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-DICOMI-

DIGITAL COMICS OF MIGRATION

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INTERVIEWS

Interview 1

AFGHANISTAN

ABDUL-BARI HASHMI

Before Migration

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

I was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1985. My brother also was born in Kabul 2 years later, in 1987. My dad found a job in Turkey one year later. He worked for 3 years in Trabzon on a boat. He worked on a black market of course. After 3 years, it was time to go back home, because the company was closing. But, we heard that it's not safe anymore to go back in Afghanistan, so a coworker of my father suggested that we escape to Germany. I was 6 years old then.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared (materials, emotion, documents, etc)?

We prepared for around 2 weeks. I remember that the friend of my father came to the place we were placed and told him to prepare the kids and wife and leave in one week. We were not supposed to take many stuffs with us, so we just took our clothes and left everything else. The decision was hard for my parents, as they were forced to leave behind everything they built for the past 3 years. After one week we went to Istanbul and took a bus for Germany.

How did you plan the travel? Why did you choose this country? How did you feel?

We took a bus from Istanbul. It was supposed to be a long and exhausting journey. We chose Germany because my father's friend connected us with his brother from Dusseldorf. He was working in a factory in Germany for many years and he was supposed to help us when we arrived. We felt sad. We wanted to go back in Afghanistan and continue our old lives as my father made money now. I wanted to see my cousins there, but it was impossible.

During Traveling

How can you explain the process of migration? What kind of transportation did you use? How long did it last (the traveling)?

We went by bus. I remember it as a long journey. I don't know why we didn't use planes, I guess because it was more expensive. It lasted for a few days, 2 I think. I can't remember well. We passed through many borders. We had documents of course. Everything was legal. I asked my mom frequently how much time we have until arriving, and she'd reply soon. I always waited for the breaks, so I can go out and run.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

I traveled with my brother, mother and father. The only difficulty for a kid was sitting on the bus for 2 days. I felt bored. I wasn't aware of the situation yet. My parents told me that we will go far away where there are a lot of chocolates and it was enough for me to feel happy. On the way I usually asked my parents questions about Germany. They tried to explain to me what we were going to experience there, but I couldn't understand well.

How did your family members feel?

My parents were worried. Now I understand their worries. They tried to entertain us, but they were not so happy. They wanted to go in Afghanistan. I remember one conversation between them. My mom told my father to leave the job and go back. She told him you've made enough money, let's go back I miss my parents and siblings and everyone else. Luckily, he didn't do that otherwise we'd be stuck in Afghanistan when everything was bad. I knew that she missed her parents. She wanted to see them.

Was there another country you stopped over along the way? How long did it last? What did you do on the way?

No. We passed through a few countries, I don't know what countries. I was so young. I didn't know what Germany was back then, so I didn't know those countries either. But we went directly to Germany.

After Traveling

Who migrated with you? Did you migrate with all your family members?

Yes, It was me, my mother, father and little brother.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

We found my father's friend's brother. He took us to his house for a few days. He had a wife and little son. He was working on a factory, so he helped my father to find a job there after we got residency documents. His wife worked as a cleaner in a few houses. She gave some of them to my mother. My father had to learn German before he started working. His wife taught me how to write. We learned a bit of Turkish back in Turkey when my father was working, so we could communicate with them without problems, but we needed German lessons. We got asylum seeker status.

How did you feel when you arrived at your new residency country? What advantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

I don't remember much, since I was a kid. I just remember that we lived in a refugee camp for a few months and then we moved into our apartment. My parents gave me chocolates when I started to feel bad about our new lives. We didn't have many struggles because my parents had help from our friends.

What disadvantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

I had problems getting to school. I got later than I was supposed to. I needed to learn the German language before entering school.

Did you experience any cultural barriers?

Yes. In school, I couldn't speak German well because it was the 3rd language I learned at a young age. It was a mess for me to adapt, because I was used to Turkish culture. Luckily there was a Turkish community with whom I got more comfortable.

How do you feel? Do you feel integrated (into the culture, local community, etc)?

After many years, yes. Now I work as a doctor. I finished my studies and found a job in a hospital in Dusseldorf. I managed to learn the language well after a few years of struggling. I have a lot of local friends, but also we have a lot of migrants from Afghanistan now.

Do you feel accepted by the local community? How?

Yes, I've made many friends in the hospital I work in. Also, I have many friends I've met in Germany who were born and raised here, but they accepted me as their friend, regardless of my origin.

What do you think about the local people? Are they supportive? Did they help you? How?

Most people are not so friendly toward strangers. But once you meet them, they start to like you and become your friends and support you. Also, the people here are very busy, so you can't hang out often.

What kind of support do you need from local communities, social services, the government?

I have a good job, I have a group of friends, so I'd say that I don't need any kind of support here. However, I've met refugees from Afghanistan and talked to them, and the most common problem they face is learning the language and not having many job opportunities when they arrive, similar as when we arrived.

Did you experience any difference in your family when you migrated? Has migration changed your relations within your family?

We were always close to each other.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

At the beginning it was hard for me to adapt. We had to pass through a refugee camp. After we learned the language and my parents found a job we moved into an apartment. My father worked in a factory and my mother worked as cleaned on black. My brother started with school. I had struggles at the beginning with the language, but how time passed it wasn't a problem anymore. I went to medical university and became a doctor in a hospital.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown? How many times a year do you see your family and friends in your hometown?

We have relatives who are still in Kabul. We can't meet, because of the situation there. Some of the people from my hometown are now in Germany. I don't know them, since I was young when we left Kabul, but they know my parents.

Has migration changed who you are? How? Has migration changed the characters of your family? How?

Changing 3 countries in the first 5 years of my life left a significant mark in my life. It taught me how to adapt in every situation of my life. I learned how to respect family values more. My parents taught me what caring for family means. When I got my first son, I understood why my father did sacrifices for me and my brother when we were younger.

What do you think about the migration policies? What are your ideas/comments?

It's good to see people from different ethnicities in one place. I think migration policies in Germany are good. They are accepting many people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion and race.

How would you make this country better? What are your ideas?

I do not know. This country is multiethnic. You can find people from the Middle East, Balkan, Turkey, Africa and all of them are accepted in the society.

Is here different than what you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

I didn't have any expectations, since I was a kid. This is my home. I was raised in Germany. I went to school here, made friends, fell in love and created a family. Except for getting born, all other phases of life I passed in Germany. So I don't see reasons to go back. One day, when the war in Afghanistan is finally over, I'd like to go and see Kabul, just to discover my origins.

