



2016

Bilal

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Mohammed Bilal Hashimi

(tent 48)

Interview taped at the Oinofyta Refugee Camp, Greece

Interviewer: Morgan Gibbons. Videographer: Garrett Gibbons

1 July 2016

0:00-3:11 **Bilal tells his story in FARSI. Topic: Why he left Afghanistan to try to go to Germany**

3:11 **The interpreter gives a general translation** of what Bilal has just said. (Bilal, who understands English, nods and interjects quick comments a few times. He seems to agree with the translation.)

I'm a journalist. I live in Kabul. Because I have made some reports [in the media], once the Taliban sent me a letter but I did not care a bit and I continued my job. But recently the Taliban had a bomb blasting at one of the TV channels and they sent a letter to all journalists [saying] they want to kill the journalists at that time. This was the time his family decided he should leave Afghanistan. So because of this he left Afghanistan. He said this was a very long journey, 21 days through Turkey and 20 through Greece. [It was garbled through here with a lot of background noise; I couldn't understand this section clearly.] But by the time he reached the border [between Greece and Macedonia?] it was closed. And he couldn't cross the border. But a smuggler said he could help him go further. He tried ten times to cross the border into Macedonia but each time he was arrested and six more times [he was arrested by] the Greece police. One time he reached [as far as] Bulgaria but the Bulgaria police sent him back. And then he tried to go by train and they put him in the train in a storage place.

[Seemingly eager to tell the punch line himself, Bilal interrupts here and finishes this story in English. **He completes the interview in English** without the aid of the interpreter.]

4:56 But the train didn't go to Germany, it went to a company [in Greece]. And the Greece police opened the door and said, "Welcome to Germany." [Bilal and the interpreter laugh.]

5:09 **Topic: Why he doesn't want to stay in Greece.**

Morgan: "When they sent him back each time, was he being sent back to Greece? Did you try ten times to leave Greece?"

Bilal: Yes, because you know, we can't stay in Greece because there are a lot of people in Greece and no jobs. You know this about the situation in Greece. How can we stay here? Every person like me who comes here, they have lost everything: their money, their home, their cars, their job — everything. They have to work. They have to support their families. I did not come here for enjoy[ment]. Because in Afghanistan I had everything, but I lost it. Not for enjoy[ment], for my safety. But you know, we are not safe in here also [either].

6:00 **Topic: His anger and frustration at how he's been treated since leaving Afghanistan.**

I have to ask one question. Are human rights just for Afghanistan? We[refugees] have human rights in Europe. You can put this in your video. I want to know this. Because I speak about five times with television [journalists] and I ask this question. "Do we have human rights in Europe?" Because in Afghanistan when we felt [we had been treated] bad, everyone said, "It's not human rights. Why did you do this?" But we have human rights in Europe [too]. Are human rights just for Afghanistan? It's not for Europe? Europe makes human rights but now they do not accept this? I think this is just for the poor people of Afghanistan. They can't do this for Afghans. They make human rights for Afghans? Nothing for Europe?

[background chitchat about double standards regarding human rights in Europe.]

7:04 Because human rights said [say] — I know this — human rights say no one can keep an animal for a few days in a jail. But we are human. I was for two months in a place like a jail in Lesbos. We have human rights in here [gesturing suggests the camp]. We are not animals and we are not criminals. We are humans! And we think there are human rights in Europe. For that we came to Europe. And I think there are no human rights in Europe. And you can write this in your video, also. We have human rights in Europe.

7:59 I want to see this in your video, please, because we have human rights in Europe. Because it's a good question. Because in Afghanistan, [if] the Taliban do something, they all come. We have human rights. When the government of Afghanistan do something with a criminal, the human rights comes and says, "It's not human rights. Why are you doing this?" But they do something with criminals, not for all in Afghanistan. The government takes a criminal [and puts him in jail] the human rights says, "Why?"

But here we were two months in a jail. We have human rights in Europe. If you are a criminal, they have to decide. You are told you have to be in jail for one year, for two year, but in Europe, you have to wait [for a decision to be made?]. In here also [again indicating the camp]. If you want to ask something, they have only one answer, "You have to wait." They don't say for how much time you have to wait. They just say, "Wait."

9:10 **Topic: Time spent in [violent] Moria refugee camp on Lesbos**

Morgan: "How long have you been in Greece?"

Bilal: "About three months."

Morgan: During that time you've tried to leave ten times?"

Bilal: "Yes"

Morgan: You've been active in trying to [?? garbled]

Bilal: "No, for two months I was in Moria [refugee camp] but you know, Moria is not safe. Every night there is a fight in Moria. For that [reason] I left Moria. And I come to here. One month ago. [See Associated Press article about Moria camp below.]

