



# Out of Place / Far from Here

خارج المكان / بعيداً عن هنا

The Tower Hamlets Creative Writing Competition  
2016





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## Introduction

The 45 stories and poems presented here were written by the winners of the 2016 Tower Hamlets Creative Writing Competition. We would like to thank the generosity Arab British Council for making this edition of the book possible.

The theme of the 2016 competition was *refugees* and, in partnership with the HEC Global Learning Centre and the Syria Nonviolence Movement, pupils from Syrian schools submitted their work to the competition, writing about their own experiences of the conflict. Children's author Nadine Kaadan selected the Syrian stories that made the shortlist for the competition. The winning poems and stories written by Tower Hamlets pupils were selected by author and winner of the 2015 Tower Hamlets Book Award, Kim Slater and represent 30 primary and secondary schools in the borough.

Five years ago, we published our first creative writing competition, titled *Crossing the Line*. Just as here, the young writers then were inspired by events of the day, events such as the student riots against tuition fees, ongoing conflict abroad, and the rise of a coalition that would evolve into the government that, at the time of writing this introduction, has created great and terrible divisions within Britain. Our own national identity has been called into question and *Out of Place* has suddenly taken on a deeper meaning for many.

The final story in *Crossing the Line* is titled *Crossing the Line when nothing is impossible*. I chose this as the final piece, not because it was the highest placed, or the lowest, but because it was a message of hope in uncertain times. It is a theme shared by so many stories and poems collected here. That no matter where we find ourselves, there is always, and must always be, hope.





*The Tower Hamlets Creative Writing Competition is an annual event for schools in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for students aged nine years to sixteen. Conceived in 2004 by Tower Hamlets Gifted and Talented strand of the Excellence in Cities programme, it has been run by Tower Hamlets Schools Library Service since 2011 with the aims of promoting wider reading and literacy, and to encourage young people to express themselves through the written word.*

*For more information about the library service and the competition, visit;  
[www.towerhamlets-sls.org.uk](http://www.towerhamlets-sls.org.uk)*

## Tower Hamlets Schools Library Services



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Learning in a global context



الحراك السلمى السوري  
Bizava Aştiyane Sûri  
Syrian Nonviolence Movement

المركز  
العربي  
البريطاني  
The  
Arab  
British  
Centre





## Foreword

Time and time again, research has proven that children's writing improves drastically when they are involved in deeper-level thinking around global issues, whether it's acting for the environment, considering the structures that perpetuate global poverty, or contemplating what should and shouldn't be a child's right.

Today, the conflict in Syria and the ensuing movement of people fleeing their homes to safety away from violence and conflict has triggered considerable global debate. Out of Place/Far from Here is a creative writing project that invited children in Syria and the UK to take part in the debate by voicing their thoughts and feelings through creative writing.

The resulting pieces reflect a wisdom and empathy from our children that we adults would do well to learn from.

*Alia Alzougbi*  
*HEC Global Learning Centre*





## **Please let us stay**

by Tazbid Chowdhury  
*Halley Primary School*

The war started and people are dying  
I ran and ran with my family... crying  
Without a bye or a note  
I left my home on a boat

The rage of the tempest grew strong  
The wind sang its deathly song  
The sea decided to take over  
And the boat rocked and tipped over

My sister stolen by the sea  
My father died trying to flee  
Separated, we have arrived  
Only those who have survived

Hundreds and thousands in the camp  
Cold, crowded, smelly and damp  
We have nothing, no clothes or food  
Everyone is in a sombre mood

I close my eyes and remember days  
Before the skies was ablaze  
Happiness, smiles, food and shelter  
Now a different country we enter

I am what they call a refugee  
Please hear my cry, hear my plea  
We do not choose to live this way  
We have no choice, so please let us stay





# Refugee

by Penny Gould  
*Chisenhale Primary School*

His skin was a murky sky of black  
His eyes were smoking craters  
His blood was the tears that streaked towards the soil  
His hair was a tangled mess of the ruins of his beloved country  
His heart was the burden of depression  
His arms were the limp bodies of his family  
His nails were the gates that ground into the earth separating  
the past from  
the present  
His shocked expression was the stunned silence that succeeded  
bombing  
His teeth were the grinding mass of tired bodies desperately  
trudging forward  
to survival





# How I wish...

By Tanzila Ahmed

*Blue Gate Fields Junior School*

Yummy dinners such as roasts with delicious drinks to wash it  
down with...

How I wish I had scrumptious foods to eat.

Blankets and pillows a shield of comfort, security to protect  
me...

How I wish I had comfort and a shield of safety...

Attending school, getting good grades and a scholarship, a job.

Earning money.

How I wish I had a chance to go to school...

A home to live in.

How I wish I had a home...

My family the best jewel of all now breaking to nothing...

How I wish I had a family...





# Out of Place

By Nazifa Begum  
*Halley Primary School*

I was forced to move here with my brothers and sisters,  
In a land full of strangers,  
It was a horrible sight to see,  
As everyone was different from me,  
I spent most of my life in Syria,  
But I have made a difference here,  
I feel like I have been put behind bars,  
That will block my way to freedom,  
I feel like ink in a pen starting to run out,  
As soon as I run out I will pass away,  
Just like my parents ran away,  
I feel that I've done something wrong,  
In this city where I think I have broken the law,  
It's all in a huge sore painning through my spine,  
Although I feel just fine,  
I don't feel I'm committed to this place,  
Where nobody knows me,  
All I have is brothers and sisters,  
I wish somebody would take my siblings and me home,  
It feels weird not seeing my parents,  
Even if I do live in a house of rents,  
It would be a wonderful sight to see,  
As someone would take care of me,  
I feel all this because,  
I AM A REFUGEE!





# What is the point of Racism?

By Isobel McGrath  
*Chisenhale Primary School*

What's the point of racism we are all the same  
Just different languages, different colours  
Who cares?  
We're all on the same page  
We're all from the same place, born in the same bed  
Japanese, Portuguese and Arabic  
All the different languages that make up us  
We're all different and that is what makes us the same

Everyone's part of the jigsaw  
Don't matter whether you're rich or poor  
Doesn't matter about the colour of your skin  
It's one world  
We all live in

Children falling off the slide  
Bodies being washed by the tide





# Refugee

By Elysia Morton

*Sir John Cass Foundation Primary School*

A threatening wave explodes.  
The white foam follows as a blank canvas,  
swirled paint in a maelstrom.

A dirty puddle emerges from shades of grey,  
Brown and black. Lost lives lie in colours;  
Sunset bleeds till sunrise,  
When a bright star glows in morning light.

It gleams, soon fades into blue.  
The reflection drowns.  
The calm ocean drifts, no sign of a ripple,  
Everything is wiped clean





# You Never Forget

by Rojin Keefe

*Guardian Angels Primary School*

You never forget  
The bombs which wreck your house  
The sounds which make you feel as small as a mouse.

You never forget  
The thousands of tears falling down your face  
The sadness you feel escaping to a new place.

You never forget  
Stowing away on vans  
The refugee camp  
Littered with empty cans

You never forget  
The happiness you feel  
Finding a new home with a hot meal.





# My Refugee Poem

by Shamia Akhtar  
*John Scurr Primary School*

I am a girl  
I am a refugee  
I'm leaving Syria  
Why is it me?

We walk past damage  
We hike past broken houses  
To this huge world  
We seem like mice

We walk, we walk, we walk  
But our destiny doors are out of reach  
Our city is being destroyed  
Like blood sucked by a leech

Where shall we go?  
Where shall we stay:  
We've walked for miles  
And our home is far away.

There is no passage to freedom  
Only a big wall in our way  
There's no weakness to it  
Only if we say:

“Let us go  
Let us be free  
There's a world out there  
Waiting for you and me  
So help us refugees, help us please.”





## Make a Change

by Ariana Dewhurst  
*Globe Primary School*

Millions a day dying,  
Only the fortunate surviving,  
Look how lucky you are,  
Your are not one of the dead bodies lying on tar,  
Hiding away from life,  
Whilst some others stand up and fight,  
Try to make the world a better place,  
All people's lives exist for a reason and we all deserve rights,  
Why don't those cruel humans understand,  
And lend those in need a helping hand,  
I thought that war was over,  
But now other lives are being run over.

Have you heard of a girl named Anne Frank,  
Who wrote a diary whilst hiding away in a gloomy, hide-away  
tank,  
When all she wanted was peace and harmony,  
And all to have happiness and equality,  
Well, why can't you make a change,  
Make everyone feel unique and special, not strange,  
Stand up for yourself and make people see,  
Whether you lived through World War Two or are a Syrian  
Refugee,  
Do something and change the world overnight,  
So that when everyone wakes up, they will have all their  
deserved life and rights





# Out of Place

by Fahmida Naima  
*St Paul's Whitechapel Primary School*

Refugees living in the dark,  
Nowhere to hide,  
No one to turn to,  
Sailing off in destructed boats  
Feeling cold with barely any coats.  
Tears trickling down their eyes  
Saying their final sad goodbyes.

Arriving at their journey's end  
Ecstatic is the feeling to describe  
But no cheering do they hear  
Just broken hearts left to mend.  
No space is left for the 'others'

However, they should not be known as 'others'  
But... as one of us.  
Knowing that we're safe in this country  
Not complaining to their mothers.

They deserve to feel secure here  
In a warm and lovely home  
NOT on unsafe streets  
Where anything can happen  
If YOU were a refugee  
What would you do?





## A Child's Dream

by Yousif Al-Kaha

*Al-Noor School*

Ah there are so many dreams that I have! What do I first start with? My dream for the electricity to return or for delicious food or beautiful clothes or large schools. Where do I begin writing and which one will I choose ?!

I am confused so will ask my father, “which dream shall I start writing, in your opinion?” He said “about clothes”. I was not convinced, it true that clothing is important in my life and I dream of having a skinny blue jeans and green sweater and a new sports shoe and the most important thing, socks that are of excellent type and does not get ripped so that my mother does not have to sew it every day. Beautiful clothes are a dream but there are more important things than that.

I asked my mother which dream should I write about? She said ”my son, when you were little you used to dream of the day when you will go to school, dreaming of the beautiful schools and large classes, new books, uniform dress and the basketball court and the teachers who work diligently and conscientiously”, mum stopped and went silent, lost in her thoughts. I said “What is wrong mum?” She said, “we dreamed of a better life for our children than the one we had our but everything is worse, pray to God to alter the course to a better one.

I went to my brother who was near my age and I said to him “What do you dream? Do you dream of new clothes or big school?”. He said to me “be quiet, everything you said is beautiful, but the most beautiful thing is tasty food and the worst thing, my brother is hunger which has stopped us from sleeping, as we subconsciously dream of a loaf of bread. Write





my brother about bread, rice and sweets, write my brother about the chicken that we have not eaten in a long time”. He then started reminding me of a long list of delicious cuisines, then my little sister came and agreed with our brother in everything he said, adding “do not forget the fried potatoes, oil, thyme and she began listing cuisines too. Yes, they are right, we children wake up in the morning and can’t find a loaf of bread to eat, food is important for humans.

My sister sat and said “write about the electricity that was cut off and did not return, I do not like the dark, I like to watch television. It has been a long while since we last watched ‘Tom and Jerry’ and ‘birds of paradise’”.

I fell into further confusion about what to write? Where do I start? All that has been mentioned are important and everything has become a dream that we the children have. But the biggest dream that we plead from God to grant us is to bring victory to us, and keep the aircraft and missiles away so that we live in peace.

*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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## حلم طفل بقلم يوسف الكحال

أه ما أكثر أحلامي! بماذا أبدأ أولاً؟ حلمي بإعادة الكهرباء أم بالطعام الشهى أم الملابس الجميلة أم المدارس الكبيرة. من أين أبدأ في الكتابة وأي واحدة أختار؟! أنا محتار سوف أسأل أبي، عن أي حلم أبدأ في الكتابة برأيك؟ قال: عن الملابس. لم أقتنع صحيح أن اللباس مهم في حياتي وأحلم أن يكون عندي بنطال جينز أزرق وكنزة خضراء وحذاء رياضي جديد وأهم شيء الجوارب أن تكون من نوع ممتاز لا تنفتق حتى لا تقوم أمي كل يوم في خياطتها، اللباس الجميل حلم ولكن هناك أشياء أهم من ذلك.

سألت أمي عن أي حلم أكتب؟ قالت: يا ولدي وأنت صغير كنت تحلم باليوم الذي سوف تذهب فيه إلى المدرسة، تحلم بالمدارس الجميلة والصفوف الكبيرة والكتب الجديدة واللباس الموحد وعن ملعب كرة السلة والمعلمين الذين يعملون بجد وأمانة، فسكنت أمي وشردت فقلت: ما بك يا أمي؟ قالت: كنا نحلم بحياة أفضل لأبنائنا من حياتنا ولكن كل شيء أسوء، ندعو الله أن يبديل الحال بأحسن حال. ذهبت إلى أخي القريب من عمري وقلت له: بماذا تحلم؟ هل تحلم بالملابس الجديدة أم بالمدارس الكبيرة؟ فقال لي: اسكت كل ما قللته جميل ولكن أجمل شيء هو الطعام اللذيذ، وأبشع شيء يا أخي هو الجوع الذي جعلنا لا ننام، ونحن نحلم أحلام اليقظة برغيف الخبز. اكتب يا أخي عن الخبز والأرز والحلويات، اكتب يا أخي عن الفروج الذي لم نأكله منذ زمن طويل. وبدأ يذكر لي قائمة طويلة من المأكولات اللذيذة، وجاءت أختي الصغيرة وهي توافق أخي في كل ما يقوله وتقول: لا تنس البطاطا المقلية والزيت والزعتر وبدأت أختي تعد المأكولات أيضاً. نعم معهم حق نحن الأطفال نستيقظ صباحاً ولا نجد رغيف خبز نأكله، الطعام مهم للإنسان.

جلست أختي وقالت: اكتب عن الكهرباء التي انقطعت ولم تعد بعد، فأنا لا أحب العتمة وأحب أن أتفرج على التلفاز. مضى وقت طويل ولم نشاهد توم وجيري وطيور الجنة. لقد وقعت في حيرة من أمري عن ماذا أكتب؟ ومن أين أبدأ؟ كل ما ذكر مهم وكل شيء أصبح حلماً نحلم به نحن الأطفال. لكن الحلم الكبير الذي نرجو من الله أن يحققه أن ينصرنا ويبعد عنا الطائرات والقذائف ونعيش بسلام.



# Refugee Story

by Fergus O'Sullivan

*St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School*

Hi my name is Zack and I'm a refugee from Syria. This story is about how I moved from Aleppo to London.

One dark, stormy evening I was sitting in my bedroom throwing and catching my worn out and battered ball, it was a goodbye present from my father. He had to leave for work, I never see him but we write letters to each other. I cherish the ball and never let it out of my sight. All of a sudden I heard three loud bangs on the door then I heard footsteps, when I went downstairs I saw the door in pieces on the floor. I walked into the kitchen and saw my younger brother and sister and mother huddled in a corner, my mother was protecting my brother and sister from some strange men. I heard my name being called by my mother so I went to join her in the corner. The strange men forced us out onto the street. Me, my brother and sister were crying but they were crying because it was scary, I was crying because my ball was still in the house.

