

**A true story of an Afghani refugee**  
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**Copyedited by Corinne Squire**

I am writing because we are suffering from wars for 35 years. I was born in the war, I grew up in the war, and there is still war in my country; and now my children are suffering from war.

I was born and brought up in an eastern province of Afghanistan. I opened my eyes in a poor family. It was very difficult to get education, but my father was dreaming for me that I would get an education. I was the first child. So my father struggled so much for me to get an education. At last, he admitted me in a school, and I finished my secondary school with so many difficulties. After that, I did medicine for two years only. Because of my economic problems, I then left my education.

However, I used to work like a teacher. I taught English, for free, to the boys in my village, as a volunteer worker. I was running a general store, with a few types of medicine for first aid. Because our village is far from the main city, there is no hospital or clinic. So I was checking blood pressure, giving injections, and putting in drops for people, for free.

I then started work with a company. The company was supplying fuel to the American bases. I sold some of my property to buy a fuel tanker and for fuel supply, and I started working with the company to support my family – I have five children. I worked with the company for two years. On the route, there were two police check posts. I was working with a logistics and telecom company.

One night my fuel superior called me, and told me, ‘Tomorrow we will supply fuel to a province further east’. I said, ‘Ok’. So I told my father, ‘Tomorrow I am going east; let my younger brother come with me’. He said, ‘Ok, tomorrow is Friday, he is not going to school so he can go with you’.

Suddenly, somebody knocked at our door. My father went to answer. After a while he called, ‘Come here, someone wants to talk with you’. I went there, and I saw one of the people from my village. He said, ‘You're going tomorrow?’ I said, ‘I am going to Laghman\* province. He said, ‘I will go with you because I want to visit my friends there’. I said, ‘Ok, I am going at 4 o'clock of the morning’. He said, ‘OK’.

At last we moved, at 4 o'clock. My younger brother worked with me as a conductor in the tanker. After about two hours' drive, we reached a small town. The man, Ali, our villager, told me, ‘Stop here for a while; I am going to bring one of my friends from here’. I said, ‘I am going to be late, please do it fast’. He said, ‘Ok, in just two minutes I will be back’.

After a while he came with one of his friends. I saw the man was covered with a big blanket of the kind Afghani people use in winter. Under the blanket he had a Russian gun, a Kalashnikov. He sat with us, and after some minutes of driving he said, ‘Turn to the right’. I said, ‘I can't drop you because I am late’. He said again, ‘Turn to the right!’ I stopped the tanker, he put the gun to my head and said, ‘You have to turn’.

So I turned into a street, where after just five minutes there was a big villa. Two persons opened the gates and I went inside. There were about 12 persons with

heavy weapons there. The man told us to stop and get down from the tanker, so I got down. Two more persons then came and told me, 'Our Commander wants to talk with you'. So they took me to the commander. He told me, 'You have to do a job for us'. I asked, 'What kind of work can I do for you?' He said, 'I am giving you a box, just give it to my men waiting on the road for you'. I said, 'What's in the box?' He replied, 'Weapons and explosive things'. I said, 'I can't do it'. From behind, suddenly one of his man hit me very powerfully. I shouted and cried, 'I have small children and a family; I can't do it'. He said, 'Ok, if you don't do it, I will shoot your brother'.

I just kept quiet for a while. When I saw the eyes of my brother, they were full of tears, because he was just like a child for me. I said, 'Ok, I will do it'. He responded, 'If you make any problems for us, I will shoot your brother on the spot'. I said, 'No, no I will not make problems for you'. Then they put the box in my tanker and I moved on towards the next town. That was the last time I looked towards my brother's eyes; he was just looking at me.

After some minutes of driving, I was thinking, 'What should I do?' At last I thought, 'For one brother I can't kill a lot of people'. So I decided to tell the police at the checkpoint. When the police came near to me, they knew me, and they said, 'Hello, hi' to me. One of them said, 'You're looking very sad. I said, 'Yes, I am very sad', and I told them the whole story. So they checked the box; it was full of weapons and explosive things. Then they told their commander, and took four police rangers to go towards the villa where the Taliban were. I was with them. When we were near to the villa, they started firing on us. So the fighting began between them.

After 20 minutes, the police took over the villa. When we went inside, I saw my brother lying on the ground. When I went near to him, he was dead. They had shot him in the head. I cried and shouted, 'What has happened with my brother!' That was a very panicky and hard time for me, the most hard in my whole life. I called my father and told him, 'Come and take my brother's body'. Then the police took me back to the police station, and after some hours they released me and I went to home. My mother was crying and shouting so much, and she was saying to me, 'Why did you take my son with you?' She hugged me and cried and cried the whole night. Our whole family was very sad about my brother.

At that time, the villager I knew and the Taliban commander called me and said, 'We killed your brother, you made a problem for us, and we will do the same to you'. I was very scared. I told my father. He said, 'My son, you have to leave the country soon, I don't want to lose you.'

After the funeral of my brother, we left our home; we went to another district for some time. But on the second night, at 2'o'clock, my neighbour called to say, 'Some people burned your house'. So I told this to my parents, who told me, 'Now you must leave the country'. Then I started my journey towards Europe. I left my wife, my five kids, and my father. Again we sold some of our property – all of our property – and I deposited \$10,000 with the agent for taking me to Europe. So I started my journey.

