

# **The Life of Refugee**

## **By: Mahmoud Qeshreh**

*This is some part of my life  
Maybe for some of you, it is just normal story  
but for me it is something important to share  
to let other people, know about the life of refugee*

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## Do you know Syria?

This message is directed to citizen in the countries who have taken in Syrian refugees.

Hello, my name is Mahmoud Qeshreh, I'm Syrian refugee in Belgium from Aleppo city. If you let me to take a few minutes of your time.

I have a message to all the honorable Europeans and west people ... like Belgium, Norway, Austria, Greece, Canada, USA .... Can you believe that Syrians are now in all these countries? You have hosted refugees and I have a few word to tell you:

I came about a serious revelation, a revelation which concerns you firstly because you live with us, the Syrian refugees feel extremely frustrated, experienced great sorrow and would like to feel like a normal human being not as a refugee.

We want to walk in your streets without being hunted by all those eyes, without having our steps and breath counted.

We came to breath in some safety and security but we feel this freedom is incomplete.

Dear western and Europeans people:

The Syrian refugee did not come to your country willingly, he would have preferred to come as a tourist with his family and enjoy the beauty of your civilization, your amazing history and take photos and go home.

He did not come looking for a job opportunity, he came looking for an opportunity for life.

This Syrian refugee whom you've embraced your humanity, he came looking for the warmth that he lost in his country.

This Syrian is the son of Syria, which means "the land of the sun", but unfortunately, the Syrian sun is no longer warm for him.

In the past, 8000 years, the Syrian has never been a refugee but he harbored the entire surrounding world's refugees.

Yes, this Syrian came to you alive but left behind a significant part of him dead, he came to you to open a new page in his life leaving behind pages of death and destruction.

You can't imagine what this Syrian went through before reaching your shores, and I hope you never go through such a dreadful experience.

Do you know where he came from? From Syria, do you know what Syria is? I do not blame you if you do not because today you know Syria for its death and destruction, however, Syria was a cradle to all civilizations.

Do you like olives? Or olive oil? The first olive tree was planted in Syria. Do you eat bread? The first wheat field was in Syria, planted in the first agricultural village in history. And plowed with the first plow in history, harvested with the first scythe in history and ground for the first time in history in 7000 BC.

Ladies and gentlemen, this refugee is from Syria, his mother tongue is Syrian, a part of the Aramaic language, the language of the Jesus Christ and from Syria the Christianity started.

Damascus is the capital of Syria, the first inhabited city in the world, it encompassed the first school in history, the hometown of Ibn Al Nafis who discovered the circulatory system.

You will be astonished when you will know that Syria presented the world with the first alphabet in history, A B C, came from Syria in 7500 BC.

You will be amazed to know that Syria introduced music, the oldest musical note in the world was made of clay, dated 1400 BC, was discovered in Syria. It contained 4 verses in Hurri language and was the scale of a song dedicated to the goddess Nikal the wife of the god of the Moon.

Through this short words I want to convey my gratitude from all of us to all those people who opened their hands and hearts to Syrians and took us in and gave us one of the most important things in life, SECURITY.

I wish you all security, safety, happiness and peace.

## **Me in Syria: the beginning of my story**

Syria is the country where I was born and spent all my amazing moments in my life before the stupid war started.

The life in Syria like a spring day, lovely sun with soft rain. You can feel the smell of the flowers, of the rain and of the jasmine. It is a night of clear moon with warm air playing with your hair.

This was the life in Syria before 2011 before every bad thing happened and happening nowadays.

I graduated from the Faculty of Economics – Management Information System department, I had been a teacher at the university for project management classes before I left Syria.

Before that I went to the university, I wanted to be computer engineer and to have my own company specializing in robots and artificial intelligence, but I could not do it because I did not get enough good marks in the secondary school to get in computer engineering college.

The life at the university was very nice and I met a lot of great people and people who shared my dream. So we decided to work towards our dream after graduation.

I studied networks, database and hacking in a private technology school and I got many certificates in technology and management from Microsoft and Google.