Every house that was evacuated was burnt down, the strange men told us there had been terrorists attacking people in my neighbourhood so we all had to go to a refugee camp in France.

I looked out at the blue sea for hours and hours until I saw land. The journey was terrifying, I think one man died, but my mum wouldn't tell me what happened. We had arrived!!! We docked then we were sent off the ferry. We had no car, money, food or water and we had to leave all our possessions in the house which was burnt down. We had no shoes on our feet. We set off to walk to the refugee camp. It took about three days. It





was freezing and damp. My feet were sore and bleeding. When we got there the man in charge said this is where my father was. I recognised my father immediately we were all ecstatic until the next morning my father was gone. My mother said he had to go to London in England.

We lived in the camp for three months before we heard from him. The camp was terrible, dirty, cold and frightening. I missed my beautiful clean home, my friends, my battered ball and my dad. Then one morning, a man called into our tent to say that our father had arranged with some dodgy men who were going to take us to England in a dinghy. The journey was distressing. I thought we were going to die, but we kept going because we wanted to see my father. I knew he would have found a job and a lovely home for us to live in.

How wrong I was.

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## قصة لجوء

بقلم فيرغس أوسليفان

مرحباً اسمي زاك وأنا لاجئ من سوريا، وهذه قصة انتقالي من حلب إلى لندن. في ليلة مظلمة وعاصفة، كنت جالساً في غرفتي ألعب بكرتي القديمة المتهترئة... هدية وداع من أبي. كان عليه أن يذهب إلى عمله، لا أراه كثيراً ولكننا نتبادل الرسائل. أحب كرتي كثيراً ولا أدعها تغيب عن نظري. فجأة، سمعت ضربات ثلاث قوية على الباب تبعها وقع أقدام. وحين نزلت إلى الطابق السفلي وجدت الباب محطماً... ذهبت إلى المطبخ فرأيت أمي وأخي الصغير مختبئين في الركن. كانت أمي تحمي أخي وأختي من رجال غرباء، وسمعتها تنادينني باسمي فالتصقت بها في ذات الركن. أرغمتنا الغرباء على الخروج إلى الشارع. كنا جميعاً نبكي، أختي وأخي من شدة الخوف، أما أنا فكنت أبكي على خسارة كرتي.

أحرق كل منزل تم إخلاؤه. أخبرنا الرجال الغربيين أن إرهابيين هجموا على حيناً، أجبرنا هذا على الرحيل إلى مخيم لاجئين في فرنسا.

حدقت طويلاً في زرقة البحر قبل أن أرى اليايسة. كانت الرحلة مرعبة. أعتقد أن رجلاً ما قد مات ولكن رفضت أمي أن تخبرني بما حدث. وصلنا أخيراً!!! رسا القارب ومن ثم أرسلنا إلى العبارة. لم يكن لدينا سيارة أو مال أو طعام أو ماء. تركنا وراءنا جميع ممتلكاتنا في بيتنا المحترق. بلا أحذية تحمي أقدامنا مشينا ثلاثة أيام إلى المخيم، كان الطقس بارداً والرطوبة عالية تشنجت قدمي ونزفتنا. وحين أخبرنا المسؤول بوجود أبي في المخيم. تعرفت عليه مباشرة ولكن فرحنا لم يدم أكثر من سواد الليل، لأنه غادر في الصباح مضطراً بحسب قول أمي إلى مدينة لندن في إنجلترا. ثلاثة أشهر مرت قبل أن نسمع أخباره.

كان المخيم وسخاً وبارداً ومخيفاً. افتقدت منزلي الجميل النظيف وأصدقائي وكرتي المتهترئة وأبي. وفي صباح أحد الأيام، دخل رجل خيمتنا ليخبرنا أن أبي رتب مع بضعة رجال مربيين سفرنا إلى إنجلترا في قارب. كانت الرحلة متعبة. كنت أعتقد أننا سوف نموت في أي لحظة، ولكن شوقنا إلى أبي شد من عزمنا. كنت متأكداً أنه قد وجد عملاً وبيتاً جميلاً لنا لنعيش فيه.

كم كنت مخطئاً.

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*



## How?

by Oumou Gassama

*Canon Barnett Primary School*

Walking, walking, walking. How much more of it? I just can't take it. It's like we've been robbed of our lives. I feel like we've been walking from one end in the world to the other.

It's so frustrating. How could this be happening to us? (Me & my family). One day I am a normal school kid, the next I am a helpless boy who has to escape this dastardly country because of war. It's just so confusing.

It's really sad for me because I see lots of people dead on the road. Some I even know. It breaks me piece by piece whenever I leave a person on the street. They need hospitality they need love. Then may be just maybe they will survive. It's not fair I need hospitality I need love. We are on war because selfish leaders are on war with each other not us. Them. I bet every soldier in that field have no problem at all with each other. They are just fighting for the sake of their leader. They just don't realize they are ruining people's lives. How could this be happening?

I feel like crying as I see children, grannies, mums, dads, sisters and brothers all running away of what fate has brought us. What has become of us? What is left of us?  
I hear gunshot to my right.  
My name is being called.  
I stagger for a bit.  
Blackness.



## كيف؟

بقلم اومو بن اساني دجايي جاسامه

نمشي ونمشي ونمشي، هل من نهاية لهذا المسير؟ لم أعد أستطيع أن أتحمل، كأن حياتنا قد سرقت. يبدو لي أننا قطعنا الكون مشياً...  
كم هو مثير للقهر. لماذا يحدث لنا هذا؟ البارحة كنت طالباً واليوم أصبحت صبيّاً عاجزاً عن الهروب من بلاد مرعبة بسبب الحرب. كم هذا محير.  
إنني حزين لأنني رأيت الكثير يموتون في الطرقات، وآخرون يحتاجون الاهتمام والحب، قد ينجون ربما.  
لا عدل في كل هذا فأنا أيضاً أحتاج للاهتمام وأحتاج الحب. هذه ليست حربي، إنها حرب قادة أنانيين بين بعضهم البعض. أعتقد أن لا مشكلة بين الجنود أنفسهم في ساحة القتال، بل هم ينفذون أوامر قادتهم. ولا يعلمون ربما أنهم يخربون حياة الآخرين، كيف يحصل شيء كهذا؟ أريد أن أبكي حين أرى الأطفال والآباء والأمهات والجداات والأخوة كلهم يهربون من قدرهم. ماذا أصبحنا؟ ماذا تبقى مننا؟

أسمع طلقات نار إلى يميني.  
أحداً ينادي اسمي.  
أتردد لبرهة.  
عتمة.

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*



# The Refugees

by Sabrina Denbri

*Halley Primary School*

Syria was a lovely country before the war. Samya used to live in Syria. Before the war started she lived a normal life with her family, like any other child. The week before she turned nine, her mum planned the party for her, made the cake, invited most of the family and then they started to celebrate, but suddenly a tragic thing happened. Before she blew out her nine candles, a rock dropped on her house. Unfortunately one member of the family died, and some got injured. Luckily, some of the family were not harmed. She was shocked as well as her parents. They could not sleep that night because of the fears and dangers that could occur to them.

The next day, Samya didn't say a word until the afternoon. But her parents were in so much shock that they locked the doors, every one of them, closed the windows and they packed up, called their friends and set off. Sweating like giant drops of tears running down their cheeks, they heard screams and shouts and lastly... They heard heavy breathing. They felt blood silently splash on their hands, saw the remains of innocent children and adults who got shot without any mercy. They drove behind the houses so they cannot be caught. Their friend was shivering, like he wore summer clothes for the winter. As they were inside the car, a lemonade stand standing in front of them. His dad drooled. Of course they went because it was a long journey. So they sprinted, bought it, got in the car, set off. They all had the same amount but Dad cried because he thought he had something else, like a fruity apple, he cried. Samya looked then ignored. Then Mum saw and STARTED. Then he stopped like he was changing his feelings in a flash. But suddenly a bullet hit the car door. Samya fainted. Her





parents go so worried that they just hugged her tight. Luckily it was just a concussion. She woke up a few minutes later. Samya's Mum and Dad were relieved that Samya was safe.

They were three miles away from their goal. Samya's mum was shivering and Samya's Dad was in pain, and Samya was in tears to leave her home country, so they tried to cheer her up by playing a game of I Spy, but that didn't work. They were still in despair. They felt like a knife that was stabbed in their hearts. Now, two dastardly miles away from the enormous airport. The clock was ticking, it struck twelve, and that's when trouble REALLY started. A soldier found them in their friend's car, so he shot the bullet in their friend's car's window. Samya's Dad hugged his wife and Samya tight.

Their eyes turned red, but they didn't stop moving. Luckily they dodged all the bullets and nobody died. One mile left, they all shouted in glee, but their glee stopped. Still more bullets heading to them. But their friend slept, the car stopped. One soldier got full aim, luckily Samya's dad could drive, so the put his friend in the back and drove. They got four tickets (one for his friend) go on the plane, and flew to the place we call home today.

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بقوة. صارت عيونهم حمراء من شدة البكاء، لكنهم لم يتوقفوا بل واصلوا السير. ولحسن حظهم، استطاعوا المراوغة دون أن يصابوا بأذى. بقي ميل واحد فقط للوصول، وكان الجميع يصرخ فرحاً. لكنهم توقفوا فجأة فقد تواصل إطلاق النار عليهم. وشعر صديقهم بالنعاس ... وكان هناك جندي يصوب بندقيته نحوهم. كان والد ساميا يجيد القيادة، فتولّى ذلك عن صديقه الذي جلس في المقعد الخلفي حتى وصلوا إلى المطار. اشتروا أربع تذاكر سفر وطار الجميع إلى البلد الذي يطلقون عليه جميعاً اليوم كلمة "الوطن".

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*



## اللاجئون

بقلم: سابين دنبري

قبل الحرب، كانت سوريا بلداً جميلاً. وكانت ساميا تعيش فيها حياة عادية مع عائلتها كسائر الأطفال هناك.

قبل أسبوع من عيد ميلادها التاسع، خطّطت والدتها لإقامة حفلة لها، أعدت قالب الحلوى، ودعت معظم أفراد العائلة. ولكن قبل أن تطفئ ساميا شمعاتها التسعة حدث شيء رهيب، إذ سقط صاروخ على منزلها. للأسف، توفي واحد من أفراد العائلة وأصيب آخر بجراح، ولحسن الحظ نجا الآخرون. صُدمت ساميا وأفراد عائلتها بما حدث، ولم يستطع الجميع النوم في تلك الليلة بسبب الخوف من الخطر الذي يمكن أن يلحق بهم.

وحتى بعد ظهر اليوم التالي، لم تتقوه ساميا بكلمة. ولشدة وقع الصدمة على أهلها، أغلقوا الأبواب والشبابيك وبدأوا بتوضيب حاجياتهم، ثم اتصلوا بأصدقائهم وجهزوا أنفسهم للرحيل.

وبينما كانت الدموع تنهمر بغزارة على الخدود، سمعوا صوت صراخ وطلقات.... وأنفاس ثقيلة، وشعروا بالدماء تتناثر وتلطخ أيديهم، ورأوا بقايا الأطفال والكبار الذين أطلقت عليهم النيران دون رحمة. قادوا سياراتهم خلف البيوت حتى لا يراهم المسلحون ويمسكوا بهم. وكان صديقهم يرتجف بشدة وكأنه يرتدي ملابس صيفية رقيقة في عز فصل الشتاء القارس.

وبينما هم في السيارة برزت أمامهم طاولة عليها زجاجات عصير ليمون. وسال لعب الوالد، فنزل الجميع وتسابقوا للحصول على العصير والعودة إلى السيارة لتناولها. حصل الجميع على كمية متساوية، لكن الوالد بدأ بالبكاء لأنه اعتقد أنه حصل على عصير تفاح. ثم بدأت الأم أيضاً بالبكاء. اما ساميا فقد لاحظت كل شيء إلا أنها تجاهلته تماماً، وتوقّف الوالد عن البكاء محاولاً أن يغير مزاجه. فجأة، أصابت رصاصة باب السيارة. أغمي على ساميا وأصيب والداها بالهلع فضمّاهما إلى صدريهما بقوة. لحسن الحظ، لم يكن ذلك إلا شعوراً بالصدمة أفقت منه ساميا بعد دقائق قليلة، وشعر الوالدان بالراحة لأن ساميا كانت بخير.

وعلى مسافة ثلاثة أميال من هدفهم المنشود، كانت والدة ساميا ترتجف والدها يشعر بألم شديد، بينما كانت هي تبكي لأنهم يغادرون وطنهم. لذلك، بدأوا برفع معنويات بعضهم البعض من خلال لعبة "I spy"، لكنهم لم يفلحوا في ذلك، بل ازداد شعورهم باليأس والقلق، وكانوا يشعرون كأن سكيناً قد غرست في قلوبهم.

الآن، هم على مسافة ميلين فقط من المطار الكبير. وكانت دقائق الساعة تتلاحق حتى أعلنت الساعة الثانية عشرة. وهنا بدأت المشكلة الحقيقية، فقد رآه جندي في سيارة صديقهم فأطلق النار على شباك السيارة. حضن الوالد زوجته وابنته



# James' Journey

by Namira Sandhu  
*St Anne's Primary School*

With great sadness Jemmima gazed into the miserable eyes of her father, James. James' and Jemmima's eyes were now welling up with tears. Time was running out, but not seeing your daughter for four months would upset any father.

Before he left, James took off his velvet hat and revealed a white origami bird. It was slightly tattered, but it came from the heart. She hugged him. Very tightly. Soon enough, James was going to be a refugee. Cherishing this moment forever, James slowly walked towards his wife, Victoria. She was heartbroken. Her voice was croaky, but she tried to be strong. Victoria flung her arms around her husband. No matter how many times it was said, she couldn't believe her husband had to flee the country. "The force of love will always keep us together." James' foot stepped out.

After the smoke had cleared, James woke up feeling very tired, and was still on this cumbersome journey. But wait! Even though this was extremely upsetting, no more tears were allowed. "5 minutes to the new land, 5 minutes". Excitement was riveting around the boat and chatter was louder than ever. What a sight, James thought. The ocean was glistening and he laid his icy blue eyes upon it.

After his hands stopped shaking, James (and a sea full of refugees like him) went for a health check. "You are all clear", the doctor sternly said. James said "Thank you", although his voice scared James just a little. Then he tried to find his way through the crowd but he couldn't even get through three





people. They were also refugees but, unlike James, they had their loving families beside them.

Squeak, squeak. Looking down (beside his feet) the skeletal man saw a miniature mouse. Since he was very lonely James picked him up and said hello. A rush of sympathy came over him and it was decided. The mouse was now the refugee's best friend and companion.

In one hour, exhausted James made his way through the crowd and he had a big problem. It all depended on the family's future. A job. The only way to provide for any family is money. While all these questions were running like crazy in James' head, he noticed a sign. It read 'Woodcutter job for offer. Four strong men are needed. Salary £3, 5 pennies and 9 shillings a month. James' bright eyes started glistening and sparkling once again. But at last they were tears of joy!

