

Diary of a refugee

Public opinion soon turned against the 300,000 Syrians seeking refuge in Egypt. Local boys began bullying Mahmoud, at one point even physically attacking him. Afraid for his life and unable to attend to school, he refused to leave the apartment.

Mohamed, his father, too, saw no future for his son in Egypt. Eventually, he took the decision no father should ever have to consider: he put his son on an illegal boat bound for Italy – alone. But escape proved difficult, too. The vessel Mahmoud boarded was fired upon at sea before it left Egyptian waters. The boy spent five traumatic days in a detention centre before he was able to see his family again.

Back in Cairo, the bullying resumed. When UNHCR interviewed Mahmoud, he could barely hold back the tears. And with no future, no education and no friends to play with in Egypt, he told them he was not afraid to take the boat again.

UNHCR presented Mahmoud's case to the Swedish government, which had started accepting Syrian refugees as part of a resettlement programme. In December 2013, three months after Mahmoud boarded the boat, his family was accepted.

Mahmoud is just a boy. He loves playing with friends, going to school and reading to his little sister. His mother and father, like any parents, simply want the best for him.

When he is nine-year-old and his family fled their hometown of Aleppo, Syria. Seeking shelter from a war that has killed thousands, they settled in Egypt, renting a small, sparsely furnished apartment in a sand-swept suburb of Cairo. But daily life was far from easy and, with a change in government in June 2013, it was about to get much harder.

This story is from this website: <http://www.unhcr.org/534fc8b46.html>

The Refugee Crisis in the past years has become overwhelming for the politicians in the EU, as well as for the EU citizens. They wish to stop the influx of migrants and protest against them.

Have you ever wondered what these people feel like? The ones shunned by society? They left their home against their will, pushed by war and fear for their lives.

This is a fiction based on a real-life story, about a family of Syrian refugees who travel to Egypt first and then begin to be rejected there.

Each group has written a part of the story in a different family member's point of view. Main character Mahmoud, his little sister Ayasha, his father and his mother will tell you their side of the story.

Enjoy!

Mahmoud's diary

In Syria/

My name is Mahmoud, I'm 8 years old. I have lived in Syria since I was born, I have never known other things than war, violence and destruction! But my father, he has...I have a beautiful family, I love them so much. I try to go to school but it has become really hard to, I'm crazy about football but now we have no more tv to watch it ! Here there is no life anymore, no friends because they all left and no humanity. I don't understand very well what is happening in my country, I have heard so much of this that I can't explain but now it has become really hard to stay here.

Before he left/

It's time to go! My parents have made the choice to flee to Egypt; I'm so sad to leave my country because I know very well that I will never come back. My father said that we have to take only the minimum but what is my minimum ? Can I take BLOOBY, my favorite teddy, or my lego? I think there is lego in Egypt, maybe not... Anyway I'm worried about this trip, I've been making Ayasha believe that we'll come back soon but maybe it's what I hope, too!

On the boat/

We have been on the boat for four hours now. I have a stomach ache because I want to eat but we don't have time to get some food. It is difficult for all of us in the boat. We are cold, it has been raining, I feel like an animal and I hope the trip ends soon because I'm tired. The boat is too small, I go the round fast. Time is passing really slow. I want one thing, and that is arrive in Egypt. I don't see any ground, any light, just the ocean. It is night and I see a lot of stars, it is very beautiful and I close my eyes and dream about me, with my family, in a big house where I can play on the swings with Ayasha.

In Egypt/

We've been in Egypt since 8 months, the flat is small but it is near the river. Mommy is happy to have a real kitchen. I don't really know what to think about this country...the weather is hot and dry, I just know that we do all we can to fit in the society however some Egyptians don't accept us, perhaps because we are from Syria. Last week a group of boys threatened me, I understand that I'm not welcome here but I don't want to hurt my parents, they do so much for Ayasha and me. I can't go to school because the bullying will increase! So I stay at home and help Daddy with his work...Nobody worries about us, I'm so sad...

