

ISSUE

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EXODUS

Produced by refugees and people seeking asylum for the community

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“Anything for love” needs your stories



Care4Calais needs your help. Their “Anything for Love” campaign would benefit from hearing your stories about the dangerous journeys you made to the UK.

This can be anonymous and in your own words. If you know someone who has the right to remain, maybe they would agree to make their story public and have their photo taken?

Care4Calais are looking for stories that show that you travelled to the UK out of love for your family. Maybe a big thing; the journey was made to save the lives of your family. Or a small thing; you had to sell a wedding ring or something precious to you to buy food.

Anything that you did out of love. Contributions to the “Anything for Love” campaign can be emailed to Reading@care4calais.org or sent by direct message to your local Care4calais team.

Welcome to your new Exodus magazine

EXODUS Fanzine is a journal that is shared with all asylum seekers and refugees.

Its contents include stories, poetry, art and many other shared articles that form a collective and informative journal for the benefit of all. Information can be found about social and active participation as well as when and where community activities are available. Collective activity is positively encouraged, and we urge all asylum seekers and refugees to embrace all cul-

tures. The success of Exodus is only possible with your fantastic contributions.

Please send your contributions to exodusfanzine@gmail.com

We hope you enjoy our first edition and are encouraged to send in more stories in the coming months. Exodus would like to welcome you all to the UK and hope you find happiness and comfort with us all!

Jean-Marc Hall

Exodus project co-ordinator

There's lots of help available for you

Picture: Tyler Nix, Unsplash

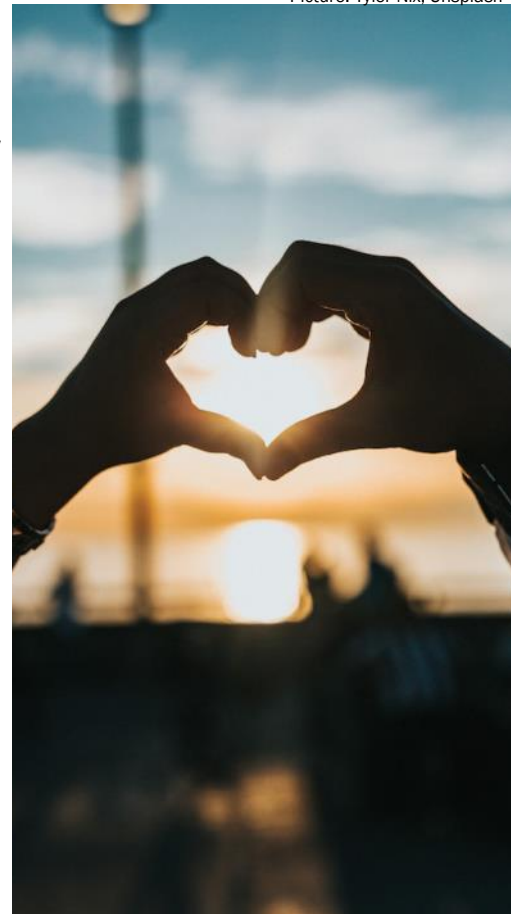
CARE 4 CALAIS

HERE are some of the services provided by Care4calais Thames Valley, which covers Reading, Newbury, Padworth, Basingstoke, Witney, Oxford, Maidenhead and Wokingham:

- Emergency clothes provision
- Help sourcing some basic necessities
- Help with local area/ doctors/ and education
- Information drop-ins
- Help understanding the system
- English Classes
- Social activities
- Children's clubs
- Bike share schemes
- Information about asylum news
- Information about National and local events / holidays
- Football groups

To contact Care4Calais ask your hotel reception to provide contact with our volunteers or email Reading@care4calais.org

More information can be seen at www.Care4Calais.org and the Care4calais Thames Valley Facebook page.



Waiting is hard but make use of your time

We know waiting is difficult. Perhaps the best advice is to make good use of the time while waiting. Ensure you practice English as much as possible, find a volunteer role to help understand UK working conditions and culture and have something to put in your CV. Find out as much as possible about the asylum process and the next steps to be ready to get work and find independent housing once your Leave to Remain is granted.

Everyone loses in the battle of consumption

YESTERDAY when we went litter picking with the VIAN Environment Society, I found three glasses among dozens of bottles and cans left in the bushes and under the trees.

I put them in my friend's backpack and brought them to my room. Whenever I feel happy, no matter how or why, I per-versely find a reason to be sad at the same time.

Today was no exception. While cleaning the glasses, I was very happy because I had separated them from the rubbish and rendered them pristine and fresh. As I was cleaning them, I was thinking about the importance of reusing second hand items, but also of the thoughtlessness of the person who had chucked those glasses into away.

It occurred to me that thousands of similar items are thrown away daily. That night, as I lay in bed, environmental thoughts came to me, as they often do. I was thinking about the result of the big competition that has been going on for years: the competition between suppliers and consumers of goods.

The producers, very motivated and fast and with the goal of producing and selling more goods, continue their efforts. The opposing team, the consumers, matches the producers' drive and enthusiasm in their constant push towards excessive consumption.

There is no such thing as a winner in this competition.

Everyone has joined hands and is determined to destroy the planet! What a sinister race! Every creature on this planet has to pay the price for the actions of irresponsible humans. What a cruel and heavy price.

I closed my eyes, not just to sleep, but to avoid the baleful eyes of future generations...

Bahman, Thatcham



Some of the VIAN team hard at work in Thatcham.