The first country which I crossed, that was Iran. The most cruel police in the world are Iranian police. When Afghans are crossing the border, they are shooting people. I saw them shoot people in front of my eyes. We couldn't even stop for the dead people. The guy told us, 'If you stop for them, they will shoot you, like them'. I walked for three days without food -

there was some water; we just carried the water in our bags. I faced a lot of problems on this border.

At last we reached Teheran, the capital of Iran. I stayed for two days there. Then they put us in a container. We were 85 people in the container, and the weather was very hot. The Iranian agent told us they would put on the air conditioning in the container, so they closed the doors and then sealed up the doors from the outside. We moved towards the Turkish border. The agent told us that the journey would take 10 hours.

They put the air conditioning on in the container and after two hours they switched off the air conditioner. Within 10 minutes we got problems taking breaths. We were beating the container, but the driver was not hearing the sounds, so we all started crying and shouting. People were saying, 'I am dying, I am dying'. At that time, I was thinking that this was the last moment of my life. 'My children and my wife were just circling before my eyes. My little daughter was telling me, 'Dad, don't go, please don't leave us'. At last, tears came from my eyes, I couldn't stop myself. I cried so much and sweated because the weather was too hot. The sweat wet my all clothes and I took off all my clothes except underwear. .

Suddenly I saw my mobile phone, which was switched off because at the start the agent told us to, 'Switch off your mobile because it will be traced by Iranian police when we're crossing'. This was my last time to do something, and I was going to do anything to save 84 lives and myself. I switched on my mobile phone but for some time there was no signal. I tried so many times. At last, it worked and I called my agent in Afghanistan and just told him that, 'We are dying, 85 persons in a container', but I couldn't explain everything, just told him to call the Iranian agent to call the driver.

So after five minutes the driver stopped the truck. There was a small window in the back of the container. He opened that window. All these 85 persons rushed to the window for taking breath. That was a small window and they covered up all the window again, and they left all the children and women in the back. When they did this, I shouted at them, 'If you do like this, all these children and women will die except us. So please let the window stay down and open and oxygen will come so we can all breathe well'. So, thanks be to God, they accepted, and everybody sat down, and after five minutes the breathing was normal.

At last we reached near to the Turkish border and the container stopped at the side of the road. After 20 minutes, the driver opened the door, and he said, 'Come down, hurry up, hurry up!' That was 10 o'clock at night. He said, 'Stay together at the side of the road'. So when we had sat there for a while, I saw four men are coming toward us. When they came near to us, one of them just started counting, and he said, 'How many are you?' We said, '85 persons', so he started abusing us in Iranian Persian, for no good reason - because he wanted to put pressure on us. .

We started walking. After four hours, we reached near to a mountain top. The agent said, 'We have 15 minutes' break -after that, we have to climb up the mountain'. That was a very high mountain. We started climbing. I saw the women and children and that the agent was shouting at them. But they couldn't climb like us. Suddenly the agent pointed a gun and he said, 'Because of you people I can't stay'. So we, some boys, decided to help these women and children. I had one baby with a small bag; so we divided them.

With difficulty, we reached the top of the mountain. We took a short break there. After that, we started going down; that was very hard. Suddenly, some people started shouting. I said, 'What's wrong!' Someone said, 'A guy's fallen off the mountain'. I told the agent in Persian, 'The man has fallen down'. He said, 'Forget about him'. I said, 'Why? He was our friend'. Suddenly he pointed the gun towards me, and he said (with an angry sound), 'You want me to throw you down like him? JUST walk!' I was scared, and I stayed back.

At last we came down to the houses. They put us in a place where people put sheep, goats and other animals. We stayed there for three days. They were giving us a few pieces of bread, and very little water. After three days, they brought four cars and they put in each 21 persons, except in one, they put 22 persons. We moved towards the last part of the Turkish border. They had put 21 persons in a small car so that time was very hard for us. They drove us for two hours. They were driving too fast; I hadn't seen fast driving like this on a rough road.

After two hours, they dropped us in a place like a desert. We stayed there for some hours. When it was dark, they said, 'Now move on'. The night was very dark; I couldn't even see a man walking in front of me, we just held onto each other's bags. So then the agent said, 'Are you ready?' We said, 'Yes'. And he said, 'If anyone is left on the way, I can't stop for him. If anyone gets tired, we can't wait for him; I will leave him for animals. We should walk fast before it is sunrise, so be quick'. I said in my heart, 'O my God help me because of my small daughter, and because of my old parents'. I was recalling the names of my family members, one by one. I started crying to myself. 'In what a situation I am; if you can't walk they will leave you here'. At last, I gave myself a strong morale. And I started walking...

Eventually we reached Turkey, coming to the first city. They put us in a small and very dirty room. We all were very hungry, so they gave a small piece of bread to everyone, and some water. They kept us for one week there. Then the agent divided us into four groups, and bought bus tickets for us to Istanbul.

After 24 hours, we reached Istanbul. Then again they put us in a room, but that now we were 22 persons. After two-three hours, a man came with two bodyguards. He told us, 'In a week, I will take you from here'. Also, he said that 'I will send you by air-boat (blow-up dinghy) to Greece; after five hours you will have reached Greece'.

