

01.01.20

That's solidarity: people had a party on New Year's Eve and had many and wonderful leftovers. They brought them and we went with the bikes to distribute them to people who are living on the street.

That's the reality: people have to hide, because the police is evicting the places where they are spending the nights to survive the next day. We went to many hidden places, but couldn't find during the day so many people.

That's still sad: people shouldn't live in places around the rubbish. Every single person deserves dignity and humanity.



06.01.20

Like the last 2 winters I got a sinusitis from the cold nights in my unheated apartment. Like the last winters I remember the children in the camp, all of them being sick. I am thinking of the people on the street. At least I can turn the heater on when I wake up. They can't.

20.01.20

There was a place in the passageway where I am living. People used to sleep there. No wind, no rain. In Summer we put my mattress there, because we thought someone can take it. The people who slept there could use it. Even when the cleaning woman who is cleaning with thousands of liters of water put some extra water on it. Still it has been warmer than somewhere outside in the streets. And safe. No police ever got it. Yesterday they put a gate, a fence. To protect what exactly? The empty storages behind it. Lucky everyone who has a roof over their head.



21.01.20

"It makes me angry when I listen to you this morning. Angry, because I am asking myself "Why don't we know about that?". The media doesn't tell us, they show soccer and the Beethoven jubilee, but not about refugees in Greece."

...a 15 year old girl in the school I was invited last week to speak about the situation of refugees in Greece.

I understood her. I am also angry. And I am every time thankful if only one person in Europe is listening!

25.01.20

These days we are preparing a campaign for our Pakistan friend. His application for asylum has been denied and we don't know what will happen next.

While we are working on that, beside all the other things we are doing, I am so sick and tired of opinions people tell me when we are talking about refugees in Greece.

Just do something. Just help them with time, money, love.

I am thankful to live and work with people who do not only talk and complain, but who act.



09.02.20

When I am speaking about Umer, I say “he is family for me, and that’s what he is.

I remember at the beginning when Oikopolis was full of people, he was the one with whom I did not speak that much, and actually I don’t know when everything changed. Luckily it changed because I wouldn’t know how to live my daily life without him.

To meet for some minutes or for hours. To go for a bike ride. To go “to Pakistan” how I call it if we go to a Pakistan restaurant and I don’t have to do nothing at all, just to wait until the delicious food is coming. To text him when I am sick and to ask him to bring me some food after work. To bring him fruits, juice and toys when he is sick. To have a call from him always when I am in a bad mood and to feel better afterwards. To meet early in the morning before work for a coffee and laugh how wrinkled our faces look like. To speak about easy things and difficulties. About the past and the future.

The other day he said to me “Oh, you never told me that.” And I replied “But it would be boring if we would know already everything about each other. We still have time together.”

That’s what I believe. He will go nowhere, as long as he doesn’t want to leave Thessaloniki!

17.02.20

Greece wants to deport Umer, a refugee who has become a symbol of solidarity

We know that there are many people in the same situation.

We know that there are many people who are in worse situations.

We see these people, we know these people, we saw them in the camps on the Greek mainland and

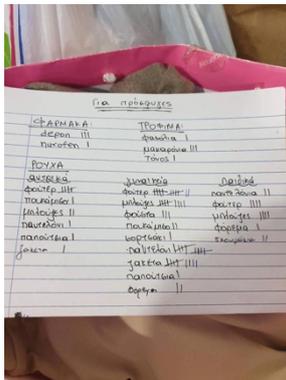


on the islands. We see them every day in the streets of Thessaloniki and in our organisations.

We know that there are people in other European countries who already speak the local language fluently, who are integrated and who are nonetheless deported to face an insecure future.

Not many people want to stay in Greece, but they are forced to, due to the Dublin III law. We are happy whenever one of them decides to learn the language, to find work and to be a part of Greek society despite the differences and difficulties. Like Umer, who lives and works with us since two years.

We want to support people from anywhere who want to be a part of a solidarity movement that we need in a country in an economic crisis.



23.02.19

What I love to do when I am helping out in the Refugee Day Center is to make the people 2 good minutes. Last week we had a lot of nice people and I succeeded:

Many children played with me.

A man laughed, gave me a hug and said (I guess, my arabic, you know...) „God bless you“ after I tried to make the procedure with the signature for the shower and the washing machine a bit more funny.

A man wanted to give me his orange he had from the lunch because he was thankful that we washed his

clothes.

A guy who washed with his clothes also his papers did not look that sad anymore when I tried to joke that he could say with the ball of wet paper „here my papers, ah, you cannot read my name?“

The staff who tried to find with me one can of tuna that has been announced in a list of donations a group o students brought us (and never has been found!) had a bit of fun in the whole mess in which they are working.

Many children laughed with me.

What I love to do is to make the people some good minutes. But it's not only about laughing and joking. In three languages I hear stories, meet human beings with dreams and hope, and I feel sad for the whole situation, angry and helpless.

26.02.19

„We need to tell the people what is happening here. Did you read about the refugee woman who gave birth yesterday in the street and a police man who was there cutted then the umbilical cord with his knife... I mean, this is happening somewhere in the middle of nowhere in Africa, but really, in Greece, in Europe?“

We were discussing the textes for a crowdfunding campaign.

It needs so much time and energy to fight for the framework that we can do our work.



We are forgotten. The refugees in Greece are forgotten. Maybe sometimes Europe hears about Moria camp, but Thessaloniki is not on the screen. Donations don't reach us anymore. We continue. What else. The people are here. And we are here.



29.02.20
Καλώς ήρθατε. Fortress Europe.
I am so angry about everything that is happening these days in Greece. So angry about a far right government. But maybe I am more angry about Europe, just saying „We have Dublin III“, and letting us alone beside Turkey with whom THEY made a bloody deal.

picture: Anadolu Agency via Getty images

01.03.2020

The first message I got this morning from a friend was „15.000“.

„What?“ I replied.

But then I already saw the news: „Number of refugees in Evros has reached now 15.000.“

Some of these people are trapped there since almost two days without support.

Today we have to think what we will do, how we will handle the situation when these people are crossing or staying in Thessaloniki.

Like always there will be no help by the state.

We are so tired. And so angry. And we are full of sadness that human beings have to pay for politics. Nothing new. But sad.

We will meet in a few hours to plan some worst case scenarios.



05.03.20

Language changes the thinking:
These are not „migrants“. These are refugees who are fleeing from war and from unbearable situations.

I am a migrant. I could pack my bags, could say goodbye to my friends, could organise my life, could decide where I want to live.

People who arrive from Turkey are refugees. Seeking for protection,

seeking for asylum.

It is simply wrong to refuse them even the application of asylum!

I appeal to the empathy of people who say „we have to protect our borders“, of people who travel now to the islands and to the Evros border to „support the nationalist friends“: I could be a refugee. You could be a refugee.

06.03.20

I have been asked today again if I can organise baby milk in large numbers.

I don't know if I can. I will try.

Fortunately I have donations people send me the last week. I will try to organise it with my bike and with a lot of pharmacies and supermarkets.

Thinking about all the women and all the babies and small children.

What a difficult start in a little life.

What an exhausting life for the women.

What a situation in which we have to take care since years for things that a government should care for.



07.03.20

It is not only a slogan we said on demonstrations: Borders kill!

Actually not the borders themselves but human beings are killing other human beings. Payed by governments. Here supported by a European Union who decided to close their eyes and to let it go.

Two people in one week have been already killed in the Evros region. We cannot do very much. We can scream and shout and spray out anger and our sadness. We don't want to think what will happen next. We don't want to imagine...

08.03.20

These days you cannot avoid to speak with people about what is happening in our country. Not if you go for a coffee with friends, not if you meet people in the street, even not if you go at a concert. And very quickly you get also opinions from people you never met before.

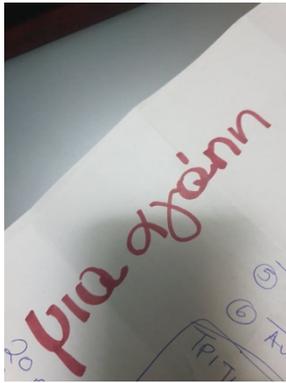
"You know, I think I cannot do anything. We cannot take everyone. I have my own life, I have three children, I cannot care for every problem in the world. And I think if we care for every problem in the world and we see only the difficult things, we lose our joy in life." I replied that from my experience I never lost joy in my life in caring also for others, but he did not believe me. "I think there are more bad people in the world than good, so - what can you do?"

