



INTERVIEW WITH A TEENAGE REFUGEE

QUESTION: Hello, could you please tell me your story?

ANSWER: I was a student in Pakistan at the same time, I was working as a helper teacher. Most of my time in Pakistan I spend on studies and education and helping minorities and stuff like that. I always tried to make everyone happy. In Pakistan I always wanted to spend time with my familie. I told them about it, but they didn't believe me, they framed me in many things and beat me a lot. The beat me, and every time they like took my mobile so I could not call or send a proof or my cry full voice. But one time the beaten me and forgot to take my phone, and then I send my father a proof „this is what they are doing with me”. Then my father said that we need to find a solution, we need to solve the problem. I had this friend, he went to Greece illegally and I decided that for protection I would go there.

So I decided I would leave Pakistan. And on the 21st of May 2019 I left Pakistan and went to Iran. From there my journey starts towards Greece. Because Italy was not my destination at that



Tent in a refugee camp in Bosnia

Source: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/closing-the-vučjak-camp-doesnt-resolve-the-humanitarian-crisis-for-migrants-in->

time. I faced many difficulties,

saw many new things. How I told you, most of my time in Pakistan I spend on education so I was not aware of the world. How it is, how it is really like. What is respect, what is everything I am seeing? It was turning point in my life. Like who I was in Pakistan, an aware of the world a teenager and after so many difficulties, so many days of hunger I saw the real world. I reached Istanbul, Turkey. After three tries I reached Greece, Thessaloniki. Near this region we, me and my friends were found by the police. They didn't deport us back, they took us to prison. I was 16 years old at the time. I was told not to speak English. I didn't know why? They told me that I might be framed into being a guide and stuff like that. So I said okay, and now one knows I could speak English. When we were caught, there was a guy from Afghanistan, I think. He knew a language and he was translating for everyone. I told him I was 16 years old but he wrote I was 18 years old. He did that because Greece deports everyone that is younger than a minor. To get an education, to start a life there I needed to be older.

Later I went to Athens, I had a friend there and I lived there with him. I am not sure for how long. Then my journey started towards Italy, from Greece to Macedonia, then to Serbia it wasn't so difficult. Pakistan to Iran, Istanbul to Greece were so difficult. Macedonia to Serbia



Bira camp

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50700345>

was not so bad, Serbia is a great country. From Serbia I reached Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the third try. Then I stayed in Sarajevo camp. After that I went to Bira camp, which is near the border of Croatia. There I tried one time, I wanted to deport myself, but they didn't let me. I didn't want to go back to that Bira camp, I wanted to go back to the capital of Bosnia, Sarajevo. But I didn't want to be deported back to Pakistan. It would be so difficult to cross the border again, there are big, big mountains it is very difficult. I was so scared to go through that all over again. There was with me a guy, he said to me: come to a camp with me I would give you money and a phone, then you can go. Later I spoke with my mom and she convinced me to try one more time. And I tried, but I was deported again. I decided to try one more time, the third time, I was deported again. I was finished, I was done. I called my whole family, but they, except my parents, didn't know what I was going through. My family were convincing me to come back, they were saying „let him come back, let him come back”. On the next try I was caught near Slovenia and Bosnian police deported us back. I was deported to Sarajevo, but there was a guy who tried to harass me, so I changed camp. On 19th of May 2020 I met a woman, and we started talking and on the 21st I fell in love with her. I called my parents and told them that no matter what now, I am going to Europe. My mum asked if I met someone, and I said no, but later I told her the truth. I was determined to go to Europe, to my Jan (it means life in my language). I was fully motivated to go. To never give up, no matter what. No matter what the police would do. After that, I fully believed in myself that I would go to my Jan. I even got a chance to go to Holland, but I was scared they would deport me back to Slovenia because Holland is a very

strict country. And i can't even marry her there. There is still coronavirus, and I am wanting when could I meet her.

QUESTION: Why did you decided to stay in Italy?