Refugees' litter project has a massive impact

VIAN is a remarkable environmental project, run by refugees. It is one of the friendliest, most energetic and cheerful groups you could imagine, doing something rather extraordinary in a little corner of the English countryside.

These refugees are from countries like Iran, Namibia, Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan. Together they pick up litter – and not just from pavements but from tree roots, ditches, canals and streams.

“We love nature and the environment,” their leader, a Kurdish Iranian man named Bahman, explained. “Every week local people tell us an area that needs to be cleaned, and we come to do it. It's our way of giving back to the community.”

VIAN, is named after the Kurdish word for ‘love’. Bahman, a teacher and environmental volunteer seeking asylum in the UK, started it several months ago with like-minded people from the hotel he has been put in.

“We all wanted to respond in a responsible and civilised manner to the support and help we receive from the British government and people,” he said. “We don't want refugees and asylum seekers to be perceived as either useless or, worse, sponging off the British economy.”

In fact, local people love the VIAN crew. “When they see us, they always greet us and come and thank us for what we're doing. Now they're asking if they can get involved with us, and join the group. I feel happy we have created this emotional bridge between people,” said

Bahman. VIAN now has 29 members from all walks of life, including a doctor, three teachers, a lawyer, a vicar and an engineer.

Many of them are supported by Care4Calais volunteers.

It all makes you wonder what could be achieved if asylum seekers had their claims processed more quickly so they could get to work.

Bahman said: “In my opinion, refugees living in the hotels are a great potential force. With careful planning and management, that force could be used in many fields such as helping the environment.

“If asylum seekers were involved in schemes like VIAN, their time will be filled productively, and the British government could make good use of the huge amount of energy of the asylum seekers living in hotels.”

Bahman thanked Karen Reeve, of West Berkshire Action for Refugees; Sam Jonkers, Helen Bowen and Rosie MacGregor from Care4Calais, Christine Ngutonua of Thatcham council for the equipment, help and sincere cooperation, and finally ‘The kind and loving people of Thatcham, who treat asylum seekers very kindly and respectfully’.

VIAN relies on support from Care4Calais volunteers.

If you would like to help refugees and asylum seekers connect better with your local community, please get in touch at care4calais.org/get-involved/supporting-refugees-in-the-uk/

Lost in the dark far from family

I offer the story of a refugee who was forced by the circumstances of the war and its aftermath to flee his native Syria.

Four months from starting my compulsory military service, protests against the Assad regime broke out and turned into a popular revolution. It started peacefully then became violent. The conflict is still getting worse, the violence is escalating, the death toll is increasing and there is no peace in sight.

I want to convey the horror of the regime's practices against cities and villages, its destruction of homes and property and murder of the people, its dropping of bombs, missiles and explosive barrels that hit random targets and exterminated unarmed civilians, and the shots of guns and rifles that never stop ringing in my ears.

Always there was terrible news about massacres, arbitrary arrests, genocide, the storming of civilian homes, the rape of women, kidnappings and ransom demands, the loss of families and loved ones.

I decided I wanted no part in this bloody conflict and planned to escape to save my life and to ensure I would not be forced to kill anyone.

I thought a lot about staying and trying to change things for the better but one person, however committed, cannot change anything, and there were no moderate political parties I could join at that time with any influence against the extremism of Assad's regime. Thus, I determined to escape at the first opportunity.

In a forced adventure full of fear and horror, I arrived in Lebanon, using a vacation card to skip checkpoints until I reached the western border villages there.

I crossed the most dangerous three checkpoints with the help of local residents who took me to one of the smugglers who helped me cross high mountains. Eventually, I arrived in a valley and we were taken to a house and I was delivered at the Sunday market where my brother was waiting for me. But I could not live safely there, as the country was divided and part of it allied with the Assad regime.

I applied for protection at the United Nations with my family but because of the insecurity found myself having to flee and fell into the hands of Hezbollah and ended up being deported back to Syria and handed over to Syrian security.

I fled again to Lebanon but was dismayed to find a political entity allied to the regime in Syria was participating in killings, genocide and brutal practices. I was not

Picture: Robert Hickerson, Unsplash



safe and had to flee to Turkey. I had to be careful not to be open with anyone, as spies were everywhere. Fear weighed heavily on me, destroying my resolve and dissipating my strength.

At last I arrived in Turkey, which I imagined would be safe and stable, but it turned out to be a nightmare of another kind. The government wouldn't give me permission to work and there was the language barrier.

I could not rent a house or get services like water, electricity and gas, or telecommunications. Neither could I get a card for the bus or train so I walked daily and avoided crowded places. I was afraid of getting sick because I wouldn't have been able to receive treatment in the hospital.

This wretched life in Turkey lasted approximately three-and-a-half years. I became addicted to the news and I was afraid of the reports of deportations from Turkey back to northern Syria where the war was still raging. I felt I must escape again. I fled from Edirne in western Turkey to eastern Greece. Then, after spending a day in the Greek Lavara prison, I was deported back to Turkey and disastrously, five days later back to Syria.

I wondered desperately when the war would end, when humanity would prevail and peace would be restored, when I would get to a place of safety. I will never forget the horrors of the Syrian war, a war between the people and a sadistic gang.

We made our way again to the border where one of the smugglers transferred us to a place near the Orontes River in north-western Syria. However, the first attempt was unsuccessful, a mother and her son

died while crossing the river, and we returned with our hearts filled with sadness and fear.

After 23 days, the second attempt succeeded and I was back in Turkey. I was afraid at every moment. I was transferred in three stages, each in a different car. I spent almost a year full of fear. My wife was pregnant and her due date was approaching, so I worked underground for fear of deportation. I finally left my family in the most difficult and most complex conditions before our second child was born.

