

## LESSON 6 RESOURCE SHEET 1

### Farzad's story

#### AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a country that has experienced many years of warfare. During the 1990s the Taliban, an Islamist militant and political group, used violence to seize control of parts of Afghanistan. In 2001 military forces of the USA, the UK and the Afghan United Front began a war in Afghanistan with the aim of dismantling terrorist organisations and removing the Taliban from power. Since 2001 UK and US servicemen and women have lost their lives in the country and thousands of civilians have died through military attacks and fighting. Thousands more Afghanistan civilians have died through starvation, disease, lack of medical treatment, crime and lawlessness resulting from the war. Instability continues in the country.



#### **Farzad is a refugee who fled Afghanistan when he was 15. This is his story.**

Farzad was born in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 1995. His mother died during childbirth and his father, a tailor, was poor. He went to religious classes at the mosque and worked at the market with his father.

In August 2010 men belonging to the Taliban came to Farzad's home and demanded money from his father. They threatened him and told him it was his duty to pay them so they could defend the country against foreign invaders. Farzad's father said he could not afford to give them any money. The men replied that if they were not given money they would take Farzad with them.

The next day Farzad's father went to find the money. While he was gone the men from the Taliban returned. Farzad tried to run away but the men hit him and forced him into a car. Farzad struggled to escape but they beat him and drove away.

After driving for a short time they arrived at a gated compound. There was a commotion when Farzad got out of the car, and he escaped, by running as

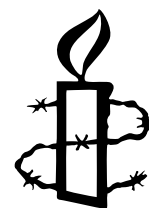
fast as he could through the gate and along the maze of side streets. He made his way back to the centre of town and towards the market. He could not go to his father's stall because the men would be searching for him there so instead he ran to find Babar, a friend of his father.

Babar had already heard that Farzad had been kidnapped and he was amazed when he saw him. Babar brought Farzad to his father who was overjoyed to see him. He was scared that the Taliban would come back to get him, and decided that they must escape Afghanistan immediately. With their life savings Babar helped them make secret arrangements to leave.

They fled to Pakistan, where they were told that they had to separate: children were to take one journey and the adults another. They were told that they would be reunited soon.

Many days later Farzad arrived in Greece and was put on a lorry. He didn't know where he was, or where he was going. He was frightened. He travelled in constant darkness in the lorry container and was only able to go to the toilet at night. He was hungry and thirsty. Eventually the lorry stopped and the driver took him outside onto





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### RESOURCE SHEET 1

#### Farzad's story (continued)

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a very clean street. He pointed to a large building and told him it was a police station in the UK, where he would be reunited with his father.

Farzad entered. He was cold, tired and very dirty. A woman asked him questions in a language he didn't understand and then pointed to a chair. He was so confused. Many hours later a man arrived who could speak his language.

Farzad explained his story. At first, the authorities were not sure whether to believe him. He did not have his passport or birth certificate and they thought he may have been 18 and not 15. After some debate it was agreed Farzad was only 15 and he was placed with a British Iranian family.

After three months the UK Border Agency wrote to Farzad to tell him that they did not believe his story and his asylum case had been refused. However, they accepted he was 15 and told him he could remain in the UK until he was 17½. Then they would review his case.

Farzad's lawyer decided to appeal and a few weeks later Farzad went to court with his carers, his social worker and his lawyer. In court Farzad had to tell his story again and became very distressed and anxious. The judge listened very carefully. After considering the case the judge decided Farzad's story was true and it was too dangerous for him to return to Afghanistan, especially in the absence of his father. Farzad was granted refugee status and allowed to stay in the UK.

The Red Cross are searching for Farzad's father but have not yet found him. Farzad is sure his father will be here very soon and the family he is living with tell him it is only a matter of time. In the meantime, he is working hard to learn English so he can go to school full time and make his father proud of his achievements when they are reunited.