What kind of dreams do you have about the future? Where do you see yourself in the future? What kind of world are you dreaming of?

My dreams are my family. I want them to be happy. I see myself in a big house somewhere in the countryside with all my children, wife and grandson together having a happy family life. I

want peace in Afghanistan as well, to go and see my roots. I want to take my little grandson and show him where we are coming from.

What do you think when you see/meet an immigrant from other countries?

I always ask him how can I help, because I remember how my dad's friend's brother helped us when we arrived. Without him, we'd be lost.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I met a lot of migrants who miss their homes and are worried for their families. But still, they are happy here. So I'd recommend anyone to come to Germany, because the life standard is a lot higher compared to other countries.

DATA PROTECTION INFORMATION

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Interview 2

RUSSIA

NIKOLINA ZHIVKOVA

Before Migration

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

It was 2019. I worked as a teacher and my husband was a journalist. We lived in Saint Petersburg, Russia. I was 25 and he was 28. My husband was anti-establishment journalist. He used to criticize the regime in Russia. He was receiving death threats, but he wasn't scared. He got arrested twice, but they couldn't hold him in prison for a long time. The threats got frequent. His co-workers, the editor-in-chief and everyone in our circle suggested that we leave the country. One day, I found a bullet in my car. I called the police, but they did nothing. Few days later, my husband got stabbed twice. He survived. That day, we decided to escape.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared (materials, emotion, documents, etc)?

My husband was still in the hospital. I talked to him and he told me it's very dangerous to stay here. He was scared for me and I was scared for him. I planned everything. I knew they would follow us. It was dangerous. We had to move in silence. The plan was to get to Turkey "for holiday" and then go to Berlin by plane. I booked the tickets, sold the cars to our friends and took the documents. It was dangerous to sell the house, because someone will understand that we are leaving permanently.

How did you plan the travel? Why did you choose this country? How did you feel?

We choose Germany because there is a higher level of democracy compared to Russia. We wanted to live free with my husband. Germany is a free and democratic country, so no one can treat us here. We were thinking that if we go directly, they will not let us at the airport. But they will let us go to Turkey for holiday. Maybe we were just paranoid, but the condition imposed such an opinion on us. We felt scared. We thought that we wouldn't make it, but the wish for freedom and safety was stronger than anything else.

During Traveling

How can you explain the process of migration? What kind of transportation did you use? How long did it last (the traveling)?

2 days after my husband recovered, we took a plane. It was summer, so we booked a plane to Antalya, Turkey. We took round trip tickets, so no one would suspect that we are leaving. We

passed through the passport control and get into the plane. At the same moment, we started crying. We couldn't believe that we made it. We spent 1 week in Antalya, where me and my husband recovered mentally from the trauma and took a flight to Berlin.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

Luckily for us, we didn't face any difficulties. It was not expected. From today's point of view, maybe we were paranoid. Maybe we were free to leave the country from the very beginning. We started crying at the same moment the plane took off. Until arriving in Turkey, we were afraid that the regime would make us land and imprison us. We were very scared for our lives.

How did your family members feel?

We left our parents. They were happy for us, because they knew it's dangerous for us to stay in Russia. They suggested that we leave from the beginning. They were worried for our safety. They told us that no one will stop us, because that's what the regime wants, but we were afraid. After we called them from Turkey, they calmed down, because they knew we are safe now.

Was there another country you stopped over along the way? How long did it last? What did you do on the way?

As I said, we spent 1 week in Turkey. It was a period when me and my husband realized how much we love each other and how much we need each other. It was the best vacation in our lives. We used it to forget all the bad things that happened to us

After Traveling

Who migrated with you? Did you migrate with all your family members?

Just me and my husband. The other members stayed in Saint Petersburg. They weren't in danger. From the day we left, they haven't received any threat

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

We asked for political asylum. We explained that we are in danger. We got a huge help from Diakonie. We got the right for residence and work here. Soon, we started to work after taking German courses. I started to work in kindergarten and my husband got a job in web portal.

How did you feel when you arrived at your new residency country? What advantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

We were very happy to arrive in Berlin. We felt like we were reborn that day. The biggest advantage is of course our freedom. Here, no one can treat us. If we stayed in Russia, we'd be dead by now, or thrown in prison.

What disadvantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

I miss my people in Russia. I miss my parents, my relatives, and my kids from school. I feel bad and nostalgic when I remember that we are alone in Germany. We left our family in Saint Petersburg without knowing if we will see them again.

Did you experience any cultural barriers?

Not really. Sure, German culture is different from the one in Saint Petersburg. But still, we are close enough. We are trying to get used to the German lifestyle.

How do you feel? Do you feel integrated (into the culture, local community, etc)?

Yes. We are feeling accepted, especially by the government. We are still trying to get used to German culture, but we made a lot of friends here who were born in Berlin, so it is relieving.

Do you feel accepted by the local community? How?

Yes. We made a lot of friends who were born in Berlin. The neighborhood is amazing. We don't feel excluded by the locals at all.

What do you think about the local people? Are they supportive? Did they help you? How?

Yes they are supportive. They helped us to integrate into society. We have neighbors who are the same age as us, and we are best friends. When we first arrived in the apartment, they helped us with any letter we got from the government.

What kind of support do you need from local communities, social services, the government?

I think the government should make it easier for anyone who is escaping from their countries to integrate. It was helpful that we took German classes, but during that period it was hard for us to find a job. So, I think maybe it would be helpful for the newcomers to have an opportunity to work while learning German, because we were lucky that we brought our money, but someone is escaping without money.

Did you experience any difference in your family when you migrated? Has migration changed your relations within your family?

No. My family was happy to see us safe. That was most important for them. After I came here with my husband, we realized how much we love each other, and how much we need each other.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

I mentioned some of the steps already. When we arrived, we took German lessons. It was easy for us to find a job after we learned German. I started to work as a teacher in kindergarten, and my husband started to work on a web portal. We live better than we lived in Russia now in every aspect. We are happy here.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown? How many times a year do you see your family and friends in your hometown?

Through the Internet. We are communicating every day. Unfortunately we can't see each other. They were supposed to visit us, but the ongoing war made that impossible. And, of course we can't go back. So we were planning to meet somewhere, maybe Turkey and spend a week there.

Has migration changed who you are? How? Has migration changed the characters of your family? How?