Before the departure /

My father decided to send me to Italy thanks to our uncle who we have a lot of contact with and who lives in Italy. I'm going tomorrow at 5am but I will be alone, I don't want to let my family here. I don't understand the choice of dad, maybe they will join to me after...He says me to be discreet because trip is not allowed but I don't understand what's mean; I just know that if arrive to Italy I have to go to Abdullah's House.

Back in Cairo/

I failed, I'm so sad. The boat didn't arrive with the all the refugees. We were around a hundred in this cheap boat? it was a nightmare. But the UNHCR comes to interview me because they think my story is really interesting...They ask me about what happened to my family and they present our case to the Swedish government which start to accept refugee... Maybe we we'll be Swedish..

Sweden/

We are in Sweden since 2 months, we have been accepted by everyone. I'm so happy to be on this country which is really helpful with us... I have now many friends who play football with me...Now I found my home, I hope the war in Syria will finish for my friends who stayed because the life there, unlike here, is really hard...



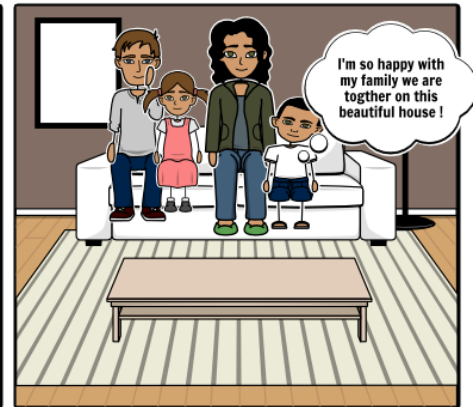
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The little sister's diary

In Syria

My name is Ayasha, I'm 5 years old. I'm a girl from Syria and generally a pretty happy child. My family is normally pretty happy, too.

But now, they're acting strange. They don't talk to me so much anymore. Daddy looks worried and is all quiet, and I saw Mommy cry yesterday. I don't know what's up but I just want them to be happy. At least Mahmoud still talks and reads to me.

Another weird thing is all the noise. They're loud big bangs which I hear almost everyday. Mommy started crying right after they started yesterday. What is going on here?

Before she left

School's only half over yet and Mahmoud will come home in a few hours. He promised we'll finish the book today! I'm looking out the window. I'm confused. Is the person heading for our house my brother? What is he doing here, he should be in school?

I tell Mommy and Daddy. They share a look. I don't know why. Mahmoud has arrived now.

"Mommy... there was an attack at school" he says. What does he mean?

"Ayasha, go to your room" Daddy tells me.

"Pack your things" Mommy adds.

On the boat

I have always dreamed of holiday on a boat. Now it's coming true. It's awesome! I began to explore it the moment we got on. It's so exciting! "Mommy, isn't this great?" Silence followed. Wait. Where is Mommy?

"Mommy?" I repeated, but I got no answer. "Mommy? MOMMY!"

I started to cry. Where were they? I clutched my plush dog.

"Ayasha?" Am I dreaming?

"Ayasha?!" That sounds like Mahmoud...

"M-Mahmoud?"

"AYASHA!" I ran up to him.

"Ayasha, where were you? We were so scared."

"I... I was so excited! I wanted to explore. I must have gotten lost"

In Egypt

Mahmoud stopped going to school. Why? I mean, it's great here. Mommy finally has a real kitchen, like back home, to cook yummy food. We had to share a place with MANY people before, I didn't like it there. Sometimes, I wonder if holiday always lasts almost a year.

Mommy has forbidden me to go out after Mahmoud came home one evening. He's always really sad. I want to help him. He's working with Daddy now.

Before the departure

Mummy and Daddy acted so weird the past days. It's almost like back when before we left Syria. I'm standing on a boat now too. But why are Mummy and Daddy not here? Only Mahmoud, and he's really quiet.

"Where are we going?" I asked him.

"Away" he said.

"What about Mummy and Daddy?"

"They're not coming." What is he saying?

"We'll stay with Uncle Abdullah. In Italy."