I was afraid of taking the sea route. I dreaded the Aegean Sea. The waves hit the boat and the boat rose and fell alarmingly. The women and children were crying and didn't stop until we reached Greek territorial waters, were saved by a Frontex ship and moved to the island of Kos.

Then we were transferred to a camp and after already having suffered for a year-and-a-half I got the first refusal, then the second refusal, and then I was given 10 days to leave Greece.

So I left Kos for Athens and went on to Thessaloniki, where I searched for a road to Albania between the mountains. Then, passing through Kosovo, I arrived in Serbia to camp Sombor, where I searched for a truck to take me to a safe country.

After confiscating our phones and checking the deposit of their fare, smugglers took us through forests to the side of a road and ordered us to board a big truck.

My heart did not stop thudding until on the fifth day, we got off at the side of a highway where young people were waiting for us in a minibus that took us to a forest. We walked through the forest after midnight and by sunrise we had reached the English Channel. I knew I had to ride the boat of death but this renewed my resolve and I said this last boat would mean either arrival or death without farewell, continued separation or meeting with my beloved family after such a long separation.

After we had been on board for six hours I saw planes over us and realized we were to be rescued. After a short time, a rescue ship came and saved us.

So far, I am still waiting for an asylum interview after more than 16 months. Time goes by and there is no relief from suffering. It seems that the candles of hope are melting and their light is fading, so I am again lost in the dark.

I wish security, love and peace to all humanity and I long for the time when I can be reconciled with my family.



We embody meaning of equality

MY BROTHERS in humanity of different nationalities, first of all, know that everyone you meet is fighting a battle in life that you do not know anything about. Each of us has a story and has emotional and practical experiences but these experiences pass quickly when we deal with them with our determination to overcome the traumas and treat the wounds with our own hands,

And we learn from it, life in

any place must be beautiful. But there are major events that make you leave the place where you were born and raised, no matter how much you love the place.

Man, in his instinct, is looking for what suits him from all aspects of security, intellectual, humanitarian and practical.

We are from Adam and Adam is from dust, and we are all brothers.

There is no difference be-

tween an Arab and a non-Arab, nor a white person or a black one, except in morals, and morals are the foundation of nations, and our Prophet Muhammad said: "I was only sent to perfect morals."

And here we are in this residence embodying the meaning of equality and rejection of racism. None of us chooses his gender or color, so no one can deal with racism with anyone else and it is not permissible.

We must understand life from this small place in a broader way and get to know the culture of other peoples and how to deal with them, have respect for all cultures and all religions and intellectual convictions.

Most people understand the meaning of love and peace because we were born from the womb of suffering and war, and from now on love and peace is to be our symbol for all.

Learning new languages offers us so many advantages

MULTILINGUALISM has been shown to have many social, psychological and lifestyle advantages.

Moreover, researchers are finding a swathe of health benefits from speaking more than one language, including faster stroke recovery and delayed onset of dementia.

Some of us know more than two languages and we can increase this ability and find even more friends.

We are in a country where learning several languages helps us to get higher positions. None of us knows exact time of our interview, so let's learn another.

These are the best facilities that our hotel has, I hope they can be useful for all of us, even in the future we can have more

friends around the world.

The best way to start is for anyone interested to choose a famous song in the world from their country and in our friendly group, explain its words to us and work on its pronunciation.

As a result, whenever we listen to that song throughout the day, those words are repeated to us many times and we will learn fast in this way.

If we listen to four songs from French, Spanish, Arabic and Iranian languages that have become famous, several nights or during the day each week, and explain the words and phrases of the song, our vocabulary will soon increase.

Let's become multilingual.



Kynz

'Seeking asylum is a leap of faith towards a better future'

THINGS happened unexpectedly. I'm six months pregnant, almost homeless and a victim of domestic abuse. My world is a wound and hopeless. Seeking help is a brave decision that I made with the help of my lawyer.

I applied for asylum in April 2021. I was an early bird, excited to attend my initial interview at the Home Office with my small luggage. I was a bit nervous when I stepped inside the building. I didn't realise it was to be a long day and I did not have anything to eat and drink.

My baby inside my tummy is kicking, it seems like he is starving too. I asked one lady officer if I can have some food and drink. She is nice and generous and grabbed some sandwiches and juice for me. I feel that day like there's hope for everything.

It's 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I am done and they take me to my initial hotel accommodation in Croydon. My perception changed into a positive outlook on life. Despite pains, anxiety, and bad experiences, I started to wake up every day with hope and delight.

The manager and staff of the hotel are responsible for looking after the needs and concerns of asylum seekers. I truly appreciated my midwife, home office drivers taking me for check-ups, and Migrant Help has big ears to listen to my concerns.

After a couple of months I am allocated to Kentish Town. In July 2021 my beautiful baby is born at the Royal Free Hospital, London. I had a traumatic labour but my midwife is amazing. I'm in good hands, though my baby has many health issues but his health visitor and doctors look after him.

I am moved to the borough of Camden: new people, environment, individual differences, society and culture.

Here I experienced management's unequal treatment and discrimination to some asylum seekers when asking for help and food. Is it because we are asylum seekers? Some of them don't know how to speak English so is it because of language barriers? There is a time I don't want to go out and just stay inside my room rather than asking for help.