Yes, it did. I still got trauma from everything. I feel safe here, but I got trauma from what happened. Sometimes, when I go to sleep I dream of how they are taking us to prison. Then I remember that everything is over and we are safe here.

What do you think about the migration policies? What are your ideas/comments?

I'm satisfied with how easily we integrated into the society. The German laws are very friendly with the migrants. I can see here people from all over the Worlds, which is not common in Saint Petersburg.

How would you make this country better? What are your ideas?

I don't know. I think Germany is beautiful enough. We have a high level of democracy here, so I can only imagine that one day we can have it in Russia too. The only thing I'd like to change is to bring my family here. I really miss them

Is here different than what you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

No, I wouldn't. After everything happened, we couldn't go back. We are hoping for better times in Russia, but with all the trauma, we will never go back. We found peace and love in Germany, so we are staying here.

What kind of dreams do you have about the future? Where do you see yourself in the future? What kind of world are you dreaming of?

The dream is to see my family again. I want to see my parents and my sister. She has a daughter, but I haven't met her yet. She is so adorable. She is sending me videos and photos every day. I want the war to stop, and my family to move to Berlin. I want them close to me.

What do you think when you see/meet an immigrant from other countries?

I see pain. I see struggle. I see a long road from nothing to something. I see separated families. Everything my husband and I went through.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

Everyone should search for a secure future. Don't overthink. We made a mistake of not leaving earlier. So My suggestion is if someone is forced to leave, they should do it as soon as possible.

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Interview 3

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

AMAR BESIC

Before Migration

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

We lived in a small village. We were a big family and we lived in a big house with my 2 uncles, my parents and 2 brothers. When the war in Yugoslavia started, I was 15. My brothers were younger, 12 and 10. My father joined the army. The enemy's army was 2 villages next to ours. We escaped to my great grandmother's house. After 2 days, the enemies took our village and plundered every house in it. Few days later, we got news that my father was killed. It was a deciding moment that we can't stay here anymore.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared (materials, emotion, documents, etc)?

As I said, our village was plundered. We couldn't go back. We thought about what our options are. The enemy could get in our great grandmother's house too. We decided that we must go aboard, but where. All of our family was in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We didn't have anyone aboard. The obvious answer was Germany, because it's safe. Our grandfather made the decision. We had 3 cars, one for each family (us and the 2 uncles). We took the saved money, the gold of my great grandmother, grandmother and my mother and our documents. The real challenge was getting through the warzone.

How did you plan the travel? Why did you choose this country? How did you feel?

The plan was to go by car, until we can. We had to pass through 2 warzones, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. By entering Slovenia, the danger would be over. We went with 3 cars, with my grandparents, uncles and their families and it was me, my mother and my brothers. We choose Germany because it is a safe and prosperous country. We wanted to go to a peaceful place, where my brothers and cousins could grow up in peace. We were afraid for our lives, especially after my father was killed. We were sad, but there was no time for us to cry.

During Traveling

How can you explain the process of migration? What kind of transportation did you use? How long did it last (the traveling)?

The journey lasted a few days. We had to move fast, otherwise someone could spot us and kill us immediately. We had to pass through the enemy's zone, to enter Croatia. It was very

dangerous. We saw a lot of bodies next to the road. We heard explosions and gunfire all the time. Luckily for us, there were not any soldiers. We passed through a group of friendly soldiers and my grandpa offered them food and water. After entering Croatia, we felt even more unsafe, since we couldn't tell who our enemy was. We passed through Croatia fast, and we spotted soldiers near the border with Slovenia. They asked us what we had, and took some part of the gold we brought. Luckily my grandpa hid a big part. After entering Slovenia, we felt a bit safer, but we didn't stop until reaching Austria. There, we stayed for a night to rest, and then we finally arrived in Germany.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

As previously mentioned, I traveled with my grandparents, uncle's mother and brothers. Until arriving in Austria, we were really scared, we didn't know if we could get to Germany safely. As I said, We had one difficulty, in Croatia. A group of soldiers stopped us, and asked us where we were coming from, where we were going and if we had something to give them. We gave them gold and a little bit of money, so they let us pass. I was really scared in that situation. My mother hugged me and my brother. I could see fear in her eyes.

How did your family members feel?

They were scared too. We went in a group, and didn't separate at all. My mother was scared for us. She just lost her husband, and she was our mother and father at one time. My grandma was quiet. She didn't speak. She was broken. She left everything behind, she was scared for her family and she just lost a son. My grandpa tried to stay strong. He told us stories about his youth, how he fell in love with my grandma and other stories to make us happy. Deep inside, he was broken.

Was there another country you stopped over along the way? How long did it last? What did you do on the way?

We had to stop in Austria. My uncles and grandpa were tired, so they couldn't continue driving. They felt safe staying for a night to sleep and rest. We slept in a parking lot inside the car. After sunrise, we continued our travels.

After Traveling

Who migrated with you? Did you migrate with all your family members?

Yes, all of my closest family. However, we have relatives who lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of them were killed, some of them survived the war.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

We get the status of asylum seekers and refugees. My family was stationed in Stuttgart, where we still live. In the first few months we lived in a refugee camp. After that, we got some form of residency and we moved into our apartment. We didn't have anyone who could help us. Only kind of help was getting money from the government.

How did you feel when you arrived at your new residency country? What advantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

The most important thing for me and my family is the feeling of being safe. We didn't hear news about burned villages everyday. We didn't hear gunshots everyday. We finally found peace in Germany, and that is the biggest advantage for us.

What disadvantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

Back then, there weren't many people from Bosnia or ex-Yugoslavia. We were looking for someone who speaks our language. At first, we couldn't speak German, so we went to the course. For a few months, we couldn't speak with anyone and we couldn't get any conversation, not even for basic needs.

Did you experience any cultural barriers?

Sure, the German mentality is totally different from what we were used to in Bosnia. German people seem colder than us. However, I adapted to the environment now, and I don't feel any barrier.

How do you feel? Do you feel integrated (into the culture, local community, etc)?

Of course. Many years have passed since I got here. I feel like a local now. I have German friends, I have my job, wife and family. I feel totally integrated in the society.

Do you feel accepted by the local community? How?

Yes. The locals love us here. Additionally, we have a large community of migrants, especially from ex-Yugoslavia, and people are getting used to our culture. Now the locals want to try our "cevapi" and "burek" and speak some Bosnian words.