So the day came. They took us to the beach - that was 12 o'clock of the night. Then they pumped the boat. The boat was just for five persons and they put 22 persons in it. There was a small engine in that boat. They started the engine, and we sat in the boat. Then they showed us a small light that was very far away. They said, 'That is Greece, and you have to go towards that light'; and we started our journey.

After two hours, we reached the middle of sea. We had finished the fuel, even with the best of luck. There was 20 litres of petrol with us at the start that the agents had given us, and we put in the petrol; that was 3 o'clock in the night. The sea waves were very powerful and scary. There were two women and three children with us; they were crying. So we started the boat engine again. We moved towards that small light.

When we had travelled for an hour, we lost the way. Someone was saying we should go to the right side, and someone was saying we should go to the left side. Then, unfortunately, the air from the boat went out suddenly. Someone shouted, 'Hey, the boat is going soft!' At that

time, I knew that there was a hole in the boat. So everybody was checking their safeguard jackets.

At last, with a powerful wave of water, we drowned in the water. In a minute, we lost each other. The water was cold and my jaws started shaking; I couldn't even shout and water had gone in my mouth; I was choking. The water was very very salty. After about 20 minutes, I saw some safeguard jackets, so I shouted at them. That was a very hard time for me. There are no words with me to explain that situation. May Allah save everyone from that situation. Finally, I was thinking that these were the last moments of my life. I said, crying, 'I can't save my life; now I am dying, O GOD help me for my children, help for my good deeds and good dealings with people'. I even lost my voice.

After an hour, I saw a light from very far. I was thinking that my head was spinning, but really the light was coming toward me, and thanks to God, that was a Turkish police boat. I just raised my hands and they shouted in a loudspeaker. Again, I raised my hands and they saw me, and they took me. When they put me in the boat with them, then I closed my eyes. I saw when I opened my eyes after two-three hours that we were only five persons. I was surprised that we were 22 persons but now five. I asked the policeman, 'Where are the others?' He said, 'We just found you five boys'. I shouted, 'We were 22 persons!' Then they started searching again, but unfortunately they didn't find anyone else. I cried too much, and then I asked them about one of my friends by the name of Faysal. The officer asked the boys on the other side, 'Anyone by the name of Faysal here?' Faysal shouted, 'I am Faysal!'. I heard the voice, and then I became happy, a little bit. 'Thanks to Allah, one of my friends is saved'. Then the police took us to the hospital, because some of us were a little bit sick. They treated us well, and two days later, they left us in Istanbul.

We called our agent and explained the whole story to him. He sent a driver and he picked us up to take us to the house. We rested for a week. After that, we told the agent, 'We are not going again by sea; we want to go by foot'. The agent told us, 'It's a very dangerous way; the Bulgarian police will shoot you'. He said, 'Bla bla', but we didn't accept it, and we just said, 'We will go by foot, this is our final decision'. At that time, we were five persons, so then they joined us with a group, we became 18 persons. After three days, they told us, 'Be prepared for tonight, we have to leave for the Bulgarian border'. The agent also said, 'Buy some food and water and put it in your bags', so everyone bought things. We made our bags very heavy, because the agent told us the way was about one week at least. As night came, we started our journey again.

So 2 o'clock of night, they dropped us in a wood. We started walking towards Bulgaria. The wood was very dark and we were 22 persons. Four were agents walking with us; they had expert knowledge of the wood. We walked all night. When it was sunrise, the agents said, 'Now we will rest a little here'. We rested, ate our food and drank some water. We were there up to 3 o'clock of the afternoon. Then we started walking again.

That was a very hard way, all mountains and forest. There were two boys who were a little fat with us. They couldn't walk well, so one of the agents beat them too much. One person was sick; he was shouting, 'I can't walk any more'. At last, me and my friend Faysal helped that patient, but nobody was helping these two fat boys because they were very heavy. Some boys took their bags but it didn't work for them.

At last, we reached a deep dark jungle; that was 9 o'clock of the night. The agents told us, 'We have to sleep here for some hours and also take some food'. We were very tired, so all the boys slept. Suddenly, at 11 o'clock in the night, a boy shouted, and all the people woke up. It was very very dark; I can't explain how that happened. We all started shouting. The agent said, 'Stay together, don't move!'. Suddenly, we saw red eyes like lights just surrounding us. The agent shouted, 'They are ghosts, they want to harm us - just recite some verses of the Quran!' When we all started reciting the Quran, with some us crying, 'O, Allah save us from these things!', they stopped coming towards us. So after some minutes these things left us, they disappeared, but from far away the ghosts were still crying out and making some horrible sounds. I can't explain that; it was very, very horrible. All the night we spent awake; we were just trembling – our whole bodies were shaking.

