

ARMANI, AFGANISTAN



Armani is seventeen years old and says that he doesn't have any dreams. He left his family in Afghanistan. His father worked for an American civilian. He refused the Taliban when they demanded him to lead them to his workplace so that they could kill his employer. He died blown up by an explosive that someone had thrown into his car. According to the Taliban, the burden of betrayal was taken over by his oldest son, Armani. The teenager tells us that he had to leave the country, even though he did not want to. The most important thing for him is to see his mother, though it is impossible. *"She tells me: don't think about Afghanistan, think about the future. But what future do I have? What's most important is the future of my country. Without bombs being dropped by the Americans"*.

At the beginning of 2011, three ISAF soldiers died in Afghanistan and a terrorist detonated an explosive in a bath house in Spin-Boldak, a town at the Afghan-Pakistan border. Although the aim was a border patrol official, 20 civilians also died. Over the last few years, the citizens of Afghanistan have not stopped abandoning their home country. At the beginning, they tried to start a new life in the neighbouring countries. However now, Iran and Turkey especially, don't want any more Afghan refugees. The Afghans stopped at the border are deported.

At the beginning of the 21st century, over three and a half million Afghani refugees resided in Pakistan and Iran. Now the only option for the majority of refugees is Europe, where the potential new citizens are not really welcome.

Source: <http://www.politykaglobalna.pl/2011/01/historie-uchodzcow-z-afganistanu/>

César Millán, Mexico



Cesar grew up on a farm in a cramped, four-room clay house that had no running water. He used to help his grandfather graze a dozen cows, but had always dreamed of becoming a star. On the eve of Christmas, he left with all his father's savings (\$ 100). He neither had a passport nor did he realize how difficult it would be to cross the border. Finally, after several failed attempts to force the fence, when he was repeatedly caught by the border patrol, the young Mexican, born in Culiacán, Sinaloa, illegally crossed the US border following the Tijuana trail. But before that happened, the police stopped him many times and threatened to deport him to Guatemala.

At that time of year, it often rained heavily, with the water flooding large areas and destroying many homes. One day, in the days before his successful crossing, as part of a larger group, he was following a smuggler who led them along something akin to a canal as the rain grew heavier and heavier. Suddenly the water current hit them with such a force that it took some of them away. "I saw it take pregnant women and old men, but the smuggler responded to it by merely saying, 'Keep following me'. He did not care a bit about the death of those people and the crying of their families," he recalls.

After two weeks, César spotted his chance: a freshly made hole in the fence. Out of the blue, a man appeared. "He came up to me and asked: 'What? You wanna go through?' I replied I did and so he charged me 100 dollars for it – the exact money I had in my pocket ", Cesar recounts the story. He recalls the border of the state: the two men crossed the highway, and then they kept running against the traffic down the side of the wall. At last, he followed the guide into a tunnel. His mind was coursing with the fear that the smuggler would kill him now, but at the end of the tunnel the man told Cesar to wait, then he whistled, and, after a while, signalled towards an approaching taxi. When the cab came up to them, he just shoved Cesar into it.

When Cesar arrived in San Diego, he was relieved not to have to run any more; now all he had to do was hide. It was existentially important to find out where people like him found shelter. He discovered that many are hidden under motorways and decided that was where he would hide too. He found a cardboard box and set out on a search for a home. César spent two months under a San Diego motorway. During that time, he worked on a dishwasher and took on any work that allowed him to survive.

After two months, he saved enough money to reach the place that was his true goal: Los Angeles. He found a job at a kennel and later began walking dogs – even for free. "I was walking 5 dogs, then 10, then 15, until I got to be known as the Mexican who can take the whole pack of dogs for a walk," he says.

After some time, the Los Angeles Daily published a photo of César walking a horde of canines. When asked by the reporter what he wished for, he replied that he would really love to have his own program on television. After the article was published, a host of TV producers were willing to offer him a contract. And that is how he came to run his own reality show called "Dog Whisperer".