Yes. "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." (Elie Wiesel)

I personally believe that there are more people who are arguing for the good. And unfortunately there are many many people who are indifferent, who are playing into the hands of the ones who doesn't want the good for the world and for their neighbours.

...and who teach their children that to do nothing makes your life better.





10.03.20

We are living in a world where refugees cannot apply for asylum. Where refugees have to stay in overcrowded camps, ships and busses, at borders or in the streets. We are living in a world where not many people are interested in that fact and in that lack of humanity and dignity. We are living in a world where many people only care about themselves. "One world. One love" sounds pathetic. But I believe in that. And we try.

Wir leben in einer Welt in der Geflüchtete kein Asyl beantragen können. In der Geflüchtete in überfüllten Camps, Schiffen und Bussen, an den Grenzen oder auf den Straßen leben müssen. Wir leben in einer Welt, in der nicht viele Menschen an diesem Umstand interessiert sind, genauso wenig wie im Mangel an Menschlichkeit und Würde. Wir leben in einer Welt in der viele Menschen nur an sich selbst denken. "Eien Welt. Eine Liebe" klingt pathetisch. Aber ich glaube daran. Und wir versuchen es.

11.02.20

Uncertainties...

„What will they ask me at the interview?“, he asked. And I couldn't answer. „What will happen with my papers I have here when I have to go tomorrow to Ioannina?“, he asked, translated by our Kurdish friend. One friend is facing his second interview, the other has to move tomorrow in another house and will - as the new law says - not have anymore his cashCard. He doesn't know in which floor, how many rooms, where exactly he, his wife and his children will move. The other, a man with amputated toes, alone from Syria here, will go tomorrow



morning to a town, 3 hours away from Thessaloniki. An organisation found a place for him to stay. But where will he eat? We are trying to find solidarity groups there to support him, as we did the last weeks by organising cooked food for him every day. He got his today's meals while the Kurdish friend and me were cooking. For an Afghan family, the woman pregnant, three children under 4. They lived four days and nights in the streets. Now an organisation will pay the hotel for them, but they need to eat. So we cooked. And will do it again tomorrow.

Let's see which questions and which uncertainties we will face tomorrow.



12.03.20

„How is your wife?“ I asked while filling the food we cooked for his family in containers. „Wife good. But baby...“ and he made a „crazy“ sign on his head. „It's from Moria, you know, Lesbos.“

I know. And I understood. He, his (pregnant) wife and the three children under 4 have arrived from Afghanistan via Turkey with a boat in Lesbos. This is already more than children should experience in their life. Then they stayed in Moria camp. Nothing to add. Then they came via

Athens to Thessaloniki and stayed in a house. With the new law (getting residence or asylum means you lose your benefits) they had to leave their apartment and found themselves four days and nights in the streets before small organisations like us started to support them with a hotel room and meals.

He tried to find us one hour long. We are just down the street from his hotel. „I have so much in my head, I could not concentrate“ was what I understood when he explained his delay and why we had eventually to pick him up at the hotel. Maybe his wife is ok, maybe their bodies are ok. But of course their souls are suffering. And without treatment they will suffer forever.

14.03.20

They considered themselves to be safe. They looked down on the so called „third world“. They said „But I did this myself because I am so diligent and great.“ They have been so proud for the work they did, the money they earned, the houses they built, the cars they bought. And even if someone got sick, everyone still made him/her feel that it was her/his own fault to suffer from cancer or whatever (can't count how often I have been asked why my husband did not have a health check and how often I replied that a melanoma at the meninges could not have been found in one thousand checks and can't count how often I felt still guilty that we never did these health checks).



Now we are in a situation where no one is guilty, a virus just spreads however and wherever it wants. Now we are in a situation where the so called „first world“ is no exception and we learn that we also can come in an emergency situation. Now we are at random in a place in which we feel unsecure.

...like people who are at random born in Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Pakistan, in places with a long history of troubles, a sudden war or in places where people are so poor that the only chance of survival is to go somewhere else.

Of course, when I see the empty shelves in Germany I understand that they still have the money to help themselves. When I see the closed shops in Greece, know that no one who has to stay away from his work will be payed, I understand that some more people will run out of money the next weeks. I still see the difference between a rich and a poor country and can see how this will have an impact.

They considered themselves to be safe. Some safety you can buy. But not really. I really hope we will understand that we are different but all the same. In weakness, but also in strength. I really hope solidarity will be considered one day as the only way to live together.

16.03.20

You, who do complain now that you cannot move freely wherever you want.

You, who are moaning that others control your life.

You, who insult the teachers and the government that your children cannot go to school.



You, who are inconsolable because the children's party or your holiday trip is cancelled.

You, who got blameless in that situation, like all of us.

You, who try to continue a most normal life. For you, for your children.

You - try to imagine how people feel who have to flee their homes.

Picture from Moria Camp, 2018, the camp in which 25000 men, women, minors, children and babies have to stay and where today again a huge fire broke out.

17.03.20

German TV on twitter: "Europe is thinking about sealing itself off."

F*** you!!! Europe sealed itself off already and pays Turkey and libyan criminals to keep that status quo. But ok, now it's not about fortress Europe for people who are fleeing their homes for several reasons. Now we speak about business-(wo)men and it's a headline.



Picture: Lesbos, Sykamia beside the mountain of life-jackets, 2018



20.03.20

Before... before every life how we knew it before stopped, we saw each other almost every day. Sometimes in the morning before work, on the weekends for a late breakfast, at noon for a quick lunch or in the afternoons and evenings between meetings, for eating together or just to hang around. We went with the bikes somewhere, we cooked, we went to activities together, the two of us and together with other people.

Now I am at home. Alone. Behind that door that keeps me away from spreading the virus.

But we managed it to see each other today. He rang the bike bell in the street, I rang it from my balcony.

When he left, I almost cried.

This will pass. We will leave our houses again.

And I know since a few minutes more than before that we will not let him get deported! We will not have our lives here without him!

25.03.20

Also this is happening: A friend from Germany, working in an institution of the Protestant church in Frankfurt asked me to have a talk about the situation of refugees in Thessaloniki.



She is collecting the information to share them with people in Germany. To inform them – in times when there is less than ever a public interest in refugees in Greece. She listened, she noted, she asked for the crowdfunding-link.

We need money.

And we need interest and solidarity.

Maybe even more in times when we can only do a few things.

25.03.20

We are deeply grateful for a donation of 1.000 € which will enable us to continue to help others. The organization [Heimatstern e.V.](#), based in Munich / Germany has been assisting us for almost 3 years by sending us supplies for our solidarity activities at Oikopolis as well as the refugee day center Alkyone.

However, we have been running out of money over the last few months.

As our circumstances have changed, we can no longer let our seminar room for groups and so we do not have any income anymore. Oikopolis is a social space which is the base for a wide range of activities, a place for people to come together, to rest and to create new ideas on how to live better together. It is the place with a kitchen that we use to cook solidarity meals, and a place where people meet and from which we can support families in need. It's the place where we always try to have supplies of essentials such as clothing, food, baby milk, sleeping bags, medication. which can be accessed in times of emergency. In addition we always try to find the time, the dignity and the love to treat our human beings with the dignity they deserve.



Today, Greece is celebrating the Greek Independence Day.
We are celebrating solidarity!

Wir sind zutiefst dankbar für die Spende von 1.000 € die uns hilft weiterhin zu helfen. Der Verein [Heimatstern e.V.](#) aus München hilft uns bereits seit fast 3 Jahren. Sie haben uns immer wieder Hilfe für unsere Solidaritätsaktionen bei Oikopolis geschickt, sowie Kleidung, Lebensmittel, Babymilch etc. für das Tageszentrum Alkyone.

Wir hatten bereits in den vergangenen Monaten kaum noch Geld.

Mit der neuen Situation, in der wir unseren Seminarraum nicht mehr an Gruppen vermieten können, haben wir überhaupt kein Einkommen mehr und können unsere Miete nicht mehr zahlen.

Die Räume von Oikopolis sind die Basis für jede unsere Aktivitäten, es ist ein Platz um zusammen zu kommen, um sich zu erholen und um Ideen zu sammeln wie wir auf eine bessere Art zusammenleben können. Es ist der Ort

wo die Küche ist, in der wir unsere Solidaritätsmahlzeiten für Menschen auf der Flucht und benachteiligte Menschen kochen. Wo sich Menschen treffen und von wo aus wir Familien unterstützen. Es ist der Ort, wo wir immer etwas für Notfälle zu haben: Kleidung, Lebensmittel, Babymilch, Schlafsäcke, Medikamente. Und wo wir immer versuchen die Zeit zu haben, die Würde und die Liebe die Menschen verdienen.