When it was a little light, then the agents said we should leave this place. We walked for an hour. Suddenly, someone fired on us. When we ran, they shouted at us, 'Don't run, we will shoot you; just stay in your own places'. But the agents said, 'Run!', so we ran. The Bulgarian police started firing. When they started, we ran faster; then we lost each other, but me and my friend were together. We ran for 30 minutes. After that, we got tired, and we stopped running.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of dogs. I told my friend, 'They have released dogs behind us; now they will catch us – no need of running'. We decided to climb trees, so we climbed up. After some minutes, I saw the dogs were down at the bottom of the tree and they were barking in our direction. That was a very hard time for us. The dogs were dangerous and big. I shouted to my friend, 'Don't be afraid, they can't climb up the tree, stay there!' At last, the police reached us. They pointed guns towards us and said, 'Come down', in English. I said in my heart, 'Oh good, they know English'. Again he said, 'Come down'. I replied, 'The dogs will bite us'. Again he said, 'Come down, or I will shoot you'. I had heard about these Bulgarian police; they are very cruel. Maybe they would shoot me. So we decided to come down. When I was a step away from the ground, then they let the dogs free, and the dogs started attacking us, biting us. I blocked my face, and shouted, too, 'Please stop the dogs, I will never come this way again'. And I never did come again, the dogs bit me too much.

At last, one of their commanders came, and said, 'Stop the dogs'. He started asking me questions; he was speaking good English. 'Why are you coming to Europe? We don't want you; we hate you people; don't come here'. I said, crying, 'I want to save my life; my life was in great danger'. For a while, he was just looking at my face. I thought, 'Maybe he has a soft heart and he will leave us'. Then he said, in a cruel voice, 'Now I will show you how to save your life', Oh my God. He started kicking me with his big, hard Army shoes; he wanted to break my bones. Eventually he beat me so much, he broke two of my fingers on the spot. I saw some other boys; they were also bleeding.

Then they took us and put us in a police van. They took us to the army base and put us in a very dirty room. The temperature was cold there, and there was nothing to wear or sleep on; it was an empty room. One of the army officers came and said, 'You are Muslims'. We said, 'Yes'. He said, 'We are keeping you here in this room, pigs'. That was a very hard time for us. They kept us for two days, asking us, 'Where are the other boys?' At that time, we were just eight boys, and we didn't know about the others, where they were, because we had lost each other.

After two days, they left us in a wood. They said, 'This is a Turkish wood – go back to Turkey, never come back or we will shoot you'. So together, we ran. After an hour, we got tired and we just walked. We walked for the whole day. At last, we reached the Turkish border. We crossed the border and reached a village. Some people there saw that we were in a very bad condition. Then suddenly, we saw some Turkish police vans coming towards us. They arrested us and started searching us. They said, 'Why are you hurt so much?' We told them that the Bulgarian police had freed dogs on us. The Turkish police officer talked with his superior, and told him that 'We arrested some boys; they are very seriously injured'. He told the hospital, 'Look, I am coming', so when we reached the hospital, there were lots of people there and some doctors were waiting for us. They started treated us, and the police questioned us. I told them the whole story. They treated us well. After some days, they gave us a paper, like a visa, for three months, then left us in Istanbul.

Again, we called our agent, so he sent a man to pick us up. After a few days, when we got a little bit more well, the agent asked us, 'Which way do you want to select again, by foot or by sea?' We said, 'By sea, but we have one request'. He asked, 'What is your request?' 'We will pay you more money for just one boat for us five boys'. He said, 'You have to pay me E500 each', so we accepted. Then he said, 'You have to buy life jackets for yourselves'. We bought the lifejackets.

At 10 o'clock they took us to a city by the name of Izmir. At last, they brought the air boat for us. The agent told us, 'I have checked the Internet tonight and the sea is very quiet, so you can go more easily', and he showed us again a light, very far off. Then we started the journey...

So after four hours we reached near to the light. Then we switched off the motor of the boat and we started pushing the boat with our hands. Thanks to Allah, at last we reached the coast and we got out of the boat. As the agent had us to tear the boat so we tore the boat. Then we towards a village; we were walking very quietly.

Suddenly I saw a shepherd with sheep. I told the other four boys. 'Let two of us go and talk with that man because this is a chance for us; maybe he has a mobile phone so we can contact our agent'. Two boys decided to talk with the man, so we went towards him. When we were near him, he saw us. He shook, said something in the Greek language, and he backed up several steps.

I said in English. 'Please please help us; we will give you money', and I showed him some euros. So he stopped for a while and replied in English, 'What?' I pointed toward his hand, 'Give me your mobile phone, I want to make a call'. He said, 'Money money,' and 'Only missed call'. 'Ok,' I said, 'OK. Then I gave him 20 euros and he gave me the mobile phone. I made a missed call to my agent in Turkey. Within a minute, he called us. I explained things to him, and he said, 'Give the phone to that man'. He started talking in the Greek language with him. At last, the shepherd said, 'Where are the other boys?' I said, 'They are there, waiting for us'. Then he took us all to his home.

After two days, a Greek agent arrived and he gave some money to the shepherd, he brought some clothes for us. ..Then he said, 'Be ready for the night, I am going to bring ship tickets to Athens'. So at last he made some documents for us, we bought the tickets, and we continued journey towards Athens, the capital of Greece in a big ship, such as I had never seen in my whole life.