Roaming around the street James bumped right into a large hotel. The Earl's Pen. Checking in straight away, James, whose hairs were standing on end from excitement, went upstairs. As he got into bed he picked up a frame and glanced longingly at the picture of his wife and daughter. "The force of love will always keep us together." James recited it again and again.

The next morning James woke up feeling great. He grabbed his CV, put on his best suit, walked down to breakfast and ran out. He sprinted to the shop and ran in, when his mouth dropped. He awed in shock. There were twenty three people... What was going to happen next? Jittery feet, sweaty palms, he entered the room with no idea of what was going to happen next...

Leaping with joy James entered the Earl's Pen and went to his room. Soon the soft voices of Jemmima and Victoria would





be heard again. The next sunny day James received a letter. Knowing that the letter was from his family, the refugee ripped it open.

*My dear James,  
I am so proud of you. When you told me about the job I felt ecstatic. If you are reading this the moment I sent it me and darling Jemmima are already on the boat! Oh, I forgot to mention, your mouse is here. We figured it was yours since it had your hat. We named him 'Squeak' because he keeps squeaking. Once again, I'm so proud of you my husband. Keep doing good and anything could happen.  
From your dear wife,  
Victoria*

They would once again be reunited. This was their new life. No bombs or war. Everything was right again.





# Out of Place

by Angela Vassilakis

*St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School*

The moment I stepped out of my house I knew that I knew that I was never going back there again. I walked out in the cold feeling miserable. I just couldn't stop thinking about my home. All the good memories I had. As I walked, I could almost feel the top half of my body bending down as if I was going to drop. I felt like I was turning into an old man's stick.

As I approached the front door of my new house, my body bent up again, as straight as an arrow. At first I was afraid it was going to be a flat like the one I was living in. But luckily it was a normal big house. Although, I still do miss my flat that I used to live in.

Once I stepped into my new home, the door slowly closed behind me. I looked around the huge corridor and found it quite unexpected. It seemed to be hospitable. Every room I went into was quiet and peaceful. But the last room was very unpredicted. Guess what room it was? My bedroom! It was huge! It was twice as big as my kitchen in my old flat! I was so astonished! Before I knew it, I knew that this house was going to be remarkable.

However I have a new school to move into, so my mood has started to change. Now I'm feeling worried, because I'll be new to the school and will have to make new friends.

I took one step back, gently closed my bedroom door, and took a few deep breaths. Told myself that everything was going to be fine, but at that moment I felt my mum tap me on the shoulder and tell me that I'm going to my new school tomorrow. At that





moment I started to panic.

The day has come and I am feeling as frightened as a bird about to be eaten by a human. I slowly turned around to face my school. A few paces forward and I passed the gate into my school. Once inside, I felt trapped and already began to dread the upcoming event of the day.





# Runaway

by Safiya Begum  
*Cayley Primary School*

There where loud sounds coming from horizon. I can see bright colours coming from the south of Turkish border. Oh, I forgot to introduce myself I'm Elijah. I'm one of the Syrian refugees which also includes my brother Kaiser. We both fled from Syria because of the war. It took us around 4 days to get to the Turkish border but we were able to pass through because Kaiser had the paperwork for it. We walked for nights and days. We finally made it to the Karak desert where it was really hot but it was immensely cold at night.

We didn't have many things with us. We mostly left everything behind in Syria. I only bought a pair of trousers and 2 t-shirts and so did my brother the rest of the things in our bags where bottles of water, some freshly picked dates and our passports and paper work to get into other countries also some money to buy food and water. I and Kaiser saw some elderly people walking in the desert. We ran to them and we all walked together until it started to get dark. We stopped to make camp. It was extremely cold. I and Kaiser had jumpers but we gave them to the elderly couple. We had dates and some warm soup also water. We all shared our food together. The elderly couple told us they were looking for their son and daughter who went on without them. Kaiser and I told them we would help them to find them.

The sun rose and we all got up and started walking. Couple of hours later in the Karak desert the elderly couple found their children. They thanked me and Kaiser many times we gave them some water and dates as a thank you for sharing





their meal with us. They left within 10 minutes in a different direction where we were heading. Every time I looked at Kaiser he had a smile on his face where as I had an annoyed look on my face.

I was really tired from walking so we took a break for only 2 minutes. The sun started setting like the colours orange and yellow exploded on red. We started making a fire to keep warm. I had some dates and went to sleep. I felt as if I'm in a nightmare but it was turned out to be true. I woke up around six in the morning and me and Kaiser started walking. I was having flashbacks on the time bombs destroyed houses and the way children were crying because they are scared to be honest I myself was one of the children crying but I had my brother with me. Most of the kids didn't really have anyone. While I was thinking I fell because of exhaustion I felt so weak that I was crying my heart out. Kaiser kept saying we are nearly there. I wonder if we will really make it alive.





## Far From Here

by Abdallah Abu Aesha  
*Al-Ehssan College*

In our world and in our time and age and specifically in our beautiful country and our region we live in an environment where anything that you imagine could actually happen. Our dream is of a bright future where we can grow and learn.

But what we did not expect is what took place in these four years, at the start of the revolution, my father and mother were getting ready to go to 'Umrah' and before they travelled, my family and I cleaned the house to celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad, it was just like the nights of Eid. My mother prepared sweets, delicious food and desserts, I will never forget what took place on that day and the amount of relatives that came to visit us and how pleased and happy we were. We wished each other many happy returns and on the next day we waved goodbye to mum and dad as they set off on their journey to 'Umrah'.

Parting away is so difficult! We did not know that there is a parting more difficult than this one. After twenty days of their journey my parents returned as things become intensified with the increase of fear and bombings and the numerous demonstrations and obviously the wide spread of people's pain. We did not know that there are bigger and more difficult pains, grief and sorrow such as these. Four years have passed where we endured a bitter siege, we could not sleep from the intensity of crying children and the wide spread hunger and the lack of bread and flour.





For these innocent children the days passed full of grief and sorrow. If one found a loaf of bread they jump for joy and rejoice with a big smile on their faces. Those who go to school go on an empty stomach as they do not have anything to eat before they leave their homes in the morning and for some they did not want the morning to come because they do not have breakfast, just as they don't have clothes that they can wear to school to keep them warm and await teachers who would distribute sandwiches to the children.

Oh God, do not deprive us of our people and our relatives and reunite us with all our loved ones and with all those who resisted the siege, this is the dream of every person and every child living in this siege.

*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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## عدم الإنتماء عبد الله أبو عيشة

في عالمنا وفي عصرنا هذا وحصرياً في بلدنا الجميل ومنطقتنا نعيش في بيئة مليئة بكل ما نتخيل أن يحدث. حلمنا في مستقبل جميل نكبر فيه ونتعلم. لكن ما لم نتوقعه حدث في هذه الأربع سنوات، في بداية الثورة كان والدي ووالدتي جاهزين للذهاب إلى العمرة، وقبل أن يذهبوا احتفلنا أنا وعائلتي في عيد المولد النبوي الشريف فقمنا بتنظيف البيت، كأنها ليلة العيد فحضرت والدي الحلوى والمأكولات الشهية والحلويات، لن أنسى ما حصل في هذا اليوم وكم جاء من الأقارب وكم كنا فرحين ومسرورين، وقلنا عقبال كل سنة وثنائي يوم صباحاً ودعنا بابا وماما وذهبوا إلى العمرة.

ما أصعب الفراق! ما كنا ندري أن هناك فراق أصعب من هذا الفراق، رجع والدي بعد مرور عشرين يوماً من ذهابهم واشتد الخوف وازداد الضرب وكثرت المظاهرات وازداد ألم الناس، لم نعلم أن هناك ألم أصعب وحزن وأسى مثل هذا. أربع سنوات مضوا مررنا بحصارٍ مرير لم نكن نستطيع النوم من شدة بكاء الأطفال ومن كثرة الجوع وقلة الخبز والطحين.

الأيام مرت بالأسى على هؤلاء الأطفال الطيبين الذين إذا وجد رغيف خبز يفرحون، وتكون البسمة على وجههم. والذين يذهبون للمدرسة وهم جياع وليس لديهم شيء ليأكلوه قبل ذهابهم إلى المدرسة، والبعض كان يريد أن لا يأتي عليهم الصباح لأنه ليس لديهم فطور وليس لديهم ملابس تدفئهم عند ذهابهم إلى المدرسة، وينتظرون المدرسين الذين يقومون بتوزيع السندويش على الأطفال. يا رب لا تحرمننا أهلنا وأقاربنا وتجمعنا بكل أحببتنا وكل من قاوم هذا الحصار، هذا حلم كل واحد وكل طفل يعيش في هذا الحصار.



# A Story That Occurred One Day

by Mahmoud Al-Aarabnyea

*Al-Noor School*

The world is so beautiful, but only when you are with family, relatives and loved ones and everyone is well and happy then the world becomes so much nicer. Our family which is made up of: father, mother and four children, began to experience problems when we left our house, three years ago or maybe or more but this difficulty is trivial to what happened on that day.

In the morning my father went out to work waving goodbye to us with a wonderful smile, he said “Be patient, things will get better soon and there are so many people like us. On that day at noon as we returned home from school, planes flew over Al-Ghouta and shelling began.

I knew immediately where the shelling has struck at the time I thought that I have lost my dear father as rumours and speculation increased rapidly, until we received the news that my father is seriously injured and his friends had been martyred. My father lost his foot and his face became disfigured. A few days later my dad returned home which was not suitable for someone with my father’s condition as he is ill and requires help to recuperate and heal. He needed a strong young man to help him fulfil his needs and I am still too young. For months the medical team came to the house to treat and help father during his illness. Yet my father is stronger than all the difficulties, thank God and he was able to overcome the situation quickly and bit by bit he began walking via crutches.

As for me well at the age of eleven years old I was responsible for the household and my sisters had the responsibility of





collecting firewood and bring it into the house, my mother was working as a seamstress, sewing clothes for the poor people. Despite these circumstances, we were happy at my dad's recovery but his fear every time he heard the sounds of the plane and bombing, increased our horror, the instant he hears the sound of planes he runs and hides in a dark room pulling my siblings towards him. I wish this horror could be wiped away from his memory.

A year after his injury, my dad astonished our neighbours and the community when they saw him for the first time riding a motorcycle with one foot and walking around town against all the odds in full strength and patience. I won't forget to tell you that my father was working in as an olive picker once it has fallen to the ground.

My siblings and I are very proud of my father and wish him all the health and strength because he has shown us as well as to other people that God compensated his leg for something else as well as stronger will, it is enough that he fills our family with warmth and affection and makes our nights full of fun and singing. I learnt from my mum to be patient and love my family and I pray to God that my siblings always have a smile on their faces. I wish for all children to live in peace with their loving family and not endure the same suffering and agony as me.

From my father I have learnt that every time I close my eyes I say tomorrow will be much better.

*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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## قصة حدثت يوماً

محمود العرينية

الدنيا جميلة جداً ولكن عندما تكون مع الأسرة والأهل والأحباء، ويكون الجميع بخير تكون الدنيا أجمل بكثير، بدأت متاعب أسرتنا المكونة من أربعة أولاد وأب وأم منذ أن خرجنا من بيتنا قبل ثلاث سنوات أو أكثر ولكن هذه الصعاب تهون أمام ما حدث في ذلك اليوم.

خرج والدي إلى عمله منذ الصباح مودعاً إيانا بابتسامة رائعة، وهو يقول: اصبروا فإن الفرج قريب ويوجد مثلنا الكثير من الناس. في ذلك اليوم عند الظهر وبعد عودتنا من المدارس حلقت الطائرة في سماء الغوطة وبدأ القصف. عرفت مكان الضربة فوراً وظننت في تلك الأثناء أنني فقدت أبي الغالي والأقوال تتكاثر، إلى أن جاءنا الخبر بأن والدي قد أصيب إصابة خطيرة وأصدقائه استشهدوا. فقد أبي قدمه وتشوه وجهه وبعد أيام قليلة عاد إلى البيت ولم يكن بيتنا صالحاً لاستقبال مريض ومداواته، ويحتاج إلى شاب كبير لمساعدته في قضاء حوائجه وأنا ما زلت صغيراً، مرت شهور والفريق الطبي يأتي إلى مساعدته في البيت ومداواته. لكن والدي والحمد لله أقوى من الصعوبات تغلب على وضعه بسرعة، وقليلًا قليلاً أصبح يمشي على عكازتين.

أما أنا البالغ من العمر إحدى عشر عاماً فكانت مسؤولاً عن أمور البيت، وإخوتي البنات مسؤولون عن جمع الحطب ونقله إلى البيت، والدي كانت تعمل بخياطة الملابس للناس الفقراء. ورغم هذه الظروف كنا سعداء بمعاونة أبي، لكن خوفه من صوت الطائرة والقصف يزيدنا رعباً، فهو عندما يسمع صوت الطائرة يختبئ بغرفة مظلمة ويقوم بشد إخوتي إليه، أتمنى أن يزول هذا الرعب من خاطره. بعد عام من إصابته دُهن الجيران وأهل الحي عندما رأوا أبي لأول مرة يركب دراجة ناريةً بقدم واحدة ويسير في أنحاء البلدة ويتغلب على الصعاب بكل قوة وصبر. لن أنسى أن أقول لكم أن والدي كان يعمل في قطف الزيتون المتساقط على الأرض.

أنا وإخوتي فخورين جداً بأبي ونتمنى له القوة والصحة لأنه برهن لنا وللناس بأن الله عوضه عن رجله بشيء آخر وعزيمة أكبر، يكفي أنه يملئ على أسرتنا دفناً وحناناً وسهرةً كلها مرحٌ وغناء. تعلمت من أمي الصبر ومحبة الأسرة، وأدعوا الله أن يبقينا لنا البسمة على وجوه إخوتي، وأتمنى لجميع الأطفال أن يعيشوا بسلام مع أسرة محبة وألا

يعانوا الذي عانيته وتعذبت به. وقد تعلمت من والداي أن أقول عندما أغضض عيني بكرى أحلى.



# I Could Feel Hope

by Sumaiya Sany  
*Hague Primary School*

Once, I lived a happy life. Once, Somalia was a beautiful and colourful country. Once, there was freedom. Now, Somalia is nothing but complete wreckage. Bombs and guns was all I could hear. Blood and dead bodies was all I could see. Smoke was all I could smell. Hope was all I could feel. Hope told me that one day, there will be freedom.

My mother was the only person I had, my father had passed away from cancer. Once day, we ran, passed all the soldiers across the Sahara Desert, and ended up in a refugee camp in Kenya. My mother was a kind woman and she would help anyone as much as she could. Suddenly she became ill. I tried ever so hard to nurse her, but there, I held her hand and watched her breathe her last. Now I had no one but the hope within me.

I took her ring. It was the only thing left from our old lives. I took it and ran. I sold it to come to England because my mother went on and on about England and how safe it was.

I was here. My mother was right. This was the most amazing place I've been to. Hope was getting closer and closer. Could this be my new life? It's been a long time since I've had a smile on my face.