Heute feiert Griechenland den Unabhängigkeitstag.

Wir feiern Solidarität!



27.03.20

„I heard, things are not that bad in Greece”, a friend wrote me.

Things ARE bad. As bad as Central Europeans cannot imagine.

People in closed camps, refugees in the streets without any support.

Bad weather since days (and the forecast says it will not get better the next days).

Restrictions why you can leave your home for a short time.

So many jobs and income lost, so many shops on the edge, a nightmare in a country in an economic crisis.

The hospitals have been already before the new virus overwhelmed and worked with a lack of medications, bed linen, toilet paper. Due to the crisis so many doctors and staff have been fired the last years, or are not been paid for months. Directors of hospitals write that they don't have masks, gloves and the essential for their work.

“Things are bad, but I am glad to be here in this situation”, I replied.

Solidarity is not just a word in Greece. It is not the first difficult situation with which the country has to cope with. We are creative. We are flexible. We will go also through this.

31.03.20

Now we complain that we feel unsecure. That we don't know how to structure our days. People say they feel other-directed. That they have a lot of work, but they cannot concentrate neither do have the energy to do what they have to do. They say it wouldn't be that bad if they would know when this would end...

Reminds you of something?

Asylum seekers are waiting for months and years, and they never know when and how it ends. They are living in the most unsecure situation, dependent from others. And many of them many times cannot focus on something, because the whole situation makes them feel so bad and makes them inactive.

Please remember that.

When it will be over.

For us.





25.04.20

International newspapers are writing about it, German TV shows it. People are putting articles and clips on their facebook wall with the text “proud to be Greek”.

Yes, the decision of an early lockdown has been a good idea. I remember that we confessed one another that we have been really afraid of the virus, “when even the Greek government reacts”. Yes, the

decision was a good idea in a country without a functioning health care system. But why does it work?

Not because of the fascist Prime Minister, now called “conservative but also an innovator”, what hides his right-wing ideology.

Because of the people who take it seriously. Who care for each other. But what is working?

The numbers of infections and deaths are low. Well, there are no tests in Greece. 61.000 for a population of 10 million. I mean, it’s ridiculous. And: people tested positive from a Roma community as well as from refugee camps have not been included in the statistics. That doesn’t show the real numbers, but clear racism. Refugees are suffering in the streets and in camps due to of the lack of help and support. Many decisions are made currently, asylum applications are rejected, the official bodies are closed, objections and getting legal aid are more difficult. People don’t know how to survive. We will see how many shops will reopen after the lockdown. This country – contrary to popular opinion abroad - did not overcome the financial crisis.

Yes, the decision of an early lockdown has been a good idea. But I wish people who see and read the articles about “Greece as a role model” would look a bit further. I love a lot in this country which is my home now. But I know it’s not the government who helps through this pandemic. It’s the people who support each other.

Maybe they could write “Proud to be a human being”

Photo credits: Verena Stürtzer / Munich

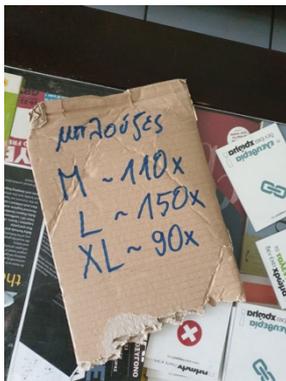
29.04.20

Stay at home... still the message these days. From the Greek government (the one praised by European media as a „role model“ when dealing with the new virus), the one who passed the law that everyone who got asylum or residence will not have the right to stay in a supported house or to get financial support. Men, women, children cannot stay at home, because they don't have one anymore. Men and women cannot find a job, because everything is still closed and no one knows what will re-open again. They cannot stay at home. And we don't know solutions and how to support them.



Do social distancing... still the message these days. The Greek government (praised now as „conservative, but progressive“) is rejecting asylum applications in this time of uncertainty and lockdown. People who obviously are in danger in their home countries don't get asylum. Apparently, the government uses the time to get rid of as much as possible people. They try to distance people from us who are already a part of our community. And we don't know solutions and how to save them.

Be positive... still the message these days. After some bad news the last days it is difficult.



14.05.20

I remember a project meeting in Rome where the organisers brought us to an "illegal" camp, running by volunteers. So much "hey bro" in between the volunteers and the refugees. So much exhibited fraternity. I remember that we spent there 4 hours and the organisers asked us "to mix with the refugees, built relationships". Remember that our group refused this way of getting in touch with people who don't want to be in tents on a parking. I remember my colleague saying: "Look at the volunteers. They give me the feeling that only to work as a volunteer gives you a good feeling and makes you happy."

Yesterday I saw this again after a long time, because I am not anymore in touch with these kind of volunteers, volunteering full-time and finding their raison d'être in helping other people. I felt again that exhibited brotherhood that deep inside me lefts a nasty feeling.

I am also giving my time and skills for non-paid projects. I have deep inside me the feeling that I want to be in solidarity with these people, deep inside me I am an activist who wants to make a small part of the world a little bit better. I guess I can never feel that happiness that these volunteers want us to see. I would be happy if this would stop. I would be happy not anymore to organize donations, money, not anymore to assort clothes, to carry supplies.

15.05.20

The last months have been very difficult... For everyone in the world. For everyone in Europe. For everyone in Greece.

For us it was so difficult that we could not do so much. We created a hashtag #ΔενΜενουμεΑδρανεις, translated with "We will not stay sluggish" - and tried not to behave sluggish. A challenge when you stay day and night in your house.

It really helped us to get in that time 3 pallets full of food stuff, pampers, sleeping bags, T-shirts etc. from the wonderful organization [Heimatstern](#) in Munich.

We could give families in needs food. At least this, because we could not go to the market where we usually collect the leftover fruits and vegetables. We could not cook and distribute the cooked food. We could give some families clothes. At least.

Next week we want to start again with the market and with the cooking at the weekends. We will need these 700 kg of rice, lentils, pasta, tomato sauce, oil etc. that we got today.

I am so thankful for this help we got the last difficult months and I cannot describe how much I am glad to live in solidarity with so many people here and wherever. This is how we can make a difference.



16.05.20

Yesterday I was so tired from all the work all the years. And first of all from so many people who say that they want to help, but are waiting that other people tell them what to do.

In the evening I was sending a message to a friend with whom I was discussing that topic a few days ago.

She answered: "I was thinking today: „If not me, who then? If not us, who else?" – And that gives me the energy to continue."

I know what she means and also that we cannot save everyone, but that we can do what is possible for us. For me.

Maybe I just have the wish to see more people in responsibility.

Maybe I am only tired after 5 years.

Maybe I only got tired of organising. Organising actions and other people.

But she is right: "Maybe it helps to have all the people in your mind whom we could help and how they would be without our help."

This can be a trap, but sometimes it can be also helpful.

25.05.20

Before dawn police moved in to the Camp to "evacuate" the 8500 people from Idomeni camp and a "humanitarian disaster", how they said.

Actually they evicted the camp and brought people in other camps.

Today, 4 years later, Europe forgot that there are still refugees in Greece.

It is so easy to evict camps, to close borders... as long as you cannot see the impact on human beings.

We saw it. And we still see it.

4 years later. 50.000 refugees (so the official numbers) in Greece. Illegal "pushbacks" on land, at sea. Inhumane accommodation. A lack of support.

This is the "humanitarian disaster" what they said they wanted to prevent 4 years ago in Idomeni.

I remember that day very well. It was one of my last days of my first time in Thessaloniki. And I cannot believe that we are still looking for houses, clothes, food and other basic items for so many human beings looking for a future.

#EuropeMustAct



Picture: Idomeni Camp 20.05.2016



07/06/20

Thousands of refugees in the streets. Women, men, children - evicted from their houses. Now without support, without hope in a country in an economic crisis, in a pandemic.

With police controls and illegal push-backs every day and night.

"I can't breathe"

I guess, for many of them this will be the main feeling these days.

12/06/20

Asylum office reflections #1

Is it because I am German why it has a certain connotation to hear the security shout "Men in this line, women and children in this line"? Is it because I read too many books about the selection at the ramps where 6 million women, men and children arrived and did not see each other again?