Source: César Millán: La historia w <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVFODvAvfM8>

Daela, Emad, Sandra, Masa Dasuqi, Syria



Masa was still in the mother's belly, Deala, when the Dasuqi family decided to leave their home in Syria in November 2012. The bloody fighting between Syrian and the opposition troops made life in Qaboun too dangerous to carry on living there and the family set out to find a more peaceful place in Syria's capital, Damascus.

Six months after reaching the Syrian capital, when Massa was only four months old, the family boarded a plane to take them to Cairo, the capital of Egypt. Over time, they found themselves in the coastal city of Alexandria.

In September 2014, Massa and her second sister Sandra, along with their parents, Emad and Deala began a journey to Europe. Prior to it, while staying in Egypt, they tried to arrange a visit at the Embassy of Sweden in Egypt to claim a family reunion with Sidra, one of the daughters who had earlier emigrated to the Scandinavian country with her uncle. But months passed without any breakthrough and the family, who could no longer bear the hardships of life and separation from Sidra, decided to take their destiny into their own hands.

On September 6, a ship set sail for the Egyptian port city of Damietta, aiming to eventually reach Italy – the Dasuqi family were on board of the vessel. Most of the passengers were women and children from Syria and Palestine. However, the ship never reached its destination. About 5 miles from Malta they were approached by a smaller ship, whose crew attempted to forcefully take them, over 500 refugees, onboard. People were resisting and suddenly, according to the survivors, the little boat foundered and began to sink rapidly.

One of the passengers, a nineteen-year-old Doaa al-Zamel remained afloat thanks to the lifebuoy she had been given by her finace. Deala was extremely weak – she felt she had no more fight left in her. Spotting the nineteen-year-old girl, Deala swam up to her and, before she succumbed to the battle for life, she gave Doaa her baby and asked her to take care of her child. Her husband and daughter, Sandra, also failed to survive. On the fourth day of drifting on the water, Doaa and Masa were rescued by a Greek helicopter and taken to hospital. Later Masa was taken to the orphanage of the Miter Foundation, near Athens.

Masa's uncle, Mohammed Dasiqi, learned about the ship's catastrophe from Facebook and the very next day flew in to Crete to see his niece. Thus his long battle with the Greek bureaucracy, which did not want to give him the baby, began. He had to travel several times between Sweden and Greece to prove his blood relation with Masa, among other things, to perform a DNA test. Finally, on 6 April 2015, the court in Chani issued a long-awaited verdict: he entrusted Mohammed with the care of Masa. Two months later Masa received a Swedish right of residence and after nine months she was able to leave the orphanage. For now, she only speaks Greek and is forgetting Arabic. To help Masa adapt to her new life in Sweden, a Greek friend of the family, Francesca Koomen, remains with her in Göteborg. Francesca has been involved with the case since the very beginning.

Mohammad's wife is 23 years old; he is two years older. "We do everything possible to give girls (Sidra and Masa) the best possible life. Luckily, we have many relatives here who help us", says the woman. Young spouses are temporary caregivers, but the social services investigate the family's ability to provide constant childcare.

Source: Masa [w http://blogg.gp.se/reportage/2015/07/24/masa/](http://blogg.gp.se/reportage/2015/07/24/masa/)

**Màrtine Samba, Democratic Republic of
Congo**



Samba Martine was born in Democratic Republic of Congo. She left the country with 9 year old daughter, Bijoux, to go to France. After a long, exhausting journey through half of the African continent they managed to get to Melilla, Spain in August 2011. Upon the arrival Martine was locked up in CETI (Centre of Temporary Stay of Immigrants). She was also separated from her daughter who was sent to France to meet the family relatives while her mother was kept in a detention centre for three months, till November 2011. At that time, due to overcrowding in CETI she got transferred to CIE (Centre of Immigrant Detention) in Madrid to be deported. However, Samba insisted that the reason she's staying in this town is a political situation of Democratic Republic of Congo due to which she is planning to apply for asylum in Spain.