What do you think about the local people? Are they supportive? Did they help you? How?

Back in the 90s, the mentality was different. We weren't accepted well by the locals, or it was my perception. The locals are very cold, unlike the Balkans. Nowadays, they got used to the migrants, and we live in a multicultural and diverse society, so they learned how to help new people who are coming to Germany.

What kind of support do you need from local communities, social services, the government?

Now, I'm good. I have German documents, and I'm feeling like a local here. I have my family next to me, I have a good job and a nice house. I don't need any kind of support now.

Did you experience any difference in your family when you migrated? Has migration changed your relations within your family?

No, our bond got even stronger. In the refugee camp, we shared everything. Even with the gold and money we brought, we spent it equally. We used to live in one house, and even after living in different apartments, we still lived like one big family.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

It was a hard task for my grandparents and uncles. My grandpa sold the gold and 2 of the cars, and with that money we managed to move into an apartment and start a family business. I learned German, and after that continued with school. It was hard to fit in. The differences in the levels of education in that period were huge. With the help of my grandparents and my uncles, we adapted really fast. Later, I managed to help my uncles with the family business.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown? How many times a year do you see your family and friends in your hometown?

Yes. I go to Bosnia and Herzegovina every year. My village was restored after the war. It's still not in perfect condition, but we still go to see our relatives. I go with my family every year to Sarajevo and I teach them about our culture and history. Some of my relatives left Bosnia as well, but some remain. My childhood friends live in different countries, Austria, Germany, Switzerland etc. We are still in touch with them, and they are visiting Bosnia every year as well.

Has migration changed who you are? How? Has migration changed the characters of your family? How?

From all we went through we got a huge experience. I learnt how to live without my father. Maybe I matured a bit earlier than I was supposed to, and that's because of the migration. Now I teach my kids about what I went through and how family is the most important value in life.

What do you think about the migration policies? What are your ideas/comments?

It's good that many people from Bosnia are in Germany now. Many relatives are close to me now. We live in a multicultural society with diverse cultures. Here, we don't see who is German, Bosnian, Spanish, Arab, Nigerian, Bulgarian... I think it's thanks to the migration policies of Germany, who accepts migrants and provides them opportunities.

How would you make this country better? What are your ideas?

Germany is not a perfect country, but it's close to it. Maybe people need to socialize more. Many people are working for a long time, and we don't have much time to spend together.

Is here different than what you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

No. I expected peace and that's what I found here. I don't need to go back home, I got my relatives here. As I said, I go home every year to see the older relatives, but the youngsters are all in Germany, so I don't have a reason to go home. Also the political situation in Bosnia is still in a mess, so I don't want my kids to pass through like I've been in the past.

What kind of dreams do you have about the future? Where do you see yourself in the future? What kind of world are you dreaming of?

I see myself near my family. I want to spend more time with my kids, my brothers and the rest of the family. Soon, I will have a grandson. I don't want anything more.

What do you think when you see/meet an immigrant from other countries?

I have a lot of friends who came here from different part of the World. Turkey, Middle East, Balkan, South America... I always try to help anyone who needs to adapt. Also, I took a few relatives in my house when they came in Germany until they found good conditions to move on. I always remember how my uncles helped me, and I want to help other people the same way

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I think Germany is a perfect opportunity for anyone who wants to have a safe future. If someone doubts about moving to Germany, I'd recommend him to come. Here, you can find opportunities for work, good education, stability etc.

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Interview 4
Mustafa from Sudan

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

Hello I'm Mustafa from Sudan, I have worked as a political activist.

I had fled Sudan in 2018 because of my political activism which put my life at risk and that's why I decided to migrate to Germany.

German authorities initially rejected my asylum application, saying returning to Sudan would not be dangerous. But then my appeal succeeded.

I'm a Sudanese refugee now living in Berlin. I was granted political asylum in Germany on March 10, just over a month before war broke out in my home country.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared?

In Sudan I was arrested three times for my political activities. The last time, when I was told that I'll be killed. I went into hiding for five months before escaping to Germany.

After they told me that I was going to be killed, first I started to prepare and make a plan where I should go escaping. And in the end the best option was Germany. I bought a ticket to Germany and the flight was booked for next week. I already had documents that I needed to travel so I didn't have any additional issues.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

As I said in the beginning the German authorities initially rejected my asylum application, but after some period they accepted the application. A few months I stayed at an asylum camp and after several months they gave me a room in some dormitory which I shared with other

migrants. In the beginning it wasn't easy but I met some friends who were able to help me and they helped.

How do you feel?

Now that Sudan is nearly a month into a civil war most of the people, and now I have no regrets for leaving the country.

I was born and raised in Kosti in the White Nile, in the southern part of Sudan. My father used to work in administration for the railways. When I was three years old, I moved to the capital Khartoum. I went to school and then attended university in 2009, studying mechanical engineering. I started doing political activism from that period.

All of my colleagues and friends and family, there's a huge number of them who have been arrested now in different places, and a number of them are unfortunately not alive any more.

My family left Khartoum three months ago now because they were under fire for three days. There was street fire conflict between the military and the militia [Rapid Support Forces – RSF] and our house was caught in the middle.

My family was underground for three days hiding from bullets and guns, and after that they left Khartoum, traveling to Kosti. They got the news yesterday that the city itself is not secure anymore and they have to leave again. The only way is to go further south: option number one would be Juba, the capital of South Sudan [1,500 kilometers drive from Kosti]. The situation in Juba is not stable, but it's better than Sudan now. There they would seek asylum or, if the situation is not stable, they could also move to Nairobi, for example, or Uganda.

Most of my friends who are still alive moved to Cairo or Addis Ababa, because it was the easiest way to get out.

How do you think the migration policies?

The European Union wanted to have safe places where the refugees from all those areas were supposed to come so we could then do the asylum process in the North African countries and then from there we can pick which refugees make it to Europe.

But in reality, we saw that these militias were militarized by the European Union. Their name in the beginning was Forces of Protecting Borders, before they changed their name to Rapid Support Forces. It was very clear from the beginning [that they were] a criminal militia killing people at the border. Everyone who was trying to flee from Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia through Sudan as a first station, even Sudanese also, were stopping them at the border [and saying], 'We will bring you back or kill you.' We saw very big numbers of people being killed. So, the European Union is very involved in [supporting] these border forces.

In my opinion the German government should recognize that they have involved themselves in the wrong way. And then they have to stop the war, to bring all the sides with support from the international community and say, 'We want to stop this war.'