After some hours we reached Athens. There was a man waiting for us at the harbour. We found the man, and he took us to his home. It was a very beautiful house. He kept us there for some days. After that, he said, 'Tomorrow we will go towards the Macedonian border'. He took us towards the border, and after four or five hours, we reached it. When we got to the border, there were lots of people who had been staying there for days. Crossing the border was very hard because many police were there with guns and tear gas guns. We stayed there; some volunteers gave us a tent so we pitched the tent there at the side, because we were very tired, and we rested for some hours. After that time, some people started shouting, 'Open the border, open the border!' So we woke up. We saw that people were rushing at the police, trying to cross the border. At last, clashes started between refugees and police. The police used tear gas, and there were children and women there also. Everyone started running a little further away from the border.

These things continued happening for some days. We called the agent, 'It is not possible to cross the border'. He told us, 'I am sending a man' he had taken from another route. After some hours, a man came, and said, 'We will go by the jungle; it is about ten hours away by foot'. So we accepted. Then we started walking. We walked for the whole night. Near sunrise, we reached Macedonia. Then we stopped in a wood near the road, and the agent called his friend to come with a car. He took us to a big frame house; we stayed there for some days.

Then we moved towards the Serbian border. The weather was very cold and raining. We started walking; all of our clothes were wet, full of water. We walked like this for two nights and three days, in very bad conditions. This means we were tired, and some boys were sick. At last, we reached the Serbian border city. We went to a bus stop and we were waiting for the bus. Suddenly, two-three police vans came and arrested us all. They took us to the police station and took our fingerprints, and then took us again to the bus stop and brought a big bus. That time, we were about 40 persons. Then the driver took us to Belgrade, the capital of Serbia.

Six hours afterwards, we reached Belgrade. There was a park there, by the name of 'Afghan Park'. At last, we found that. When we reached the park, there were lots of people there, and we were very hungry. Some people brought food and some water for us. Then I asked someone to lend me a mobile, and I called my agent. I said to him that I am in Serbia. He said, 'Stay with that person with the phone, I am sending a person to fetch you'. After 20 minutes, someone called and asked my name. I talked with him, and gave him the address. After some hours, he came and took me to his home. I stayed there for some days.

Then again, they made a group of 15 persons and they bought the tickets for the border city near to Hungary. They dropped us in a wood at 10 o'clock of the night with two agents, and we started walking. That was a very dark wood. We walked the whole night. Near to sunrise, they told us, 'We have to rest here for the whole day', so we stayed there. We did not have enough water and food with us because they had told us, 'It is just 10 hours away'; therefore we took only a little food and water with us. So again, at 10 o'clock of the night, we moved towards the Hungarian border. We walked the whole night and the weather was very cold and raining. There were not enough clothes with us for us to change our sodden clothes.

At last, close to sunrise, we reached the Hungarian border. All the border was iron-fenced. The agents said, 'We have to spend the whole day here; at night, we will cut the fence and we

will cross the border. Be quiet, and just sleep'. It was not possible to sleep, because all our clothes were soaked, and the earth beneath us was mud. We spent all the day standing, with no food, no water, just waiting. At last it was night. The agent said, 'Be prepared, we are going to cut the fence, and be fast, we have to run, because if they arrest us they will send us back to Serbia, so we will have to run for an hour; then we will walk again'. We approached the iron fence and started cutting it with big wirecutters. When the agents had cut through it, we one by one went inside and hid in bushes waiting for the others. At last, all crossed the border and we started running. That was a very hard time for me, because I had no energy to run and all my clothes were wet. Except that I was so scared of the police, this would have made it hard to run. I can't explain that situation; it was very hard, there are no words to explain it, but despite all these things I had to run – so I ran....

At last, after an hour running. we got tired and some boys stopped. Then we walked for the whole day, until we reached a village . Near the village, in a wood, the agent divided us into groups, each group containing three persons. He said, 'There is a train station, you have to find it and then take the train to Budapest'. He gave us some money for the train tickets, and he let us go, group by group.

When he let us go, we three walked for an hour, until we saw there were a petrol station and a shop. We were very hungry and thirsty, so we thought, 'We will buy some food and water'. I said to these other two boys, 'I will go to the shop because I know English, so I will buy these things. When I entered the shop, the shopkeeper looked at me . He was surprised and he knew that, 'This guy is not from this village'. I was in very bad condition, my clothes were sodden and very dirty, full of mud. I said to the shopkeeper, very formally, 'Hello ', but he didn't answer me. Then I pointed out to him with my hand, 'Please give me some chips and water'. He told me something in the Hungarian language. I didn't know what he said but during our talking he picked up the phone and called the police. I heard the word 'police', so in a very great hurry, I gave him the money and ran out from his shop and told my friends, 'We have to leave this place as soon as possible'.

So we ran in the street for just some minutes. After five minutes, we were surrounded by police .They shouted at us and said, 'Stop! Don't move and hands up!' We froze, and they started searching us. There was nothing with us except chips and some water. Then they took us to the police station and started investigations.

At last, they took us to a refugee camp. There was a big hall and they put us in that hall. There were some other guys there, and they told us, 'Since three weeks, we have been here. They are going to take our fingerprints'. I was very shaken up. 'Oh my God, this is very bad, because if we go anywhere else, this means that any other country will send me back to Hungary. Then I told my friends, 'We have to make a plan to escape from here...' I told so many guys, 'Let's escape from here'. but no one agreed with me; I left alone.