OK, these families met again to enter the gate to the Asylum office. And they also came back again. But still. It leaves a



bad feeling to see scared people who get separated from their husbands, wives, children and fathers.

Asylum office reflections #2

All these young mothers. All these mothers. All these children. All these pregnant women. I unconsciously start to ask myself: born at home? In a warzone? On the flee? In a camp? In the streets? In a Turkish or a Greek hospital?

I did not give birth, but I guess it is not easy to be pregnant and to get a baby in a foreign country, even though you manage it to be in a hospital. Somewhere where you don't know anyone, you don't speak the language and you don't know your future.

At the Asylum office the women at least have something to do while they are waiting: They have to take care of the children, have to push the pram, have to give them water, milk, something to eat.

I am sometimes sad to see the young girls with already two or three children, but then I have to call myself to order, because I don't know enough about their life, their values, their needs.



Asylum office reflections #3

The girl beside her mother. The boy beside his father. The girl pushing the pram, the boy doing some karate kicks.

I guess during these times the parents are more role models for the children than in times of peace in a family home. The boys see the men in the queue, smoking, scratch in the crotch, speaking loud with the other men and showing that

they still have something under control. The girls stand beside the prams, being with the mothers, showing the one nice shirt they have, the new shoes and the beautiful made hair.

Role models. Can be wonderful. Can be difficult.

Asylum office reflections #4

I don't speak Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Kurdish, no African language, no Kurmanji, Punjabi.

But I understood that many people are looking forward to get their passports to "go Germany".

And I know that they will be disappointed. And I know it will be dangerous for the society to have many people who will not learn the language, will not find jobs and will not be included in the society.

The first obstacle is though the Greek Asylum Office that asks the asylum seekers to write an email to book an appointment. The disappointment starts here, in front of the fence after waiting for hours in a queue.

Asylum office reflections #5

The numbers of Covid-19 infections are once more arising these weeks after the lockdown. The Asylum office doesn't accept people without facemask. Some guys could not even stand in the line because they did not have masks.

I think it makes sense in terms of safety.

Unfortunately the same guys were sitting close to each other in front of the Asylum Office and close to many other people. Unfortunately people left the Office and gave their masks to other people.

Unfortunately everyone stands in the queue very close to the next.

Social distancing is not possible for asylum seekers. Not in any camp neither in the streets.



Asylum office reflections #6

Sitting in the sun for 4 hours I was thinking today how human beings are able to adapt to situations, How normal it is for the children to sit in the morning at 6 in a bus to the Asylum Office, to wait there, to play in the mud, to run between the mother in the one and the father in the other line. How normal it is for them to hear the security shout, to fear them, but to get used to it.

I have seen so many children in 3 different camps in Munich and Thessaloniki. I studied trauma therapy to understand them better. I see them and my heart is bleeding. Lost childhood.



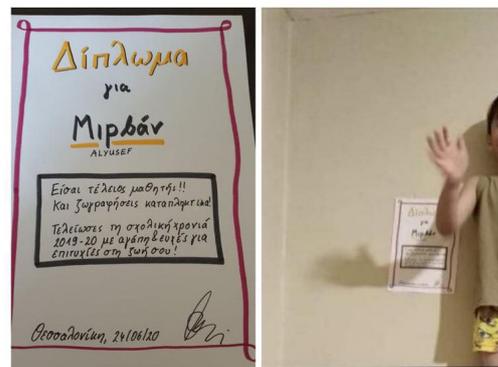
20/06/20

I am even too tired to write again something about the World Refugee Day.

Picture: from a 5 year old girl in Thessaloniki: "This is a dog. And this is my sister [she is living with her uncle in Germany since 2 years], this is my father, and this is the world."

25/06/20

He just turned 7. His family fled Kurdistan some years ago. His twin is in another country with a relative. He is here with his parents and his 4 year old sister. He is a lovely guy, the parents really care to educate the children with all the needed love. He is going to school since a year. He learned Greek. Because the family had to move in another place, he also had to change school. Yesterday all the children got their certificate, only he did



not get it, because he started in the new school in another class than he started last September in the first school.

When his father told me yesterday how sad he has been, I took immediately a paper and made him a certificate. He put it on the wall.

Dear teachers. It is so easy to make a boy happy!



27/06/20

He spoke a bit Greek. That they are living in the camp without a tent, I understood. And that they had an apartment before the new law was implemented. Could find a place in the camp for a minimum of protection instead of living in the streets. Five children, one of them with them yesterday. Not the youngest, but the second young, always good for compassion if you come somewhere to ask

for food, pampers and baby milk.

We don't need these „tricks“. We know them anyhow. We give what we have and we cannot give what we don't have.

He asked me to come a bit beside to tell me again „No money, no house, nothing“. „I know“, I replied. „So difficult, no money, no food.“, he repeated.

Only one story from those we hear every day. No new story. But the story of his life. And of the other family members. Not replacable. Not repeatable. One life.

Destroyed.

I left for the other room in order to bring the pampers. „Please“, he came behind me, „paper...“. It took a while then I understood that he was asking for wet wipes. I told him the word in Greek and he tried to remember it.



02/07/20

Since five years: (male) refugees and me:

„You have children?“

„No.“

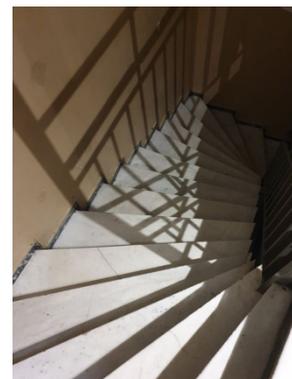
„O, sorry.“ / „Why?“ / „You still can have, Insallah.“

I learned not to reply anymore to save my energy.

06/07/20

Police is arresting refugees and lock them in cells with the promise of papers. Not yet been seen some days later. Still in cells? Pushed-back to Turkey?

Police is active around the places where groups distribute food on a daily basis. Even though they did not come again to the distribution point, they are around where they know that people are gathering. Refugees are afraid to go there, so they even stay without food.



Refugees hiding somewhere in the streets, volunteers instead of the government supporting them, police arresting. That's the time we are living in. #DefendSolidarity



07/07/20

He tried to give me the 1 year old child while his wife joined the first time her English class. Of course I asked him to take care of his daughter. I gave him some toys and some books. He put the girl on the sofa, took his phone and did not stop staring at the screen until his wife came back. Then he gave her immediately the child back in her arms.

I was so sad. For the woman. For the child.

Children need inputs. Children need education. Children need mothers AND father who care. Also on

the flee. Maybe even more then.

09/07/20

Balcony talks - about gender roles

The conversation started when I asked him who is cooking at home for the 4-person family. „My wife.“ I was laughing, because he is the one who knows how to cook and is the chef every Saturday for the 250 meals we are cooking for homeless people.

Well, actually the conversation started with another guy who asked me if the wives of the Syrian and Kurdish men

who are here can cook on Saturdays. I am sick to ask him why not the men, so I kept silent, but I had this question in my mind when I came to the balcony.

“But I m helping. You know, we are the same.” He continued. And I know that it’s true, I see them together, I see him here and I am very glad about it.

“Last week my son said to my daughter: “bring me some water. You are the girl, I am the boy, you have to bring me.” And I told him that she is his sister and not his employee.”

“”Why does your wife not wear a hijab?”, people are asking me, and I say that I don’t want to tell her what to wear. But then they tell me in the Quran you can read that the men I higher than the women. But it says the wife is your sister, your mother, your friend. And I tell you something: The problem is not the hijab, the problem is here...” – and he tapped on his head. “Here is the problem.”

He knows that the problem is in their minds and that it everyone’s decision how to behave and how to treat each other.





13/07/20

Balcony talks – about being illegal

“I could not come to the lesson, I had something to do. A friend who is in Athens called me and asked me to take care of some people. They arrived today from Turkey, they were walking 4 days from Evros to Thessaloniki. I went with them to eat something and showed them the station.”

“Take care of the station, police is there. Better they stay in the city center. And don't go with them, go in front of them and they follow you, a bit farer away.”

“What do they want to do?”

“They want to take the train to Athens tonight.”

“But police is checking the trains!”

“Really?”

“Really.”

17/07/20

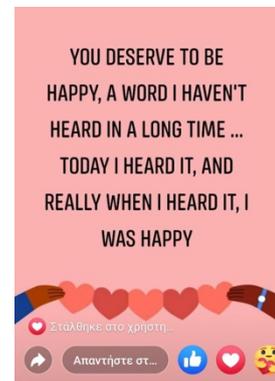
I don't need donations only for emergency cases. Sometimes it is a story like that:

A Kurdish family, trying hard to build a future for the children. I found in the donations we got the other day a beach ball and with a timetable of the boat that is going to the beach, I put the money for the expensive tickets, telling them that I would be happy they could spend a beautiful day on the beach.