I have been living on the streets now. Although it is cold, there were a few people on the streets with me too, so we became close to look out for each other.





Though he wasn't on the streets, there was a boy always gave me food and clothes. He would always stick up for me.

A few days later, I was put in care. As I took a glimpse of the place I knew this isn't where I wanted to be. There was lots of children, running around, chasing each other and even fighting each other.

I settled in very well. I didn't get bullied and I was having fun, until my social worker turned up one day.

I was speechless. I couldn't believe it! They're... they're... they're sending me back to Somalia! According to social services, I've faked my age and I'm over 18 which means I don't have the legal right to remain in the UK. Hope had disappeared.

I couldn't go back. I wouldn't last one minute. I had to do something... That's it, I would run away! The second I thought of it I started packing. I knew exactly where I was going to go. I was going to go to the boy who always gave me food and clothes. I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

I reached his house. As he welcomed me in very kindly, he told me that I could stay for as long as I wanted. He gave me food and treated me like I was his family. I knew that hope had come at last. Hope would always win. Soon enough I would have the next best thing to hope. I would have freedom. No matter the risks, I would keep on with my fight because I have the most powerful thing, hope. I knew I was going to be happy. This is my life and I'm going to be free.





# Out of Place

by Archie Pyke

*St Saviour's Primary School*

I've just got off this great big plane and I'm shaking with fear. I've no idea what's going to happen to me. I'm so scared, what if I die in this unknown country?

My name is Yasim and I'm nine years old. I hate my life but at least I've got a life. I've come from Syria and I don't know what's happened to my family and I don't know where I have been brought to or what will happen here. People are telling me I have to stay in this detention centre. It sounds like prison. I've never heard of a detention centre before and I'm going to have to sleep with random people that I've never met. The guards are shouting at everyone but I don't understand what they are saying.

It's been two weeks since I've been in this country, it's called England and things have got a bit better though I still don't know what anyone is saying. I have been put with a family called 'foster parents'. I'm starting to understand some words and we also communicate by a made-up sign language. I've started school and my teacher can speak the same language as me but I still feel so lonely that no one else can understand what I'm saying. I have no friends and every day in the playground I am sitting on the bench watching everyone have fun. I feel embarrassed and scared.

One day I saw these boys playing football and the ball rolled over to me and I thought I would kick it back because I loved playing football in Syria. The boys were shocked but then one of them came over and said come and play. I couldn't





understand what they were saying but I can understand football! For the rest of the day I felt relief like I've never felt for weeks. I still don't know what's going to happen to me but I know I'm being looked after and now I have friends to play football with.





# The Journal

by Deborah Momoh

*Our Lady and St Joseph's Primary School*

January 1

Hi my name is Myla and I'm eleven years old and this is my life trying to get from Syria to Britain. My father has already tried to make this quest but sadly didn't make it so now it's time for me and my family to do the same risky mission.

January 5

RUN! There's a SHOOT OUT there's bombs and everything! My and mother and I were scared as we packed up our belongings with tears. Without a clue we heard and smelt smoke. In seconds, our house was jeopardized! We helped each other out. My new-born sister was in pain when we came out of the house. We began to run in sweat and pain. Could this be the end?

January 9

With tears my family ran out of when we saw men holding up stickers to get on a train we ran up to him and he said, "I will only give you these train tickets if you pass over the crying baby." My mother looked like she'd seen someone get murdered. She kissed my baby sister and handed her over. The man gave us the tickets then told us it comes in five minutes. We ran like headless chickens!





January 14

Finally we boarded the train but it was a little quiet without our little sister. I really missed her, truly. My eyes watered as I thought of the time my sister and me were yet to have but now it's all gone. Oh no, I think it was a bad time to think of the good times. There was a security guard taking people to the refugee camp we jumped to get away as but it was too late! They caught my younger brother, "No!" I screamed in terror as my mother dragged me together.

January 19

Wow, now it's only Mummy and me this past week and it has been a total melt down! After a whole day of rest, when we woke up to see we were on a floating boat with happy people. We asked the why they were so happy and they said because this boat is going to Britain! My mother and I looked at each other in joy but that joy went away there was a shootout and it shot my mother in the arm. Then she fell in the sea. "No!" I shouted in terror, as I wanted to jump in to save her! Hours later, we arrived in Britain and the people I shared a boat with ran like they were winning a marathon. I just stood there and thought about my family that I'd lost.





# Out of Place

by Sanjeedah Ali

*Malmesbury Primary School*

I remember the crimson colour of my parents' blood surrounding them and myself. I remember seeing my brother joining the side of the terrorists. How dare he. As I ran outside, I soon realised that I was splashing in the maroon clot of my dear neighbours. My brother's team were patrolling the ground with huge machine guns connected to their robotic arms. Sooner or later, I had to escape and not surrender. It was the only way.

Whilst dawn occurred, I huddled myself into a ball underneath my newly made bush shelter. I managed to find some blueberries to prevent my hunger from growing any further. Mmm... the snow white inside just melted as soon as it hit my tongue.

"Hello, who are you. I'm Alex," she had bright, wavy ginger locks reaching all the way down to her waist.

"My name is Jenna. My brother just killed everyone in my village and I'm trying to hide." Alex grabbed my hand with a grip as if her life depended on it. She led me to the top of the hill where you could see the whole village.

"We need to fight back. Let's do it."

The two of us quickly managed to gather a crowd of refugees because many were trying to cross the border of the United Kingdom. Alex and I explained the instructions.

"We have to steal some of the machine guns, to stop the guards from catching us, we will knock them out. We will then besiege





the terrorists and shoot them. Easy as pie”

Three people (myself, Alex and one other refugee) grabbed a spanner. I always thought that Jim’s Tools would never be useful for me. Guess I was wrong. As we sneaked up behind them, we prepared for our first knock out. Bang! One was out. Bang! The other was out. Bang! All three of them were out. To avoid any noise, we carefully screwed off these heavy, metal machine guns. We had also stolen walkie talkies earlier so that we could communicate when each part of the plan has been executed.

“All right, it’s done,” I twisted my neck to make sure we weren’t being spied on. Time for the next part of the plan.

We then cautiously sneaked into my house to find my, my... he doesn’t deserve to even have the title of a brother.

“WHAT!” that animal screamed at me and shook my shoulders. He grabbed his dagger from his golden sheath. Before he had a chance to even try to stab me, I stopped him.

“Just hear me out. I’m a refugee now. I used to live in Syria, remember. I came back.”

I can’t believe that he forgot that I was from Syria and that I’m a refugee. I snatched the knife from him and stabbed him. Right in the heart. He deserved to die like this. I watched him collapse to the floor, clutching his chest tight.

I woke up





# The Refugee Catastrophe

by Farhana Aktar

*Marion Richardson Primary School*

To all the Syrian Refugees. We hope your journey & family are safe.

Asalam walaikum. My name is Mohammed. I'm hiding in the closet with my brother Ibrahim and my sister Iqra. As I watch my family fight to keep us safe, I see a man, he was targeting my mother and father, and shot them. The gunshot hurt my ears. It was speeding through my parent's bodies like a knife. We all fell to the ground, I felt helpless, my mother and father died right in front of me and all I did was hide inside a closet.

I was petrified. We made a pact, to find the man who killed our parents. We could not be able to go to the burial, because of the war. It was going on for days. As the days went by, Iqra was looking after me and Ibrahim, feeding us, but I could not eat after the incident. I just wished I could bring them back to life. I searched and searched in books for something very ancient called the wishing star. It lets you wish for something, or someone, but if you use it for greedy and selfish things, the wishing star will not work. It will cast a wicked curse on you. But the only thought running through my head is "Will my plan work?"

So I went downstairs to ask my sister if I can go, but she replied back "No, mother and father would never let you out of sight and into danger. It is too risky."

But it was worth a try. And you never know, my wish might come true. As dusk fell, I filled up my bag with water, blankets





and some rice, and headed outside. But when I went to the front door it was locked and only Iqra was able to reach the lock. So I went back upstairs to the room I sleep in. There were ragged pillows scattered on the floor. I crept to the window and held onto the vines. As I climbed down, I received a cut. I saw some wet paper on the ground and hastily climbed down there. I grabbed it and wrapped it around my hand to cover the bleeding.

The trees were towering over me, almost like they were alive. The sky was starting to darken. I could feel tiny drops splashing on my head, dripping down my body like maple syrup does on pancakes. I saw a cave and felt that I should hide there for the night. So I crept in, calling out for anyone or anything living there, but it was deserted. I got the blanket out and laid down on it. But something was missing. Light! I picked up the blanket and covered myself with it like a raincoat. Then looked for some sticks. And there it was. The sight of beauty. A coconut tree. I took a stick, and all of the coconuts I could hold in my arms. I went back in the cave and rubbed the sticks together to make a fire. I warmed up the blanket with the fire and ate the coconuts. Fortunately I found them, or I'd be eating plain rice.

As the sun rose, I found myself walking towards it. Because in the book it said to follow the sun and you'll find a rainbow. And there it will be. A wishing star. I knew I was getting closer, because I saw many creatures that no one is fond of. The urge of finding the wishing star was taking over me. I was not myself. I didn't care how many splinters or cuts I got. I just wanted my parents back. I was finally here. The Ice Palace. It took days but I am finally here. I ran as quick as I could as the cold was freezing my body. But I couldn't go in. There was a magical creature blocking the path. He said if I solve his riddle I can go





in. The riddle was A magic power, fading away, creating colour, instead of grey. I replied “Rainbow”.

The magical creature said “Correct”, but then it said that I needed something colourful. I gave him my blanket and successfully got in. There were purple crystals glistening in the corner of my eyes. I picked up a wishing star from the crystals and said in my language “hab li hadhih alrraghba”, grant my wish in Arabic.

And there they were, my beautiful parents right in front of me, but it was just a memory of them. My sister was right. I wasted my time. As I ran crying, I pushed the creature out of the way and by the time is said “Are you okay?” I was already gone. No one knew where I went. No one knew about the cave I was hiding in. I had been missing for hours. I didn’t want to face the punishment of going out alone after Iqra saying no. If I go home, Iqra will say “I told you so”. A few days later I knew what I had to do. I had to go home and face the wrath of Iqra. So I ran out of the cave I was hiding in, took my bag and walked all the way home. I never knew how much glass there is on the floor. When I reached home I rang the doorbell, took a deep breath and when the door opened... I took a step forward and hugged Ibrahim and Iqra. They looked so beautiful and handsome. Just like my poor innocent parents. Iqra looked like my mother, and Ibrahim looked like my father. I hope we turn out like them. They were the only family I had left.

A few months later someone knocked on the wretched door in our front yard. I looked through the window. At first I thought he was just a believer but he was much more than that. These were his exact words

“I’m sorry. About your parents’ death. I was acting so stupid. I don’t know what’s gotten into me.”





My... My world had fallen apart but now, it's all better. It's back in one piece. Knowing that I know who murdered my parents, it's alright because now I know he won't do it anymore. When I turned my back to call my sister and brother he got his pocket knife out and stabbed me. He left after he heard footsteps from the staircase. As I laid down I felt so stupid to have fallen for his trick. Iqra and Ibrahim were crying. I could feel their tears dry up on my skin.

"I love you guys, but don't use the wishing star." I held my breath and there I went. To heaven. But now at least I can be with my parents, and look down at my brother and sister. And of course I'll be the tallest. I know I shouldn't be laughing as I'm dying, but I want to die happy.





# Out of Place

by Nasif Islam

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

I'm out here feeling so sad  
everyone else is out there looking for my dad  
But all I have is you, Mr. Chicken, all I have is you.

It's so lonely out here,  
all my family members have broken down in tears.  
But I don't know how to fix this, Mr. Chicken, I don't know  
how to fix this.

Ever, day I feel so cold,  
The bread and food we get is all so old.  
But I don't want to starve, Mr. Chicken, I don't want to starve.

Across the rood there stood a man,  
he told me I should eat you while I can.  
But I can't kill you Mr. Chicken, I can't kill you.

All these years I had many friends,  
but now all I see are dead ends.  
You're a good friend, Mr. Chicken, you're a good friend.

The fighting happened repeatedly every day,  
Sometimes for food, sometimes to scare someone away.  
But I don't want to fight Mr. Chicken, I don't want to fight.

An old man said he would eat you,  
but fortunately this lie wasn't true.  
We're safe here, Mr. Chicken, we're safe here.





Every day they fight for our home,  
Blow them sky high, these vehicles sprayed with chrome.  
But we're out here, Mr. Chicken, we're out here.

Every night we go to sleep,  
but even, day just seems to repeat.  
I want it to stop, Mr. Chicken, I want it to stop.

Every day we're all alone,  
we have no friends nor a home.  
But where are we, Mr. Chicken, where are we?

Someday we will find a nice place,  
a place where no one will discriminate.  
Maybe soon we will, Mr. Chicken, soon we will.

We left our home and left our land,  
we ended up here in a plain of sand.  
But we're safe now, Mr. Chicken, we're safe now





# Out of Place

by Najah Ali

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

I didn't know where I was anymore  
Screams and Sirens all around  
Where was home?

Laughing, freedom, happiness and joy  
That was my home  
Where I belonged

Now, a living hell  
Bombs falling from the sky like rain  
Screams, Sirens, Gunfire all around  
This was my home now

Soldiers yelling, people crying  
Screams, Sirens, Gunfire all around  
Where was home?

Laughing, freedom, happiness and joy  
That was my home  
Where I belonged

Where was home?  
How could it have disappeared into a puff of smoke?  
Did the bombs snatch away my home?  
It is nowhere to be found!

Where is home?





## The Boats

by Sam Mossop  
*Morpeth School*

Here come the boats,  
Packed full of Refugees,  
Fleeing from their home,  
Lost and sad,  
Struggling for survival,  
Compacted into dinghies,  
Sitting on the edge,  
Of their life or death,  
Desperate to end,  
Their treacherous journey,  
Across the rough seas,  
Of the Mediterranean,  
The border between Asia and Europe,  
Peril and safety,  
Old life to new,  
As the boats hit the sand,  
Like the D-day landings,  
The people swarm out,  
Like bees from a hive,  
Many are ill,  
From terrible trip,  
All thinking of a happier life,  
In the Western world,  
But all needing assistance,  
In their troubles,  
As one boat is dealt with,  
The next one arrives,  
Packed with Refugees,  
Lost and Sad,  
And needing our help!





# Life as a Refugee

by Saimah Begum

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

“Boom!” There it was again, another bomb being fired.  
“Boom!” This time followed by screams and crying.  
What did we do to deserve this?  
When will I wake up to the sight of sunlight?  
When will I wake up to the sound of birds singing?  
I wish I could just wake up and find out this was just a horrible  
nightmare.  
I wish I could just wake up and be with my family again.  
I wish I could wake up and play with my friends again.  
Oh God when will this all stop?  
I pray for the day I wake up lying in my own bed again.  
I pray for the day I wake up and don't have to hide again.  
I pray for the day I wake up to food again.  
We once had a place we could call home.  
Finding shelter is not easy.  
But what's harder is finding out you have to go back.  
It's like being a refugee all over again.  
The greatest tragedy is not brutality of evil people,  
But rather the silence of good people.  
Where else can I hide the only thought that runs through my  
head all day.  
I can't stand my own ground.  
Hiding from my own country.  
We get pushed to places. Then pushed back.  
In one minute a family can lose everything,  
From a perfect happy family to hopeless and alone.  
Just waiting for a sign to say “It's over!”