2011 was the moment of forgetting dreams, forgetting all my plans for future. This year was the last year for me in the university but because of the military service I could not finish and I had to keep some classes to stay at the university because when I finished the university, they would have taken me to do the military service.

I wished that the war would have finished soon so I could start my project, but it did not and it lasts till now. The difference now is that I wish to stop the blood and deaths of people.

The war in Syria let all young and educated people to run away from it to other countries like Lebanon, whereas young people who could not leave Syria had been taken to the military service by force.

2013 was the year of my graduation because. If I waited more, maybe it would have been harder for me to finish the university, so I finished it and started to work in one educational organization part-time while I was working as teacher at university.

The May of 2014 was the moment to leave Syria to another place after all my dreams and hopes ended. There was no more hope for me in Syria. The

only option was Turkey because it was – not anymore now – the only good country who was accepting Syrians without visa.

## **May 7, 2014: Going to Turkey**

It was the last day for me in Syria, I went to Lebanon at the beginning before Turkey. All the way from Syria to Lebanon I was shocked because I did not know when I will see Syria again or I will see my family again.

May 10, 2014 was the first day for me in Istanbul, Turkey. When I went out from Ataturk airport, I was shocked by new life, new people and new culture.

The situation in Turkey was not so good because many, many Syrians were living in Turkey - about 2 million people. Most of the people were working 12 hours per day for 350 Euros per month.

Can you imagine to work 12 hours per day for 350 Euros per month? it is something unbelievable. But because of the very bad situation that the Syrian people have, they accepted this condition of work and worked just not to die and to feed their families.

Besides that, most Turkish people were biased against Syrian. Racism, no respect, no humanity from the employers... Syrian people had very hard moments at work but their only choice was either to die or to be patient.

I was sharing a house with 9 people, 3 rooms, all were from Syria and that was a good thing, especially at the beginning.

It was hard time for me because everything was so different form what I knew. The first thing I did was learning the Turkish language. I had been learning Turkish language for 2 months and after that I decided to look for a job and it was the mission impossible for me.

I could speak little Turkish and I started to look for a job in the big city – Istanbul.

The biggest problem for me was being Syrian. Yes, if you are from Syria, it is almost impossible to find a job even you speak Turkish.

It was a really hard time. For 3 months I could not find job because every time I asked for a job, the only answer was NO.

I traveled to another city – Cappadocia city – it is small city and a very nice one.

Finally, I could find a job in a travel agency and the owner was very nice with me. He liked the Syrian people – he is the first person I found who liked us – I started the work and my job was to give information to tourists about the service we have in the agency.

I know myself, I do not have any kind of luck in this life.

After 3 weeks of my job, the owner decided to close the agency because there was no work for him and he spent more than he earned.

I went back to Istanbul with no hope to find a job again.

I did not have any choice, so I started to look for a job again. Always the same answer, 'NO', 'Sorry NO', 'I am sorry, sir, but NO'.

This word was in my nightmares.

I traveled to another city – the Gaziantep city – to look for a job with any organization in human rights.

I spent 1 week looking, but got the same result, NO JOB.

I spent 15 months like this in Turkey and I started to think to go back to Syria, even though being taken for the military service would have meant the end of my life.

When I told my mom what I was thinking, she got crazy and told me not to think of going back to Syria even I have to stay at the street.

She told me she would give me the money to travel to Europe because the situation was getting worse every day.

This adventure to Europe was the turning point in my life, even if it is very dangerous, but there was no hope for me in Turkey.

So, I decided to do it and I prepared myself for this adventure, but I know my luck, it always cheats with me. I thought it would not be hard, but here is what happened.

## **August 1, 2015: The Start of the Journey**

This date has changed my life completely. It has changed my plans and every single thing in my life.

I went from Istanbul to Izmir at 12 am and we arrived to Izmir at 9 am. We got the breakfast and started to look for a hotel and it was so hard to find one.

We found god hotel and paid for 2 nights and we started to look to a person to help us to arrive to Greece.

After many attempts, we found one person who agreed to help us to travel from Turkey to Greece. We were 10 people, all boys. We met the person and we had a deal: he said he would take us to Greece by boat and charge 1200 U.S. dollars.

We couldn't find another person who would have charged less money.