Yesterday he told me that his wife had asked him "Why does she do that for us?" - and I could not bring this question out of my mind. So I wrote him in the evening: "Because you deserve it. And if you don't know the word 'deserve', translate it, it is important."

A bit later I saw that he uploaded this post.

That's sometimes how I am spending also your donations. Thank you so much!!



18/07/20

Balcony talks - About work

„We cannot ask the organisation to help us, they kicked us out of the apartment.“

„Not the organisation kicks you out, the government does it. What we are talking about now is something different. Ask them to help you to find work. To find Greek lessons.“

Three years they are here, coming from Irak. The new law now creates problems - or let's say the

reality: to speak the language is the base to find work, difficult enough here.

Yes, also the woman has to look for work, both, father and mother.

No one waits for them. No work waits for them, it is hard.

„We wait for our passport“. That means: get the passport, travel to another european country (guess where) and apply there again for asylum.

What a inhumane, what a stupid game.

The reality here: living end of next week in the streets with 4 children, with no job, no money, some clothes and toys they took today from us and the feeling that the organisation betrayed them.

21/07/20

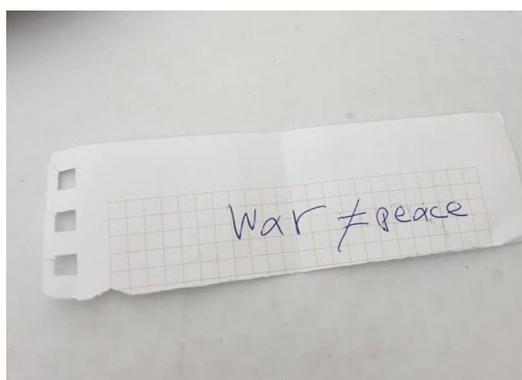
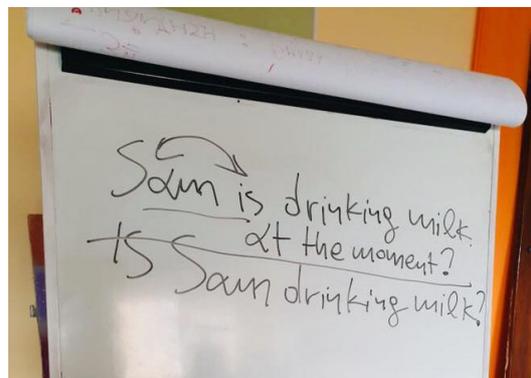
Balcony talks - About language

„There is another child from Kurdistan at school, but we speak Greek with each other.“ - „Yes, if you would speak kurdish, the other children would not understand you.“ - „Yes, and this would not be polite.“ I translated what we said in English for the italian girl sitting next to us.

„We always try to find the language that everyone is speaking. And if there is no common language, we are translating.“

„Yes. So if she want to ask me something, she could ask you in english and you could translate it for me in Greek.“

A kurdish boy and a german woman in Greece... in Greek.



22/07/20

Balcony talks - About war

„From which city are you?“ - „Rojava.“ - „And you?“ - „Aleppo.“ - „But you know, we are not from the city, like Thessaloniki, we are from the village. We were living in the village. People came to work to Aleppo. So many factories there. If Aleppo is dead, Syria is dead.“

„And now the war lasts already so many years. Nine years.“ - „Ten years.“ - „When the war started it was 2010, I have been in Damascus and then I went back to my family.“ - „Yes, ten years, but nine years ago the war became really bad.“

A moment of silence.

Nothing more to say. Pictures I have in my mind from the newspaper and social media. Pictures they have in their mind from their experience before they ran away and became refugees.

24/07/20

After an afternoon full of refugee issues, -children, -biographies, -stories...

... I was on my way home... when I saw at the corner a afghan family: 3 children, maybe one in the pram, the grandmother, a couple, and the pram full of bags with their belongings.

Sitting on the pavement, waiting.

I went on on the other side of the street - and turned after some meters around to go back to them. To do what? I



don't know, I just felt, I cannot go home and sleep well without asking them what they need right now.

When I almost arrived, I saw a guy saying hello to them, it seemed they had waiting for him. A relative, a friend I hope. Hopefully not a smuggler who promised them the paradise somewhere else... I hope they sleep well tonight.



25/07/20

I am living close to the Refugee Day Center. Like many days when I am on my way, I saw a group of about 15 people walking there - obviously homeless refugees (tired, walking slowly, UNHCR backpacks, plastic bags in their hands).

Maybe new arrivals. They did not know that the Day Center is closed on Saturdays... hope they will find out how to survive in the streets during the weekend.

27/07/20

Balcony talks - Babel today, no common language.

„I want to learn English“ - the first sentence he put in the translator to show me when I brought him the food supplies he had asked for. Not „I also need this or that.“ - I hope we will find enough volunteers to teach also him.

„If you pay 50€ more they will rent the house.“ - a tip to look as soon as possible for an own apartment, because the hosting in a hotel room by an organisation could end very quick. There are so many rumors in the internet, I don't know how many times we heard „In two months this and that will happen“. The hope dies last. We know. „They cannot tell us to leave the hotel if we don't have a new place to stay“. - unfortunately they can as we see these days.

„Since one year we cannot have children, so my wife needs a surgery.“ - this was new! - later it turned out to be a health problem that limits the life of the woman in general. „They come from the village, they don't know about the life outside of their place. So he cannot say my wife has a gynecological problem, she has every month pain, he just can say, we cannot have children, because this is what they do: children.“

„He wants to be rich.“ - we understood. For many people in the world this is the goal of their life. Even with a common language we cannot help here...



28/07/20

Two days ago we met a young journalist from Lesbos island. She was the first of all the people visiting us the last years who was asking the right questions. Concerning our work, our mental wellbeing after all these years, our perspective.

She did a good job. Some of them and also the answers we gave, are still in my mind.

28/07/20

I am struggling with the „When we will have our passports we will go to Germany.” Or the “We will try to cross the borders and to reach Germany or Belgium or Sweden”. I am struggling, because I know that it is not that easy to reach the countries illegal, to stay there legally and to have the life they think they will have there.



“In Moria camp people don’t speak about Europe, they only want to have a safe place”, we heard the other day. Yes, maybe this is human: We always want a bit more. And then more. And more... And if we are surrounded by people who tell us about their dreams, we start to follow their dreams. If there is a move towards Europe, I guess no one can resist. Especially in a country where the government tries everything to make it difficult for refugees and where it is hard enough even for locals to find an apartment and a job.



30/07/20

Balcony talks - about the near future

„I don’t know what will happen with all the people who will lose their jobs by the end of August. Today I read an article about it.“

The organisations will stop their housing projects for refugees. Due to the new law everyone with asylum status has to live by it’s own (without any support). The housing will be taken over by the state, and just a small number of apartments will exist.

All the refugees who are working as interpreters also will lose their work. Falling from a good salary back in bad jobs - if possible to find. Not good for the ego. Neither for the financial surviving.

All the greek people who found work the last years will be unemployed. Not good for every single person and family. And a nightmare for the economy and the already depressed population.

03/08/20

„I don’t want a place, a community that works how the world outside does.”

We don’t want racism, sexism, homophobia, selfishness and indifference.

We want solidarity, humanity, community and to speak out what we don’t like to find solutions for all of us.

We are working on that, for that. With all our heart, soul and energy.



It is not always easy, because many people who are coming to us are in need and don't know that kind of living and working together.

That creates periodically problems and many times already we had to say good-bye to people.

It is time to have a break.

And time will show who will go with us together in the near term.



04/08/20

"Oh, you are German?", he said. "So you love Greece?", he said, "1,2,3" he counted in German and asked "What is better? Germany or Greece?"... very inventive of course for a German living since almost 3 years abroad and always hears the same statements and questions.

But then he asked me "What do you think about what is happening in Germany, that the muslims overtake the country? And that they also want us to accept that?"

"This is racist." I replied. "OK, then I am a racist", he said and smiled at me.

"I am sorry, but I don't want to listen to you anymore", I said, leaving the shop. ...Glad I can be very clear now also in Greek.

