

Life as a  
**Refugee**

NEWS  
**Borderfree**

December 2017



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Photo by Mohammad Teimouri

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## Borderfree in a nutshell

“borderfree association“ was founded on the 9th of September 2015, with the goal to concentrate humanitarian engagements. Those engagements were spontaneous help actions, which cared about the momentary situation of refugees in the Balkan. “borderfree association“ supports humanitarian processes to guarantee sustainable coordination and future projects. The intention of the association is neither religious, nationalistic nor political. The association stands for humanitarian values such as respect, tolerance and open-mindedness and wants to help to reach the



vision of a humanitarian life for everyone. Most of the founders are from the Balkan. Some of them had to flee their country when they were children or teenagers and are therefore strongly connected to the topic. They also had experience with aid organisations and projects in Serbia. They know how to help with purpose and good coordination. “borderfree association“ works hard to improve the lives of the refugees, but it doesn't support or accept illegal activities or intentions against the state and government. “borderfree association“ is registered in Switzerland, Serbia and Greece.

# Learning while waiting

It has been 2 months since Ashugullahe Barakzai started to work in camp. He is one out of a small group of refugees who are part of a new educational program by the organisation “Nexus Care“. In the factory, he produces the things that are needed in camp: tables, chairs and other things.

He says, that he likes working with wood because you can use this material in many different ways.

At the end of the day, he can see what he has made. In the factory there are mostly small machines to work with. For the work he does, he says “its okay“. But if the work gets more difficult, he needs bigger machines to guarantee a better quality.



Photos by Jelena Djenic

Actually, Ashugullahe’s favourite material is metal. In Afghanistan, he was the proud owner of a metalshop and in Iran he worked on metal constructions for 3 years. In the camp he works with wood because there is no other possibility, but Ashugullahe says, that the work is similar and so it is a great opportunity for him.

Ashugullahe and the others work in the factory 3 times a week. At the end of the education, they will get a carpenter’s certificate. The certificate will help them get a good job in their target country.

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Written by *Lars Oester*

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## New houses for the green thumbs

The greenhouses were built a few weeks ago by people from the commissariat with the help from people living in the camp. All in all, there are four greenhouses behind the sleeping salons. The idea was to built a space for refugees where they can sow their own vegetables. At the moment, there is salad in the green-



houses waiting for the people to be picked. During the cold winter time, there are four to five refugees working in the greenhouses almost every day. When the time comes, we will be enjoying delicious vegetables from the greenhouses.

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Written by *Jelena Djenic*

# When kids become refugees

It is hard to imagine how it is for parents to make such a dangerous trip with kids. Mahsa Bami, Asonya Mohammadi and Soran Dîlo asked three mothers about their experience.

## The story of brave sisters

My name is Suzi Muhammad\*. I'm 34 years old and I have 2 little girls. Their names are Hano and Lano. 4 months ago we left our home in South Kurdistan (Iraq). Me and my kids experienced the hardest time of our lives. I escaped from my region, to fulfill my wishes for my children. **But during this trip, the children lost many things, that I believe they will never find again.** The trip had a big psychological impact on them.

We couldn't travel legally, so we had to travel illegally to Europe. For that sometimes we walked in forests for 2 days. **I promised my girls to write their courageous story as a book.** This gave them the confidence to continue the walk. When we arrived at the Bulgarian border, I didn't believe what I saw. The police raided us as if attacking enemies.

I had always taught my children that the police can deal with any difficulty and that you can trust them and that they care for you. **But now the girls are scared of the police,** they think policemen are those who will make them cry, scare them, hit them and imprison them, because they imprisoned and humiliated us.