# The Lone Refugee

by Belal Ahmed

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

I am a person with two hands and two feet  
But yet some nights I can't even eat  
I have two eyes and two ears  
But for some cruel reason I have many more fears  
Living as a refugee  
It really isn't easy being me

As I move from home to home  
I feel like I'll always be alone  
My only wish is to be with family  
So that one day I can live happily  
My neighbouring countries  
No longer want me here  
This is why my people always seem to disappear

While my hunger for education grows  
I yearn to learn what everybody else knows  
I wish I could read and write  
But I can only do that if they stop the fight

I want to see my parents  
My mum and my dad  
Oh seeing their faces would truly make me feel glad  
My brothers my sisters  
What I would give to hear their voices  
Oh If only the people who attacked my village made different  
choice.





# Out of Place

by Lamisa Farhat

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

The sky was coal black and dotted with a few stars the day I took him into my arms.

He was with his mother and father, making their way across the ocean with no more than a piece of wood. They could not stay home for they would live their life in constant fear and live their life with their freedom stolen from them. So they make their way somewhere safe. But they know they might not make it but they are left with no choice.

They are greeted by a gust of wind, thunder and rain. The boat tumbles and collapses. Mama and papa are still holding on to their dear life but their infant had no chance.

I watched the scene waiting patiently for my part but a storm was growing inside me I wanted to snatch him away as quick as I could. His little hands were balled into fists he thrashes and screams 'mama, papa' he cries helplessly.

Slowly he sinks deeper and deeper first his legs then his torso until only his head is visible. His desperate pleas are no longer heard, they are nothing but a few muffled sounds.

It is time for my part. His body is a few metres below the ocean when I take his soul into my arms; his body is left floating across the sea like a piece of debris. It will be washed ashore in a few days' time. In between their lunches and sips of wine they will read the headlines weep a few tears and resume back to their lifestyles.





As I hold his soul in my arms I kiss his damp, poised cheeks  
and take him with me up to the sky and I leave him there.  
I come back again for his mama and papa's soul and for the  
others like him. The child was out of place his soul shouldn't  
have been in my arms his body shouldn't have been floating  
across the ocean.

I am only breathing because of humans.

*Narrated by death*

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## غير منتمي بقلم لميس فرحات

كانت السماء حالكة السواد مزينة ببعض النجوم، يوم احتضنته في يدي.  
كان مع أمه وأبيه يشقون البحر على قطعة خشب لا أكثر، البقاء في بيتهم كان  
مستحيلاً لأنهم كانوا سيعيشون في خوف دائم، حياتهم وحرياتهم مسروقة، لذلك  
اتجهوا إلى مكان آمن مع أنهم كانوا يدركون أن الوصول ليس مؤكداً، لم يكن  
لديهم خيار آخر.

واجهتهم رياح، رعد ومطر. القارب ينقلب وينهار. الأم والأب ما زالا يتمسكان  
بكل قواهم أملاً في النجاة، ولكن الرضيع لم يكن لديه أي أمل.  
شاهدت الحادثة منتظراً دوري بصبر ولكن عاصفة تأججت بداخلي. أردت أن  
انتزع بأسرع ما يمكن، يداه الصغيرتان كانتا متشنجتين. يضرب ويصرخ  
"ماما، بابا" ويبيكي بلا حول ولا قوة.

يغرق ببطء إلى الأعماق ثم الأعماق، تنغمر قدماه أولاً ومن ثم صدره إلى ألا يتبقى  
سوى رأسه ظاهراً. صرخاته اليائسة لم تعد مسموعة، لم يعد يسمع سوى أصوات  
خافتة.

جاء دوري، كان جسده على عمق بضعة أمتار تحت المحيط حين قبضت روحه  
بيدي. تُرك جسده عائماً فوق سطح الماء كقطعة حطام. ستنقل الأمواج جسده  
إلى شاطئ البحر بعد بضعة أيام. سيقروون عناوين الخبر وهم يأكلون ويشربون  
النبيذ وسيذرفون بعض الدموع ومن ثم يستأنفون حياتهم من جديد.  
وأنا أحضن روحه بين يدي، أقبل خداه الرطبين وأحمله معي إلى السماء وأتركه  
هناك. أعود مجدداً لروح أمه وأبيه ولآخرين مثله. كان الطفل لا ينتمي لذلك  
المكان وكان لا ينبغي أن تكون روحه بين يدي. وكان لا ينبغي أن يكون جسده  
طائفاً على وجه البحر.

لولا الإنسان لما استطعت التنفس.

أنا الموت.

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*



# A Flower Blossoms From Under The Rubble

by Raneem Al-Kahlos

*Al-Ehssan College*

I dozed off in a long nap, I do not know the length of it or what happened to me during that time and then I woke up and I saw myself in the desert of hyperopia overcrowded with all types of creatures and in masses beyond counting. I then discovered that I had been sent and that this is the Day of Judgment, sadness took over me and after removing the dirt from my head I heard human voices shout “remove the debris and rescue the injured”. I raised my head to see the devastation around me as if an earthquake has taken place, some were removing the debris and others transporting the injured.

I found out that two missiles have landed at my grandmother’s home, changing the features of the house into a large hole where the rocket took out the guest’s room and the kitchen along with my four female cousins and my grandmother who had been preparing them some food in the kitchen.

The paramedics took to searching for the girls and found two in the house garden, full of blood while the other two were not found, but after few hours the paramedics heard a loud screams from one of the buildings. The other two girls have been found by the women next door to my grandmother’s house. One girl was on the third floor with her hand cut off and the second on the roof of the building in distorted features, as for my grandmother the paramedics exerted all their effort but did not find any trace of her until they raised the concrete surface beneath with a crane and there they found her dead underneath. Everyone was stunned with pain tearing their soul.





Everyone is running, everyone is suffering and all are amazed at the way fate has struck and its miracle. Despite the strength of the rockets and the disaster that followed, the room next to the hole left by the missile, which has some family members did not get affected at all nor did any of the people in it, they did not suffer a scratch or even a small wound, merely some dirt that came through window and covered the dining table as they gathered around it, when the dust and smoke cleared they raised their heads and found that this room was the only thing left of their house and the rest became a pit of hell. The pain and sorrow squeezed my heart but I realised that fate does not consult the people but imposes on them the destiny that was written for them.

Despite the affliction which fell upon us we went back to life and the crises did not break us, similarly to this steadfast city, God willing, it will never die and will not perish even if it was bombed with thousands of rockets, will not vanish, no matter how much anguish it experiences or how heavy the bombing becomes and how far the destruction spreads....

*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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## من تحت الركام تنبت زهرة بقلم رنيم الكحلوس

غفوت غفوة طويلة لا علم لي بمدائها ولا بما وقع لي فيها، ثم صحوت فرأيت نفسي في صحراءٍ مد البصر مكتظة بأنواع من الخلق لا أحصيهم عدداً، فعلمت أنني بعثت وأنه يوم القيامة، فساورني من الهم ما ساورني وبعدما أزلت التراب عن رأسي سمعت أصوات أنس يصرخون: أزيلوا الركام وأنقذوا المصابين. رفعت رأسي لأرى الدمار من حولي وكان زلزالاً مر من هنا فيعضهم يزيل الركام والبعض ينقل المصابين. علمت أن صاروخين نزلوا في منزل جدتي، فتغيرت ملامح المنزل لتصبح حفرة كبيرة حيث جذب الصاروخ معه غرفة الضيوف والمطبخ وأخذ معه بنات خالي الأربعة وجدتي التي كانت تعد لهم بعض المأكولات في المطبخ. أخذ المسعفون يبحثون عن بنات خالي فوجدوا اثنتين في حديقة المنزل وقد تضرجتا بالدماء أما الأخرتين لم يتم العثور عليهما، إلا بعد ساعات انتبه المسعفون إلى صراخ عال من أحد المباني، فقد وجدت النسوة بنت خالي في المبنى المجاور لمنزل جدتي؛ واحدة في الطابق الثالث مقطوعة اليد والثانية على سطح المبنى مشوهة المعالم، أما جدتي فقد أعيت المسعفين ولم يجدوا لها أي أثر حتى رفعوا السطح الاسمنتي برفاعة فوجدوها تحته وقد فارقت الحياة. كان الجميع مذهولاً وألم يمزق الفؤاد، الكل يركض الكل يتألم والكل في دهشة من ترتيب القدر واعجازه فرغم قوة الصاروخين والكارثة التي خلفها إلا ان الغرفة المجاورة للحفرة التي خلفها الصاروخ والتي تحوي بعض أفراد العائلة لم تصب بشيء ولم يחדش أحد منهم ولو بجرح صغير سوى بعض التراب الذي دخل من النافذة وغطى مائدة الغداء وهم مجتمعون حولها، عند انقشاع الدخان والغبار رفعوا رؤوسهم وجدوا منزلهم لم يتبق منه سوى هذه الغرفة والباقي أصبح حفرة من حفر جهنم. كان الألم والحزن يعتصر قلبي إلا أنني أدركت أن القدر لا يستشير الناس إنما يفرض عليهم المصير الذي كتبه له. رغم البلاء الذي حل بنا عدنا للحياة ولم تكسرنا الأزمات وكذلك هذه المدينة الصامدة بإذن الله لن تموت ولن تهلك ولو قصفت بالآلاف الصواريخ، لن تباد دوما مهما اشتد الكرب ومهما اشتد القصف وكثر الدمار...



## The War

by Raghad Mohei Al-Deen

*Lahen Al-Hayat School*

Something is knocking at the door, knocking with great strength and anger, indicating the echo of a lurking event in sight. The sweet little girl rushed to open the door and I screamed: *“Do not. Do not open the door. It is someone anonymous; we do not know who he is, return to your former serene state and enjoy your simple kind life.”* The girl replied *“It is someone running away from something, let’s open the door to him and see to whatever he needs ...”*

No, my sweet ... the roads become stronger and more brutal, the sound rises and the screaming almost deafen the ears. Oh my beauty please return, hear my advice and be sure of these powerful roads, and never open until you are convinced that these ‘roads’ are humane and that what they want from you is something you can grant. The girl laughed and said *“alright, obeyed”*.

My heart trembles, I don’t want her to open the door. My heartbeat increases as I feel my blood pressure rise, but I’m trying to hide the fear that has filled me. In her kind spirited and good heart the girl said *“I will open the door slowly, slowly, and if we felt that there was a risk or danger then we will just close the door.”* Syria set off and opened the door in a powerful breakthrough, unable to open it slowly and shut the door. I came to realise that it was the war knocking on the door with that brutality.

I screamed loud and strong *“Oh shut the door quickly my sweet Syria .... it’s a powerful war, beware of opening that door wide, we will not be able then to confront it together.”*





Unfortunately, the voice of war and its roar was far more powerful and stronger than both Syria and I. It pushed us and we fell to the ground together, then it laughed at us maliciously saying *“beware of rejecting me, I am the war with all its evil sense.”* The girl slapped her cheeks with powerful blows as tears rolled down her rosy cheeks. Who said they are rosy!?! They have turned to lemon yellow cheeks and her eyes stood still as she says *“this disturbing nightmare has been visiting me every night.”*

*“Wake up from this nap”* I shouted, *“you are at the peak of your awaking, Syria”*.

Syria screamed: *“No ... what is this? Did I open the door to my enemies, in this powerful and big.”*

Oh Syria, did I not warn you and say don't open your door, that it is the ugly war that wants to steal your flourishing youth, that it wants to prevent your dazzling beauty from shining, it wants to throw you into the abyss because it envies you in the most insidious ways, and sought the help of a friend. How stupid are you! How are you...no, you are innocent, Syria, your thinking is childlike and innocent ... you did not expect this malice and evilness could come from friends with whom we were united.

Did you not learn from the past? What happened here and there from bygone decades ... ah strong cries ... they killed your beauty boldly, those murderers and malicious killers and destroyed your palaces in a determined manner and left you in a brutal manner.

I cry and call for Syria *“Wake up from the lengthy coma ... Awake”*.





*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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صرخات قوية... قتلوا جمالك قتلة خبيثة جريئة وهدموا قصورك بمطرقة عنيدة  
وهجروك بطريقة وحشية.  
أصرخ وأنادي سورية أفيقي من غيبوبتك الطويلة... استيقظي.



## الحرب رغد محي الدين

شيء ما يطرق الباب، يطرق الباب بغضب وقوة، شيء ما يزجر يعلو صوته في الأثير في الأفق، هرولت تلك الخطوة لتفتح الباب، صرخت: لا... لا تفتحي الباب إنه شيء مجهول الهوية، لا نعلم ما هو، عودي أدراجك الجليلة، قري عيناً بعيشتك الهنية، قالت الصبية: إنه شخص ما يهرب من شيء ما، هيا لنفتح له الباب ونرى حاجته ونقضيهها....

لا يا حلوة... الطرقات تصبح أقوى وأكثر وحشية، والصوت يعلو وصرخاً يصم الأسماع. يا جميلتي عودي أرجوك، اسمعي مني هذه النصيحة تحققي من هذه الطرقات القوية، ولا تفتحي حتى تتأكدي من أنها طرقات أنسيّة تريد منك شيئاً تستطيعين التلبية، ضحكت الصبية وقالت: حاضر.

قلبي يرتجف، ولا أريدها أن تفتح الباب، ضربات قلبي تزداد أحس بارتفاع في ضغط الدم، ولكن أحاول إخفاء الخوف الذي أصبح يتحدر مني، قالت الصبية بطيبة قلبها: سوف أقوم بفتح الباب رويداً رويداً، وإن أحسنا أن هناك خطراً، أغلقنا الباب. انطلقت سورية وفتحت الباب فتحاً قوياً لم تستطع أن تفتحه رويداً وتصد الباب، أيقنت أنها الحرب من كانت تدق الباب بهذه الوحشية.

صرخت عالياً وقوياً: أغلقي يا سوريتي الحلوة الباب بسرعة...إنها الحرب القوية، إياك أن تفتح الباب على مصراعيه، عندها لن نستطيع أنا وأنت أن نصدنا سورية. لكن للأسف صوت الحرب وزمجرتها كان قوياً أكثر قوة مني ومن سورية، دفعتنا فأوقعتنا أرضاً سوياً وضحكت ضحكة خبيثة... وقال: هيهات أن تصداني، أنا الحرب بكل معانيها الشريرة. لطمت الصبية خديها لطمات قوية، وجرت دموعها على وجنتها الوردية، من قال أنها وردية؟! لقد أصبحت وجنتيها صفراء ليمونية، وتسمرت عيناها وهي تقول هذا كابوسي المزعج يراودني كل ليلة، أفريقي من هذه الغفوة. أخذت أصبح: أنت في عز يقظتك يا سورية. صرخت سورية لا... ما هذا؟ أنا فتحت لأعدائي هذه الفتحة القوية.