There was a guy who had a mobile phone , so I made a call to my agent. He said, 'Do something, just get out of the camp and come to the train station'. So I found a way for myself, and made a plan about how to escape from there. There was a big hall, like a prison, surrounded by police; it was very hard to escape from. But there was a weak point. I noted that, when they were supplying food to us, they were letting us come out from that hall, and outside was a very thin iron net fence surrounding us. I made a plan to escape during that time. When they were supplying food, the police came also, and supplied the food. I said to

myself that the chance to escape was then .I made a hole with my hands in the iron mesh; then I jumped down into the woods and ran. Believe me, I ran for two hours!

At last, I reached a road, and waited for some minutes. There were other clothes with me in my bag. I changed my clothes because they were dirty, and I started walking along the road. I thought, 'There is maybe a bus stop, and I will find it'. After some hours, I reached a village, and very far off, I saw a bus stop. I went there and checked the time schedule for the bus but unfortunately, it was in the Hungarian language; I could just get the times. After 40 minutes, the bus was going to come there.

After some minutes, people came to the stop and all of them were looking at me, but I just made myself busy with the bus timetable. At last, the bus came and I got on the bus and sat in the back part, so that I could find out how much the tickets were and what was going on in the bus. When some people paid money, I got it; I saw what to do. When the conductor came to near to me, to the person in front of me, the person said the name of a place in Hungarian language. I just memorised that name, I said the same to the conductor and gave him ten euros.

After one hour and some minutes, we reached a city. Then I got happy; I thought in my heart, 'There may be a train station'. So I got down from the bus in the city. I walked for some minutes and at last I decided with myself that, 'If I want to ask someone, I will ask a woman, because some women are sympathetic'. There was a woman sitting on a bench; I said to her, 'Hello , can you speak English?' She laughed and said to me 'A little bit'. I sat with her and asked her, 'Could you tell me please where is the train station?' She said 'Yes, it's nearby', and then she gave me directions. Then I asked her, 'Can you help me please?' She said, 'Yes'. I asked, 'Do you have a mobile phone? I need to make a missed call to someone'. She said, 'Of course you can'. So I called my agent and explained to him, and he guided me about where I should go from the train station and which train I should take to Budapest. So at last I made it, and I got the train to Budapest.

After some hours, I reached Budapest. Then I called the agent, and a man came to the train station to take me. I told him, 'Please, first of all, take me to a restaurant. I am very hungry; I have to eat something'. So we went to a restaurant. After food, he told me, 'I have already bought tickets for you to Austria, so no need to stay here, you have to go'. Then he bought jeans trousers and a shirt for me. I changed my clothes and went again to the train station. We waited for the train some minutes, the train came, and I got up into the train

When I entered, I saw that there were lots of Asian people sitting in the train, the same as me. I decided one thing : 'I have to sit with the European people'. There was a seat number on my ticket but that was near to the same refugees who were like me. At that time, there was very strict checking in the train on the way and near to Austria's border. So at last, I found a place near to a German woman. When I saw she was reading a book, I thought. 'That's the woman to sit near to'. I said hello to her , and said, in very formal English, 'Excuse me, Madam. could I sit here?' She looked at me and said, 'Yes'. I became happy: 'Thanks to God, she knows English'.

At last, the train moved towards Austria. .. I was trying to work out how to get to talk to that woman. After some minutes, she closed the book, she was trying to drink some water. She was looking in her bag; then she found it and drank the water. I thought, 'That's the time to talk with her', so with very big courage I started talking with her. I said, 'I think you're going

to Austria?’ She said, ‘Yes, I am going to Austria to visit some of my friends there’. I said, ‘OK!’. Then she said, ‘You are also going to Austria?’ I said, ‘Yes’. Again she said, ‘You’re living in Austria?’ Automatically I thought, ‘If I say yes, she will start talking the German language with me’, because I knew that Germans and Austrians talk the same language. So I said, ‘No, I am living in Hungary. I am going to Austria to visit my friends’. Then she said, ‘OK!’.

In talking, talking, we reached the border. Suddenly, I saw the police; they were getting into the train. When the police came near to us, I started talking with the woman again. They just looked once at us, they didn’t ask anything about any documents, and just passed by us. And they arrested all those other refugees who were sitting together, and they took them down from the train. Then the train moved again. I said in my heart, ‘Thank God, they didn’t know me’. Then I asked the woman after how long we would reach Austria. She said, ‘In just an hour, we will be in Vienna, the capital of Austria’.

So I reached Austria's capital, Vienna. When I got down in the train station, a lot of people were there - I mean, a lot of refugees were there. Everyone was trying to go to Germany and there was a big rush on the ticketing counter. Then I found an Afghan guy. I asked him, ‘You also want to go to Germany?’ He said, with a hopeless voice, ‘Yes, this is the third time I am trying to pass. The German border police arrest me, and send me back to Austria’. He said, ‘I don't know what to do’.