I am moved again and my next accommodation is in South Acton. The wind has



Picture: Ricardo Gomez-Angel

changed into a nice breeze: the manager and staff act with respect, thoughtfulness and empathy to people, offering help instead of you asking. I see the same respect in the smiles on the faces of the asylum seekers.

Changing location and accommodation is challenging. Moving again, this time to Oxfordshire, at first I feel worried as I don't want to move outside London. I asked to stay but must go. I've heard Oxford is nice and I should not worry. When I arrive at my new place I am surprised the house is big. It is a house-share, different nationalities, women and single moms like me.

My first night triggered my anxiety and I cried terribly. Thank you to my housemates who supported me and gave me advice. I embrace the surroundings, people and places. I feel more peaceful, relaxed, away from busy places in London.

Every birthday at the house we celebrate, cooking varieties of foods with entertainment like singing and taking photos. One of the best food banks is at Christ Church in Abingdon, which is a big help for us. The town center, library, park and river

are in walking distance if you want to have fresh air.

Though house-sharing with different nationalities, cultures, beliefs and languages, we have one goal and aspiration - to get settled. Everyone has a different experience and journey in life. Some of us are suffering depression, anxiety and have unique needs for our children.

I am thankful to all the services and organisations like the Oxon Perinatal Mental Health Group and Asylum Welcome for their help and support. I am taking courses at the moment and I am enthusiastically gaining knowledge and enhancing my skills to be useful in the future.

Thanks also to Rachel of Care4Calais for her dedication and efforts and for no end of clothes, toys, buggies, foods and helping us collaborate with health visitors and health services. Satisfying our needs and concerns and making us happy is priceless!

As an asylum seeker I believe that on every journey we get through we are not alone - it is just a leap of faith through to the right destination.

Spotlight on Maidenhead Bike Share

WHEN the Maidenhead hotel was opened to people seeking asylum, we received many bicycles from very generous people in the town. At the last count there were approximately 130 bicycles given to individual residents.

However, with over 350 residents in the hotel and new arrivals, we still didn't have enough for everyone. The management decided that it wasn't possible to receive any more bicycles on the grounds that there was no room to store them, and that health and safety regulations were being overlooked. The idea of a Bike Share was something that had a positive and practical use.

There are approximately 14 bicycles in the bike share scheme. They can be found at the back of the hotel in the bicycle rack. They are all locked with a numbered key, which is held by the Bike Share manager. When someone wants a bicycle, they ask the Bike Share manager, and a key is given to unlock the bike. When the bicycle is returned, it is locked, and the key is returned.

Volunteers are always needed to help run the Bike Share. We need volunteer residents because they are always available to distribute bicycles.

We also need residents to service the bicycles so that they are always safe to ride. Please see one of the C4C volunteers for more information about the Bike Share.

Picture: Waldemar, Unsplash



'How cycling helped me to overcome isolation'

Picture: Heather Wilde, Unsplash



MY NAME is Yonatan and I am an asylum seeker from Eritrea living in the UK. Life as an asylum seeker has not been easy, and I have faced many challenges since arriving here.

One of the biggest obstacles I have encountered is isolation. As an asylum seeker, I am not allowed to work, and the amount of money I receive each week from the Home Office is barely enough to cover my basic needs. This has made it difficult for me to socialise with others and explore my local area.

However, I am not one to give up easily. I am determined to find ways to overcome these challenges and make the most of my time in the UK. So, I decided to take up cycling as a way to explore the area around me and break out of my isolation.

My first destination was the Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham. It is a beautiful nature reserve with several walking trails, birdwatching opportunities, and a lovely café. I spent hours exploring the reserve,

admiring the natural beauty around me and taking in the peaceful surroundings.

My next stop was the Kennet and Avon Canal in Thatcham. It is a popular spot for walking, jogging, and cycling, and I loved cycling along the towpath and enjoying the stunning views. I felt a sense of freedom and exhilaration that I had not experienced in a long time.

Moving on to Newbury, I visited the West Berkshire Museum. It is a small but fascinating museum that showcases the history and heritage of the local area. I learned a lot about the town's past and found it interesting to see how it has evolved over time.

Another spot I enjoyed in Newbury was the Victoria Park. It is a beautiful park with plenty of green spaces, a pond, and even a small skatepark. I loved taking my bike and cycling around the park, enjoying the fresh air and exercise.

Finally, I visited the Newbury Racecourse. It is a world-renowned horse racing venue

that attracts visitors from all over the UK and beyond. Although I could not afford to attend any of the races, I enjoyed walking around the grounds and admiring the beautiful horses.

One of the best things about cycling is that it allowed me to interact with the community. I would stop at coffee shops and chat with people, and I discovered that the local Pret a Manger had a coffee for only 90p, which was affordable for me. I felt a sense of belonging and connection with the people around me, and my mood improved.

In conclusion, life as an asylum seeker has its challenges, but I have found ways to overcome them.

By taking up cycling and exploring the area around me, I have been able to break out of my isolation and feel more connected to the community.

I have discovered some incredible places in Thatcham and Newbury, and I feel grateful for the opportunity to experience them.



‘I dream now of staying safe’

I used to live in safety with my family in Chad, but was forced to flee for my own safety.

I fled to an area between Chad and Libya to try crossing the border, but I had no money. So I looked for a truck which transports sheep and I made an agreement with one of the shepherds that I would be one of them to help take care of the sheep and they agreed.

I kept waiting for them for two days, and the truck set off towards Libya for a week. Every moment I was afraid that I would be arrested by border security but they did not suspect me and the driver told the border security police these are my sheep and shepherds, so we crossed the border safely.