آه منك يا سورية، ألم أحذرك وأقول لا تفتحي الباب إنها الحرب البشعة تريد أن تسرق من شبابك المزهري، تريد أن تحرمك من جمالك المبهري، تريد أن ترمي بك إلى الهاوية حسداً منها وقد اتخذت أخبث طرق، واستعانت بصديق كم أنت غبية! كم أنت... لا أنت بريئة يا سورية، كم تفكيرك طفولي وبريء...لم تتوقعي هذا الخبث وهذا الشر من أصدقاء كنا معهم سورية.

ألم تتعلمي من الأيام العابرة!! ما حدث هنا وهناك من العقود الغابرة...آه



# Home Sweet Home

by Sajidah Alam

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

'RUN' shouted my mother. It was the last thing I remember as screams filled the air. Before everything had exploded, everything was all hazy. I could not run and leave her behind. The loud eruption knocked me to the ground. I slowly opened my eyes, looking around wondering, how long had I laid there, seconds...minutes...hours? Through the Ash and the remains of our broken home, which we once laughed and played in, I saw my Ammi's lifeless body lying on the floor. Her blue eyes filled with fear, gazing into the back smoke. What was once my Ammi's floral dress was now a black tattered cloth.

An instant loneliness had hit me. My heart felt heavier, my head was throbbing, and I broke down onto my knees. I was breathing harder as the tears rushed down, and I didn't stop them. My Ammi was gone. Loneliness was a common feeling but finding your mother's dead body, was a type of loneliness I could not explain. Should I leave her? Should I stay? What if my father comes back? My father left for war when I was three. I remember him coming home, giving me the most precious hugs in the world and finding me treasures from all the places he had been, like the shells he had brought from the beach. Life was not so bad then. Until I was nine and my Abbu was missing in action. My Ammi and I always had hope. That's what my life has always been about, hope. My name is Amal.

It all started when the people of Israel started attacking Villagers because they wanted more land, which was very selfish. My Ammi always told me I was an 'intelligent young lady' as she shared the stories about Israel. I was only eight and didn't understand but her voice was so soothing, even when





she was telling horrible stories. The Israel army decided to attack our village. We would have been happy if our village was not attacked.

I looked down at my Ammi. My heart started beating faster as my Ammi's hand flinched. I crouched down to hold her head. I held her close. Maybe there was a chance of her living. A tear ran down my cheek and dropped on her face. As I leaned over to wipe the tear, I gave her a kiss on her forehead like she used to do to me when I was a small child. Maybe I could heal her, just like the times she kissed my bruises and scars away when I was younger and miraculously I felt better. I clenched my eyes shut trying to be stronger. I tried remembering all the happy moments I spent with her. I felt the strong presence of her on my cheeks. Hoping, this was not a dream I reached over to touch my cheeks. There I felt my Ammi's small delicate hands. My eyes flew open, "Amal" said a raspy voice, and I looked down to find my Ammi smiling.

Two years had passed. Ammi and I were living in 'the famous city of London.' Abbu always told Ammi how we would soon have a life here, away from the war, away from the bombs, away from Israel. Abbu was not here to fulfil his dreams. But my Ammi told me 'Abbu is always at the root of our hearts.' I remember the rescue helicopter flying into this foreign land. Gazing down in amazement I saw sky high, modern glass buildings. Unlike back home, it was like I had flown into another world. In our new home I had a bedroom and a comfy bed, this was a luxury in Palestine. I decorated my walls with posters of a band I have recently fell in love with, One Direction. I enrolled in a new secondary school. Not knowing English I was afraid of what everyone would think of me. But my Ammi said "Be yourself and you will be happy." My class welcomed with open arms. My Ammi is going to fulfil her



dreams, she has a scholarship to the University of Arts. As my Abbu always told me “Home is the place were loved ones are, not your birth place, not your enemy’s territory. But rather it is where you are safe. Home is built of hopes and dreams. Home sweet home”  
Home is where our story begins...

لأشعر فجأة بالتحسن. أطبقت عينيّ محاولة أن أكون قوية. وحاولت أن أتذكر كل اللحظات السعيدة التي أمضيتها معها. فجأة شعرت بقوة حضورها على خدي. رفعت يدي لألمس خديّ أمله بأن لا يكون ذلك مجرد حلم . وفي تلك اللحظة، شعرت بلمسة يد أمي الرقيقة وسمعت صوتاً خشناً يناديني: “أمل”. فتحت عينيّ ونظرت لأرى أمي تبتسم لي.

مرّت سنتان، ونحن الآن، أمي وأنا، نعيش في مدينة “لندن” المشهورة. والدي كان دائماً يقول لأمي بأنه قريباً سيعيش معنا، بعيداً عن الحرب، بعيداً عن القنابل، وبعيداً عن اسرائيل. صحيح أنه ليس معنا الآن ليحقق حلمه، لكن أمي تقول لي دائماً بأنه موجود في أعماق قلوبنا. وعلى العكس من قريبتنا، كلما نظرت إلى السماء العالية أرى طائرة النجدة المروحية تحلق في أجواء هذه الأرض الأجنبية، وأشاهد البناءات الزجاجية الحديثة.... وأشعر وكأنني انتقلت إلى عالم آخر.

في بيتنا الجديد، لديّ غرفة نوم وسرير مريح، وهذا ما يعتبر ترفاً في فلسطين. زينت جدران غرفتي بصور وملصقات فرقة “One Direction” الغنائية التي أحبها. التحقت بمدرسة ثانوية جديدة، وكنت خائفة جداً لأنني لا أجد الإنكليزية، ولا أعرف ماذا يمكن أن يفكر الطلاب الآخرون عني. وكانت أمي تقول لي دائماً: “كوني كما أنت، وسوف تكونين سعيدة”. وبالفعل، استقبلني تلامذة صفي بصدر رحب وسواعد مفتوحة. وأمي ستحقق حلمها: فقد حصلت على منحة دراسية في كلية الفنون. وكما كان والدي دائماً يقول: “الوطن هو المكان الذي يعيش فيه من تحبين، وليس مكان ولادتك. إنه المكان الذي تشعرين فيه بالأمان، المكان الذي تبينين فيه الآمال وتحققين الأحلام.”  
فما أحلى الوطن. إنه المكان الذي تبدأ فيه قصتنا.....

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*

## ما أحلى الوطن بقلم: ساجدة علم

”اركضي“ صرخت والدتي، وكان ذلك آخر شيء أذكره عندما ملأ الصراخ الجو. قبل الانفجار كان كل شيء ضبابياً. لم أستطع الركض وتركها وحيدة ورائي. رماني الانفجار الضخم أرضاً. وعندما فتحت عينيّ ببطء ناظرة حولي، تساءلت: ”تري كم مرّ من الوقت وأنا هكذا منبطحة على الأرض، ثوان.... دقائق.... ساعات؟. وعبر الدخان المتصاعد من بقايا منزلنا المحترق الذي طالما أحببناه ولعبنا فيه، رأيت جسد أمي الميتة ملقى على الأرض: عيناها الزرقاوتان اللتان يملأهما الخوف تحديقان في الدخان الأسود، وفسانها الملؤن بالأزهار صار الآن قطعة قماش سوداء بالية.

غمرني شعور قوي بالوحدة: قلبي كان ثقيلاً ورأسني يكاد ينفجر. ركعت على الأرض، وكانت أنفاسي تتلاحق ثقيلة لشدة انهيار دموعي التي لم أستطع السيطرة عليها ووقفها.

لقد رحلت أمي. الشعور بالوحدة شيء طبيعي، ولكن أن تجد أمك ميتة أمامك، فإن الشعور بالوحدة في تلك اللحظة له طعم آخر لا أستطيع تفسيره. هل أتركها هنا؟ هل أبقى معها؟ ماذا لو عاد والدي؟ لقد غادر ليحارب عندما كنت في الثالثة من عمري. أذكر أنه كان، عندما يأتي لزيارتنا، يضمني إلى صدره بقوة ويعطيني ما جمعه لي من الأماكن التي تواجد فيها مثل القواقع التي أحضرها لي من شاطئ البحر. الحياة لم تكن سيئة في ذلك الوقت، حتى بلغت التاسعة من عمري وفُقد والدي أثناء تادية واجبه الوطني. لم نفقد الأمل، والدتي وأنا، بعودته إلينا سالماً ذات يوم. وهذا ما كان محور حياتي: الأمل. فاسمي ”أمل“.

بدأ كل شيء عندما بدأ الإسرائيليون بقصف القرى ومهاجمتها من أجل ضمّ المزيد من الأراضي. كانت أمي تقول لي دائماً بأنني ”صبية ذكية“ وهي تروي لي القصص عن الإسرائيليين. كنت في الثامنة من عمري، ولم أكن أفهمها جيداً، ولكن صوتها كان هادئاً مريحاً حتى وهي تروي لي القصص المرعبة. لقد قرّر الجيش الإسرائيلي مهاجمة قريتنا، ولولا ذلك لكان ما نزال نعيش سعداء فيها حتى الآن.

نظرت إلى أمي. تسارعت دقات قلبي حين اهتزت يدها. ركعت بجانبها لأسند رأسها بيدي. ضممتها إلى صدري: ربما هناك أمل بأن تكون ما تزال حية. ونزلت دمعة من عيني لتسقط على وجهها. وعندما انحنيت لأمسحها، طبعت قبلة على جبينها كما كانت تفعل معي عندما كنت طفلة صغيرة. ربما أستطيع مداواتها تماماً كما كانت تفعل معي وأنا طفلة عندما كانت تقبل كدماتي وجراحي



# Out of Place

by Tahmeed Abdullah

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

‘Whoosh!’

The biting wind blew on my face. My body ached with pain as I grunted with anguish. Gazing ahead, I could see a silhouette. I could not go on any further; it felt as though I had walked for miles. I began down to rest for the night. Horrible noises whizzed around in my head, as I could hear the people who attacked my village and destroyed everything in sight. The sweat on my forehead dripped down to my ears as I realised it was just a flashback. My eyelids shut tight again due to exhaustion, as I lay down on the bare ground, alone.

Light shone brightly into my eyes as I began to wake up. My body felt better. Stronger than before. The night sleep had relieved the pain. Rushing to my feet, I began to search for food in the nearby town. Toast and tea could be smelt by the town people who began their purchases for food. Hopefully, there would be enough breakfast left for me after they had finished. Gradually, my stomach started to rumble like an earthquake. Food was begging my stomach to eat. I couldn't resist. Slowly, I noticed a large piece of eaten bread lying on the ground. Without a minute to spare I hurried over, picked it up and slotted it into my mouth. The crispy outer layer had brought satisfaction to my body, but it was not enough! Looking around people had abandoned their seats and was heading back to their homes. Not much food was left after people had gone. Only dishes and cups were left on the tables.

As I exited the town, I continued my journey from Damascus to Beirut. Tears swelled in my eyes as I was feeling lonely





travelling from town to town. Nobody seemed to care about me. No one even looked to my direction. I felt lonely, frightened and unsafe. I struggle every day to find food, looking for somewhere safe to stay while other people had it all.

After forty five minutes, I became closer to Beirut. It may not be the best of places but I have no choice. Other refugees were heading there said my dad before he was shot in the head by those repulsive men. It was hard escaping with nobody else to support me. My throat became dry as I longed for a sip of water. The air began to thicken as I clenched my throat tightly. I held my knees and gasp for breath. Suddenly I fell to the ground like a deer being caught by its prey. Lights flashed all around me, men with torches in their hands. As I squinted, the men appeared to be helping me up.

“She’s dehydrated and hungry I presume.” A man shouted.

A plate of food was placed in front of me, along with a glass of water. I froze in fear. I did not know what to do. Slowly, I reached out my hand and grabbed the glass. Immediately, I began drinking the water. Then three faces beamed at me with delight, they told me that this was the Beirut refugee camp where lots of people had been coming to. Finally, I had reached my destination, the Beirut refugee camps. This was now my home.

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حلقي بإحكام. أمسكت بركبتي محاولة التنفس. فجأة سقطت على الأرض كغزال  
أمسك به حيوان مفترس. الأنوار تسطع حولي وعدد من الرجال يحيطون بي  
ممسكين بمشاعلهم في أيديهم. وبينما أنا أنظر بعينين نصف مغلقتين اتضح لي أن  
الرجال حولي يريدون مساعدتي.

” هي تعاني من الجفاف والجوع كما أعتقد“ قال أحد الرجال. وضع  
أمامي طبق طعام وكوباً من الماء. تجمدت من الخوف. لم أعرف ماذا يجب أن  
أفعل... وبيبطةٍ رفعت يدي وأمسكت بكوب الماء وبدأت أشربه مباشرة. عندها  
أشار ثلاثة رجال نحوي بفرح، وقالوا لي أن هذا المكان هو مخيم اللاجئين في  
بيروت الذي يقصده الكثير من الناس. أخيراً وصلت إلى نهاية رحلتي: مخيم  
اللاجئين في بيروت. هذا هو ملجأ الأن...

*Translated from English to Arabic by Nahla Mawas*



## عدم الإنتماء بقلم: تهميد عبد الله

!!!!!!اشش!

وضرب الهواء القارص وجهي. وشعرت بجسدي ينن من الألم وأنا أتأوه من المعاناة. أمعنت النظر أمامي فرأيت طيفاً يتحرك. لم أعد أستطيع التحمل أكثر والمثابرة على ما أقوم به، أشعر وكأنني مشيت أميالاً عديدة!!!... بدأت أخفف خطواتي طلباً للراحة خلال الليل. أصوات مرعبة تتردد داخل رأسي: أصوات الأشخاص الذين هاجموا قريتي ودمروا كل شيء رأوه أمامهم. تساقط العرق عن جبهتي ووصل إلى أذني. وعندما أيقنت أن ذلك استرجاعاً لذكريات أحداث مررت بها، أطبقت جفوني بقوة نظراً لشدة تعبي وافترشت الأرض العارية وحيدة.

لمع نور الشمس بقوة في عيني عندما بدأت أستيقظ. شعرت بتحسن في جسمي وكان النوم أزال الألم عنه. أسرعت واقفة وبدأت أبحث عن طعام في البلدة المجاورة. رائحة الخبز والشاي تفوح من السكان وهم يشترون حاجياتهم من السوق. أرجو أن يتبقى لي فطوراً يسد جوعي من مخلفاتهم بعد أن ينتهوا من تناول طعامهم. ومع مرور الوقت، بدأت عصافير معدتي تترزق وكأنها تتوسل الطعام. لم أعد أستطيع المقاومة... وما إن رأيت لقمة خبز كبيرة ملقاة على الأرض حتى أسرعت إليها والتقطتها وابتلعتها دون أن أضيع أية لحظة. كانت الطبقة الخارجية المقرمشة لقطعة الخبز كفيلاً بأن تشعرني بالسعادة لكنها لم تكن كافية لسد جوعي. نظرت حولي ورأيت الناس يغادرون مقاعدهم عائدين إلى بيوتهم. لم يكن هناك الكثير من الطعام متبقياً على الطاولات. فقط الصحون والأكواب الفارغة.