So I got an idea from him. He and the others were using cheaper train tickets, I think that was just for something like a local train. So I decided that I had to buy a ticket for a VIP train which was a little expensive. So I went to the counter; I saw that there were only some European people there. I said to myself, ‘That's the place to buy the ticket’. I asked the man for the train schedule, to know what train went to which part of Germany. When I saw the schedule, the tickets were very expensive for all the different parts of Germany, and there was not enough money with me to buy a ticket. At last, I found that there was a border city by the name of Passau. It was a little cheaper, so I decided to buy the ticket. Then I called my agent to explain the situation to him. He said, ‘That's a good idea, go and buy the ticket’. So I bought the ticket and some hours later, we moved towards Germany,

At last, I reached the German city by the name of Passau. I then got down from the train. I was trying to get out of the train station; there were a lot of German police. I found the exit, and came out of the station. I was trying to find a telephone box to call the agent. Suddenly, a police van came in front of me and the just stopped. Then they called, ‘Hi you!’ First I decided to run from them. Then I said to myself, ‘They will catch you’. Then I said, ‘No need of running; they can't send me back because now I am on German soil’. I let him come and he asked me something in the German language . I was just quiet. Then he said, ‘You speak English?’ I said, ‘Yes, I do’. He then asked about documents, ‘Do you have a passport?’ I said, ‘No’. Then they said ‘Hands up!’ They arrested me and started searching me; then they took me to the police station.

After some hours, they took me to a refugee camp that was very far away. They drove for about five hours; then they registered me in the camp. I told them several times, ‘I don't want to stay in Germany, I want go to the UK’, but they didn't listen to me, they just put me in the camp. There were people from different countries there. At last, I found an Afghani guy and I talked with him. He said, ‘I have been here for some days’. I asked him, ‘Do you want to stay

here?’ He said, ‘Yes’. Then I thought, ‘I have to make a plan, alone, to run away from here’. I decided to stay for some days in order to learn how to escape from there.

After those days, I said to the Afghani guy, ‘Let’s walk outside the camp’. When we went outside, there was a village near to the camp, and some supermarkets. The people were looking at us very strangely. We walked all over the supermarkets. The time came when, outside the markets, it was late evening. I said to the guy, ‘We have to leave now, it’s very late’. So we started walking towards the camp. When we had walked for some minutes, suddenly, in the middle of the street, some guys stopped us. They were saying something in the German language. Then they came near to us. I thought, ‘Maybe they are going to ask us something’. They said a lot of things to us in their language. I said, ‘Can you speak English?’ Then they started in English; they started shouting at me, ‘Why are you coming to our country? Why?’ I said, ‘Please cool down, we are refugees. We have problems in our country, we have war in our country’. They said, ‘We don’t want you, go back to your country’. I said, ‘I can’t go back, my life is in danger’. Suddenly, one of them took out a spray from his bag. Within a minute, he sprayed our eyes and they ran away. I shouted to my friend, ‘Don’t move from where you are, because we are not able to see anything!’ That time was very hard for us; our eyes were burning so much.. I cried so much, and nobody helped us. I said, ‘Oh my God, what is happening with me?’

So after about 30 or 40 minutes, we were just about able to see something. We moved towards the refugee camp. When we reached there, there were some German security guards. I talked to them, and explained the whole story. They said, ‘It’s very simple: Don’t go outside’. I said to them, ‘We are not prisoners, we have to go outside’. After that, he said, ‘I can’t do anything’. Then we went inside, and we washed our faces. So I decided, ‘Now I have to leave the Germany very soon’. I said again to that Afghan guy, ‘Do you still want to stay here?’ He said. ‘No. I want to go with you’. Then we together made a plan of escape from the camp. So we made a plan by ourselves. There was no agent any more, because I had finished with the agent. We found the train station and bought tickets for Frankfurt. We used that route because that one was safer than the others; I mean, that there were no police checking on the way.

At last we reached Frankfurt and we got down from the train. It was very strange to us: there was no one to guide us. We came out of the train station, and we started searching for tickets to Paris. We didn’t buy train tickets because that time was a lot of checking in the train at the French border; we were trying to buy bus tickets. I found an internet cafe to buy online tickets. I went to the counter. Thank God there was a Chinese guy at the counter; I knew that he would know English. I said hello to him in a very proper way and then said to him, ‘I need two tickets to Paris’. He said, ‘Yes, sure’. Then he started searching on the Internet. After a minute he said, ‘We have tickets for two times. One is for tomorrow morning and one for this evening; which time do you need?’ I thought to myself that, ‘If we buy for tomorrow, we will have to spend the night on the road because we don’t know anyone here and we don’t have sufficient money to rent a room in a hotel’. So I decided to buy for the evening. After a short pause, I told him, ‘For evening’. Then he said, ‘Please give me your I.D’. I was shaken up by this. I said to myself, ‘Which I.D? I don’t have any I.D or passport’. Quickly I started checking my bag. At last I found my Afghani driving licence, so I gave it to him. He looked at me and at the driving licence. He couldn’t even read my name because it was written in Pushto and Dari, our own languages. So eventually he said, ‘What is your name please? I can’t read it’. I said my name, and he gave me two tickets to Paris; it was about 60 euros. I

gave him the money and received the tickets. An hour later, the bus came. We got up into the bus, and started our journey to Paris...