He told us, 'Be ready. I will call you tomorrow and tell you about the time we are leaving.'

The next day we were ready. All bags were packed, we got our breakfast then we stayed in one room waiting to his call.

The day almost ended, but he did not call. He called us at 11 pm and told us, 'We can't leave today, we will go tomorrow.' Then we went to bed and got ready for the trip next day.

However, the same thing happened again and again. We were waiting for five days. On day 6 the person called us and told us to get ready. This time he promised that there would be no change. In 10 minutes, we got ready and we were waiting for his call. He called us and told us to come and meet him in the center of Izmir.

We went there. There were a lot of people who were waiting for other people for the same reason. And then the first attempt started.

He took us to a house in the countryside by cars and left us there. He also told us to wait for the truck. The house had just two rooms with a simple kitchen and a bathroom, every time the person who agreed to take us on the truck said to us, "Stay silent, the people who lives here should not know about us".

And we stayed like this for 3 hours and we were 80 persons. Three hours later, the truck came. The maximum number who can be in the truck is 20, whereas we were 80. We went in the truck and it was very bad. No place to sit down.

After 4.5 hours I couldn't even move my leg because I did not feel it.

The truck was covered so we could not see anything, we just heard one thing from the driver, 'Keep silent or I'm going to stop and smash you back.'

Then we finally arrived to the point where we could take the boat, but a lot of police were there. We could not move and we had to stay in the forest for three hours. After that we moved very fast and quiet to the boats and started our trip.

It was very safe. The sea was very nice, no high waves, no police, it was in the early morning so we could see the sunrise. It was an amazing view, but before we arrived to the borders between Turkey and Greece, Turkish police caught us and took us to Turkey again. It was horrible.

Everyone was crying, including me. They let us stay on big steamship and every 30 minutes they catch new people, almost all of them from Syria. We were 800 persons on the steamship and we stayed in the sea for 7 hours under the hot sun and they did not give us anything, just the hot water (not cold).

At that moment I felt that I lost my hope and it's the end of my life. However, I convinced myself to try it one more time and that is what happened.

## **August 6, 2015: The Second Disappointment**

We left Izmir and went to the city called Bodrum. It was the second place we could go from to get to Greece. We arrived to Bodrum at 1 pm and started to look for a hotel. All hotels were full because it was vacation time for many people.

All people wearing swimsuits were looking to us as we were strange. Sure, we were hiding from the police because if they had caught us, they would have taken us to the police station and we would not have been able to travel.

After many hours of looking for hotel, we found a very expensive one, but we had to take it because it was the only hotel that accepted us as Syrians. We talked to another person to help us. He told us, 'Ok, you should be ready to go very soon.' And the same thing happened, just like in Izmir. We had been waiting for 3 days to leave, but this time we did not have to use a truck to arrive to the point, we got there by cars. We got in the boat and everything was good, except for the sea that was bad and the waves that were high.

The sailor of the boat didn't know how to sail it very well. The waves were very high and it was in the middle of night. No lights, just light of the moon. 100 meters later, the sailor lost the control and the boat sank in the sea.

We had to swim back to the beach, at the same time helping old women and men to arrive safely. We were shocked. I could not believe this. This time my hope was completely destroyed. All our clothes were very wet, it was cold and immediately I started to cough. At the beach I checked my money and I found out that I had lost 500 EUR. I was shocked.

How did I lose them? I and my friends had been looking for them for two hours until we found them near the rock. I felt happy again but I did not forget about the accident.

If I couldn't swim, I would die. We arrived to the highway and by chance we found a small bus that agreed to take us to our hotel.

My friend told me, 'Let's try for the last time and if we can't do it, let's go back.'



I agreed with him so fast and I do not know why but maybe I remember what my father said to me before I started my trip, 'You must be strong and challenge yourself if you want to get somewhere.'

1 days later, we asked another person to help us and he was the only person who was honest with us. He told us that we were leaving tomorrow. Indeed, the next day we went to the point, got into the boat, and started the trip.

Again, in the middle of night. Again, there were no lights, just the light of the moon. This time the sea was good. No high waves during the 2.5 hours of the trip. It was scary, in the middle of the sea. Nobody talked, we were silent.