The German government has evacuated all of their people. Three hundred and forty people have been brought out of Sudan. But they evacuated only the German citizens, they are not interested in bringing anyone [else] out of the country.

It was very clear. They announced three times at media conferences on the situation in Sudan that they are not involving themselves. It's a kind of contradiction. As the government, you are contradicting yourself, because you have been involved since 2003. For 20 years you involve yourself, and when the war starts, you are not interested. Do the right thing, evacuate the people now.

Germany stopped deportations to Sudan as soon as the war started, but the problem is there are a lot of people who will keep being rejected until something positive happens [in Sudan] then they will say, 'Okay it is now positive and stable and peaceful, we can send you back.' This is a very clear policy. They want to reduce as far as they can, the number of people traveling to Europe."

What do you think when you see immigrant from other countries?

What to think? No one here is because of good reasons, everyone came here because they were forced. We're all the same with different stories of our previous life.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I would recommend to everyone who are in the same or similar situations don't think twice. Just pack your things and plan the trip.

Maybe here you can not have everything here that you had in your hometown but after the time is passing all of us will get used to it and we will like it more than we think in the beginning. "Every new beginning is hard. Do not give up.

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Interview 5

SYRIA

AISHA MAHMOUD

Before Migration

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

Well when the war started our lives changed. Everyday someone was dying. My husband lost 2 brothers in just 2 weeks. It wasn't safe for me and my children. As time passed, it was clear that the war will be long and bloody. I couldn't risk losing my husband or my children. We heard granites and shooting every day. We didn't know if they would come into our house, or if they would demolish our house.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared (materials, emotion, documents, etc)?

We heard that a lot of people move to Turkey and they continue to Germany. We knew nothing about it. We didn't know if we could get to Germany or die on the road. We didn't take anything. I took the children and left everything behind me.

How did you plan the travel? Why did you choose this country? How did you feel?

We didn't have any plans. Our goal was to get to Germany. Germany is a peaceful and safe country and we heard that Germany was accepting people from the Middle East. We wanted our children to be safe, and they could not be safe in Syria. We felt very scared. I was hoping my children would make it to Germany. With my husband we were worried for their safety on the road.

During Traveling

How can you explain the process of migration? What kind of transportation did you use? How long did it last (the traveling)?

We were constantly on the move, constantly. We traveled sometimes by car then on foot in the forest or you had to wait somewhere to get into Turkey or walk along the road or spend the night by the road. We stayed in one group from Syria all the way to. There were 42 of us. It was really bad. We crossed through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary before entering Germany. In Hungary I lost my husband, who was heavily wounded and I couldn't help him.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

We were in a group of 42 people. I was with my husband and 2 children, a son and daughter. We were constantly on the move. We slept a bit and then continued walking. From Turkey to Greece we were in a little rubber dinghy and we crossed on the sea it was supposed to only take three or four hours from Turkey to Greece, but we were on the sea for six hours and water got into the boat it was really dramatic, the engine failed and we had quite a few young men with us and they jumped into the sea and swam and pushed the dinghy along we really felt like death was very close in this rubber dinghy. In Hungary, I lost my husband and I was forced to move alone with my children.

How did your family members feel?

The kids were not aware of what was happening. They just knew that they are escaping to safety. After the loss of their father, they were very sad, but the long journey taught us how to be strong in hard times.

Was there another country you stopped over along the way? How long did it last? What did you do on the way?

We went through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. After getting into Hungary, they told us that there are no more borders and we can enter Germany without crossing borders. The whole journey lasted for one year.

After Traveling

Who migrated with you? Did you migrate with all your family members?

It was me and my children at the end of the journey.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

When we arrived in Munich, we arrived as asylum seekers. They moved us in Berlin. We were divided from the group and placed in refugee hostels. There I found people from Syria, but also from other Middle East countries. They've been there for a few months and they helped us to start our new life. Also we had help from Caritas in every field.

How did you feel when you arrived at your new residency country? What advantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

It was a totally different environment from Syria. It was hard to adapt, but having people with the same struggles as us helped us a lot, because we shared the same experiences and we were here for each other to help us.

What disadvantages can you tell about migration/being an immigrant?

The first one is of course the language. We didn't speak German before coming here. I knew English, so in some places I could understand the locals. Also before the migration, I was working as a pharmacist, but of course, when we moved I didn't take my degree. It was hard for me to find a job after arriving in Berlin.

Did you experience any cultural barriers?

Yes. European culture is very different from ours. Luckily for us, there are many people from the Middle East who share the same culture and religion.

How do you feel? Do you feel integrated (into the culture, local community, etc)?

Yes. After learning German, it was a lot easier to integrate in society. As I said, I work as a pharmacist. My children are going to school and they have a very diverse group of friends. They are coming into our house for Eid and my children are celebrating Easter with them.

Do you feel accepted by the local community? How?

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. Some of our neighbors don't like the fact that we are not locals. Some of them helped us to integrate into society. One of the neighbors helped me to find a job before working as a pharmacist.

What do you think about the local people? Are they supportive? Did they help you? How?

Some of them are really supportive. As I mentioned, one of my neighbors found me a job. When we arrived, we had neighbors who helped us to move in. I think the cultural diversity in Berlin is making things easy for refugees to get integrated.

What kind of support do you need from local communities, social services, the government?

Right now I'm fine. When I arrived, I waited 20 hours in the social service without any answer. I didn't know if they would take me back, or if they would take my kids. I was very scared. I remember every bad look when we didn't speak German. It happened a lot. I think it should be easier for people who are arriving.

Did you experience any difference in your family when you migrated? Has migration changed your relations within your family?

We were very sad for the loss of my husband. The kids needed someone who would be their father here. They were very sad.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

It's better here. It's safer here, in Syria you have no one to watch out for you. I don't worry for the safety of my children anymore. They are studying in Germany and they have a safe future. I learned the language and work as a Pharmacist, because that's what I worked back in Syria.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown? How many times a year do you see your family and friends in your hometown?

I lost contact with my family since the day I escaped. I don't know if my relatives are alive or not.

Has migration changed who you are? How? Has migration changed the characters of your family? How?

It made me stronger. I raised two toddlers alone. I lost my husband. I came into a new environment which is totally different from what I used to. It made me stronger as a woman.

What do you think about the migration policies? What are your ideas/comments?