I stayed in Libya, in the Sabha area, for 15 days with the driver until he sold all the sheep and returned to Chad.

I then searched for someone to take me to Tripoli, and I found a person and agreed with him to transfer me to Tripoli. But I had no money, so he said you have to work for me on my farm for two months in return for that.

During the journey when crossing a security checkpoint, the Libyan police caught me for entering the country. Because I was there illegally, I was transferred to the prison in the city of Gharyan, where I stayed for four months. They asked me for 5,000 Libyan dinars to release me, but I did not have money, so they beat me and asked me to contact my family. I told them that my father had been arrested and

my mother does not have any money. After that, they took me to do cleaning day after day – one cleaning day and one rest day.

After two months, I got an opportunity and ran away to the city. I found some other Africans and asked them for help. They took me to their house and provided me with food. I slept the first warm night and looked for work so I could complete my escape trip. I stayed for two months and I sometimes worked for free. I got no wages and I was exploited by the employer, so I moved from Gharyan to Tripoli and searched for a place to stay.

I found some people from Chad and stayed with them for four months, searching for work. In the meantime, the Libyan police came and arrested us and they took us to prison for two months where they used to take us to work in construction from morning to evening for free, then they would take us back to prison.

Then, one day, me and another person from Egypt got the opportunity to escape. We fled to the city, and I returned to the people I had lived with before, and I worked in cleaning for 20 days, sometimes for a fee, sometimes for food, and sometimes for nothing.

Eventually, I collected everything I had and decided to flee to Europe, so I searched for a smuggler and found one of them to transport me for 1500 dinars to Italy. But the boat driver tricked us and transferred us to Malta and we spent three months in a Maltese prison.

I went to Italy but after six months in a

camp, I was automatically expelled. I managed to escape from the container taking us to the port then took a train to Rome. After five days I moved to Fantamilia, where I lived on the street with refugees, and got food from humanitarian organisations.

However, I could not live without shelter so I fled to France over a mountain and then by train to Paris for 10 days, where I found the situation very bad. Most of the refugees face rejection, and many of them burn their fingers to try to change their details in order to obtain asylum.

This made me decide to flee to the United Kingdom so that my fate would not be like these, so I went by train to Calais although I had no money. I was kicked off one train by the inspector, then another, but eventually managed to hide in the train bathroom and arrived in Calais.

I tried for nearly three months to get a truck across the Channel. I would go to the roundabout where trucks pass and refugees run to hide between the driver’s cabin and the container when they slow down. I was afraid because it is dangerous and many people are crushed to death this way, but I had no other choice because you need money to get a boat across the Channel and I didn’t have enough. At long last, I succeeded and I got here to the UK.

I dream now of staying safe, living in peace, getting a positive decision to stay here. I want to read, study, work as a builder and get married. I long to see my family too.

When a slogan becomes a lifestyle

Woman, life, freedom. What comes to mind when we hear these three conceptual words? What do these words evoke for us?

These three words became a national slogan years ago in Kurdistan and in the past few months in Iran, and even spread across the borders and became global. What do we think of them?

Undoubtedly, they highlight the meaning of human life, birth and peace together with individual and collective freedoms. What meaningful words with beautiful concepts... Yes, these are the women who give us life with freedom, and what a gift that is! Yes, life and liberty.

These days, this meaningful slogan has been published more and more in the public mind. And maybe we hear it every day in the media and social networks. This slogan first started in the Kurdistan region and Iran, where women strive and fight for gender equality and their rights. It granted a new meaning to their rights, which played a big role in protests across Iran.

Iranian women raised their voices bravely. They took off their hijabs and burned their scarves. Believing in themselves, they stood face-to-face with the Islamic rule of their country and created a new stage in the Iranian women's movement.

They danced in the squares and streets along with demonstrations and chanting their slogans. Their weapons were dance, joy and courage, a call to freedom. And for removing the hijab, they were attacked by the government and uniformed forces and the police. They were killed, wounded, lost their bodies, including their eyes, and some were arrested and imprisoned... The courage of women is commendable.

The women of my land in Iranian Kurdistan showed ultimate courage and awareness with a deep look into the future.

They are no longer able to stay at home and, so to speak, bear the oppression. Their fear has disappeared and their courage has awakened. They want equality and the realisation of their rights.

That's why many political analysts and sociologists consider this movement and protests to be a kind of women's revolution. Why? Women have made awareness their source and goal, and this awareness and awakening has always existed throughout the history of Iran. Their efforts have not stopped, as we can clearly see its manifestation now. And in this protest movement men, their fathers and brothers, also



participate in the demonstrations, risk getting killed and consider themselves part of the women's slogan of life and freedom.

For this reason, what we see about women, life and freedom is unprecedented in the world.

And it changes from a slogan to a lifestyle. A slogan that believes in the change and growth of oneself, others and society. It is a transformation that includes all elements of society. A change where freedom and life are a priority. A change that gives meaning to interpersonal relationships.

In other words, it is a cultural and social renaissance of Iranian society. Iranian women have always been leaders in the change and transformation and awareness of their society from the distant past to the present day.

The current government of Iran ignored women's rights in a wide and severe way and did not value them.

They started their struggle with civil disobedience and founded its principles on freedom, humanity and respect for others, which can be found in the spirit of this movement in Iran's civil society.

And this is despite the fact that none of us Iranians, neither women nor children, are not strangers to the oppression and tyranny of dictators who use all their efforts to continue their rule with violence because human freedom has no meaning to them.

