



Katsikas (**Habibi.Works**) Wednesday 26 January 2022



Zainoullah Daudzai, 22, Kabul,
Afghanistan



Erfan Azini, 16, Mazar Sharih,
Afghanistan

Zainoullah I left Kabul when I was three years old. We went to Iran, where we lived for 16 years, in Kerash. I left Iran about three years ago.

There were lots of reasons. The first is that in Iran there is no work, no jobs. The second, is that because my family are Afghans and I am an Afghan, I could not get documents to work there. It is impossible to live if you cannot work, and if you have no documents. You don't exist. So, it was very hard. I had to leave because I couldn't live.

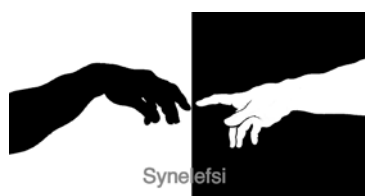
Erfan My family are from Mazar Sharih in North Afghanistan, but I was born and grew up in Iran, in the capital city Tehran.

But even though I was born in Iran, I had no documents. The state said I was an Afghan, so I had no way to get a job and money. My family also struggled.

For me, what was more relevant was education. The government would not let me go to school as normal. The government said we had to pay double what everyone else did to finish school, do all the right lessons. And we had no money because we could not work. It upset my parents, and me. I wanted to learn so I could get a good job and do well.

Even if I had been able to, once I finished university I still wouldn't be able to work because I am an Afghan according to the Iranian government.

This is not fair. My family did not leave Afghanistan because it was fun for them, or for a change. They had to leave because Afghanistan was not a safe place for them to live. They should not be being punished for that. So, two and a half years ago, I left.





Z Yes, this is similar for all Afghan people. I did not know it when I was three years old, but my family left because it was so dangerous. The Taliban were still there, and there was fighting everywhere. People did not leave because they wanted to, or because they didn't like Afghanistan. It is because it was too dangerous to stay.

Like everyone else who left Iran I went to a person who said he could help me get over the border. We went to Van in Turkey. We walked for 20 days across Turkey and then we were put on a boat to Lesvos.

E For me it was 28 days' travel. Maybe three weeks in Turkey, then like Zainoullah, to Lesvos by boat. I came with my family. My mother, father, sister and brother.

Z The journey was very difficult. It was cold, and because often we had to walk at night it was difficult. Then, we were put on a tiny boat with 10 people. It's terrible, how you are forced to come here.

I spent one year on Lesvos-

E I was there eight months.

Z -and then I came straight here, to Ioannina.

E I went first to Kilkis, then to here. Why? It was not my decision. The government sent us, so we went where they said. That's life in camps.

Z I have been living here for three years, and in this period the situation keeps getting worse.

Everything is bad. We have to explain different parts so you can understand.

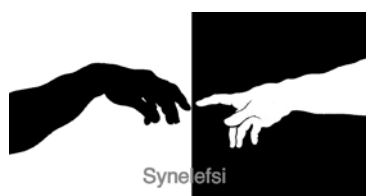
Inside our containers, everything is broken. We are supposed to tell the staff here, but we wait and wait and wait – for months – and nothing is fixed. This is for things from a fridge breaking to the lightbulb. There is a Whatsapp group as well, set up by the camp, and so we message that too, in case we have just been forgotten. But no-one comes to fix things.

We don't have money – usually we have only a little and for the last four months, none. But we do not mind fixing things for ourselves. So, because no-one comes, we do that. We have to borrow money, but that is better than having no lights that work, or no fan. So, we borrow money to fix the things that are wrong, we use that money.

But then, when they see us fixing things, they come and take them away, and they don't fix the broken things. So we now owe money, and have taken time to fix things, and we are left with the same things, broken and useless, and in debt to other people. It is depressing. We feel useless, and we have only broken things, even though we bought new things.

E Last year, I did my interview, to get asylum. I have been waiting for one year to hear the result, but no-one has told me anything. I cannot make plans, let alone start to live my life, go to school, or anything, until I know. I am stuck.

After ten months my Asylo card (*ID to show that a person is entitled to be in Greece, and is in the legal asylum process*) expired. No-one told us that this could happen, so we did not know. When I asked about it, they said they couldn't tell us because 'lots of people live at the camp'. But every month, they come to check who is in each container. So they could tell us then. They know the things they want to – where people are, if someone





stays overnight in someone's container – but they don't tell us anything and say it's because it's too difficult.

Z I have ID. I've had it for eight months. But I am waiting for a passport. It's the same for many people at the camp. I have to go to the officials' office every week, to keep reminding them. It's because they forget every time we ask for anything, and I really want to make sure they don't forget this. Maybe they will listen to us.

Imagine if it was you. Could you live in such a situation? Such a system? Such a refugee camp? And this is in a container.

Before that, I had to live in a tent, for a year-

E For me, it was eight months.

Z It's terrible. It's not easy at all. It is not a life. It's not for- No-one should have to live like this. In a box, with no control. If a friend visits you, you are told they can't be there. There used to be a free bus which would take us to Ioannina to spend time there. It was really good because we had little money and the road to Katsikas and the bus stop there is a dangerous road to walk on. But now, the bus has finished. There is nothing. It's so much harder, and yes it feels like our options are closing. Like we are getting more trapped.