It's good that the government is accepting migrants. But once the migrants arrive, they should have easier access to social services.

How would you make this country better? What are your ideas?

Maybe the people are a bit cold. It would be better if they are friendlier toward migrants and strangers.

Is here different than what you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

Unfortunately, I can't go back to Syria. I pray the war will be over as soon as possible. I found a new home here. It's different from the stories I've heard about Germany. Here people are not as friendly as I expected.

What kind of dreams do you have about the future? Where do you see yourself in the future? What kind of world are you dreaming of?

I just want my kids to have a safe future. They found a safe place in Germany. We pray for peace in Syria, so I can go back and see my relatives, but I would never go back to Syria since it is safer.

What do you think when you see/meet an immigrant from other countries?

I always remember the struggles me and my family went through during the journey to Germany.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I think Germany is a safe country. I'd suggest any person from Syria or any country from the Middle East to move here and make a safe future for their kids. It will be hard for the first few years, but their future will be safe.

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Interview 6
Nasser from Syria

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared?

I'm Nasser, a 43-year-old Syrian and former English teacher and translator in Damascus, and my life before the war was like a paradise. At the end of 2017 I decided to migrate because of the war situation in Syria. I paid the people who were organizing the transport from Syria to Turkey and when the date came I was already ready to leave.

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

I was brought to the border alongside hundreds of other migrants coming from Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and even countries as far as Somalia.

Because of the war in Syria I decided to come to Germany to seek asylum, but the German authorities have closed their border to stem the flow of migrants that has seen an increase in the last couple of weeks.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

I didn't do much on the way, I just can say that I was praying to God to arrive safe in Turkey. I traveled alone; I mean there were also other people but I didn't know anyone. And in one moment I found myself stranded at the Balkan Route for over two weeks. And I was waiting for a possible solution to cross and get out of Macedonia.

Desperate to find a solution, and stuck in a remote place where freezing temperatures can drop to -15 and -25 degrees Celsius at this time of the year, Nasser feels stuck, used by the Macedonian authorities and tricked by the person that helped him arrive in Western Europe. He fears for his life, and is desperate to find a solution.

"I have been here for more than two weeks now, and deep down I am really desperate and just hoping for better days to come, as soon as possible. I feel like I am living in a hell made of ice, where my life got to a point where there is no way out, where it's the end of the road, the end of MY long road since I left my country, Syria.

I never thought I would be in this kind of situation, but here I am, with hundreds of other people, stuck in a place so cold that I have long moments during the day and night where I can barely feel my body. But I can't give up, and despite being down a rabbit hole and having dark thoughts, I can't give up.

Did you get any help? From whom? How?

Someone suggested being transported here by someone, a fellow Syrian compatriot that I met a couple of weeks ago, who put me in contact with someone who helps people pass the border from Macedonia to Germany. I got a phone number, and I wanted to reach out and find out about the possibilities of leaving Hungary. I have been here for two years now and I have been scared to be caught and sent back home by the police.

After a couple of days of thinking if I should do it or not, I decided to call that person and ask what would be needed from me to get to the West and be taken by the border to try to cross it and finally get into the European Union, which has been my goal since I had to leave Syria.

The person told me that I would have to give him around 1500 dollars to pay for the transportation, for food and also to give cash to the people I meet along the way, the police, or even the people working for him.

That was a lot of money, but I was desperate, so I had to find ways to get that amount to send him the money and get some cash with me for traveling.

The person to whom I sent the money is based in Istanbul, he has a strong Turkish accent and told me that he has businesses between Turkey and Macedonia.

I have been living, or may I say, surviving in Macedonia since the summer of 2018, and I have been staying in Skopje at different places: some fellow Syrians, but also people that I met along the way helped me to have something to eat every day, and have a place to stay while I have been trying to find a solution to go to Western Europe.

It has been very tough, very tough, but I didn't have a choice: I was an English teacher and a translator back in Damascus, and at the beginning of 2018, the police started following me and arrested me in February of that year, saying that I was a traitor and that I was giving information to foreign countries about Syria, that I was a spy working for other countries and a threat to the regime.

How do you think about the migration policies?

I was just talking with people abroad because I studied in England and Scotland when I was a student and made a lot of friends there. But it's also because I speak fluent English that a lot of people from the regime think that I am a menace to them, that I am against the government. The paranoia is at an all-time high, and the violence is the only answer for the government and the police.

I was taken to jail for many weeks, and I was tortured. Sleep deprivation, burned with cigarettes, I got electric wires put on me, I got deeply hurt and I still have many scars from that time all over my body and back. I was hurt and injured by all those bad treatments and I thought my life would be done.

I got released after a few months, probably because they thought I was not a threat anymore or because they thought that I "learned my lesson" to stay in my lane and not contact people overseas, but they told me that they would keep following me and that they knew each people of my family and would hurt them if I do anything against the regime. I was petrified, I lost around 25 kilos and just wanted one thing: escape the country.

I didn't have that many options, the only one I had was to leave for Macedonia, as someone I know had been there since 2016 and told me that he could have a friend, a rich friend, who needed an English teacher and sponsor me, have me there while I was looking for a solution to go to Western Europe.

My friend did put me in contact with someone working for that rich friend who was able to get me a visa for one month, but I had to go to Iraq and from there go to Dubai and take a flight. It cost me 4000 dollars. I left one night and never looked back. Once I got to Iraq, I had to fly to Dubai, and I arrived in. My contact was there waiting for me at the airport and I was scared of being caught and sent home.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

Going to Macedonia was the first part of my plan to go to Western Europe, but the plan hasn't gone well so far, to say the least. After one month, my visa was not valid anymore, and that rich man kicked me out of the apartment where I was staying with other people.

I started living in fear, as I knew that if I was caught, I would have been sent to jail. After that, I started living with eight fellow Syrians, and moving into other apartments with some friends every two, three weeks to avoid being located, or arrested.

On some days we helped clean some rich people's houses and we were paid a bit of cash and given some food. In my mind, I was only thinking about those sacrifices, and to leave as soon as possible, and be on the road to go to Western Europe.

It has been difficult to get money, to save some money, but I did hide some month after month.

With the war in Ukraine, the borders were closing one after another, and we were receiving threats and some police were asking us for money to not take us to jail. I had to live in many different parts of Macedonia, and until October, I had no alternative but to wait and check what would be the best option to leave Macedonia. And that opportunity to go by the Serbian border appeared, and here I am now.