The good thing was that none of us was alone, we were 60 persons on the boat so we had the same goal, to arrive or to die.

## **August 11, 2015: The Best Moment in My Life**

Finally, we arrived to the Kos island of Greece. I can't tell you what it meant to me. We were extremely happy. We made it. WE MADE IT. It was the most amazing feeling you can ever feel.

BBC, UNHCR and CNN were waiting for us. They started taking photos of us. We became famous.



In this photo you can see me and how I was happy and shocked that I did it.

We had walked for about 2 hours before we arrived to the police station. All people were not looking to us because they use to see refugees on the street, so it was normal to them.

We were walking near to the sea and the other side was about buildings and markets. We needed an official paper from them that would allow us to go to Athens, the capital of Greece.

Of course, a lot of people were there so we had to find a hotel to stay. And there was a big problem: no hotels. We saw about 10 hotels and all of them were full.

We stayed on the street the entire evening and eventually we found a hotel just for 4 people. The rest of us kept looking for a hotel until they found one. We took a shower and went to sleep because we were very tired.

The next day we went to the police station to take the paper but the same situation occurred: lots of people were waiting there.

We could not take the paper and we had to stay one more night at the hotel. The next day the same thing happened. It happened again and again for 5 days.

It was a big problem to while we are in Kos, we are losing money we need in the trip so we had to pay to a person to get this paper and he took 50 EUR for each paper.

After receiving the paper, we took the steamship to Athens.

## **August 16, 2015: Arriving to Athens**

We arrived in Athens at 9 am and found a hotel. We talked to a person who agreed to take us to the border between Greece and Macedonia. The next day we took a bus towards the border.

We arrived at 6 pm and some people told us that it was dangerous to go at that time. They suggested waiting until the next day, but we did not want to wait anymore. We kept moving.

There were about 100 of us walking together, so it was safe, you may say. We were walking into the fields while it was raining. Here we had a problem because everyone wanted to move in his way because his friend told him how to move.

After a lot of talking we chose one way and moved, it was a bad walk, but we had to do it. 4 hours later we arrived in Macedonia. The second step of our trip was made.

## **August 17-18, 2015: The First Borders**

We kept moving until we arrived to the train station. We wanted to go to the border between Serbia and Macedonia. At the train station in Macedonia there were about 1500 people waiting for the train to come. All people were talking, drinking tea, eating, singing and dancing. Just a few lights with the light of moon.

The situation was good because you feel like you are in a big party. Just I and my friends were sleeping because we were very tired. Four hours later the train came. The train had 6 doors. Imagine how many people there were in each door.

I jumped to the window and entered the train from the window, not from the door. Sounds bad, right? You will see things that are much worse than that.

Do you remember the truck we took from Turkey to Greece during our first try? The same thing happened here. I was standing for four hours in the train. I stopped feeling my legs.

It was really bad. Four later hours we arrived to the border. One girl from UNHCR told us about the right way to take in order to cross the border. And we started walking.

## **August 19, 2015: The Way to Unknown**

Five hours of walking between the wet fields as it was raining really hard... It was terrible. You must be very careful because the way was so wet and it was easy to fall down.

Even I was very careful but I fell down many times. Of course, it was very dark. At the end we arrived to the first village of Serbia. There we had to be very careful because if the people had seen us, they would have called the police and the police would have brought us back to Macedonia. We were walking silently.

We walked as groups to not make a sound. We were walking between houses and using GPS to know where we were. 2 hours later we met taxi drivers and they offered us to arrive us to the third village but they will charge 250 EUR by car.

It was so expensive so we did not accept the kept moving, but we were afraid from them because maybe they will call the police but thinks God they did not.

After that we arrived to the third village. We crossed 3 villages on foot. From the third village we took a bus to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. We arrived there at night and it was raining so much.

All hotels were full. It was so difficult to find a hotel. Of course, every 4 people were in a different hotel. The next day we went to the bus station to take the bus to the last village of Serbia, which is the nearest point to the border with Hungary.