"Is that far away?"

"Yes."

"But why aren't Mummy and Daddy here?"

"I don't know." He stopped talking. I didn't want him to continue anyway.

Back in Cairo

The past days were terrible. Mahmoud and I were locked up with all the other people on the boat that survived. It sunk... I was so scared. It was cold and we had no food and for a long time no water until finally Mummy and Daddy came to get us.

I heard Mummy talk to Daddy about Sweden and the government. They want to talk to Mahmoud. Both are really happy about it.

In Sweden

I never knew but Sweden was accepting people like us. Mahmoud's and our story interested them and it worked-we live in Sweden now!

I have to go to school, but that's okay. Great, really. Even though it is a little bit hard because I don't understand Swedish as well as my classmates.

I have a lot of friends now, I love to play pretend with them. Even some boys are nice here. All people are.

Mahmoud has gone back to school and plays everyday football with some boys in his class.

Daddy is looking for a job and Mummy is really happy. We all are to be honest.

I do miss Syria a little, but here in Sweden there's no noise and no talk of attacks. I still don't know what Mahmoud meant that day exactly. Just that it wasn't a good thing. Now I have a real home like my family and I always wanted and I have school. I couldn't be happier.

The mother's diary

In Syria

My name is Fatima, I am 27 years old. I've been living in Syria all my life. In my country we have a new war every day. My daily routine is working at home while my husband is looking for food during the whole day. Because of the bombs and some attacks, our house was destroyed and we were obliged to go away with only the clothes we were wearing hoping that our children would survive.

In Egypt

Because of the terrible situation of the war in our country, we had to move to an unknown land in Egypt ere, we rented a small flat hoping to have a better life. My children could go to school but the Other students did not accept refugees and they suffered bullying. I and my husband knew that our children We're very affected by This situation and we took the hardest decision a mother can take. We sent our children on a boat to Italy, where their uncle lives.

On the boat

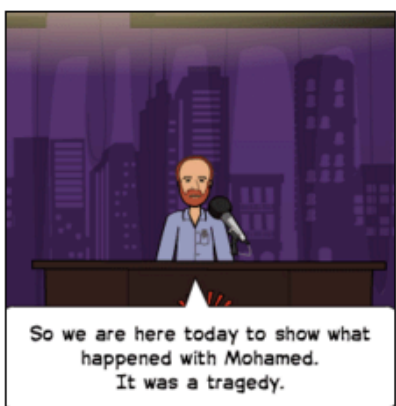
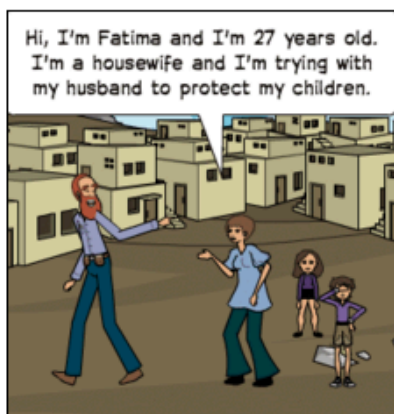
When we decided to send our children to Italy, we did not know if they would survive. We heard that the boat was shot but fortunately our children were safe. They spent five terrible days arrested, and they came back again. When I saw my children were safe I was very happy. But here in Egypt my children cry everyday because they prefer to risk their life and go to Italy one more time. them to me.

In Egypt

The UNHCR interviewed my son about what had happened and they talked to the Swedish government, they Because they to us they admit refugees. I'm so happy because they decided to admit us and we would have a better life.

In Sweden

We are really happy to live in Sweden now. Now we only want to live a new life far from violence, killing and war. I and my husband found a job and our children go to a good school with real friends to have a better future.



The father's diary

In Syria

Hello, I'm Mahmoud's father, Mohamed. I am from Syria and I am just a normal father trying to look up to his family with his wife, his son and his daughter in hard circumstances until the war. From the beginning of the war to now our hard life became nearly impossible to live. There are violence and destruction everywhere you look. There are very less food and water. So me and Fatima decided to move from Syria.