#defendHumanity

13/08/20

Four years ago I arrived the second time in Thessaloniki. Still with no Greek, still not knowing where this would guide me.

I only could stay for 3 weeks. I remember how happy I have been to have more time than the first time. I remember how I started to go to the camp every day.

How I distributed food in the streets every morning. How I spent many afternoons at the Oikopolis balcony.

My 5th August here thus.

For me everything changed since that day I arrived four years ago.

The situation for refugees in Thessaloniki and Greece also changed - for the worse.



Picture: 13/08/16



15/08/20

What are they afraid of??

97% of the population is orthodox. Every single baby get baptized, if the parents are believers or not. There are many non-biblical, only religious/churchy holidays and customs. Greece is one of the few countries in the world which declared Christianity as a state religion. The only which declared Christian Orthodoxy as state religion. Me as a protestant am not seen as a member of a church, but of a cult. Not many people heard about Martin Luther

and the reformation. Orthodox church is everywhere. In schools, in politics, at the military, in most of the shops in the form of icons, and first of all in the heads of the population. Sitting on my balcony on a Sunday morning or like today on a curious holiday I hear from many apartments the Mass they watch on TV or listen on radio. I cannot avoid it.

AND THEY ARE AFRAID A FEW REFUGEES COULD CHANGE THEIR RELIGION?? Seriously??

18/08/20

Balcony talks - about books

„I had a teacher when I started to learn English, he said to me: first you read, then you copy it in your brain and then you start to speak. Unfortunately I don't like to read.“ We started the conversation because I was reading a book and he asked me in which language I was reading.

„I am not used to read. We don't have books, we don't read books with the children, it's not like in Europe.“ - „I know. We have so many books here, but none of the families ever wanted to take a children's book.“ - „When the children go to school then, I hope they will learn also to read and to write.“ - „They will!“

And then we spoke about the situation that all the fleeing children in refugee camps, on places and streets, in small apartments and forced to go with their parents from one country to the next will not learn how to write in their mother tongue. Hopefully at least they can go to school regularly to learn how to write and read Greek.



22/08/20

It always feels like „We don't do so much“ or „We only have a few people we are caring for.“

But then we have a visitor from abroad, interested in our activities and we start telling. And while we enumerate our activities we realise that it is a lot. And it is a lot for only a

handful of people who is organising it as volunteers.

„You are making such a difference“ I heard yesterday. „We try“, I replied. And that’s what we do: trying to make a difference for some people in that mad game Greece and Europe are playing with refugees. It is only a bit. But it is a try.

23/08/20

Since 14 years they are living in Italy. They left their country with a 1 1/2 year child with a disease and a 2 month old baby. Like so many families I see nowadays in Greece. How dare people to think you want to leave your country with a newborn baby? There are always good reasons to leave your home.



6 years ago they found an opportunity to meet the family in their homecountry, that’s when they met my friend the last time. A few months later also he had to leave. His brother-in-law tried to explain me that he had to leave, a fact that I already knew. I guess he experienced many times that he always has to explain why he left his country.

His nephews (14, 6) and his niece (15) are so nice children, I am so sorry that I don’t speak italian. This is also what refugees are facing when they find a new home: if they meet, they still have their native language. With their friends they speak the new language and the rest of the family, living somewhere else, cannot understand them. It was difficult to communicate with the poor english they had, but we understand each other with our hearts.

His sister tried to say many times „Thank you for all you do“ and „It was so nice that we could meet.“ I understood her. „Well“, I said. „It’s family.“



27/08/20

Balcony talks - about education

„And what is your sister doing?“ I asked the young guy.

„She’s studying.“

„Oh, nice. What?“

„She is going to school.“

Not the first time I realised that „studying“ is not about university, but about going to school after being older than let’s say 15. Not the first time I realised that it is a privilege to grow up in a world where „studying“ is getting a profound education after 17 years of school. Not the first time I realised that „I want to study“ doesn’t mean people have the degree to go to university, but it’s about learning the language of the country where they find themselves now.

Words show us so much about culture. And about expectations. About education.

Picture: "When I grow up, I want..."

29/08/20

„All we say now we will read later in your balcony talks“ he said. We laughed. This balcony talk was - like most of the balcony talks - kind of therapy. To reflect the day, to share experiences and emotions of the long day we had behind us. But it was also the attempt to find a good way how to proceed with the distributions.

Fact is: there are so many families who don't have more than a house. Many times they don't even have a table, a bed, a chair in that house, no fridge, only the plastic plate and -cup they get from the organisation that supports the rent. Fact is also: most of them don't speak one word english or greek after some years here. Another fact: we are tired. Tired from our time we are spending, from the fundraising (we never have enough money, nor goods), from the neverending needs.

It was an exhausting day. It was a good balcony talk. I needed it before I went home - after almost 13 hours.



31/08/20

5 years ago I was in Munich at the train station helping to welcome thousands upon thousands exhausted refugees. Today I am in Thessaloniki and still see every day refugees: In the streets, in the organisations, at the distributions. I don't know if I ever thought it will stop one day. Probably I was at least hoping that it will stop one day. It doesn't. People still have

to flee their homes. 5 years ago and still today we are doing the work the governments and the European Union should do.

04/08/20

I always love to have groups visiting us. I love the (critical, philosophical, political) questions.

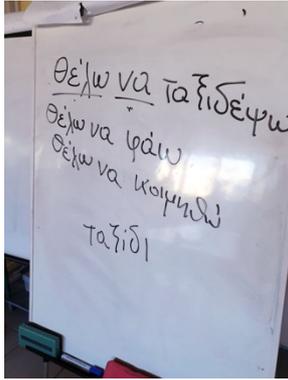
I love the interest, the other point of view, the view from the outside.

And it helps me always to see the reality a bit more: We are doing many things. And "we" are only a few people. But we want. And we do.

I love to have groups visiting us.

They evoke that I remember beside all the organisational issues my passion, my love, my commitment.





05/08/20

“Is there anything don't you like how refugees behave and you would like to let them know?”

First the question wasn't clear, but then we replied both almost the same: It is so difficult if families are already since a year or two in Thessaloniki and (especially the women) still don't know any Greek or English word. And this results in a behavior that we would like to let them know: “We want to communicate with you. We want to know from you. We would like to share things. We would

like to have you in our community and in our society.”

05/09/20

„What is your motivation?“, she asked me.

A beautiful question.

That I believe in solidarity I said. That I think that the world only in a solidarity way can work. And that I found people who want to work and live in the same way. And that I am grown up with the knowledge that every person can provide something to the community. That's why I like to encourage other people to share time, money, knowledge, love and whatever they have to give.

#AnotherWorldIsPossible



05/08/20

„I was really glad that you told us also your personal impressions. I liked that you also spoke about the difficulties and did not pretend that everything is great.”

...Of course. I have to tell how we feel. And we feel overwhelmed with all the needs around us. With the organisation of the place and the activities. I did not think that this is something special to admit. But yesterday I learned that in many organisations, people present only the nice and beautiful picture of the situation.

Well. Our picture has many colors. Also grey and black

09/08/20

We say it since years: Europe must act!!

After war and flee thousands upon thousands traumatised people had to live for years under inhumane conditions in Moria camp.

Greece had the OK for that from the European Union.

Now this camp is burned down.

Thousands of traumatised refugees are now without any shelter and are facing their next traumatic experience throughout a series of traumatic experiences.

I guess Greece has no plan what to do.

I guess Athes and Thessaloniki will have the next days and weeks more men, women and children in the streets.

I know that Europe must act!! Finally!



10/09/20



Dear friends everywhere in the world. Thank you for asking since yesterday how things are going in Greece and in Thessaloniki.

We are sad, and first of all angry about the situation in Greece, on the islands, in Moria camp - since years.

Many of the people who come to us to

ask for help have been there, facing in the next days to be thrown in the streets because the short supported housing will end.

We expect that the Greek government will bring more people to Thessaloniki (more than the 400 unaccompanied minors who already arrived yesterday night and will arrive today). But they will bring them and let them without any support - as they did already and as we can see in Athens at Victoria square.

Thank you for asking how things are going! We really appreciate that!

We ask you kindly to help us to continue to help. We are running literally out of money - in times when we need it most.

We have a crowdfunding since a while and many of you supported us. Thank you for that. We try to go on with collecting money: <https://oikopolissocialcenter.blogspot.com/p/help-us-to-continue-to-help-who-we-are.html>

If you prefer to support me on my personal account from where I am supporting different projects, you can do this here:

IBAN: DE14701500000903121812 / BIC: SSKMDEMM

IBAN: GR8602602060000100201430994 / BIC: ERBKGRAA

Thank you for your support, for your solidarity, for your help!