But all buses were full so we had to stay for 2 days to find a place in the bus because there were many people.

## **August 22, 2015: The Dangerous Way**

We arrived in that village at 6 pm. We started our most dangerous and difficult part of the trip at 8 pm. We started walking just in our group, there were no other people with us.

We had two ways to cross the borders, by crossing the river way or using the railway. We chose the railway because it was safer. We were moving on the left side of the railway. It was at night, just the light of moon and just our group.

We were walking silently and carefully because if they had caught us at this step, Game Over: we would not have been able to do anything after that. The borders were about just a rock, if you are before the rock you are in Serbia and after it you are in Hungary.

Suddenly a policeman light was on us. We started running while he was trying to shoot us with his gun. I will never forget what happened then. The police man shot my best friend.

He died. My best friend died, and I could not do anything. Why him, why not me? Why him? It was the worst moment in my life. We hid between trees while all of us were shocked of what happened, my friend knows some Hungarian words and he heard them said "died".

I have known him for 20 years. His father died when he was born. He didn't have any brothers or sisters. He lived with his mother. We know each other from very long time. We used to play together, eat, fight, we did everything together.

He told me before we crossed the borders, 'Mahmoud, if something happens to me, please take care of my mother'. He knew that something bad would happen. Every time I remember that, I cry.

I won't able to tell you what happened when I told his mother about this accident. I will never forgive myself. The police took the dead body of my

friend while we had to keep moving because I could have lost my life and my hope if I had stopped then.

We arrived to the end of the railway and saw a highway. We had to cross it in order to get to the other side of the railway, but a lot of policemen were moving and we needed choose a perfect moment. We were hiding in the corn fields.

It was raining a lot while we were waiting in the corn fields for at least 3 hours.

When the police car left the highway, we crossed the highway and continued our trip on the railway. We continued walking through the wet fields, crossing the highways and keeping close to the railway in the heavy rain.

At the end of the railway we found a person who had a truck and took us to Budapest, the capital of Hungary.

We arrived in Budapest at 6 am. We were very wet. We were looking for a hotel, but, again, we could not find one.

The man who brought us to Budapest left us in a small forest where we changed our wet clothes very fast. It was very cold. You can't imagine how it was.

We stayed in this forest to 12 am then we divided to 5 groups and went to eat something and come back to that forest. Then we called a taxi to take us from Hungary to Germany, but we couldn't find one till 12 pm.

We were hiding from the police as well as from the people because if they had seen us, they would have called the police for sure.

We got a taxi and we made our last step.

The driver was drunk and we could have ended up in an accident several times. He was driving so fast, going right and left on the highway. We were scared, but fortunately we arrived safely.

We arrived to the first city in Germany where the driver left us in the middle of a big forest. Again, we had to walk to the train station. While we were walking, the German police saw us.

They were very nice to us, especially when they realized that we are from Syria. They took us to the police station and gave us food and blankets. Then, in the afternoon they took us to the shelter and left us there.

Soon we escaped and went to the train station everyone alone because if they saw us as group they would have brought us back to the shelter. This was the last time I saw my friends after long trip.

All of them went to Germany, I was the only one who came to Belgium.

## **August 27, 2015: New country, new culture, new life**

It was the day when I arrived in refugee center. I spent 11 months there before moving to my house.

My life in the center was nice and difficult at the same time because of what happened to me. My first interview was on October 20, 2015, and here my luck started to play a stupid game with me again.

On October 16 one of employees of the refugee center told me that there was going to be a train strike on October 20. I told myself that it was just the beginning. On October 17 another person from the refugee center told me there is no train strike on October 20.

I was very confused because 2 people told me 2 different things, what was I supposed to do in this case? I decided to no to go to the interview, and it was the most stupid thing I have ever done.

Because of that, my interview got rescheduled 3 times and for the fourth time it was on January 6, 2016, but the luck also played its game with me and there was a strike on this day. I was so sad about this because I had a lot stress.

The next date was on January 13, 2016 and after many months of waiting I did it finally.

My second interview was March 31, 2016 and thanks God it did not get rescheduled. After 14 days from the second interview I received a positive answer and felt great at that moment. However, the big problem started: I had to find a house in 2 months so it meant that I had to leave the center on June 14, 2016. That was very difficult.