In Egypt

We moved to Cairo which is in Egypt and rented a small flat. At first everything was fine Mahmoud quickly

interacted with people and my five year old daughter Ayasha seemed to be doing fine as well. Unfortunately it didn't last long people started to dislike refugees such as us. My son Mahmoud would keep complaining about boys bullying him at school and I could see how the other people looked at us, as a result we became

home sick. I realized we couldn't have a future here as well so we moved again.

Before departure

My brother Abdullah lives in Italy so I figured it would be a good place for my children to live and take a quality education. Unfortunately we didn't have enough money for all of us to travel neither the boat had the capacity since all of the cabins were already taken. I told my children they were going on a trip to their uncle Abdullah. I packed their bags and accompanied them to the boat. It was a hard decision, but it would be better if they stayed there instead of Egypt.

On the boat

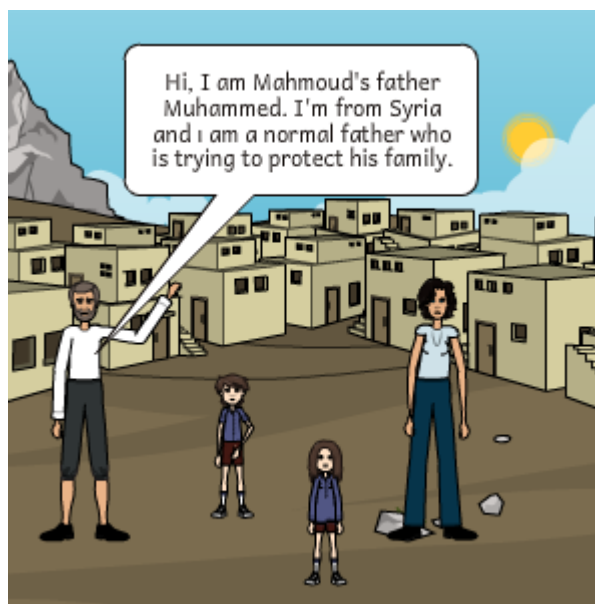
It's been a week and I heard any news about the boat my children are traveling on. I hope they are fine if

anything happened to them I can't forgive myself.

After the accident

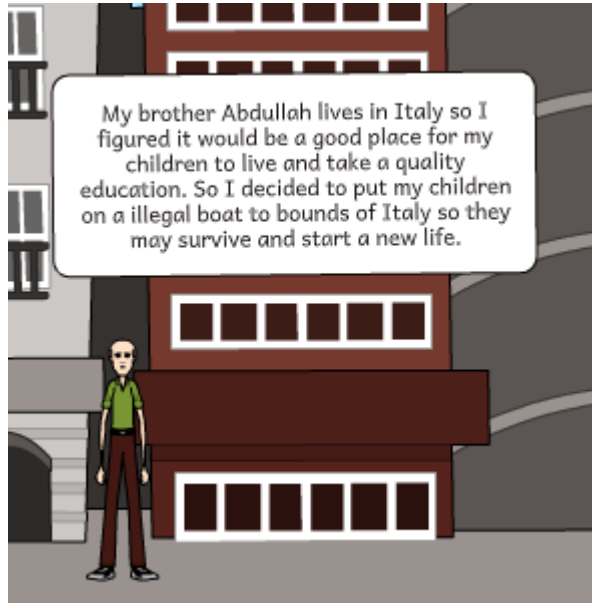
I learned that the boat sank five days ago, but thankfully my children were among the survivors. Later on my brother Abdullah called me and said the Swedish government started to accept refugees. I am so happy, we are going to be a family again. We wish for the other refugees to live happy like us.

