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020 Hamed

Oinofyta Refugee Camp, Greece

1 July 2016

Hamed: My name is **Hamed**. I live in Afghanistan, in Kabul. I have my M.A. in international relations and diplomacy. I studied in Kabul University. I have been working with the U.S. Army and was an interpreter and a consultant to the troops. The basic job for us was to make sure all the Afghan army had good consultants so they know how to do their jobs in very effective ways.

Since the troops and I have left Afghanistan, the lives of the interpreters were in danger so we couldn't live anymore in Afghanistan. We were very well known and many times we had been threatened by the terrorist troops with the Taliban. They knew us; all the interpreters working with the U.S. were in danger. I felt I was not in a very comfortable life mode in Afghanistan. I couldn't send my wife or my daughter outside of my house because I always had tension that if they went out, they wouldn't come back. Everybody knows about me. That's why we decided to come in the safest place so right now I'm here in Greece.

I'm here with my family, my wife and my daughter.

I came only with my wife and my daughter. The rest of my family is still in Afghanistan. They are in danger, too, because they are *my* family. Unfortunately, I could not do anything for them and save my life, too. But I am thinking of them, of how I can help them in the future, to make sure they are rescued from all those tensions.

What I want for those who see this video is that all these people escaped their country, their homeland, and they left their parents and whatever they had only because people who felt they were very important in their positions — the politicians — from all these countries came to our country and destroyed it. They made all the people homeless and jobless and their families have been killed in the conflict.

They [refugees] wanted to come to a safe place to experience a better life but right now they see that every door is closed behind them. This is a shame for them.

Because of them [leaders in other countries] we came here. We came here to say, "We need your help." All of this was done to our country. We are not guilty. We are at the mercy of corrupt politicians in other countries — Afghanistan, Syria, and other countries. We are not a part of those things happening in Afghanistan.

We came here [to Greece] as humans. And we need your help. Please consider the refugees and try to save them from the situation they are facing. If I ask you to come — the people who have the responsibility for all of this — and see the level of life for the refugees, and consider your own families living the same lifestyle, what will you think? What will you say? It's very difficult for them. If you cannot see others as refugees, why are you doing this in other countries? Why are you making war in Afghanistan, or in Syria, or in any other country? Try to save the people because they do not belong to the corrupt government or other terrorist groups. They are people; they are humans!

What I want from your organization [TSOS] is to try to record the words of the refugees so the rest of the world can understand what refugees say, what refugees feel, and the difficulties we face right now.

I came from Kabul to Iran (because we have a border with Iran) and this is the regular way for every refugee to pass. We had the same experience as well. So we came to Iran and we were there for one week to make [connection] with some smugglers, to find them. We wanted to talk with them so they could take us from the Iran border to Turkey.

It was a very difficult situation for my family because we had to pass two or three times across a very big river in very cold weather. I had my small daughter with me and my wife. And there were many people who were old and young. The ladies, the men, the women, the children, the small babies, also. All this way coming to Turkey was a very difficult way. I cannot tell you; I cannot remember what I had to pass through.

And then we came to Turkey and we were one month in Istanbul to find other smugglers. And they took us to the boat. And they were not human at all. They don't understand the value of life for a refugee. They simply make a lot of money and take us to a very big risk. We paid for our death. We well knew that if we took this boat across the sea to Greece, we could die. But we paid for that because we didn't have any choice; we didn't have any option.

So we were in the 7-meter boat, more than 75 people. It was a very big risk for everybody in that boat. But fortunately, it was like a miracle. We were safe. We were rescued from crossing that sea boarder and we came to Greece. I was in Pireus Port for 25 days, then we were transferred by the Greek government to this camp. I've been here for two-and-a-half months.

You cannot imagine [how dangerous it was] with more than 75 people in a small boat carrying all their stuff with them. It was night. We were put into the boat at 9:30 into the sea. It was very difficult. All this way I kept praying for my family. And I imagined what I would do if the boat collapsed. What would I do? How many people could I save? My family and my daughter but I couldn't save the other people. I was alone. I [probably] couldn't even save my own daughter, my own family. It was very difficult. Very, very difficult.

Some people who I know right now have some problems, psychological problems, when they remember all of these bad experiences — especially crossing the sea border. Now they have mental problems. Remembering all of those bad experiences make us very upset. It had a very bad effect in my mind. I try to avoid [remembering] all of this and take it easy because this is life. We took risks, and we were rescued, and we are safe. This was my destiny. This was my destiny. I could have been killed but right now I am safe here.

There are some programs right now for refugees. We are not yet sure which kind of programs can be done because of the politics for at any time [the programs] can be changed. I was trying to go to Canada. This was a hope for me and my family. If I could go to Canada, it will be great. I could give a better life to my family, to my wife, especially. To my daughter. I don't want my daughter to live the same lifestyle as her parents lived. I want her to have a better and different lifestyle.

Other than Canada, if a [country's] border is open for refugees, I would like to go to any country. It doesn't matter. I just want to go where it is safe, where my family is safe so I don't have any more tension about what is going to happen to me [and my family].

As I told you before, I have been in this camp for two-and-a-half months. Maybe I can say you can find this camp is the best camp. As best as possible. The rest of the camps don't have all of the facilities we have here. But we didn't come for the facilities we have here — to have the school, the good food, what they are giving right now to the refugees. We didn't come for all of that. We didn't plan to stay in Greece. We wanted to go farther. To go to a country where we can start a new life, a new destiny. But right now we are trapped in Greece. We are trapped in this camp. Nobody hears our voice. Nobody.

There are organizations for refugees. I know them because I talk to them everyday because I work for them because of the refugees' problems. I have been in a conference for the last two days in Athens because of the refugees' problems. I had a speech there also. I told them the same thing. We didn't come for all of this in Greece.

You are paid for the refugees, but you are not doing anything for us. Simply you are coming and taking some notes — “What's your problem? And all these things.” — but once you go, nothing is happening to us. This is really not good. They shouldn't cheat the refugees because they know — they themselves know what is going to happen to their life. They will stand until they feel they don't have any hope anymore so they can return us back to our homeland by voluntarily returning back to Afghanistan. Once they see nothing happens to them, and once they see they have lost their powers, their strengths, they will go back. Almost all of the refugees are disappointed by this situation. They're getting tired. It's very difficult for them. And what I will say, if possible, if they don't want refugees to come forward, to come to central Europe, that doesn't matter. But at least give them a better living standard, better salaries, better health services, better education. Provide education for their families.

We had been told that one or two months later asylum officers would come to Greece asking questions and solving problems. We were waiting for them until two months and they didn't come. They make promises but they don't do it. They delay coming to the campus and this is not good at all. They [the refugees] have hope. Don't try to break their hope — the refugees' hope. This is the only thing they have in their hearts and their minds — only hope! That's it.

[Long pause here where **Hamed** bows his head in frustration.]

Rather than hope they don't have anything else. Every day they keep praying [but] nobody hears their voice, except God. They are still waiting.

Even me, when I see my daughter in this situation, I sometimes think, “What is going to happen to my daughter?” She is now two-years-old. If she gets older and we are still here — she is growing up and we are still here — there is no point. It makes me upset. Upset. My wife also.

If I see other refugee's children playing in this desert [he gestures towards the hot, dusty compound where the interview is taking place] — having no entertainment, no proper life, water supply, a problem which we now have — but still we have hope. With all these difficulties and problems we still have hope. And we will keep this hope until we die. Here or in any other country. Because we believe God. We don't expect other humans to do something for us. We have God. He will do something for us.