

REFUGEES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

"I AM A REFUGEE, I AM A PERSON"

The country members of the European Union have as one of their main objectives the maintenance of humans rights.

Freedom, Tolerance, Respect and Social Inclusion have become an important part of the UE work.

This story is about that:

And, suddenly, everything changed:

My name is Khaled and I was born in Syria .I had a very happy life with my fathers and brothers. I liked to go to school. I spent really good moments with my friends. I lived in a quiet city, where children could play in the streets because we lived in harmony.

However harmony turned into fear. Peace turned into war.

My parents lost their jobs. I left school. We had to hide because there were bombs and destruction everywhere. Terror became the main character of my city.

A group of people appeared to help us. They took us to a place where we could be safe. I had to refuse to live in my city. I left my home. And in that moment they called me "REFUGEE".

Many doubts came to my head:

Do I have to leave my country?

Do I have to refuse to my language?

Do I have to refuse to my culture?

Will somebody help me?

Yes, there were people and countries thinking about us in their comfortable offices. Some of these countries belong to the European Union. Very important people started looking at us. They wanted to open their frontiers for us. They offered us the opportunity of a new life. They offered us the opportunity of a new beginning. And in that moment I understood that I was a citizen of the world. There are not frontiers among human beings, the only frontiers that exist are in our heads. The world is very big and we all have the right to live in it.

I began to understand that the words solidarity, tolerance and respect have a magical effect. They can carry you from sadness to happiness, from sadness to hope. I don't want to be a refugee. I am a citizen of this world and I have the right to live in freedom and peace.

I am not a number. Spain and the rest of country members of the EU have developed a program “of voluntary reestablishment” for those who have to leave their homes because of wars.

This program “ guarantees accommodation , maintenance, juridical, psychological and social assistance ; accompaniment to public school , sanitary and social centers; learning of the language and basic skills , orientation for labor reintegration, cultural activities and economic aid”.

With that program my family and I took a plane to Spain. We learned that Spain is a country that belongs to the EU. They told us we could start a new life in that country.

We arrived to a city called Murcia the 2nd of February of 2017.

As soon as we arrived we were treated with great hospitality. A very strong man carried us to the townhall. There, the mayor of Murcia received us. I was so excited! He was so happy to have us in Murcia. We talked to him for forty minutes. Then we visited the Cathedral of Murcia and the bandstand. I met with my friends in a neighbourhood called San Pio X. We met there because our house was there. I went to see my house as fast as I could. It was small but I could sleep so it was enough. Then I played football in the Church of San Pio X. The priest was called Sir Juan and was a very good person. He offered us milk with chocolate and told us about the Christianity. I was not

interested in Christianity but I noticed that muslim and Christianity are not too different from the each other.

Article 17 talks about the respect of religions and cultures:

"The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations."

The next day we went to an NGO called "Jesús Abandonado" where they gave me clothes and food. When I entered into it I saw a lot of people very sad, looking so bad, even some persons were so ill. I asked them why they were there and how they were and they asked me saying: "I don't have any job, any house and of course any family and, I have to say thanks to God because my prays have effected on me. Now I can sleep here and they give me food". Then I thought about, how good the UE treated me giving me a home, I also have to say thanks to God, is not the same God but we have the same heart. After having lunch I went to get my Identification card, a document that says I can live in Spain.

Also they talked to me about a passport that I can use for identifying myself when I go travelling, it will be useful if I want to go back to my country. My mother carried me to a school and she went to work. She told me about a very good man that has explained her the work that she has to do. Also she told me that he is going to dinner tomorrow in our house. In school I haven't got any book so a teacher carried me to a room where they gave me some books. At first hour I had Spanish language where I had to introduce myself but I don't know how to talk in Spanish so I said it in English.

I liked my first day in a Spanish school, it was so big. What I really liked was the tolerance and respect of my classmates. In the school I met some volunteers that offered me linguistic support. These volunteers belong to a program of the EU called **Erasmus +**.

The Erasmus Programme is an EU exchange student programme that has been

in existence since the late 1980s. Its purpose is to provide foreign exchange options for students from within the European Union and it involves many of the best universities and seats of learning on the continent. .

In that moment I could see that the EU offers people many opportunities. On one hand young people have the opportunity to share experiences with students of other countries, and on the other hand the EU offers young people the opportunity to start a new life, that was my case.

It is very important that politicians talk about people. Their main objective should be people, not only economy. They have the responsibility of making a better world with no frontiers. A world for you and for me.

Although the EU is working on social inclusion, it is not enough. The EU country members should spend more time talking about how they can help people who are in war, in a conflict, people with fewer opportunities. They have the power. But I think that the real power is true when you accept that all the people have the right to live in peace . I am really thankful for the opportunity the EU has given to my family.

But I want to say that we are not numbers, we are not refugees, we have a name, we have a culture, we have a past and we want to share it with you.

This is a news about me and my family you can read in a newspaper:

Murcia acogerá a quince nuevos refugiados

“Un grupo de 164 personas han llegado a España procedentes de Grecia en cumplimiento con el programa de reubicación de los que huyen de la guerra de Siria.”

I AM NOT A NUMBER, MY NAME IS KHALED.