

## The Story from Mesud Al Shikho



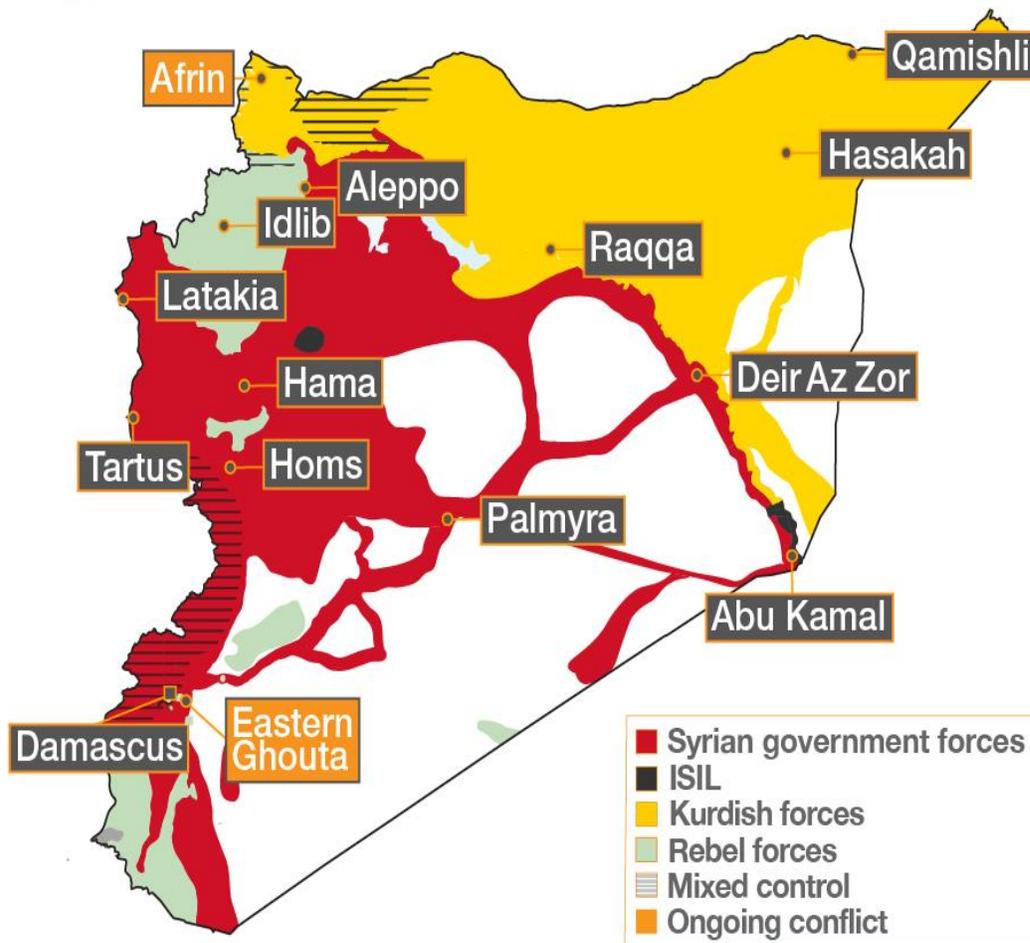
I am Mesud, 19 years old. I come from Qamishli, the biggest Kurdish city in Syria. The land that is still being destroyed by the civil war that caused nothing except shedding blood of hundred thousands of people and forcing millions to leave their homes, flee to foreign countries, starving and freezing outside waiting for the war to be over.

I can't write down all the details about this war because there are millions of stories and hundreds of crimes that happen every day. But I can tell my story and describe what I went through in the past few years.

The present (2018)

Before I start with my story, this is a photo that shows how divided Syria is right now (2018) between these groups that fight each other only for their own interests. This is only a glimpse of how complicated this war is.

## Syria: Who controls what?



Source: Institute for the Study of War, South Front  
Updated: February 7, 2018

## Before the War



Before the war started, I was a kid, who just like any other kid, was dreaming and thinking how simple the world was. Waking up every morning, going to school, coming back, then hang out with friends, do homework, go to bed and then doing the same thing on the next day. I have even planned my whole future as I was 12: just keep doing what you're doing and go to university, become an English teacher, get a wife, then have 3 children and live happily ever after. But perhaps as you already guessed, things didn't work that way.

## The Demonstrations



Let's start with the beginning of the demonstrations in 2011.

My brother was serving in the army of the Assad regime and I was going to school normally. As we heard that there were many people who got killed or arrested in those demonstrations, my brother was hoping that the demonstrations would be peacefully over and that everything would be back the same as it was, but on the other hand, I wasn't hoping that! Now don't get me wrong, not that I wanted those terrible things to happen but the only silly reason that a kid like me could have for hoping that the world would get in trouble is because he wants the schools somehow to be shut down so that he won't have to wake up early every morning and not be stressed about the tests.

## The War



So the demonstrations didn't stop like my brother was hoping. It wasn't even called "demonstrations" anymore, it was called "war". My brother asked his commands to send him home for 3 days as soon as possible. He heard how his friends entered cities filled with people with tanks and how they were shooting down any building where the rebels were hiding in without questioning whether there were innocents who lived in the building or not.