It was June 7, 2016 and I still could not find the house, so I asked the refugee organization to give more time to find house. They gave me a negative answer 3 weeks later, but I asked them to give me time again. Before they replied, I could find a house near to Liege city center and I moved on July 26, 2016 and now I am living in my house.

The life in the center was good opportunity for me to learn about the Belgium culture and see how people live, also I started to help the center in translation as I speak good English and to organize some activities for the residents as well.

Also, I helped them to organize the red cross trail and I was one of the participators as well.

It was so organized for example the breakfast from 8 to 9 am and the lunch from 12 to 1 pm and the dinner from 6 to 7 pm. Everyone has special card to divide the people who eat meat and who eat me without pork and also for the vegetarians.

They have many services in the center like GYM, medical office, small kitchen if you want to cook by yourself, laundry room and social office with is the responsible to fellow up your situation. Also, they have library, bar to have drink and clothes room to get some clothes if needed. Every week you will get packet money like 7.40 euro, some people have job contact in the center like cleaning or working in the bar, laundry ... also they have reception which is open 3 times per day to answer your question and if you want to talk an appointment with the social office as well.

I had new family and I made new friends in this center, I lived with other cultures and I learnt a lot from those 11 months in the center and it opened my eyes for new opportunities in volunteering specially after meeting JAVVA volunteers in 2015 and from that time I decided to volunteer with them.

## **My great experience with JAVVA ASBL**

Integration is the most important thing you should think about it. Why? Because it is the key to understand the culture and getting more opportunities in new country.

To do that, you should apply what I call "The golden rule" which says: "Hello, my name is ....., I am ....., refugee in Belgium".

fill the empty places by your information. But what does it mean?

It means you should not be afraid from introducing yourself as refugee because it is not your fault to be refugee.

But you should be careful also because this rule has 2 sides:

The good side: To use it with good people.

The bad side: To use it with bad people. But don't worry, every day the number of good people are increasing.

I am going to tell you about my story in volunteering and how I am integrating myself in the local community.

October 2016 was the first time I started volunteering in international camp with JAVVA ASBL. I remember being stress and I asked the help of one staff from the red cross to introduce myself to the team because I was volunteering from the red cross not directly from JAVVA.

The first person I met was Clem, a girl from France, she was so nice and we started to talk immediately and she helped me to meet the rest of the team.

All the people were welcoming me and we started to have conversations and being friends.

The workcamp was for 14 days and it was really great days we had together and my birthday was in the middle of the workcamp so the people celebrated with me and we had lots of fun.

During this workcamp I met 2 people from JAVVA ASBL and we shared our emails and they welcomed me in their future projects and the training for being workcamp leader in the summer.

The sad day came, we had to leave the center, all the volunteers were sad because we really spent great moments together.

We cooked together, danced, worked and played games, I remember when that my birthday was in the middle of the workcamp and all the volunteers celebrated my birthday and I had great day.

After this workcamp I decided to do another workcamps and try to make the world better (crazy dream I know :D).

Till this moment I still in touch with those volunteers even we saw each other's in the 2017 new year and summer 2017,

I did the training in summer 2017 and I met also nice people there and I had good 2 days.

After the training I had new ideas for the workcamp specially after they accepted me a leader for Nonceveux workcamp.

I was happy to be the leader of the workcamp in Nonceveux specially it is the same center where I was living and I know the area very well and the staff.

My workcamp starts 22 of September, on 4 of September, JAVVA contacted me to do a workcamp staring on 4 of September.

I wasn't sure if I will go or not so I told JAVVA to give me sometimes and I will tell them if I will go or not. I called me friend "Ali" and I told him like this " Hey, we will go to do a workcamp, prepare yourself we are



leaving soon " I didn't say anything more and the surprising thing that he said " OK " .

The meeting was at 4 pm but we couldn't go at that time so we arrived at 8:15 pm in the train station.

We met Marti and Saimoune and we welcomed another volunteer coming from South Korea.