Dictatorship governments want to turn man into a thoughtless object: a motionless and dead being that does not change, does not speak, does not blossom, does

not create, does not express feelings, does not think, does not criticise and ultimately does not want to change its destiny.

But women, understanding these qualities, want to give another meaning to prosperity and change.

They are free humans for whom being a human is a priority for their dignity, and the right to human choice is meaningful for them.

This movement has in its hands the cycle of life and the connection of the past and the future with the female soul, which links the past consciousness to the future.

These changes are more of a civilizational and cultural transformation than an easy change and simply relying on the hijab.

It is a moral revolution because morality is prior to politics. That is why the fundamental characteristic of the movement is its democratic nature and its centrality is based on equality and freedom.

Kurdistan accelerated it with the origin of its history and the worthy struggles of its women. Other measures and protests were also its strength, such as the teachers' movement and labour protests that reached a higher stage in the life of women's freedom.

Against this movement, there is a fascist thought that violates human principles: injustice and suffocation of thought are its philosophy.

These two opposite directions indicate a new beginning. In other words, hope can be considered one of the principles of this movement. Our future is something different than now. This is why one of the basic principles of any revolution is hope and faith in victory. And the men and women of this movement hope to reach their goals, step-by-step.

With this slogan, society has officially declared that what can fulfil unanswered demands along with women and life is freedom. Freedom includes method and goal.

This is the reason why this slogan is becoming more widespread day-by-day and is compatible with today's demands of all classes and strata of society.

A society that has well-informed and developed men and women can no longer remain within the framework of the past: ineffective, petrified and traditional laws with a minority claiming to represent them.

Society is driven by hope to move towards freedom and life.

Souran Soleimani



THERE are lots of very talented artists among our community. Here is a just a selection of their amazing work.

We understand the value of art for relaxation, expression, therapy and fun. Where possible we aim to provide arts and crafts for children and adults in Home Office accommodation, please keep an eye on your hotel notice board and Care4Calais groups for details.

For example, for those staying in Maidenhead, a children's arts and stories session is run at 2pm every Tuesday at the nearby Norden Farm Centre for the Arts in Altwood Road.

Full details can be found on the notice board in the hotel reception.

Donnel's inspirational book available on Amazon

Among the many very talented people seeking asylum in the area is Donnel Clery, a vibrant, young and inspirational poet and writer from the Caribbean Island of St. Lucia.

His book 'My Life, My Journey, My Survival' can be bought on Amazon.

He found that writing has helped him overcome many obstacles in life, and hopes that through sharing his story, someone's life is made just a little easier.

This book is just a snapshot into his life. He has been through many trials, tests and tribulations, which resulted in him attempting to take his own life.

However, he believes God had a plan for him and that is why he is still alive today to be a beacon of hope and survival to others.

He is not only a suicide survivor, he is also a mental health advocate.

Donnel was encouraged to put his chal-

lenges, experiences, feelings and thoughts into words and document them for current and future generations.

He found this writing exercise to be quite healing and therapeutic as he was able to rediscover himself and find his purpose and passion. Donnel hopes that whoever reads this book will be blessed beyond measure and find peace within themselves.

He hopes that every reader will have the strength, confidence and power to live their truth.

But don't just take our word for it. A five-star review of Donnel's book on Amazon reads: "Donnel writes so well it is as if he is talking with you. The first few pages hits you like a brick then his story of courage takes over. A phenomenal read and one that makes you grateful of strong men in this world like Donnel."



Do good!



Always do good
No matter how people and life treat you.
Always help those you can help
Be that candle
That lights up the entire room
When the power is out!

For you see,
Being a good person
Does not depend on your religion,
Or status in life,
It does not depend on your race
Or skin colour,
It does not depend on your political views
Or culture.
It depends on how you treat others.

By Donnel Clery, from 'My Life, My Journey, My Survival'

We are Refugees

Longing for Peace, Safety,
Normality And Life...
Away from the Bombs and the Bullets...
We fled, we are Refugees.

Killing two birds with one stone

When I was in elementary school, my grandfather was very fond of playing chess. He was no longer working and felt very lonely because many of his sportsman friends had died.

He was very fond of playing chess with his grandchildren and most of the time I had to play with him without having any previous interest in chess.

Many of our elders are left behind because of their old age. They spent time with us as children and now, as adults, they need us to spend time with them.

Although I had no previous interest in chess, I began to stubbornly learn from him and help him feel that his presence was still useful to us.

I learned the game from him without



having any expectations or a specific intention to participate in a tournament.

Before he passed away, the only help I could give him in his old age was to feel useful. But in the not-so-distant future, one day at school, they were looking for the best chess players for tournaments, and I participated.

I was very surprised that my skill level had increased so much without my expectations from those days and I won a silver medal in the competition at the provincial level, and that success at a young age made me try again to be first in life.

Because chess was not my favorite skill I didn't play any more, but I tried harder to achieve my other dreams.

In my grandfather's life, I only helped him not to feel old and useless. But as a result, I killed two birds with one stone.

Spend time with older people, look for their experiences and share your valuable time to learn your own priorities.

And know this: old is gold. And in the meantime, help them still have a purpose in life.

Kyn

A New England

We are the new society,
Of this modern world.
We hear the voices,
And watch flags unfurl.
But to who's culture,
Should we embrace?

Be indiscriminate,
And ignore each race?

Our immigrant nation,
Holds no indigenous right.
To allow one race,

Sanctimonious might.
We give what we have,
And take what we can.
Sow seeds for our future.
And enrich New England.