There is nowhere to go anymore. Nowhere to go to get a moment from your problems and challenges. And nowhere to go to get help. It's hard.

Even when there is a health emergency and someone calls the ambulance, they don't listen. They don't come.

We can't do, see, or say anything.

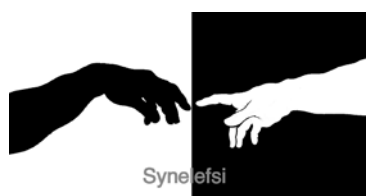
And we have no money. So sick people have to borrow €15 to pay for a taxi to take them to the hospital. We are all getting into debt because we are cut off from everything and we have no money to go anywhere, connect with anything. We need something other than this terrible camp.

It has now been five months since they paid any money onto our cards, and the situation for us is getting worse with every day. Some people can find work, but most can't, because they have no papers, or they have little babies – they need to look after them, so they can't work to get money, but they need money to look after them.

E I know a woman and she has no husband. She has to stay with her children, so there are very few jobs she could do. She can't travel to work. But there is no support for her, no help.

Part of the problem as well is that they do give us food, but it's not edible. People have to recook it, add things to make it possible to eat it. But these things cost money and we have no money and so we end up eating things that are disgusting. That's when they are not rotten, which happens often. I understand that people say 'we shouldn't be choosy' about food, but eating terrible food every day is not fair. It makes people even more miserable. We can't go anywhere, we can't do anything, we can't fix things that are broken, we can't plan for any future, we can't have friends come and visit us, and we can't even enjoy a nice dinner.

It's not being ungrateful, it's... well, it's very difficult. We are hurting, I think.





Z The problems with the wall, are... We already are feeling more and more trapped, and this is a physical confirmation. We can't have friends to visit, and this will make that even more certain. We already can't really afford to leave the camp, and now the wall will mean we can't even see outside. We don't understand why there would be a wall.

E No-one has told us anything. Why it's going to be built, what it's for, will we be able to come in and leave when we want to. If this is where we must live, that's important. They put security people in the camp and now they are building a wall. But if it's for security, they don't need both. So why make a wall?

If there are problems in the camp, security is better than a wall. All a wall does is sit there. It doesn't make things in the camp better. And no-one here makes trouble for anyone outside, in the village {Katsikas} or the city.



Z Maybe the wall is there for some problems. They make it because of that. But we are all burning in the same fire. Maybe there are some bad people. I don't know and no-one has explained. But all are being punished if that's the case. Everyone being punished for something none of us have been told about and probably no-one in the camp has even done.

We are being cut off. It isn't fair, it isn't kind and it doesn't help anyone. We just want to be able to live our lives, not be walled in miles away from anyone.

E Making a wall won't have any effect to end our problems. You can't solve problems in the camp by shutting them in. People will be trapped inside. If they are worried about who is in the camp, they should not be. People in the camp are not bad people, though many of us are having a bad time.

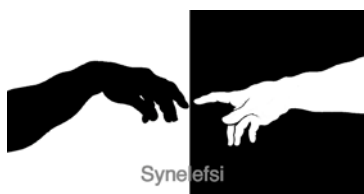
Even if there was a bad person, well, if someone wanted to fight, for example, they would still fight in the camp. How can it be right to shut us all in as if we are all the same, and force young families and old people to have to live with that trapped person? Being trapped with them?

Z When the camp manager said she wanted to make a wall, it depressed everyone. It still depresses us all. They remove our hope. That we could live here and be a part of the wider community. We are being hidden and trapped. What will people think of us? If they cannot even see us? It will make them worry. And there is no need to worry. We are normal people like them, like everyone.

You can't imagine how you can make a normal life because of what they have made here, this situation they created and we are in.

It's like a jail.

It's like we said about documents. This takes a year, more than that. They don't do repairs for months and more, and they remove anything we fix ourselves. But when they want to make a wall, to trap us, this can happen quickly. But everything else is so slow.





Our problem is that we don't have documents, so that we can live our lives again. Not that we don't have a wall, and need a wall. No-one here is saying 'life will be better behind a wall.'

E Our big problem is documents. Without them, we can do nothing, and can't prepare to do anything. We just want things to be good for us and for Greek people.

Z From the first day I came to Greece, everybody wanted to run away. Even if you had a good job or a good life. I think it's because no-one believes it. We have all had a terrible experience and if we had a good job or a good life we think it cannot continue. Someone will take it away from us.

E I want to go to school. Why can't we go to school? Why can't I speak Greek? Schools don't let us come. We can't even speak Greek. We have no money for private lessons and no access to schools. My brother is now in France. They send him for French lessons three time each week, and he is learning. This should be available here.

The result is that the government keeps us in the country, but we cannot do anything here. Is it just so they can collect money from other countries or organisations? We can't do anything here.

Our future and what we want depends on whether they ever try to help us here. To earn Greek, as a start. Everyone loves Greece, for tourism, lovely beaches, good weather, so that's good. But the situation for us makes us think badly of Greece, we are cut off, we have nothing and we see no way of changing, getting better.

Z Greece is not bad. Our country is much worse, with bombs and bullets. We are glad that Greece lets us live here. But we are sure that bombs will not come to our homes here. That's a very good thing and we're glad for it. We know UNHCR, they say what should happen. But the rules they say 50 per cent of the time are not followed.

This is the problem.