After 3 months they finally allowed him to leave and we took the chance and found a smuggler and paid him 700\$ to smuggle my brother to Kurdistan of Iraq.

In 2013 my best friend, who I had known since I was 5 years old, knocked at my door to walk with me to school, I went out and told that I didn't like to go that day and that it would be a waste of time for me because the teachers weren't coming and the school was searching for new ones who could replace them.

My friend went alone and on his way back, as a witness says, a black car stopped in front of him and forced him to get into the car. I remember how his mother came to our house in the evening, how worried she was because her son didn't come home yet, she asked me if I knew where he could be but I had no idea. We never heard from him again and that was the last day that we saw him.

I felt such a loneliness and sadness and, of course, there are no words that can describe the feelings of his mother so I am just going to let you try to imagine how she felt and how she feels every single day not knowing if her son managed somehow to escape from them, if they are forcing him to fight on their side right now, if he lives or not.

In 2014 I was at home watching TV when suddenly the Earth shook and a strong sound of an explosion came, a suicide bomber attacked my old school. My father told me to stay at home, no matter what, and the people were scared but not me because I thought it would be exactly like I saw in films or in my video games, so I took one of the worst decisions in my life. I went there and what did I see? Blood, fire, destruction, and the worst of all, dead bodies of children. I was shocked for weeks, I was wondering how any man on this world, no matter how bad he was, could take the life of innocent children thinking that is fighting for a reasonable purpose or that he'd go to Heaven. From that moment on, the world was never beautiful and simple to me again.

## My Journey to Europe

In 2015 I was 17, I went to school one day and suddenly some men from the regime came into the class and took our birth dates and said that every student that turned 18 had to join the army, do his duty and fight for the country. That was not a good news, I told my parents and in few weeks they accepted the fact that I could not stay, so we called the same smuggler who had helped my brother and I flew to my brother in Kurdistan of Iraq we were in a refugee camp, there was safety there but life was extremely hard, the government of Kurdistan Iraq couldn't help the refugees much because of its financial problems and I had no school, no job, and the worst thing is I couldn't go far from the area because if the police found out that I had no residency and that I crossed the border illegally, then they would send me back to Syria.

After 6 months of living in that camp, my parents realized that I couldn't live this way, so finally they took the decision to send me to the only place that could give me safety and treat me like a human: Europe!

My journey started in the same year (2015), my parents sold our house and sent me the money that I needed for this journey. First I crossed the border to Turkey where I was first in an empty town where the people had to leave because of the war between the Turkish army and the PKK. I slept on streets for 5 days till I offered a strange man 400\$ to take me to a safe city.

I then tried to enter Europe on foot through Bulgaria but the border guard caught me trying to cross and sent me back. Then I tried on foot but this time through Greece. We were lots of people trying to get to the other side of a river but there was only one truck on the other side

that could only pick up from 30 to 50 persons, by the time I crossed the river the truck was already full.

Finally I went to Izmir and I risked my life and got on an inflatable boat and crossed the sea to the Greek Island (Kos).

## My Journey through Europe



On the Greek Island Kos I had to sleep on a mountain for 4 days because there was no more space left in camps, but I helped a lot because I was the only person between those 1400 refugees on that island who could speak English very well and could translate to Arabic and Kurdish, my job was to translate between the border guards and the refugees and check if anyone needed a special treatment because of sickness, if everyone had something to eat and of course to translate the border guards' instructions.

They allowed me to leave after those 4 days, so I took the first ship to Athens where my phone and my whole money got stolen, I went to the police station but they said they couldn't help me.

I made it to Europe but had no money and no phone. I decided to continue, no matter what, so I took a train to Macedonia and there I met 3 Kurdish guys that I had never met before, I told them what had happened and they gave me money and were very kind with me, I really own these three guys my life.

I continued to help as much as I could and to translate between the refugees and the border guards in every country that we went through (Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Austria) and finally we reached Germany. They asked me if I wanted to go to Munich, Frankfurt or Hanover. I have never heard of any German city before, so I just picked Hanover, why? Because I just found pronouncing its name easier.

## A New Life

They say the hardest part in having a new life is the beginning and for a refugee in a foreign country that's absolutely true. I was glad that I was in Germany but really sad that I was thousand miles away from my family and my old friends. I was having nightmares seeing a lot often of dead bodies, mostly of children, and I was scared that something might happen to my family in Syria.

I started attending school, the BBS Syke Europaschule, and learning the German language, I met lots of new great friends, I had the best teachers in my life Mrs Lindhof and Mrs Greve-Simers with whom I shared all the problems I had and asked them what they thought I should do to fix them. My family left Syria and joined my brother in the

Kurdistan of Iraq and I can call them now every day, I save up money and I send them any time they need.

I got this chance to join the amazing Erasmus-Project “The European ABC” and this project is like the best chance that I ever got, thanks to this project, I was in Poland and then in Italy, I met great people from Poland, Italy and Spain.



I hope we will visit each other every year and remain friends forever!

I have goals now for my life, I learned that I have to let go of the past and focus on the future and I have hope that life will get better.

I wish peace for my country and I want to thank everyone who supported me and helped me get up on my feet.

**IF WE DON'T END WAR, WAR WILL END US.** – H.G. Wells