Link to the comic: <https://Pixton.com/tr/:pdx7vm9DIV>

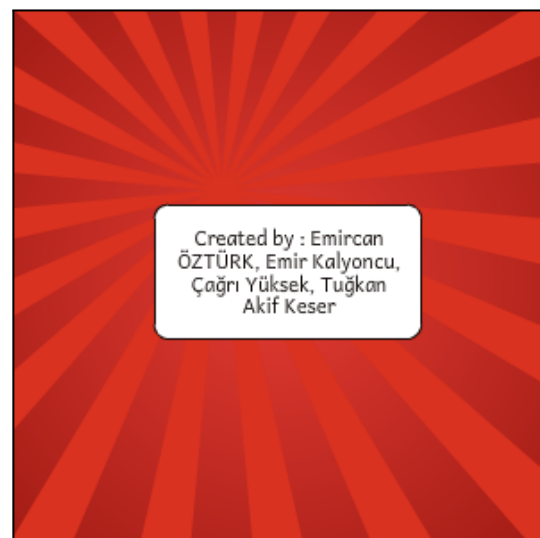
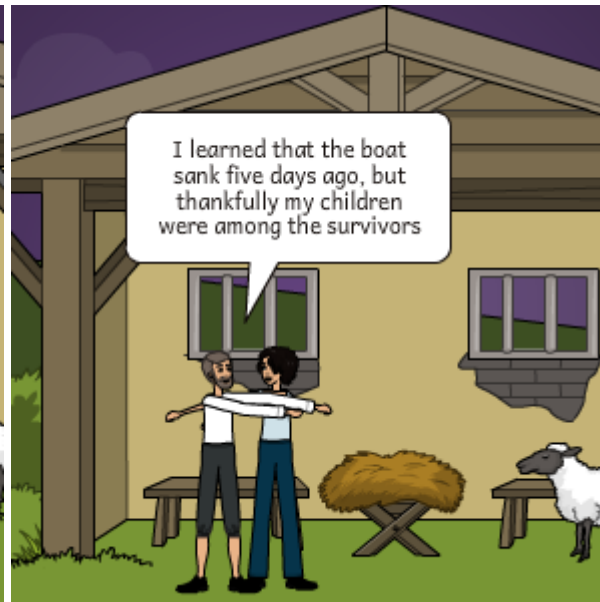


Unfortunately we couldn't stay here long people started to dislike refugees such as us. My son Mahmoud would keep complaining about boys bullying him at school and I could see how the other people looked at us, as a result we became homesick. I realized we couldn't have a future here as well so we moved again.





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INTERVIEW TO A REFUGEE LIVING IN OUR TOWN

Today the communication allows to see the world in another way, so the guys we met got first in touch with people who could help them to leave their country to find a better life and then they left full of hope!!!!

We met five guys who came from Nigeria. In this country there isn't a real war but there are a lot gangs, civil war for drug and people's market and poverty.

We interviewed Kevin, a refugee who lives in a village where one of us lives.

Here are the questions we asked him:

1. Where are you from?

I come from Bennin city in Nigeria

2. How old are you?

I'm 25

3. When did you arrive to Italy?

I arrived to Italy last summer precisely on 23rd july 2015

4. How did you arrive to Italy?

By boat, like everybody

5. Where did you stay when you arrived to Italy?

I was hosted in a reception centre in Lampedusa, the island very close to Sicily and to the North of Africa. That was my first stop, then I was transferred to Rome and after that I moved to Bresso a little city near Milan

6. Where is your family?

They are still in Nigeria, I have a wife, her name is Leila and two children Joshua and Micheal.

7. Why did you decide to come to Italy?

I decided to move to Italy to find a better life

8. Did you have a long journey? Which countries did you see?

My journey has lasted for 7 months, I left Nigeria, I crossed the desert and when I arrived to Libya I was captured by Libyan soldiers.

9. ButWhat happened during the travel?

No answer(probably afraid ??????)

10. Did you choose yourself to come to Italy? Why?

Yes, I chose to arrive to Italy, because in Nigeria we are pursued by a lot of gangs, and there are a lot of civil wars for the control of drugs and people's market.

11. What do you expect from your future?

I want to learn the language because it is necessary to stay in Italy and obtain a job

12. Would you like to stay in Italy?

I like to stay in Italy, the country has welcomed us and I would like to build our future life here.