JM



Across sand and sea to safety

We have a lot of problems in the western regions of Sudan. There is little respect for the indigenous people in the country, a lack of provision of energy and healthcare.

The environment is difficult and there is no security and stability in the country. It was becoming so dangerous there that a group of us young men decided to leave.

It was a very difficult journey. We were a group of 12. When we arrived in the desert between Chad and Libya, we were travelling by car and we lost the road.

We then ran out of the drinking water we were carrying.

Suddenly we found a car coming from Libya. We were surprised and pleased. The driver gave us water and described to us the route to get to the first city over the border in Libya.

When we arrived in the first city in Libya, Umalaranip, some thieves from a local

militia caught us, took our money and put us in jail for two months.

We found a lot of people had been imprisoned there. We were not given enough food and we became very weak and thin.

They said: "If you don't pay us more money you can't leave prison."

One day we decided to try to break out of prison but the first time our attempt failed. We didn't plan it well. Some of us got out but we were re-captured and put back in jail.

The second time we tried, a few young men managed to escape. The jailers shot at us and some of us were wounded. We had to leave the injured but some of us got away.

After escaping from prison I stayed a year in Libya with a friend from Sudan. He had a job fixing cars and although I helped

him out sometimes I couldn't find a job of my own. Eventually, I decided to try and make the sea crossing to Lampedusa.

I was at sea for three days in a small inflatable dinghy.

It was very hard because of the cold and wet and the lack of food. A lot of us were seasick.

There were other difficulties getting from Italy to France and from France to Britain. But I think the hardest part was over.

I like being at the hotel because sometimes I play football with my friends and sometimes I study English with my teachers. Also, we go to parties at the church.

The food at the hotel is mixed, sometimes good and sometimes bad.

It is all a matter of time, of waiting. I hope it will end soon and I hope to get a job and a nice house in the future.

No mum puts her child in a boat unless it is safer than the land

I am 32 years old, I am married and I have one son and one daughter. My daughter was born here in the UK.

I was pregnant when we decided to leave our country because my husband had a big problem with powerful, dangerous, heartless men in our region.

To be honest even now we don't know who did this to us. I was a very successful and hardworking woman. I had many dreams I wanted to make come true. But unfortunately they are all destroyed.

I am a chemical engineer. I was working as an assistant manager for scientific affairs in a petroleum institute.

But I was working as a volunteer for

building a bright future for children in my country and women as well. I had a project to make completely handmade soap to encourage increased production instead of using foreign products.

I gave a series of seminars and workshops. But unfortunately one day all my dreams were destroyed when we were subjected to the ruthlessness of the men in power and they kidnapped my husband and attacked me.

We found my husband at the hospital with injuries after many days of being lost and kidnapped by savages.

We went to Turkey to protect our son but unfortunately we were found. So we

handed over our fate to the smugglers to get us to a safe country.

After spending about 15 days in different lorries we found ourselves near the shore and a boat.

They asked us to get into the boat but we refused so they threatened us with a gun and knife and, by taking my four-year-old son and putting him in the boat, they made us go.

Imagine an eight months' pregnant woman with a four-year-old child and husband in this situation.

No mum could put her child in that dangerous sea in a small boat if the sea is not safer than the alternative.



Volunteer Emma with a huge pile of donations.

Pop-up salon works its magic

I'd definitely miscalculated how many asylum-seeking ladies I could squeeze into my little hatchback.

The four ladies eyed the backseat of my car with some scepticism as I explained it would be fine as long as they didn't mind a bit of a squish.

There was another gentle sigh of resistance when I insisted everyone had to wear a seatbelt.

My task was to ferry these ladies from their hotel to a free hair salon that Care4Calais had organised at a nearby church hall.

One of the women – a trained hairdresser herself – was coming to help out, while the others were in search of a little pampering.

The outward journey was quiet – everyone was from a different country, and being forced to sit thigh-to-thigh in the backseat was a bit uncomfortable, but the

ladies were polite, if a bit reserved.

Soon, however, our pop-up salon worked its magic.

A decent haircut and nice blow-dry can do wonders to restore the mood and put smiles back on everyone's faces.

One of my passengers, an older lady from Sudan, was delighted.

"My happiest evening," she told me, her face wreathed in smiles as she patted her smooth hair.

She even video-called her husband back home to show off her new hair-do. I was pulled into the camera frame to say hello and take some of the credit, though I'd done little more than make tea and hand out pizza.

I'm always struck by how warm and friendly asylum seekers are, in spite of the horrors they've endured.

I think there's something about their culture and kinship that we've lost sight of

during our busy, urban lives.

They call us volunteers 'sister' or 'angel' and are eager to share what little they have to show their gratitude - be it a homemade Iranian delicacy, a bar of chocolate or a banana.

On the return journey to the hotel, my little car was rocking with chatter and laughter.

These ladies, strangers only a few hours ago, had become friends, bonded over hair straighteners and pizza.

Now they were swapping numbers and hatching plans to do Zumba in each other's rooms.

Watching them though my rear-view mirror, I felt my own bubble of happiness.

This, I realised, is why we help.

To share a smile, to become part of their wider family - and to show that we care.

Emma, volunteer from Reading

Seeking peace and stability to rebuild lives turned upside down

Even before the conflict began, many Syrians were complaining about high unemployment, lack of freedom and corruption.

In 2011, pro-democracy demonstrations inspired neighbouring countries to rise against repressive rulers.

But this only strengthened the government's crackdown and resulted in opposition movements taking up arms to defend themselves.