We arrived to Marsinne castle and we met the other volunteers. They welcomed us very friendly and they were happy when they knew we are refugees (me and Ali).

Next day, Marti took us and showed us the area then we went back and started to work. I had to leave on 8 of September because I had an appointment and I was really sad because I wanted to stay and enjoy the whole workcamp with the other people but I couldn't but we shared our facebook accounts and now we are very good friends.

I discovered that I shouldn't have say to JAVVA "give me sometime", I should have say "Sure, I will do it" because really I had great time with them and we meet always in Liege and we go to bal folk parities together.

Today is 22 of September and it is the first day of my workcamp as a leader, I was excited as it is the first time for me as leader.

I prepared a plan for the workcamp and I was hoping to do it all and make a lot of activities for the asylum seekers.

This time, there was just 4 volunteers, 3 girls and I, we started the workcamp just 3 of us and the other girl came late.

Not everything I planned I did, I had a lot of changes and we had to work for the center a lot this year, but I was fine for the team which was good.

We did some activities like visiting the forest, cooking for the center, help with the trail and dancing.

For the 2 weeks it was good time, we had fun and enjoyed it. Maybe not a lot of people knew about use because we were just 4 but that is normal.

We traveled to Bruge and Gent cities also in our holiday.

This workcamp gave me lots of experience in how to lead camps and I learnt a lot from my mistakes. Now I know which activities should be done and which better to do.

You can say it was good time and I met nice people in this workcamp.

After my workcamp the time fly and the year is finished, before the end of the year I saw a training in the Netherlands about integration of young refugees but I need like sending organization to do this. As I am not working but volunteering in JAVVA so I asked them if I can apply and for sure they welcomed the idea and they helped me to fill the application.

Fortunately, they choose me to do this training and it was great opportunity for me to improve myself and meet new people.

The training was from 20 to 24 of February, I spent very good time in the training and I made new friends and new connection and because of this training I will be doing an EVS (European Volunteering Services) in the Netherlands in summer.

Why I am telling you this? If you remember from the first part the golden rule:

(Hello my name is ..... I am ..... refugee in Belgium)

If I didn't use this rule, I won't get all the opportunities that I am getting now.

It is important to not be afraid from being refugee, it is not your fault, people want to help, don't be afraid to ask help if you need because the people will help you don't worry.

Now I have very good relation with JAVVA team and the helped me a lot and they are helping me and I am sure they will help me in the future.

## **Don Bosco Rijswijk**

It was the time when I challenged myself and decided to go out of my comfort zone and do something I never done before, this was Don Bosco Rijswijk.

The project started on 27/7 for one month, we were group of 22 international volunteers from 18 countries. It was the first time for me to live in this condition with many people at the same time and for one month.

The first week was preparation week and it was mostly activities for team building and cultural differences which is very important for us. Also we had training and workshop on how to make good games and how to deal with Dutch kids.

The first week came and we started the project, the first day was kind of strange for me as it was the beginning for me and everything still little bit stressful for me. Later it started to be more and more fun and enjoying. We were in 5 different groups according to the age of the kids, the first group is from 4 to 6, the second is 7 to 8, the third is 9 to 10, the fourth is 11 to 12 and the last one is 13 to 16. My group was 13 to 16, it was just the perfect group for me.

I did a lot of activities and I learnt a lot of new things to do as well, the special thing in this group that we will go to a camp in the last week of the project. The camp was the best thing ever happened to me I guess, we did a lot of fun activities specially dropping, which you have to drop the kids in somewhere in the city and they had to come back walking without using mobile phone. I spent like 6 hours walking with one long term evs and one Dutch leader.

It was very nice even it was at night and scary things happen like we were walking near a park and we saw 2 things are running to us in the dark and the kids scream because we thought they are people and they want to do something bad to us, but there were just 2 horses :D.

Also, the painting day was amazing day where we had games with water and paint and you should be dirty, you have no choice, you will be dirty anyway. It was so much fun and we enjoyed it a lot.

I learnt in this project how to go out of my comfort zone, I did a song with one of the evs volunteer, I danced on the stage and the most important that I could share my story with people who accepted me as who I am.

I won't forget any moment from this project all my life.