During 38 days spent in CIE Samba needed medical help at least ten times but she never got properly diagnosed. She didn't speak Spanish and it seems that no interpreter was present during the doctor's appointments. Several women who lived with her in the arrest said that her physical weakness was clear and obvious. Sometimes they had to help her get to the room because she couldn't do it on her own. On Monday 19th of December she had been sent to Doce de Octubre hospital where she died a few hours later. Her family never received a slightest explanation about the circumstances surrounding her death nor did they hear any word of sympathy from the people responsible for the arrest.

The autopsy showed that Samba had been carrying HIV. From a technical point of view, according to the forensic medicine report, she died due to cryptococcal disease – a virus that can be fought by a healthy person but can turn out lethal in someone with untreated immune deficiency, which had been Martine's case.

Source: Entrevista a Juan Diego Botto. Exilio e Inmigración (historia de Samba Martine) w
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0kL26qk_SI

Bertín Youmssi, Cameroon



Bertín left his house at night without saying goodbye to anyone. He didn't want to see his mother's tears. He couldn't bear to spend another New Year's Eve not being able to feed his sister and brother. His country, Cameroon, offered no possibility of growth.

His journey lasted two years. He travelled during the night so that the police would not catch him and force him to return. His aim: Morocco's border in the high mountains. He climbed up, marching night after night and sleeping through the days in hiding. Below, in a valley, he saw a dazzling carpet. It was Ceuta. Europe. It was paradise.

However, there was a triple electric fence that stretched out between the paradise and reality. It took Bertín one and a half years to save the 1,300 euros necessary to cross the border. He took any job. He saved every penny. Until he met people who offered to swim through the Strait with him on their back. The "carriers" put on neoprene wetsuits. An illegal immigrant holds on to their backs and they set off into the sea like a giant turtle. They were stopped by police as they were crossing the water. He spent three months in an assistance centre in Ceuta. They took him to a hearing against carriers. He had to testify. He applied for political asylum. He got rejected. He got a ticket to Navarra and a document that enabled him a stay of 6 months and then he was required to return to Cameroon.

He left Navarra to go to Madrid, where he achieved a lot over the course of two years. He found a group of friends with whom he could integrate and began studying at University. He helps illegal immigrants to legalise their stay in Spain.

He passed the university entry exams for people over 25 years of age with a distinction. He is going to start studying Law in the next academic year. He thinks of his return to Cameroon with fear:

"Those who study in Europe and return to Cameroon get good jobs in administration. The average life expectancy in Cameroon is 35 years old. I am 32. When I go back, how many of my friends will already be dead?"

Source: <http://noticias.universia.es/ciencia-nn-tt/noticia/2007/08/01/591258/inmigrante-africano-cuenta-experiencia-resultados-viaje-mundo-opulencia.html>

Omar Alshafai, Syria



His family is large, living all over Syria, with some members also having emigrated abroad. Prior to the Arab Spring, he worked for eight years in Saudi Arabia, as a company manager. Before that stint, he served two years in the Syrian army. In 2011, when the revolution broke out, the situation in Syria was not very dangerous yet, but Omar decided to return to Damascus to look after his family. He opened a computer shop there, had a fiancé and planned to get married.

Initially peaceful demonstrations soon descended into war. The situation became increasingly dangerous. One day, just like all young men, he got a military draft notice letter to join the government army. That meant shooting and killing other Syrians - neighbors, friends, friends. It also meant, as far as he was concerned, a certain death. The family wanted to protect him and so they decided to send him to Lebanon. After five days there, he realized there was no chance of finding a job and a normal life in Lebanon. He took a decision to sell his home and computer shop, for which he got some 5,000 dollars, and set off for Europe. He bought a plane ticket to Algeria and soon landed in the capital of the country. He spent there a week, during which time he contacted smugglers who organized refugees' journey to Europe. Thus another plane took Omar to a town near the border with Tunisia. "We were transported in a pickup truck to the border and then crossed it on foot. The Tunisian police stopped us several times, but allowed us to carry on even though we had no travel documents. On the Libyan side of the border, another smuggler's car took us to the seaside city of Zuwara. We came under fire several times – the country isn't safe either. But it's only owing to the war that refugees can find a boat to Europe in Libya".