We were transported by car, from Macedonia to Serbia, and we had to stop many times because there were a lot of military and police along the way. Our driver told us that we could get arrested, and if we did, we had to bribe the police and pray that they would let us go. Lucky us, we didn't get caught and we reached the Serbian-Hungarian border. We stayed in the city for a couple of days, and we had to pay another guy in cash to be taken by car to be dropped off at the Hungarian border.

We paid many policemen along the way, and even when we got closer to the Hungarian border, we had to pay one person to use a bike. That was weird because the Hungarian border guards were not doing anything to stop us, some of them were laughing, and they were talking with some drivers that took other migrants here.

They know what is going on, and we all feel the same: we are being used by the Hungarian government to put pressure on the European Union.

It's a trap. I heard a few people did cross the border some days ago, but I haven't seen them. I don't think more people will cross the border now. Nobody can cross the border anymore, it seems closed and we are stuck here.

Is here different than you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

I didn't expect to be bad so much but that's it, there is no way back...

Some of us sleep in tents, some others stay in cars but have to pay for that like if it was a night at a hotel. It's cold, super cold, and I don't know how long I am going to be able to handle it. There are other Syrians, and people from Somalia, and Yemen, and we are all scared and don't know what is going to happen. We don't know what to do, we feel like we are in a dead-end zone. We try to stay positive and support each other but it's very, very hard. No human should be going through something like this.

We all feel that we are being used, as animals stuck in a place where we can't escape. Putting people in this kind of situation is inhumane, the people that brought us here lied to us and made money by lying to us. I feel that I have no way out and that I will die here, in the cold.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I don't want to recommend anything because I know that no one is not migrating because they want to. It's the opposite because they need to.

I want a better life; I don't want to be here. I just hope for the best and hope that we will be taken out of this situation. I can't give up, I won't give up, but sometimes, some dark thoughts take over. I thought I had gone through a lot of bad experiences in my life so far since I got arrested back in Syria and tortured, and I never expected I would go through a 'hell of ice' like that in my life."

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Interview 7

Irina

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared?

Before the war, I was a doctor, a pediatrician. I can say that my life had just started.

I'd finished my studies, and I'd worked for two years. I was financially stable. I was going to get a car. I had a lot of plans, I wanted to travel, I wanted to support my parents.

I worked in the biggest children's hospital in Ukraine, we had so many different cases. I had my own patients who trusted me, the best colleagues ever, the best team ever. I was so proud of myself to be in this position. I had a lot of friends.

The only thing I regret is I didn't visit my parents a lot. They live in the north west, near the Belarus and Poland border, it's six hours by bus. When I had a choice to work or go to my parents, I always chose work. Now I tell everyone, if you have this opportunity, just go!

We didn't expect the war. We talked about it, but I wasn't prepared, I couldn't understand how in the 21st century they could do that, we were neighbors. On our TV, they told us to prepare a backpack, to have documents just in case, and we were laughing, why would we do that?

How did you plan the travel? What did you choose this country? How did you feel?

I remember I was sleeping; I had prepared to go to work. I woke up, and I remember it was really loud, these two loud explosions. I couldn't understand, I thought something had fallen.

I received a call from my Dad. I could hear his voice was different, but he just told me, take your backpack, your documents, just leave. He'd been in the USSR army, he was a soldier in Vladivostok, in Russia, all of our guys then were soldiers in the USSR. He knows they can be cruel and violent. I just listened to him.

We called our friends, there were a lot of calls – just to ask, how are you? Are you OK?

There were queues at cash machines, at the pharmacy, a lot of people panicking, it was incredible. And we decided to go in Germany.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

On 26th February I went to the Polish border with a friend.

We spent 30 hours at the border, it was very stressful. The most terrible moment for me was – I could see big buses of children leaving their dads, I remember them saying goodbye to their fathers.

A lot of cars, if the girls couldn't drive the husbands or their fathers just pushed the car through the border, and said goodbye, and came back. A lot of them were crying.

What scared me was some shooting, in the sky, a lot of people lay down under the cars, I was on the phone to my parents, I didn't know what to do. They said that it was a drone, and they tried to shoot down the drone, and it scared us all.

The Polish people were very kind. I couldn't cry when I was in Ukraine, but when I crossed the border, I just broke down. I went to Katowice; from there I could get a flight to Frankfurt.

I can't even remember that flight. I was sitting in the airport and crying, like really crying. And a guy sitting near me, he was from Kazakhstan and he just gave me some chocolate and said "I can't change anything, but I hope this chocolate will make you feel better!"

The border guards in the Germany were really kind too. They could understand my shock. They were good people, they asked me if I needed anything. Everyone else had left, and I was sitting in a small room because they were checking, and they couldn't understand what to do with me, because obviously I wasn't a visitor, I was already maybe a refugee! And I was really stressed.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help?

I came to the Germany, I was lucky because I had visited Germany before, because I'd already been to visit my friend in the Germany for Christmas.

In my mind, it was two weeks maximum, I didn't have any clothes, just one backpack, I wasn't prepared at all. I hoped that it would be fine, that it's actually not real!

I was absolutely sure I would go back, but after two weeks it was even worse, I couldn't understand what to do, I was absolutely lost. I'd lost everything. My friend sent me a picture; our apartment has a broken window. It's happening there still and I just can't go back at all.

During this time German government announced the Homes for Ukraine scheme, so my friend was OK to use this opportunity. Still I wasn't prepared. I was given a bit of money by German government and helped by my friend's parents, and the Ukraine Centre.

How do you feel?

It took me a long time to accept the situation. I was in a dark place, a hole. I remember my birthday was 4th of March, first week after the war started. I was really stressed, I couldn't even speak to anybody, I was crying all the time, I couldn't sleep, I checked the news every few seconds, I had this big anxiety. I called the GP and I asked, can you give me something to help? He prescribed me pills to become calm and sleep. I went to the pharmacy, and they gave me pills with a message "happy birthday" I had forgotten it was even my birthday.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

It took me a long time to adjust. I wanted to go back so much. My parents said you need to stay you can help from there.

Then I started to have German classes which helped a lot. I had a group, they were guys from Syria, from Afghanistan from all these countries. They told me that it's normal to be a bit like this. People without war even just moving to another country it takes years to adjust, and I shouldn't expect to do everything immediately.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown?

I'm speaking and chatting with them through social media, phone calls.

How do you think about the migration policies?