11/09/20

What I am listening when I am listening.

“In 5 days we have to leave our room. We are 20 families like that”. He is one from the families who could leave Moria camp a few months ago. They put the families in a hotel, gave them 3 times a day food and told them when they will have the stamp in their paper, they have 30 days to leave the room. To leave without any support.

“I will take a lawyer, then I get my passport quicker.” He is – like many others – dreaming of a life in Europe. Sweden, Belgium, Germany or England.

“In Syria I had everything, here I have to ask for everything, It is difficult for me.” He studied biochemistry and had a good life until the bombs fell on Aleppo.

“I had 100 beehives. Daesh burned them all. The honey was like a river on the ground.”

“I borrowed last year a friend 100 Euros. I never said something, but now I need it. He gave me 20.” He had cash card to live with his wife and the two children until the new law. Now he has nothing and tries to get through the family.

„They don't know the city, they don't have money, they have to leave their house soon.” Two women who are since 2 years in Thessaloniki. Who have been like many women every day at home with the children.

“I am going to school since 3 years, of course I speak Greek.” At my request the parents let translate her daughter that they don't speak Greek or English.

...some of the sentences I was listening when I was listening. Only some.

11/09/20

What we should not forget:

- The situation on Lesbos Island is not a surprise or a suddenly and unpredictable disaster.

- More than 12000 people (and many more thousands if we count those who could leave Moria camp and have been dropped in the streets of the mainland) are not displaced now, they have been already displaced before.

- Greece plays it's part in this European game, as well as Europe.

- The Greek far right government is elected by the people. They wanted a far right government.

- Only because you did not see the people in a row in a street, on a cemetery, on a supermarket parking, they have been there in this camp that burned down.





13/09/20

I always thought wearing a uniform says a lot about you. I think you can hide behind a uniform and behind a mass. Police denies today press access in Lesbos. Yesterday they denied access to NGOs to bring water and food to the desperate people who had no food or water for 3 days. Threw tear gas to men, women and children who are more than unarmed.

What kind of person do you have to be to do that work? How can you give up all your humanity when you put on

your uniform?

Cannot laugh anymore at the policemen who is whistling the traffic while the road users don't need him because there are also traffic lights.

15.09.20

Of course there are these annoying families. It starts when we call them and it is impossible to communicate because except arabic / farsi / kurdish they don't speak a language at all.

But there are wonderful families. Women who try to teach their children (usually they bring one of the 4, 5 up to 7 children) to say „hello, how are you?“ and „thank you“. Children who go to school and speak already quite well Greek. The woman alone with 6 boys, the smallest 6, the oldest 17 who lost his leg in Syria, where all of them lost their father / husband.



I try to make a bit fun when they choose between the food and hygiene stuff and to give them a little bit of dignity in that undignified situation they are in. And so does the girl who cares for the clothes and try to find for them what they need.

I hope we can continue for a while to support these families who are since 4 months without support. I hope they can keep their dignity.



17/09/20

„I want this finally to stop“, the child said after waiting a long time in the line to get food and clothes in our distribution...

...I my dream... I saw his angry, tired, desperate little face. I kneeled down to him and said „Me too!“, trying not to cry. „How old are you?“, I asked him and he replied „a little older than young.“

In a dream you can do what you never do in reality: I went away to hide somewhere and cried over all these people...

(Later on in that dream the alarm of the building was activated and we have been locked for an indefinite period in the building. How symbolic)

20/09/20

The new camp in Lesvos is a prison.
Nothing else.

The new camp is a prison. A prison
in the sun, the cold, the wind.

The new camp is a prison. Without
enough water, toilets, space.

The new camp is a prison. And
Europe accepts that.

The new camp is a prison. The new
camp is a prison.

The new camp is a prison!



<https://www.change.org/firemoriacamp>

Photo credits: Elias Marcou / SOOC, 19/09/2020



22/09/20

„I am a journalist. When I wrote a
critical article, the Daesh came an
shot at me.“ - he showed me the
scar and we spoke about how
religion can evoce wars.

„I arrived in February and then the
lockdown came. I am every day at
home with my 3 year old daughter.“
she said and we said we will find a
Greek teacher for her and that she

will come to help us on Saturdays when we need volunteers.

„Madam, do you have a notebook for me for school?“, she asked me - and it turned out that she and her sister need each 4 notebooks, a pencil, a rubber and a sharpener. Luckily a friend is collecting all the material that children forget in school and never take it back.

She spoke very quietly. With the scarf and the mask it is difficult to see a person.

„My sister is 6“ she said when I asked her if they also have children at home.

„Yeah, you are also so young.“ I said, and she replied with a shy „thank you“.

She spoke an excellent english and had to leave her home when she was 19.

... some of the people who came yesterday to our distribution. Some human beings. Some forgotten people who try to survive their new life as refugees in a country where politics does not want to have one of them here and tries to show this with it's laws, tries to starve them out... not only on Lesvos island.



24/09/20

To flee tears apart families.

I don't know how long I can stand these stories anymore.

I don't know how long the members of all these families can stand this anymore.

#EuropeMustAct

26/09/20

„I was busy with other things the last week, can you tell me what happened in Moria camp?“ - an international volunteer who is thrilled about „helping refugees“... I mean, I am glad that he asked, but I would be happy if young people also would have enough time and interest to get informed about what is happening in the country where they are staying and to follow up a bit on the current situation in which we are.



27/09/20

We discussed how to proceed with the distributions. We decided to ask the organisation that helps us so often again if they can support us with foodstuff. I felt bad because I know they have so much work, are - like we are - only a few people with huge tasks. I sent a message with a few words - - - and got immediately a reply „great, we wanted to ask you anyhow.“

And only ten minutes later we got money we need for lawyers and to pay some nights for emergency cases who are in the streets. An amazing bugded and someone who will go with us next week to buy foodstuff in large quantities, and on top they will send a palette with other foodstuff and things we need.

Thank you Petra and Tilman to be with us. Thank you [Heimatstern e.V.](#) for supporting us all these years and everytime when we get desperate (as an organisation or personally).

28/09/20

There is that family that popped in last Saturday. They have twice an asylum rejection from the “Hot Spot” in Leros and had to leave the camp there. They found themselves in another town in the north of Greece, the police sent them to Thessaloniki, and there they stayed in the street with the two children. The woman so young...



We could give them immediately food and fruits and water, could organize a one-week-stay in a hotel, they get supported by the Refugee Day Center and then...? There seem to be no place for them. Nowhere. Not in the war in Syria, not in peace in Europe.

So many people, so many of these stories, so much suffering...



29/09/20

3 years they are already here. 4 of the 5 children are going to school and speak Greek. "Will your parents start soon their Greek lessons?", I asked yesterday. "They will not learn Greek." – "Why? You also learned the language." – "They don't need it, we will go to Germany."

I am so tired of that sentence and that argumentation...

30/09/20

Everyone who is coming to us had a life before being "a refugee". As a husband, a daughter, a worker, a student, a house owner.

Today I learned a lot about bees. Before the Daesh burned his beehives, he had 100 of them.

Before they had to flee, everyone of them had something he or she can tell us.

I love to listen and to learn.

And I love to see how someone is flourishing for a moment.



02/10/20 Tag des Flüchtlings - Text für die landkreisweite Kundgebung in Lörrach

Video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jh1etutt5DaplouUyo79TJBa9zhYmIXX/view?usp=sharing>

Wenn ich von meinem Balkon auf die Straße schaue, sehe ich Menschen auf der Flucht. Wenn ich aus dem Haus gehe, sehe ich Menschen auf der Flucht. Warum? Weil ich zwischen den Plätzen, den Bauruinen und den Verstecken im Westen der Stadt und dem Tageszentrum, in dem es Frühstück, Mittagessen, Kleidung, Waschmaschinen und Duschen gibt, im Zentrum, lebe. Und weil ich es wahrnehme und nicht wegsehe.

Woran ich sie erkenne? Sie sind müde, haben meist die falschen Schuhe an und tragen ihr ganzes Hab und Gut im Rucksack und in Plastiktüten. Und weil ich schon seit 5 Jahren mit diesen Menschen arbeite und lebe.

Was ich so sehe?

Ich sehe Menschen. Meist müde Menschen.

Ich sehe Not. Kleine Not. Große Not. Die allergrößte Not.