ANSWER:I decided to stay in Italy because, first of all I have many friends here and second of all Italy is a really great country for me. I have this beautiful apartment, I don't think I would get it in Holland. Italy is not a strict country for refugees and stuff like that. I think it is the main reason why I stayed here.

QUESTION: Were you alone on that journey or did you have someone to rely on like someone who would help you? A type of a shoulder to cry on.

Shoulder to cry on, I am the first one of my familie to come on this journey. I was alone, okay I had a lot of people around from Pakistan, Afghanistan etc, but I was alone. I didn't have anyone to speak of my sorrows and to cry to. Until, of course may 2020.

QUESTION: What was the most terrifying moment you experienced?

ANSWER: The most difficult time was in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fear of rape. As I told you, a guy came to harass me.

Fear of getting killed by the Bosnian police, fear of getting murdered by the refugees and stuff like that. This is what I fear the most.

QUESTION: How long did your journey take? How long did you travel from Pakistan to Italy?

ANSWER: I left Pakistan on 21 or 26 May 2019, and I reached Italy on 26 or 21 September 2020. One year and four months.

QUESTION: How did your typical day during this time look?

ANSWER: Wake up in the morning, then have breakfast after that, waiting outside then coming back. It was in Burichi camp, there was an Arabic woman I called Mama Juhsiena. There is this stereotype, that all refugees are bastards. But in Burichi camp it was true. People were fighting and hitting each other. Mama Juhsiena was an older woman and no one would touch her. So I went outside only with her. She was like my armor.

QUESTION: Do you go to school, or study or maybe work?

ANSWER: Right now I am learning Italian language. As a job I have with my Jan facebook page, where I write quotes and she makes some drawings for them. Later we sell those.

QUESTION: Why did you decide to leave Pakistan?

ANSWER: It is like I told you in the beginning. Because in Pakistan when you are 18 years old you have an ID card and passport. Or you can have a passport if you travel to another country with your parents. But I wasn't 18

years old so I didn't get an ID card, without it you can not do many things. I couldn't go anywhere else. I was in school in Pakistan, and I didn't know where I would go to school, being so far away. This is like confusing stuff.

QUESTION: As a person, who lived through all of it, do you have any idea how we can improve the living situation of refugees coming to Europe? How we can help to prevent all these terrible things from happening?

ANSWER: Well, imagine yourself. People around you can get everything they want, they can get jobs, they can get good food to eat and stuff like that, and you are looking at them and you can't get anything they got. You ask yourself, why? I am also a human. Why are you treating me like an animal, even though some animals are treated better than this. Even if a dog is barking, they give him water and food. But what do they do to us? They don't give us anything, and then they blame us for the refugees fighting and killing. This is just a cause. I gave an example of hunger, because hunger makes a person do a lot. Hunger makes people steal. As I said, imagine yourself in that position, there is a shop in front of you, everyone can get good food from there, except you. After many days with so much hunger, what would you do? You would try to steal or to beg. The real question is who should we blame, refugees or the people?

I don't know.

I asked Kashmiri (teenage refugee) and Aleksander (teenager from Warsaw, Poland) the same questions. Here are their answers:



Aleksander



Kashmiri

1. What is the most important thing for you in life?

Aleksander: Friends and happiness

Kashmiri: Love

2. What is your biggest fear?

A: loneliness, failure, not being good enough

K: I am fearless...

3. What is your biggest accomplishment?

A: Forming a band.

K: That people around me respect me.

4. What are you looking forward in life?

A: Being happy and successful. Having hobbies and interests. Being open for new things.

K: To marry my Jan, then open a hotel.

5. What makes you happy?

A: Music, amigos, seeking adventures.

K: My love makes me happy.

How you can see, some of their answers are similar, but some are radically different. They are both just teenagers, and both should face similar problems. Teenagers problems, not dilemmas such as, where would I get my food or am I safe sleeping here? Our role as a newspaper and society is to focus the attention of the world on this problem. The problem of robbing innocent people from their childhood.