خرجت من البلدة، متابعة سيرتي من دمشق إلى بيروت، والدموع تتساقط من عيني، وشعوري بالوحدة يتزايد وأنا أتنقل من بلدة إلى أخرى. يبدو لي أن لا أحد يكثرث لحالي، ولا أحد يلتفت إلي. تزايد شعوري بالوحدة والخوف وعدم الأمان. أجاهد حتى أؤمن طعامي وأجد مكاناً آمناً ألجأ إليه في حين أن الآخرين يملكون الطعام ويشعرون بالأمان.

بعد مرور خمس وأربعين دقيقة، اقتربت من بيروت. يمكن أن لا تكون هذه المدينة أفضل مكان ألجأ إليه، ولكن ليس لدي خيار آخر. لاجئون آخرون توجهوا إليها كما قال لي والدي قبل أن يصاب في رأسه بطلقات من أحد الرجال الأشرار. من الصعب الفرار وحيدة دون دعم من الآخرين. شعرت بالجفاف في حلقي وتمنيت الحصول على رشفة ماء. بدأ الهواء يتناقل وأنا أطبق يدي على



# Every Story Deserves to be Heard

by Jasmin Rahman

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

My name is Rooba. I am a 14-year-old girl and I am an ISIS sex slave survivor.

Flashbacks, memories, they all play in my head so vividly, like they just happened yesterday. Every time I try to think about my past, my childhood, I can't remember anything but the faces of those men, who ruined me, and took away my childhood. Those sounds, gunshots, all still play loud and clear in my head. My father, my little brother, I witnessed them die in front of me. They killed them. Shot them with no mercy. My mother and my two sisters were with me, but not for long. I remember being kept in a small cramped room with around 30 other young girls. We all huddled together and cried, and we would get beaten by the men in their black masks. I didn't understand anything, everything was happening too quick. We hardly got any food and we'd often get threatened with a gun pointed at our heads if we refused to obey the men.

I was separated from my mother and two sisters a few days after and I was sold to a man about 20 years older than me. I cried as I was taken away, I wanted to stay with my mother but I was being dragged away. The first night with him, he tried to force himself on me. Again and again he whipped me whenever I refused. Eventually he got fed up and sold me again. I never stayed in the same place for more than a few weeks. Again and again, I was sold just like that, as if I was some object. Every man that would buy me just wanted to sleep with me, and then he'd throw me away like I was trash. I was disgusted, and I became lifeless, I simply had no valid reason to live.





I prayed day and night for someone to come and save me from this misery. I prayed for the women and the young girls that would have no idea that ISIS was heading to their city to capture them. I wished every time an aeroplane would fly over us, they'd drop bombs. I'd rather be killed by bombs than be killed at the hands of ISIS. I guess my prayers were heard. Bombs were being dropped onto us and I took the chance to escape. I took a black abaya and covered my face and ran. I ran for my life and never looked back.

Till this day, I have never looked back. I don't regret risking my life to escape. I worked hard enough to get to where I am today. It seems that luck is with me. I am reunited with my sister and we're in a sex slave survivors group. There are many women here and everyone seems so much happier. It feels like I can finally look forward to a happy future. It feels like I can actually have a future.

Each and every woman who had to go through what I went through have their own stories. And they deserve to be heard.





# A Syrian Child Discovering the Real Meaning of Homelessness

by Ammar Hamada  
*Al-Anater School*

Oh how hard it is to be homeless and how it is even harder to leave the most precious thing to you and migrate from danger in these bitter days, thinking that you will find a better refuge only to find more deadly danger.

Hamza's story is one of a Syrian child who discovered the real meaning of homelessness, despite his young age. Hamza used to wake up very early to the sound of his caring father to go with him to the mosque and then returns to the warmth of his home to have a hot drink to re-energise, then with great optimism goes to his second home to see his siblings. But Hamza was surprised, he who a smile never parted his face, that the war forced him to what he has always feared.

One day there was an award ceremony for the high achievers and Hamza was among those who will be awarded, he along with all the little children were full of happiness and increasing joy, then the ceremony started and in first place was Khaled, a friend of Hamza who came to receive his gift full of happiness, as Khalid was receiving his prize it was like he pressed a button that bombed the entire place, everyone was shocked as the sky turned pitch black with blinding dust that hit all the young children who were gasping for breath with blood splattered everywhere, Hamza could not bear all that is happening and he soon passed out, unable to feel that his small foot is bleeding after that poisonous bomb struck it, his innocent foot which had no part in whatever was happening, all it was guilty of were the steps it was taking to gain knowledge and fulfil his dream which was cut short.





Hamza woke up from his sleep, thinking it was a dream but the scene around him made it clear to him that it was a fact. He saw his friends here and there whose joy was cut short, Hamza began to cry, he did not cry at the pain of his foot but at the bitter taste of war and that painful image which he will never be able to wipe away from his memory. He asked his teacher “where am I? And the reply came, “fear not, you are now safe and here are your friends around you, they have suffered similar injuries to yours but do not be afraid, your wound is simple and will soon heal, God willing”. Hamza said “I want to go to my family”. His teacher then replied and said “don’t be scared they will soon come”. The family were on their way to the medical point to see their young son, but they did not get see him in this world, they bid him farewell and left him to move into their ‘new home’ up in the sky to see Hamza’s friend; Khaled. They were hit by a bombing shell that wiped them out, only for Hamza to be orphaned, deprived of his siblings who he used to play with in their warm house. This was not all he lost, but he also lost his friends at school even his teacher whom he regarded as a second mother, has become ashes.

Hamza’s grandmother arrived with a smile on her face but grief that is burning her soul and heart, but she forced a smile to comfort her grandson, the only survivor. He had a puzzled look on his face once he saw her and asked “where are my parents?” She answered quietly with sorrow “do not worry, my little one, they have travelled abroad, come on, let’s go home and prepare breakfast and get our things ready so that we also leave. Hamza said, “I do not want to leave my country, here is my land and roots how can I leave it?! She replied “come on, we will talk in the house.

Hamza could not eat breakfast because of that horrific scene





which just won't go away, he bid farewell to his house and went with his grandmother who told him "do not worry, my little one, we will go to a nearby town called Turkey and when the situation has calmed down we shall return to our town.

Hamza arrived in Turkey, he could not talk to anyone as he did not know the language and he told his grandmother of this but she said "we will go to Europe to find a house, because we could not find one here".

He asked his grandmother "where is my family? You promised me that I will see them here". She answered him with a question, "where did Khaled go dear? He said "he is now a bird in paradise, granny". She then said "well your family have gone there too but don't worry we shall see them". Hamza was filled with deep sadness and grief but his heart was strong and patient that was growing up rapidly. Hamza grew older and began studying in London and learnt their language, he was successful in his studies and got the biggest and most beautiful houses with got a job and as director of a newspaper, and a literary writer, he even wrote a story entitled "A tale written in gold which will never depart from memory". To this day Hamza still hopes that the war will end and he will return to his beloved homeland accompanied by his grandmother, with the words "no matter how far we have gone we shall return to you, oh homeland".

*Translated from Arabic to English by Raya Al Jadir*

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لم يستطع حمزة تناول الفطور بسبب المشهد المؤلم الذي لا يفارقه، ثم ودع بيته وذهب برفقة جدته وقالت: لا تقلق يا صغيري، سنذهب لبلدةٍ مجاورة تدعى تركيا وعندما يهدأ الوضع سنذهب إلى بلدتنا.

وصل حمزة إلى تركيا وكان مثل الأعمى لا يستطيع التحدث مع أحد، وأخبر جدته بذلك. فقالت له: سنذهب إلى أوربا لنجد منزلاً، فهنا لم نجد منزل.

سأل جدته أين أهلي؟ وعدتني بأني سأراهم هنا، قالت يا عزيزي، أين ذهب خالد؟ قال: إنه عصفور في الجنة يا جدتي، قالت: إن أهلك ذهبوا إلى هناك لكن لا تقلق سنراهم. حزن حمزة حزناً شديداً لكن قلبه كان صبوراً قوياً يكبر ويكبر.

كبر حمزة وبدأ يدرس في (لندن) وتعلم لغتهم، نجح حمزة بدراسته وحصل على أكبر البيوت وأجملها وحصل على عملٍ وأصبح مديراً لأحد الصحف، وكاتباً من الأدباء وكتب قصته بعنوان (قصة تكتب بالذهب ومن الذاكرة لا تذهب) ولا يزال حتى الآن على أمل انتهاء الحرب والعودة إلى حضن الوطن برفقة جدته وهو يقول (مهما ابتعدنا فسنعود إليك يا وطن).



## طفل سوري عرف المعنى الحقيقي للتشرد

عمار حمادة

ما أصعب التشرد وما أصعب تلك الأيام المرة التي تترك أعلى ما عندك وتهاجر من الخطر ظاناً أنك ستجد مأوى أفضل لكن تجد الأخطر.

قصة حمزة هي قصة طفل سوري عرف المعنى الحقيقي للتشرد، على الرغم من صغر سنه. كان حمزة يستيقظ باكراً على صوت والده الحنون ليذهب برفقته إلى المسجد ثم يعود إلى مأواه الدافئ في بيته الدافئ لكي يشرب مشروباً ساخناً يستعيد نشاطه ثم يذهب بتناول كبير إلى بيته الثاني لرؤية إخوته. لكن فوجئ حمزة الذي اعتادت البسمة ألا تفارق وجهه بأن الحرب أجبرته على ما كان يخشاه. ففي أحد الأيام كان هناك تكريم للمتفوقين وكان حمزة منهم وكانت الفرحة تملو وتعلو والسرور لا يغادر الأطفال الصغار، ثم بدء التكريم وكان في المركز الأول خالد صديق حمزة وبفرحة جاء ليستلم هديته، كان خالد يستلم جائزته وكأنه ضغط على زر التججير، فوجئ الجميع إذ السماء لا تكاد تُرى وسواد حل على جميع الصغار وغبارٌ أعمى الأبصار وأغلق مجاري التنفس لدى حناجرهم الصغيرة ودمٌ هنا وهناك، لم يصمد حمزة أمام ما رآه إذ أعمي عليه ولم يشعر بأن قدمه الصغيرة تنزف دماً من إثر شظية سامة تخترق قدمه الصغيرة التي لا ذنب لها إلا أن سارت به إلى علمه وحلمه الذي لم يكتمل.

استيقظ حمزة من نومه ظاناً أنه كان يحلم لكن المشهد الذي حوله كان دليلاً واضحاً بأنه كان حقيقة. شاهد هنا وهناك أصدقاؤه الذين لم تكتمل فرحتهم ، بدء حمزة بالبكاء لم يبكيه وجع قدمه بل مرارة الحرب ومشهدها المؤلم الذي لا تستطيع ذاكرته نسيانه. قال لمعلمه: أين أنا؟ أجابه: لا تخف أنت الآن بأمان وهؤلاء أصدقاؤك حولك قد أصابهم ما أصابك ولا تخف جرحك بسيط وستشفى بإذن الله. قال حمزة: أريد الذهاب إلى أهلي. أجابه معلمه: لا تخف سيأتون عما قريب. كانت الأسرة بطريقها إلى النقطة الطبية لرؤية صغيرهم لكنهم لم يروا صغيرهم بالدنيا، بل ودعوه وانقلوا إلى بيت جديد في أعلى السماء لرؤية صديق حمزة ألا وهو خالد. إذ أنت قذيفةٌ قضت عليهم، ليعيش حمزة يتيم الأبوين فاقد الأخوة الذين اعتاد أن يلهوا معهم وبيته الدافئ. ليس هذا وحسب بل فاقد لإخوته في المدرسة حتى أمه الثانية (المعلمة) باتت رماداً.

أنت جده حمزة مبتسمة وقلبها نارٌ مشتعلة تحرق قلبها، أجبرتها الابتسامة لمواساة حفيدها الذي لم يتبقى غيره. فرأها بتعجب وسألها: أين أهلي؟ أجابته بصمتٍ مؤلم لا تقلق يا صغيري لقد سافروا إلى الخارج، هيا بنا لنعد إلى المنزل ونحضر الفطور ونعد العدة لنغادر نحن أيضاً، أجابها: لا أريد ترك بلدي هنا أرضي وجذوري كيف أتركها؟! قالت: هيا في البيت نتحدث.



# Survival

by Abir Choudhury

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

All alone. Without a family to help, Anas was forced to go around the town, picking up leftovers to eat. His family had been killed in Syria, his birthplace. However much he wanted them to come back to life, they were gone forever. At 12 years old, Anas had learnt how to survive. He had only a cardboard box to get him through the long, cold nights. People told him to go away, unwelcoming and rude, Anas ignored them, because he knew things would get better. They had to, he told himself. How could they possibly get any worse?

One day, after finding a slice of pizza, slightly squashed near the bin, Anas sat down to enjoy it. After hours of searching around bins, he had found food. He normally had old food but the pizza was fresh and still hot. It must be my lucky day, Anas said to himself, before taking a nibble at the slice of pizza. It had chicken, sweetcorn and pieces of pineapple on top of tomato and cheese. The pizza was absolutely delicious and within a few minutes, it had been completely devoured.

Anas was lying down in a dark tunnel at night, waiting to fall asleep. He had always found it hard to fall asleep. At night, cars would speed around, with sirens wailing, not too far behind. It was better than living in Syria. If he was still there, he may not have been alive. However, he still missed his country and his friends. Nothing could take the place of his parents either. He missed them so much, weeping at times for them. Nobody took any notice of the small boy shivering in the darkness of the night. People sometimes felt sorry for him and gave him some money. It was never enough to buy him a decent meal, but he was still very grateful to them. He went to the shops





sometimes, but was not familiar with it as he had spent most of his life scavenging for food.

Looking for food had helped Anas in many ways. By going around the city, searching for whatever he could find, he had become much stronger than he used to be. He had become used to running when people threatened him and tried to attack. He had learnt a skill which millions of people did not know. He had learnt how to survive all on his own. Not having a family was painful, but Anas had learnt how to survive by himself.

On the first few days, after arriving in England, Anas had sat on the pavement, asking for money. However, barely anybody gave money. He could not survive for much longer. From that moment on, he knew he had to rely on himself alone. As he sat on the pavement looking at all of the people walking around without any worries, he wondered if he would ever be like that. Anas stood up, and continued with his painful and also challenging life.





# The Story of the Refugees

by Muhammed Ibrahim

*Bow School*

It all started off by Hitler's hatred for Jews. He made every Jew wear a golden star that represented that they were Jews. If any Jew caught not wearing the golden star will be killed. My names Isabel and this is my story.

One day I was looking out a window and I saw a German soldier man-handle a defenceless young Jew. Then he was thrown into the lorry with all the others... I just looked away.

AFTER THAT DAY...

I thought of them and decided to help them, so I followed the lorries to see where they were going.

Once I got there I found out where I was, it was a concentration camp for Jews they wanted to kill.

Suddenly, out of nowhere I heard German soldiers coming closer and closer every second my heart was pounding like it never had before I made a run for it luckily I never got caught...

THE NEXT DAY...

It was time to get up; I put my breakfast into my bag, and headed for the camp. I saw lots of skinny people and some even starved to the death. My hands were too fat to fit through the sharp wire, but their hands were skinny, so it fit through. They had the food like they've never eaten before; after they ate I headed for my house...