After eight hours, we reached Paris .we got down from the bus and looked for someone to guide us on how we could go to the Calais 'Jungle' We found a man who knew English and he helped us. At last we reached the Calais 'Jungle'. That time was very strange for us and the weather was very cold. I found a volunteer worker and asked for a tent and thanks to him, he gave us a blanket and a tent. I was very tired and I slept. When in the morning I woke up, I saw a new world: a lot of people from different countries, a lot of volunteer workers; they were helping people. To be honest, I liked it, so I spent all the day in walking about.

At last I found a guy and asked him, 'How can I go to the UK?' He said, 'It's very hard to do'. Then he explained everything to me and he said, 'There is an agent, you have to talk with him'. So I talked with the agent. He said, 'You have to pay 500 euros, then I will make a game for you' I told him that 'I don't have that much money'. So he said, 'How much can you pay?' I said, 'Only two hundred'. Then he said, 'Ok'. He said, 'Be ready for the night, we are going to close the autobahn, and then my man will break the locks of the container and will get you onto the container so you can hide there. There are two police check posts: one is the French police and other one is Britain's police check post. When you have crossed these two check posts then the container will go into the ship. After some hours, you will be in England'. So I got happy: 'That's very easy'.

At night, the agents closed the road and made some fires on the road. They stopped the containers. We were among some guys waiting for them, for when they will open the doors of the containers and we will climb up into the containers. So at last they broke down the locks of some containers and they shouted to us, 'Get in the containers!' We got in and hid under the cartons, and they locked the door from outside. Then the container moved towards the UK. At the first check post of the French police, there were dogs with the police. They found us and arrested us and kept for the whole night. Then they took us to the police station. They wrote our names and released us, and we came back to the 'Jungle'.

We slept all the day and in the evening they made a group, and again they were trying to put us in a moving container. So they broke down the locks of the container and some guys climbed onto them. Suddenly, when I was climbing, I fell down from the container and I broke the last part of my backbone (the coccyx). That was very painful for me. I couldn't even walk because of the pain. Then some guys took me back to the 'Jungle'. I didn't sleep all night because of the pain. At last, in the morning, I went to the doctors and explained to them. They gave me some painkiller tablets, took me to the hospital, and took some X rays. Then they told me, 'You have broken your coccyx and we have to do an operation'. I was shaken up: 'What, an operation? Is it something serious?' They said, 'Yes, we have to do the operation'. I said, 'No, I don't want to have an operation!' I insisted so much, 'I don't want to do it'. I told the doctors, 'Give me some medicines'. They told me, 'Don't waste your time; after some weeks you won't be able to do the operation, and then it will be too late for you'. I told them, 'Give me the medicines, and after some time I will decide'.

So they gave me some medicines and I started taking them. I felt well for some time. But after some months, the weather became cloudy and it started raining, and we had no beds with us at that time- we were sleeping on the ground – and that was not good for me because of my injury. Then I went again to the doctor and I took my X-rays. When the doctor checked every thing, he said, 'Now it's very late for an operation'. ...I said, 'Why? I want to do it now'.

He said, 'You can't do it now, it's too late. Then I said, 'What should I do now?' He said, 'You have to take care of yourself. You will suffer this pain for a long time, even for your whole life'. He was right. Still now, I have pain and I can't even sit on a hard chair, the ground, or something else very hard.

Then with a very broken heart, I came back to my tent and I cried too much. I said to myself, 'I will never retreat, I will go to UK and that's my dream'. Then I rested for some time and again I started trying to cross the border, but I couldn't succeed. So at last I decided, 'I am going to save my life. Whether it is the UK or France, they are the same for me'. Then I went to the people of ORPRA in the 'Jungle' and told them, 'I want to claim asylum in France'. They got very happy and wrote my name down and told me, 'Tomorrow we will take you to the asylum centre'. So then they took me to the asylum seekers centre, and they explained everything to me.

So at last, I decided to stay in France. I wrote my name down for a city in France for asylum. After some days they took to a city by the name of La-Seyen-Sur-Mer, and that was a very good city, I liked it. After several days, they took me to the ORPRA centre for fingerprints and they took my prints. Thanks to God, there are none of my fingerprints in any other European countries. So they gave me the right for asylum in France. Our social worker, a woman, wrote all of my story, with all the evidence of it which I have, and I sent it to ORPRA in Paris. Then I asked my social worker for a French course. She promised me the class, but it took two months. I was telling her every day in order to make her find a French class for me. I was very happy that day, because I have a strong interest in learning the French language. So I started the French class and attended it for two months.

After those two months, they shifted me from that city to another city, by the name of Verpilliere. Now I am living in Verpilliere; there are no courses, no activities to do, and still I am waiting for my interview. In Calais, when ORPRA was first talking to me, they told me, 'Your whole process will be finished in maximum, three months', but it's seven months, and I am still waiting just for my interview. You know, every day, I am making a new promise to my little daughter, 'I will take you to France, I will take you to France', and now she is not talking with me. I asked my wife, 'Why is she is not talking with me?' Her mother said, 'She is saying, "Dad is lying to me, I don't want to talk with him"', and that's very panicking for me. But this pain, anyone who has a daughter, knows. So let's hope for better. But a refugee's life is like that; you have to spend a lot of life in waiting.