Ich sehe Mitarbeitende die nicht mehr können, aber müssen. Ich sehe Freiwillige wie mich die nicht mehr können und wollen dass das alles aufhört, die aber solange es nicht aufhört auch nicht aufhören können, weil für sie das gilt, was für jede und jeden gelten sollte: Das könnte ich sein, wenn ich nicht zufällig hier geboren wäre.

Was ich sonst so erlebe?

Unsere Lebensmittel-, Kleidungs- und Windelverteilung 2x in der Woche, bei der Menschen kommen, die seit 4 Monaten keinen Cent mehr von der griechischen Regierung bekommen, weil sie nun Asyl haben und das neue Gesetz es vorsieht dass sie sich nun selbst versorgen (in einem Land in der ökonomischen Krise, in dem die Jugend in andere Länder zieht um eine Zukunft zu haben, in einem Land, in dem sie niemals von staatlicher Seite die Möglichkeit bekamen die Sprache und die Regeln des Landes zu lernen. Dies haben Organisationen versucht zu übernehmen.

Ich erlebe dass Organisationen schließen müssen, weil sie kein Geld mehr haben.

Und ich erlebe immer weniger Freiwillige und immer mehr Arbeit, da die Not nicht weniger sondern immer mehr wird.

Was ich aus Lesbos mitbekomme von Freund*innen und Kolleg*innen?

Mit Billigung der Europäischen Union hat Griechenland ein neues Lager in wenigen Tagen mit einfachsten Mitteln hochgezogen, die Menschen gezwungen dort „einzuziehen“: in den 9 Tagen und Nächten in denen die Menschen die Hoffnung hatten dass nach dem abgebrannten Moria Camp etwas Besseres kommt, ließ die Polizei die NGOs (Nichtregierungsorganisationen) vor Ort nicht zu den Menschen durch um Wasser und Essen zu verteilen und verbreitete zeitgleich dass es im Camp alles gäbe. Dadurch gaben sich die Menschen nach einer Woche geschlagen. Inzwischen wissen wir, dass es dort nun einmal am Tag Essen und einen Liter Wasser gib, Duschen gibt es keine, wenige Chemietoiletten und auch Strom ist nicht vorhanden, die Menschen dürfen zwischen 8 und 18h das Lager verlassen, aber nur eine bestimmte Anzahl und am Sonntag durfte niemand gehen, die Erklärung dafür „Es ist Sonntag“.

Nebenbei gesagt: Auch der Presse wurde ab dem 2./3. Tag der Zugang verwehrt. Die Bilder die Sie kennen durften in der kurzen Zeit gemacht werden, in der die Presse Zugang bis einige Meter vor dem Zaun hatte. Der Zaun ist inzwischen höher.

Viel, viel mehr gibt es zu sagen über Lesbos, Chios, die anderen so genannten „Hotspots“ der Europäischen Union, über den Vktoriaplatz in Athen, wo hunderte Menschen in unwürdigen Zuständen leben und sich zurück nach Moria Camp sehnen, wie viele sagen.

Viel mehr aus Thessaloniki, wo ich seit drei Jahren lebe und wo ich gerade gestern für 50 Unbegleitete Minderjährige T-shirts, Unterwäsche, Rasierer, Rasiergel gepackt habe. Das, was wir gerade in größeren Mengen hatten, denn auch wir helfen ausschließlich durch Spenden. Es sind 14-18-jährige Jungs die

aus Lesbos weg durften und die nun in einem Hotel leben, 3x am Tag Essen aber sonst nichts haben. Nichts.

Niemand will in Griechenland bleiben. Hier gibt es keine Perspektive. Schon kaum für die Einheimischen oder Eingewanderte Europäer*innen wie mich. Alle wollen nach Europa. Nach Deutschland, in die Niederlande, nach Schweden, Belgien... dort wo sie Verwandte haben.

Europa macht einen großen Fehler am Dublin III Gesetz festzuhalten.

Europa zeigt sein unmenschlichstes Gesicht in der Flüchtlingspolitik – und in Griechenland sehen wir das glasklar.

Vor 2 Jahren war ich bei einer Podiumsdiskussion in die Schweiz eingeladen. Damals habe ich als Einleitung gesagt „Wir sind wütend. Und wir sind sehr müde.“

Es hat sich nicht geändert. Nichts ist besser geworden, Nicht für die Menschen auf der Flucht, die ich jeden Tag von meinem Balkon aus, in den Straßen und den Organisationen sehe, und nicht für diejenigen die – bezahlt oder unbezahlt – versuchen ein wenig Menschlichkeit zu zeigen.

Wir sind wütend. Und wir sind müde. Auch heute.



05/10/20

He speaks enough Greek to communicate. "We have been in a camp in a small town. It was not good. We were only speaking arabic all the time. Also in the other camp. When we came to Thessaloniki it was better. My children are going to school. They learned the language. We are with you, with Greek people."

This man, father of 4 children from Kurdish Syria understood what inclusion is and that camps are making everything worse. He likes to be in Thessaloniki. He doesn't want to leave Greece for Europe. "Thessaloniki is good. Only one problem we have: No work."

09/10/20

"Can you cook 50 more portions tomorrow?", she asked me yesterday. "We have new arrivals of people living in the streets. In between families."

...families who are homeless and cannot/don't want to stay in the overcrowded camps around the city... This is happening to those who are "allowed to leave the island": the next desperate situation.





13/10/20

The mother not in good condition. The girl, 10 years young, completely overwhelmed and with her poor Greek not able to translate what the mother expects her to translate. The boy 6 years old and frozen. No eye-contact, no sounds, no reactions.

When I ask the girl to chose a toy, I give him a box with little animals and he starts to play with them immediately.

Still very quiet, still without sounds, but he smiles. He looks at me, even interacts when I try very carefully to get in touch with him, expresses something. This have been the "good 10 minutes" that I try to give people who are in these difficult situations.

...next time his sister!

14/10/20

„How was it for you to be separated from your wife?”, I asked him when he came back yesterday after weeks he spent in a village at the olive-harvest. “It was ok.”, he replied. She was here and I was there, I came twice back. “Yes, I know, but how was it for you, how did you feel?” – a question, I know, very far out of his way of thinking. “It was ok”, he repeated. And added: “At home everything is clean. There not so much, we had to do it.”

...this is when the conversation came to a halt.



18/10/20

„You might like to write this story“, he said.

In his town in Syria, close to the Turkish border, there hasn't been electricity for one year. In the night no one left the house, the dogs became dangerous because they ate the bodies of the deaths in the streets of the town during the first years of war.



He decided to leave Syria and to cross the only 19km away borders to Turkey, where he stayed the next couple of years, always with the hope to go back home.

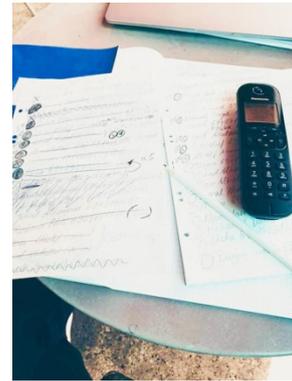
„It was the most beautiful day in my life“, he said, and he told me how it has been when he crossed one night the borders and saw that there have been lights, there has been electricity. „To see these lights after one year has been so beautiful.“ He could not go back home. Also Turkey became dangerous. Now he is in Greece, where he has

electricity every day and night. He is making plans, he does not want to stay, and it's not about the stray dogs here...

20/10/20

Yesterday I sent away 5 people from families who wanted to sign in to take foodstuff, clothes and pampers from us.

They stood there with their refugee papers that every big organisation needs to register them, but that we don't want to see. We want to get in touch with the people, we want to meet them, we want to get them involved, we want to know them, to help each other, not to do a charity program. Of course not everyone is aware, but we strive for that.



How can we get in touch? How can we call them? „Arabi, arabi“ was the only answer to my „Do you speak English? Μιλάτε Ελληνικά;“ How can we communicate if they give not even a try to learn a few words in a language we speak in Europe? How many of these non-conversation-conversations do we have to do on the phone?

It is not nice to send people in need away. But if we want to continue for a longer term, we cannot squander our resources, such as time, energy and the items which we have to organise constantly.



21/10/20

One of our syrian volunteers went with a family to an organisation to get some advice from a lawyer there, concerning their asylum rejection. The advice from the lawyer has been: “They should go to a lawyer”.

I cannot blame them, I know the organisations are overwhelmed with so many refugees in Greece. But... seriously???