WHEN I GOT HOME...





It was nearly lunch time mum said, “Where have you been.” I replied, “Playing with my friends.” I was starving I never even ate breakfast. So I ate and went to sleep after all that walking and running.

THE NEXT DAY...

I headed of for the camp and got my breakfast with me and I also got a wire cutter with me to let them free. Finally, I got there and gave them the food and went SNIPI SNIP! SNIP! With the wire cutter. The soldiers must’ve heard me, I ran as fast as I could go so I headed for the abandoned house. The soldiers were running BANG! There went a bullet inches away from my arm BANG! There went another bullet and it shot me in the arm. I was slowing down. My house was really close so I ran in my house and there my story ends. I had a big wound and the innocent Jews were free.





# Home

by Muhammod Towhid Abmed

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

What can I call home?  
Is it were I was born, where I live or where I love,  
Self-belief, courage and love,  
All washed away,  
Like me from my home,

Adapt they say,  
Make friends they say,  
Forget about it they say,  
But,  
Just but,  
How can I forgot about my home,

Beautiful in its own way,  
Horrific in its own way  
But no longer my home,  
In its own way

Blood spilled,  
Bullets shot,  
People traumatized,  
Homes taken away,

The people,  
Their power,  
Their government  
Their rules,  
But still my home





My friends, gone  
My family, washed away  
My colleagues, dispersed,  
But me,  
I'm still here; I'm still at home,

I am in a foreign country,  
Treated like trash,  
Talked to like I'm inferior,  
One day,  
Hopefully one day,  
I will return home.





# Out of Place

by Sulaiman Khan

*Stepney Green Maths, Science and Computing College*

What does it mean to be out of place?  
Imagine yourself, getting chucked out  
Maybe it means being out of your comfort zone  
Not in order, or just misplaced?  
Feeling all alone

Look at the refugees,  
Afraid of the country of their own  
They can't even say please,  
They're feeling all alone

They can't even get a piece of education  
Full of desperation  
This feels like it's going on forever,  
I think it isn't going to stop, never

They don't have an option, a choice  
Pick a picture, hear the crying voice  
Running, screaming crying in terror  
Why are they getting hurt, they didn't make an error

This isn't right, it's not fair  
Every second someone's dying, everywhere  
But no one really cares  
People are killed  
Families are separated  
One by one - like bombs they're  
Getting detonated





It's sad and a crime  
It waste many good lives  
And a huge amount of time  
And it's a hardship to those who survive

The refugee's homes are being bombed  
Destroyed  
It's from the people above  
The houses are being toyed

As they're so close to dying, they're wishing they were never  
born  
They are feeling out of place  
Leaving their home country in haste.





# The Right to Rights

by Aafrin Al-Mamun  
*Central Foundation Girls' School*

EQUALITY: the UN declaration claims it number one,  
how then can you justify what you have done?  
Treating them with injustice, denigration,  
and bright coloured bands to add humiliation

SHELTER: it is the twenty fifth right,  
why then is she left to the harsh and cold night?  
She nurses a heart, bleeding and torn,  
asking "Can this be the end, after all I have borne?"

FOOD: no one should go hungry – or so you say,  
she lost her new born to hunger today.  
She came to you looking for people who would,  
support her children as best as they could.

LIFE: wouldn't you agree that it is rather dumb,  
that the third Human Right is granted only to some?  
A battle for life – he thinks he's finally won,  
only to find he's number five thousand and one.

These people are HEROES, who've fought determinedly,  
SURVIVORS that deserve much for their bravery,  
they are just like every person you see,  
with FEELINGS and BELIEFS and the RIGHT TO BE FREE.

It is a DUTY upon us to treat them with kindness and  
sensitivity,  
that is if we want any claim to HUMANITY,  
90





TOGETHER we'll work to create a society,  
where they will have names and identity,

where they won't be labelled "REFUGEE".





# Thralldom

by Nadeem Malek

*Sir John Cass's Foundation and Red Coat C of E Secondary*

My eyes are wide open  
But I am not awake.  
No evidence exists of my existence.  
I am alive but not a breath escapes me.  
Everything is Torment, Torture...

My eyes scan the horizon but I see nothing.  
My life is desolate, vacant, blank...  
I think I see a glint.  
But my life is a cocoon  
No glimmer or hint of light breaks through.

I feel the urge to flee  
From everything, everyone-  
But I can't feel my soul.  
I want to shout but my lips are sealed.

Chains imprison my spirit, my will...  
Paralysis devours me.  
Reality is silent still...

I'm on my knees begging, pleading  
For a second chance.  
But now it's all over.  
Far too late  
How can I escape my fate?





# Wandered

by Syeda Subha Anjum  
*Central Foundation Girls' School*

## Sep 2nd 2015

Opening his eyes to a beautiful azure sky, he wiped his sandy palms against his red t-shirt. The gentle waves of the Mediterranean danced effortlessly, inching its way towards him in an endless line that stretched deep into the horizons. Eventually, they reached his tiny feet, only to melt away into themselves; over and over and over again, like his favourite lullaby on replay. He was bored now.

‘Where’s mum?’ he wondered. But he was soon distracted by the approaching man wearing an unusual uniform, camera held attentively in his hands and an emerald green hat perched on his head. He was taking a photograph of a sleeping boy on the beach.

“I’d like to play with the boy when he wakes up.” he reminded himself.

## Sep 3rd 2015

He clambered, on tiptoes, through the rubble and dust, careful to avoid the sharp metals which may scratch on his tender skin. The shattered bricks and hanging wires brightened his adventure; they reminded him of the obstacle courses he makes at home with his brother Galib.

Speaking of home, he knew he was close. When he saw his favourite tricycle perched carefully against the wall, his little





feet hastened towards the house, and continued on until reaching his bedroom. Stopping in his tracks, he observed the man sitting on his bed, all the while aware of someone else - holding yet another camera - walk silently out of the room. With his hunched back turned and head down, the man's shoulders were shaking uncontrollably. He couldn't recognise him at first because his blue and white plaid shirt seemed to hang too loosely from his fragile body to be his father.

"Papa?" he queried, gently approaching him. It was him. Why is he clasping onto my shabby yellow toy? His eyes travelled up to his father's swollen ones, and he was confused upon seeing the frozen stream that ran down his cheeks. He was sad that papa didn't acknowledge him, and embrace him like he usually does. It's ok. He's just feeling sad. He extended his arms and wiped away the tear from his father's face that was set to drop and dissolve into the toy's fur. Instead of waiting for his hug, he wrapped his own arms around his father's neck and laid his head on his trembling shoulder. Letting the man's rapid breaths warm his arm, he cradled him tighter, which only made his distressed father's whimpers exalt.

**Sep 4th 2015**

His heart suddenly felt heavy, with each beat more foreboding than the last. There were too many people for him to be amongst the crowd, so he watched from afar, away from the glares of the camera lenses. The air was so light and breezy it seemed to pass through his torso, making him purposefully have to stand his ground a little harder. Fine sand grains swept over his feet, in synch to the wind, as he sighed with exasperation. He was getting weaker.

The abrupt screech of tyres forced some vigour into him - it





had the same effect on the shutters and flashes too. The back doors of the van swung open and he could just make out three brown boxes inside, rather tall and wide in size. Reflecting off the polished surface of the three coffins, the roasting sunlight seemed to create a brighter light around him. Or is it the sun? It was more glorious as opposed to blinding.

Minutes passed and he found himself closer to the crowd than before. A large rectangle hole was dug in the ground directly beneath him and as he peered inside, he heard the same cry from yesterday- the same cry of immense heartache. His vision moved to the sound, which came from directly in front of him. Papa? What's he doing?

He was kneeling on the arid earth, whilst two people either side of him placed a bundle of pristine white drapery in his outstretched hands. Whatever was inside was wrapped up, protected from the turmoil of the outside world. His father's arms seemed to falter as soon as his fingers touched it, but he held on nonetheless. What's inside, papa? But his father didn't reply. Instead, his forehead was creased with sorrow as he looked down at what he was holding. A silent sob escaped from his quivering lips, and he brought the bundle closer to his face, placing on it the gentlest of kisses. As he did so, his eyes squeezed shut, releasing the torrent of soundless tears that were awaiting their freedom.

All this time he had managed to ignore the light that disturbed him previously, but it came back now, strongly highlighting its presence. It wasn't the white light, however, that made his eyes widen with joy, but the sight of his dear mother standing near him after all those days he spent alone. She opened her mouth to speak but he ran towards her, tightly embracing her around her slender waist. He looked up to see his mother smiling





down at him. The burial had begun, and the men were now standing in rows, praying to the imam's recitation as one. His mother stroked his wispy hair. 'Come, my dear Alan Kurdi. It is now time for us to go,' she said.

*In memory of 3 year old Alan Kurdi, and all the refugees that have died in the crisis.*





# If

by Saima Uddin

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

“Hurry, quick, hurry, Habibah” is one of the many things my mother said to me that day. We rushed, ran and reached for the dearest things to us, meanwhile Dad loaded our things and continuously wept. Tear after tear and sudden sighs.

I sometimes sit and wonder why God has created humans when he knows what will happen to us in the future. Mother says it's a test, to see how we cope with it. But I think I'm just naturally unlucky and that nothing about me will ever be positive. My friend Soha consoled me many times, saying that it will be alright and that she'll see me here in the UK. She no longer lives. She was the same age as me, and our mothers knew each other since when they were kidnapped by ISIS.

There was about, roughly, fifty to seventy-five other people on the boat. The majority were women and children. All I heard was screaming and shouting, alongside the sound of the waves. At times I felt dizzy, and my eyes spun like the earth.

Night turned to day and I gradually opened my eyes. To be honest, I don't even know how I fell asleep in such chaos. I wish I continued sleeping because little did I know that when I opened my eyes, half of the boat I was on disappeared.

Hands were sticking out of the water and families were panicking. Soha was at the edge or falling into the water, she did not have her life jacket on her. I pushed in through the crowd and impulsively jumped out of the boat. “Hold my hand!” I shouted.





“I can’t” She shouted.

“You can, just move a bit forward” I said. There was no reply.

“Soha, Soha!” I didn’t know where she was. I pinched my nose and went under water. There was a black figure but it was too far away from my reach. I couldn’t bear it.

Bits of broken boat were floating all around. All my family were safe, but we were all extremely hungry. We shared a loaf between us, even food we disliked was nice to eat when we were hungry. I kept thinking of Soha, whilst Mum dried my long hair. She repeatedly yelled at me for putting my life at risk. I said to her that I had no life anyway, so why not save someone who has a better one than me.

My name is Sara Allanache and I’m sixteen years old. This place, Glasgow, it’s different, it has everyone with different backgrounds. I have recently completed my GCSEs and I aspire to being an illustrator showing the unjust horror people like me have experienced.

If only Soha was alive, if only we continued our life back home. If only my life was like how it is now.





# Trapped and Isolated

by Tamanna Hussain

*Central Foundation Girls' School*

They've kept me here like some sort of animal. Why do they not understand that I mean no harm?

I'm not a monster

I'm not a terrorist.

I'm a human being whose life has just been ripped away from her. What have I done to deserve this?

I see the way they look at me. They think I have the power to threaten them, as if I'm here to take away everything from them.

They don't know me. They don't know what I've been through, what I've sacrificed just to get here.

Anger bubbles inside me and their disgusted looks, but hunger and exhaustion overpowered that feeling.

They said I'd be fine once I came here, that I'd be far from danger but it doesn't look like I'll be safe any time soon.

All I'm asking for is safety. All I need is safety.



## List of Winners

<b>Key Stage 2 Short Story</b>		
1st	Yousif Al-Kahal	<i>Al-Noor School</i>
2nd & Best in School	Fergus O'Sullivan	<i>St Elizabeth Primary School</i>
3rd & Best in School	Oumou Gassama	<i>Canon Barnett Primary School</i>
Commended	Sabrina Denbri	<i>Halley Primary School</i>
Commended & Best in School	Namira Sandhu	<i>St Annes Primary School</i>
Commended	Angela Vassilakis	<i>St Elizabeth Primary School</i>
Commended & Best in School	Safiya Begum	<i>Cayley Primary School</i>
Commended	Abdallah Abu Aeesha	<i>Al-Ehssan College</i>
Commended	Mahmoud Al-Aarabnyea	<i>Al-Noor School</i>
Best in School	Sumaiya Sany	<i>Hague Primary School</i>
Best in School	Sanjeedah Ali	<i>Malmesbury Primary School</i>
Best in School	Deborah Momoh	<i>Our Lady and St Joseph Primary School</i>
Best in School	Farhana Aktar	<i>Marion Richardson Primary School</i>
Best in School	Archie Pyke	<i>St Saviour's Primary School</i>
<b>Key Stage 2 Poetry</b>		
1st & Best in School	Tazbid Chowdry	<i>Halley Primary School</i>
2nd & Best in School	Penny Gould	<i>Chisenhale Primary School</i>
3rd & Best in School	Tanzila Ahmed	<i>Blue Gate Fields Junior School</i>



Commended	Nasifa Begum	<i>Halley Primary School</i>
Commended	Isobel McGrath	<i>Chisenhale Primary School</i>
Commended & Best in School	Elysia Morton	<i>Sir John Cass Primary School</i>
Commended & Best in School	Rojin Keefe	<i>Guardian Angels Primary</i>
Best in School	Shamia Akhtar	<i>John Scurr Primary School</i>
Best in School	Ariana Dewhurst	<i>Globe Primary School</i>
Best in School	Fahmida Naima	<i>St Pauls Whitechapel Primary School</i>
<b>Key Stage 3 Short Story</b>		
1st & Best in School	Lamisa Farhat	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
2nd	Raneem Al-Kahlos	<i>Al-Ehssan College</i>
3rd	Raghad Mohei Al-Deen	<i>Lahen Al-Hayat</i>
Commended	Sajidah Alam	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
Commended	Tahmeed Abdullah	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
Commended	Jasmin Rahman	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
Commended	Muhammad Abir Choudry	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
Commended	Ammar Hamada	<i>Al-Anater School</i>
Best in School	Muhammed Ibrahim	<i>Bow Secondary School</i>
<b>Key Stage 3 Poetry</b>		
1st & Best in School	Nasif Islam	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
2nd	Syeda Najah Ali	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>





3rd & Best in School	Sam Mossop	<i>Morpeth School</i>
Commended	Saimah Begum	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
Commended	Belal Ahmed	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
<b>Key Stage 4 Short Story</b>		
1st	Syeda Subha Anjum	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
2nd	Saima Uddin	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
3rd	Tamanna Hussain	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
<b>Key Stage 4 Poetry</b>		
1st	Piah Uddin	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
2nd & Best in School	Muhammed Towid Ahmed	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
3rd	Sulaiman Khan	<i>Stepney Green Maths, Computing and Science College</i>
Commended	Aafrin Al-Mamun	<i>Central Foundation Girls' School</i>
Commended	Nadeem Mahmud Malek	<i>Sir John Cass's Foundation and Red Coat C of E Secondary School</i>





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