The Assad regime blamed foreign powers for backing the insurgency and as the chaos worsened, extremist groups such as IS and Al-Qaeda became involved.

Syria's Kurdish population added another problem to the conflict, wanting the right to self-government. Abdul* tells his story of persecution and oppression.

The year was 2015 and there had already been unrest and violence in his native city of Aleppo. He had managed to escape with his wife Amina and three-year-old child Habiba to the relative safety of Aziz.

Their lives had been turned upside down. His job as an engineer had vanished and the future for him and his family was desperate. He looked at the prospects of remaining in Syria, or the alternative decision to risk the journey and take his family to a country where they could find peace and stability.

With his mind made up, he decided that the chance of surviving a perilous journey far outweighed the risks of being bombed, imprisoned or tortured in his own country. Their first destination was Turkey. With few belongings and the savings he had managed to withdraw from the bank they made their way to the Turkish border.

They ended up in the refugee camp at Killis, a huge temporary city of endless rows of white containers that were homes for the thousands of refugees that had become displaced during the Syrian war.

Habiba spent three years being educated at one of the three large yellow constructions used as schools.

The family were left in limbo and although it was a tough time, Abdul had no regrets about leaving Aleppo.

He was desperate to move on and find a better life for his family. After meeting a

charity worker from the organisation Refugee Action and being told that the UK was 'a place where they could rebuild their lives and feel safe' and that 'the UK was renowned for upholding the rule of law and human rights' Abdul decided to take his family to Britain.

He looked out to the calm Aegean Sea and his mind focused on the dangers that lay ahead. He turned to his wife and daughter and asked them if they were willing to make the journey.

There was a unanimous decision and despite the numerous tragedies that befall refugees on the perilous crossing, they ended up lucky.

Abdul soon found out he could claim an apartment in Athens as part of the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programme.

The programme, funded by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and the European Union, was set up in 2015 to help the most vulnerable asylum-seekers.

The hope was it would facilitate their integration into the host society. Abdul decided that they should stay in Athens. However, in 2022, the Greek government

phased out the ESTIA programme, which meant that Abdul and his family had to move back into a refugee camp. They decided to move on again.

They travelled through Macedonia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany and after two months eventually arrived in the port of Calais in France. The journey had been financed through a 'pay as you go' scheme set up by people smugglers.

This elaborate way of exposing migrants to abuse and danger is common and travelling from inland areas to coastal ports is a gruelling journey.

Once arriving at Calais, it was just a short dangerous crossing over 'the Lake' to Dover in England.

However, it was not straightforward. Abdul and his family relied on the refugee camp for shelter and safety.

The Calais camp suffered a bad reputation. It was termed 'The Jungle' and this was their next home for 12 months.

Eventually, they were lucky to make it to the UK and seek asylum. They are now living safely together and applying for leave to remain.

JM (*all names changed)

Picture: Ev Epi, Unsplash





Clare Moseley set up Care4Calais eight years ago after reading about the plight of refugees on the French coast.

Care4Calais founder is the spark that lit a beacon of hope

Eight years ago, Clare Moseley read a story about refugees in Calais, and cared so much that she immediately went to France and began helping them as a volunteer.

As a volunteer she worked all hours, every day, and stayed on in Calais for months.

Eventually she founded Care4Calais, a charity that would enable thousands of other volunteers to care for refugees just like she did.

Without her, many of the most vulnerable people on earth would not have had food, clothing, shelter, legal support, friendship, or restored dignity.

And we, the team at Care4Calais would not be here now continuing that support.

Few people leave such a legacy, but Clare Moseley has done, and today - as she

moves on to new projects - we honour that.

As one of our volunteers said: "She's an almighty force, and she will put herself in the line of fire for others all the time. That's why she's been able to do so much good for those with no voice, and to create real change."

Clare's achievements with Care4Calais are legion.

*'She's an almighty force,
and she will put herself in
the line of fire for others
all the time.*

*'That's why she's been able
to do so much good'*

The incredible infrastructure that facilitates the support of refugees in northern France day in and day out; the support network of volunteers helping asylum seekers in the UK; the Access Team, providing essential legal help; the campaigns against Napier Barracks, the Rwanda Plan and the Illegal Migration Bill; the list goes on.

All of these have had a lasting effect on the lives of refugees, and they have also inspired countless people to take action.

Care4Calais is not a large, wealthy charity; it is dependent on volunteers and donations, but it has become an example of what can be achieved with love and hard work.

More than that, it has become a beacon of hope to many who would otherwise feel hopeless. And we thank Clare for being the spark that started it all.



The 11-a-side team.

Holiday Inn team runners-up in six-a-side league competition

Last summer our Holiday Inn football team enjoyed great success.

The 'Hollie Boys' met twice a week for training and entered a team for a six-a-side league competition in which we were runners-up. Our sponsors made sure we had the equipment and kit as well as the funds to enter the competition.

We thank Bishop Holdings Ltd and Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) for all their help. We played an 11-a-side full game with Berkshire Elite but lost 4-0 in a competitive game that featured the fantastic skills of the South American players and the defensive aggression of the strong man Ranos.

Our guest French international goalkeeper Francois-Marie did his best to contain the young attacking forwards of Berks Elite.

With the summer approaching and better weather that suits our new arrivals, we hope to get another team together. If we can find sponsorship, we may enter another competition.

If someone wants to volunteer to become captain and get a team together, you can get all fit get fit.

Fresh air and exercise are the best treatment for loneliness and depression, so let's get out there and get enjoy the English weather!



The successful six-a-side team.