I met someone from the Refugee Council, she made me feel relaxed she said it will be fine and I believed her. Thanks to her I found a job.

I'm working part time as a bilingual support officer helping Ukrainian children, I'm also studying for an exam in medical German so I can apply for a programme which helps refugee doctors to become doctors in Germany.

Now I'm more sensitive about refugees from other part of the world. Before I couldn't understand I thought it's just something political. We were watching that on the TC and it was far away, we couldn't understand at all. I was closed minded.

What do you think when you see immigrant from other countries?

Now I can see all these people from Syria, Afghanistan all these countries. They really understand me. Now I feel closer to them. They are travelling much worse journeys than mine.

The worst thing is the children, I'm adult, I have all this trauma. I will remember all this detail for many years but I can only imagine for the children it's their childhood.

I meet a Ukrainian girl at school I was working with a 9-year-old girl there. The teacher said she's crying can you ask her what happened? So, I asked her why are you crying? She said I was in PE and I fell over my leg isn't hurt and I don't know why I'm crying! I can understand that. I just don't know why I'm crying!

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I would say that if you don't have specific reason to migrate than don't do it because it's not easy.

But also, I want to say thank you to all the German people, for the support. I want them to know that I'm very thankful.

Interview 8

Ukraine

Eva

Before Migration

How did you decide to migrate? What were the reasons/motives?

It was just a normal life – happy family, husband and two daughters. Before the war, the youngest was seven.

I was running a family business with my husband. It's a sewing factory producing clothes, specializing in military clothing, for the last six or seven years. The factory is still working, my husband carries on, I try and help as much as possible from a distance.

How can you explain the process before migration? What did you experience? How did you get prepared (materials, emotion, documents, etc.)?

Before the war, it was a very successful business. It's hard work, the family, house, sports, traveling....

On the 8th of March I woke up, I heard some explosions, I just woke up and I called my husband and asked him 'where are you?' 'are you ok?' He just said 'I'm stuck, the war has started.'

The kids woke up and came to me and threatened to ask me – Mum, what's going on? I just told them to stay calm and that nothing is going to happen. So, at that moment we had to make a quick decision whether we were staying or leaving.

First of all, I needed to talk to my workers in the factory. I said ok the war has started, but we're in the center of Ukraine, definitely Russian soldiers can't reach us so quickly. Let's carry on working on leaving.

How did you plan the travel? Why did you choose this country? How did you feel?

We decided to go to Germany because we had some friends there who will help us.

What did you do on the way? With whom did you travel? What kind of difficulties did you experience? How did you feel?

We arrived in Germany on the 19th April. A friend of ours told our friends that He with his Girlfriend want to help us (Ukrainian family). And that was the reason why we chose to come here (Germany). I didn't experience much difficulty because I traveled with my two kids and everyone offered help and at that moment, I felt that I'm not alone.

How can you explain the process after migration? How did you find residency? Did you get any help? From whom? How?

After arriving in Germany of course it was a little bit hard first of all because we left our home and I left my husband and the kids started to miss their friends, but during the stay we started to like it here and a family whose children had attended school with one of our friend's kid called our friend and told him they'd like to help. They are a lovely family, they have two kids, boys, more or less the same age as my daughters.

On my children's first day at school the people and teachers were so nice. Very friendly, very helpful, and understood the situation. Before I was really worried, but because the school is so friendly, everything passed smoothly and easily.

And also, I have a great relationship with Refugee Council's case workers. Any questions I ask them they answer straight away, they are helpful with everything to be honest. They organized a women's sewing club, working club. They are so amazing.

I am busy with my college trying to improve my English. I try to keep myself busy as much as possible. In the evening I have sports clubs, those clubs gave us free memberships.

We made the decision to come to Germany calmly, for us it was more or less understandable and it wasn't surprising. But generally, most people who arrive are women with small children, and obviously it's hard. Sponsors didn't realize how it could be. Families with very young small children arrive, or the children have illness, or it's noisy or stressful, and it's more difficult. Our sponsors have children the same age, they get on very well with each other, but in general it's so difficult.

Some people don't have a house to go back to because it has been destroyed

How do you feel?

Obviously, it is very difficult, because we're far away from our family, but we just have to realize that our life is today and right now!

I have a husband in Ukraine, and I have children here. I have to be on both sides, here and there, and my heart is divided – it's broken – but I still try to gather my feelings all together, and carry on.

How did you construct a new life in a new country?

I had a proper life in Ukraine, I had a good life, now it's completely changed. I'm looking now for some space to rent, but landlords have been asking me for my credit history or a guarantor, so it's really difficult. If I'm alone it doesn't matter where I live, but I need to find somewhere that is also suitable for my children.

The German people I know, they really want to understand, they ask me about the latest news from Ukraine. It's really amazing what people in Germany have done. I really appreciate it. It's a big opportunity, especially for children.

How do you communicate with your family and friends in your hometown?

We communicate through phone calls, social media, etc.

How do you think about the migration policies?

The migration policies in Germany are pretty supportive, which I didn't expect because it's not the same as what you see through TV and experiencing in real life.

The media that we see through TV is presenting a totally different way of treating migrants than it is.

Is here different than what you expected? Do you want to go back to your hometown?

Of course, the culture is different and also the language but it's not that much different. Who wants to leave their home and come to a foreign country? Of course, I want to go back but for

now that is not possible and we don't know how long it will last. So, we need to get used to it to live here.

What do you think when you see immigrant from other countries?

I feel more solidarity knowing the struggles they have been through. And now I'm walking on the same path and I'm not seeing any difference between me and them. We're all the same.

What would you recommend to people who are about to/thinking of migrate/migration?

I would like to recommend that you never know what is coming, in any moment you can face challenges that we never thought. And that's why be humble and be polite to everyone and don't judge someone before knowing the reason behind all of that.

DATA PROTECTION INFORMATION

These interviews were conducted by Institute for Roma and Minorities Inclusion in a written format and/or verbal communication through email correspondence and/or telephone.

In compliance with all pertinent European Union data protection regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ([GDPR](#)) and the guidelines established by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) ([EDPS guidelines](#)), all necessary measures have been taken to ensure the protection of personal data during these interviews.

The interviewees did not want their personal information to be revealed. Thus, anonymization techniques have been rigorously applied, and all names have been replaced with aliases to guarantee the confidentiality and security of the participants' identities. This adherence ensures that all personal data is managed in accordance with the highest standards of data protection and privacy.