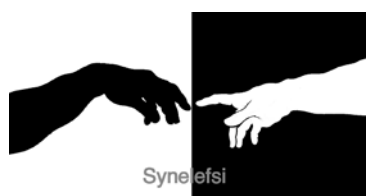
We were all transferred and we came here on 19 February 2021. We had been here in Greece for three years, but had not had our interview for asylum. We were told to wait.

And then when Turkey was named as a safe state by the Greek government we were called on 24 June 2021 and at the interview they told us Turkey was safe. But we are not from there. We came from Afghanistan. We waited eight months, and had no answer.

You are from England. There, I think everything is OK, for school, for your family?

I had to leave Afghanistan. There are so many problems there. Everyone has problems. That's why we risk the mountains and the sea.

This camp, Katsikas, is better than Moria. There are not so many people. But we have had no money for five months and now we have had some money it's much less. Before, a four-person family got €420. This time, it was €210.





Because my wife has a problem, we can't share a container. The one we have is too small for our family, so we have asked for a bigger one but they told us either share a big container or go into a tent.

I come here {**Habibi.Works**} to help and to find a way to help. Just to help, to have something to do.

The wall is very bad, no good at all. We are not criminals and we should not be in prison. Why are we being shut inside walls? We didn't commit any crimes. We escaped from crimes being committed in our countries. But this is being done to us.



I feel lost about the wall. So unhappy. Why are they shutting us in, shutting us away from the Greek people? What have we done? We want to be part of the community. Why are they building a wall?

We don't want it, and it's not for us. So is it for Greek people? How does it help them?

We can't fix things when they are broken, and we are told off if we try to buy new things. We can't do that now, because we have no money, but when we did the camp staff took them from us. So it was a waste of money. Instead, everything stays broken.

The washing machine is outside. And at the moment, when it's so freezing cold, that's a big problem.

I don't know now what I want for my family.

I would like to go to Germany, for my wife and children. We don't like this life where all we can do here is just sleep and eat.

I used to have a job, at home. I spoke to people, did useful things. I was a tiler. I would decorate buildings' receptions, stairwells and staircases, floors, kitchens and bathrooms. In offices, stores and apartments.

That was what I did and I was good at it. I really liked it and really want to continue.

I started when I was ten years old. I would work with my father, and got qualified. I earned a living by making things, a good thing to do. I was a master builder, a project manager.

I have 18 years' experience in this. I was good at it and want to do it again. I just want a chance to work, to do the thing I am good at. I can help people if I am allowed to.

My children do go to school, now. They have been able to for the last two months. That's good, but we have been here for three years and they have been to school for just two months. This is especially a problem for my oldest son Hamid, because he's nine. He has missed so much.

They like school. I want to make sure we go somewhere we can be sure they get to go.