After several days of waiting, he was taken to the beach where a boat was waiting. As many as 450 people, including women with children and elderly people boarded the boat. Water and food supplies aboard were insufficient. They did not have a captain and no one who knew the route. Still, after two days, they managed to reach Sicily in Italy. They were immediately approached by the police – Omar was forcefully taken to a place where he had his fingerprints taken. He planned now to get to Denmark, where his brother lived. He managed to reach his destination via Germany, where he was fingerprinted for the second time. After eight months in Denmark, he was informed that he would be sent back to Italy under the so called Dublin II regulations. "I did not want to go back there because Italy cannot handle the number of refugees it receives and it is nearly impossible to find a job or start a new life there." The Danes had already bought him an air ticket to Italy but he informed the authorities that he wanted to say goodbye to his family in Germany and went to Berlin again. Germany issued him a residence permit for three years. He began to learn German, attended two additional programming courses and completed an internship programme. During that time, he created the **Bureaucrazy** application, which helps refugees to navigate asylum procedures in Germany. Omar has been interviewed by Siemens and hopes to start working there next year.

"If I were in Syria now and had to decide again, I think I would prefer to stay and die rather than go through all the hardships again," he concludes.

Salwa Yussef, Syria



Salwa Yussef is running a library for refugee children in Nizip – a small town located not far away from the border with Syria. The library is financed by Turkey and UNICEF donated 400 books in Arabic, mostly fairy tales.

“Before the war I used to write short stories. In one of them, a young woman gets banished from home because of the war. I describe her struggle, how she gets used to the new situation. I would’ve never thought it will become a story of my own life.

I am a Cherkess, like many here (before the war there used to be a Cherkess diaspora in Syria). I come from the mountains near the border with Jordan and Israel. We ran away when the soldiers started to recruit local youth to the army. I have three sons – the oldest is 21 years old, the youngest is 14.

I would like to go back to Syria but as long as Assad remains in power – it’s not possible. Europe only sees what it wants to see. I am afraid it will help Assad. Syrians don’t deserve that. We are not terrorists, we love peace. We are hard workers. I don’t know how can I change your opinion about us. What would you do if someone stormed into your house and started to destroy it?”

Source: <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75399,19254097,listy-uchodzcow-do-europy-trzy-historie-trzy-kobiety-kazda.html>

Waris Dirie, Somalia



Waris was raised in Daarood, Somalia. Her family were nomadic shepherds of livestock. They lived in a grass hut they had moved from one place to another on the back of a camel every few weeks to find new pastures for their herd. As early as at the age of six she already worked and overlooked a herd of about 60 sheep and goats as they grazed in the wilderness of the desert. By Somali standards, the Dirie family were well-off.

When she was about thirteen years old, her father announced to the whole family that he had found a husband for her – a 60-year-old man, who bought her for the price of five camels. Unwilling to marry him, which would result in raising children in an isolated settlement in the desert, Waris fled home. She headed for the Somali desert, without a clear idea where she would go. Nine days later she arrived in Mogadishu, where she located some relatives. Later she found employment as a bricklayer. When she learned that one of her uncles was appointed Somali ambassador to the United Kingdom and suggested that she could work as a maid for his family, without thinking twice, she grabbed the opportunity and came to London, where, for the first time in her life, she saw snow, toilets and escalators. But when the family suggested returning to Somalia, she hid her passport and became an illegal immigrant. She found a kitchen porter job at McDonald's. After a few months she started studying on evening courses, where she learned English

In 1997, she published her book *Desert Flower: An Unusual Deserted Travel*, co-written with Cathleen Miller. Soon after, she became a spokeswoman for the United Nations campaign against circumcision of women and abandoned her modelling career that she had taken up in the UK. Waris is now the special ambassador for women's rights in Africa.

Source: Waris Dirie Biography w <http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2958/Dirie-Waris.html> oraz https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waris_Dirie