Interpreter: They don't provide him with documents.

Bilal: I didn't receive anything. I came without papers. Because when I go to the police — and I told the police — I need my papers. I am not staying here. But the police said, "No., there is no paper." I said, "I will go without papers."

Morgan: "How did you get out of Lesbos?"

Bilal: Lesbos was like a jail. There was a fence. [He makes a motion showing he was surrounded.] I came from outside the camp. The fence was breaking. I came outside the camp and went up with the sheep. I can run so fast. I was on the national team of running of Afghanistan. When I saw the police come this way [he gestures one direction], then I go the other [indicating a different direction] side of the ship. And I came here. When I was at the border I wanted to be smuggled out. The smuggler took my money and then I couldn't find the smuggler. I go to police and I told him I don't have any papers. I need papers. They said, "You have to go to this office." When I went to that office, they said, "You have to go to another office for the paper." After that, I decided I didn't need the paper.

Interpreter: So they went [back] to the police to be arrested. They had no money.

Bilal: I went five times to the police to arrest me. But they said, "You have to be in the park. If you are there, we can arrest you."

Topic: The high monetary cost of being a refugee.

Morgan: Are you married?

Bilal: No, I am single.

Morgan: How many single men are in the camp?

Bilal: I think twelve.

Morgan: We haven't interviewed that many who are not married.

Bilal: They come in here alone. Because it's a problem that my mother and my sisters are also in Afghanistan. They are not safe in Afghanistan. I came here alone because we don't have a lot of money. When the border was open you could come with about \$2,000 from Turkey to Germany. But now you have to pay 10,000 Euro from Turkey to Germany. I think Europe loves the border just for this. [garbled] It's just making a way to funnel money to smugglers. Because when a smuggler takes our money, he will use it in that country.

Topic: Why he feels he can't take asylum in Greece

They close the border for what? And now they say, "You have to take asylum in Greece and then we will take you to another country." If they want to take a person to another country, why don't they open the border? They helped people in Greece. Refugees could go by [using] money. But when they close the border, why do they say this? — that we will take you to another country? It is not true. I know this. Because when they want refugees, they have to open the borders. They close the borders for refugees but now they say take asylum in Greece and then we will take you to another country. Do you believe that? It's not true. Because it's a problem. When you take asylum in Greece, you can't take asylum in another country and you have to stay in Greece. And nobody can stay for a long time in Greece. You know this. They have to go back to Afghanistan. You have just one chance. They just want to send these people back to Afghanistan, nothing else. Because I read this just now. When you take asylum in Greece, you can't go to other countries. When you go with a smuggler to another country, they will send you back to Greece. And this time, there's a lot of people who are taking asylum in Greece. You have to go back to Afghanistan. Because they have lost all of their money here. What else can they do? Without money. There's a lot of families. They have children. What can they do without money? If you don't have any way to get money, you have to go back to Afghanistan.

[background chitchat between interpreter and Morgan about this topic]

You can't stay in Greece. Without a job. Without money. Without school. Without university. I have to continue my lessons. I have to learn, but how? I am 23. What can I do here? Everyone says, "You have to take asylum in Greece. But what can we do? What will be our future? I don't think we have a future here. But in Afghanistan you know you will die. One day you know you will die in Afghanistan. But here you know you will die.

That's the situation in Europe. And they make this asylum or sending people to other countries it's just words. Because every people want to go with smugglers. They do this [didn't understand this phrase].

Topic: Syrian Refugees take precedence over Afghan refugees when processing asylum papers.

It's just for Syrians. Every time it's first a Syrian. When you ask someone why it's first Syria, they say Syria is at war. Is Afghanistan safe? Last night they killed 45 Afghans. It's safe? They are all [?]. They killed him with a bomb blast. How can we say Afghanistan is safe?

7 hurt in refugee camp fight on Greek island of Lesbos

Published September 05, 2016

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ATHENS, Greece – Greek authorities say seven people have been injured in a brawl at a camp for refugees and other migrants on the island of Lesbos, where overcrowding and a slow asylum process has fueled tension.

Police say five teenagers and two adults required treatment for light injuries.

The violence between Syrian and Pakistani teenagers, in which adults became involved, started early Monday at the Moria camp, where more than 3,000 people live. No arrests were reported.

About 5,400 people live in Lesbos' camps, which were designed for 3,500. The island is very close to Turkey and a main destination for migrants seeking a better life in Europe.

Camp residents are awaiting processing of their asylum bids. If these are rejected, they face deportation back to Turkey under this year's EU-Turkey deal.