All photos by Mohammad Teimouri

Now we are here in the camp in Preševo. Over here, I have some problems too. For example: There are many bad guys in the camp (addicts, alcoholics, smugglers...). I have to take care of my children. So when I say to the girls, "You shouldn't talk with those guys", they ask: "Why?" and I can't give them an answer. **Because I'm afraid their opinion about the whole community will change.**

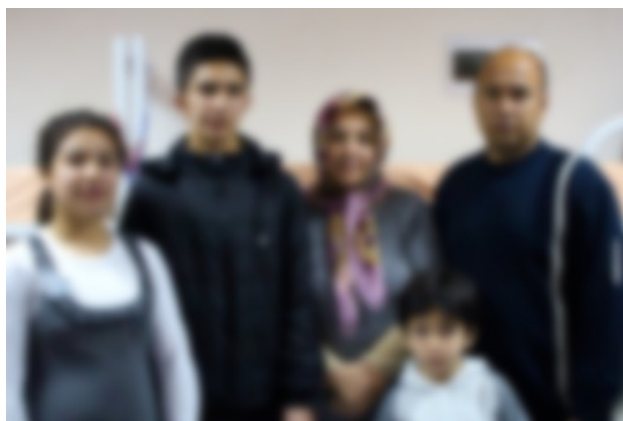
I hope that after all of these difficulties, I will be able to meet the wishes of my children in the future. Hano, my eldest daughter, wants to become an architect, so I have to do everything that I can for her to reach her dream. I also have to try to erase the two images in the minds of my girls: The image of the police and of the forest, because now they are scared of both the police and the trees. In my opinion, my girls are those brave sisters that I want to write a book about.



## Finding freedom

My name is Farzaneh Sakizadeh\*. I'm 42 years old, from Afghanistan and I have three children. We left Afghanistan two years ago, reached Mashhad first in Iran, then Greece and finally Belgrade.

During the trip, we had many hard moments. The Iranian police shot at us. **We were missing the children several times.** And we were drowning in the waterways and felt



**“The camp is not suitable for families.”**

stuck. The camp in Preševo is not suitable for families, here are many single men and the dogs are dangerous for the kids. My kids can go to a local school. **I want them to continue going to school and I hope, they can fulfill their wishes.** Because the schools are safe here, unlike in Afghanistan. There was no freedom of speech and the use of a hijab was even obligatory for girls.

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## Away from school

My name is Rahimeh Amini. I'm 33 years old and I'm from Afghanistan. I have three children. We got smuggled. We stayed in Greece for one year and now we are in Serbia for one year, too.

On the way we traveled day and night with rain and snow. Our hands and feet were frozen. Thieves and smugglers robbed us, took our money, the phones and everything we had. **At one point, we even saw dead bodies on the way.** My daughters screamed and cried. But we



weren't prepared to return to our country, so we continued.

Here in camp, I'm afraid that my daughters go alone to the toilets or elsewhere. I fear that single men will harass them. **For three years my daughters didn't go to school** because they weren't allowed to in Iran. Everywhere we were ashamed because we didn't learn to write and read. My biggest wish is, that my children can study in any field they like.

\* The family doesn't want their photo to be published online.

# The unknown boy's new family

This is the story of Roholla and Mahjan Azizi, an Afghan couple, that lives in the Preševo camp. And it is also the story of Muhammad, a 23 years old man from Iran who is stuck in this camp.

Roholla and Mahjan have 5 children. Three years ago they started their trip from Afghanistan. Before, they have had a calm life.

**They were the owners of a house, they had work. But then, the war, the Taliban and other extremist groups changed their lives.** That's when they decided to leave the country and became refugees.

After leaving Afghanistan, they tried to reach Europe 3 times. Finally they managed to cross the border between Turkey and Iran and arrived in Greece. They spent a year in Greece. Then they went to Macedonia and on to Serbia. On their way, they faced lots of problems:

**Smugglers stole their money several times. Till now they lost 35'000 Euro.**

Now they are in Preševo since one year. They learned to accept the difficulties of life in camp. Here, they learned about an Iranian boy, his name is Muhammad.

According to rumours, he got hit by smugglers and the police during a rebellion at a camp in Bulgaria. His brain is damaged and he has a serious mental disease. He is not able to take care for himself.

**What really happened to Muhammad? Nobody seems to know.** He himself never talks about it. Therefore,

Roholla and Mahjan don't know much about his past and his family in Iran. From the first moment on, they had sympathy for this unknown boy. They decided to take care of him. They help him in his daily life, look for food, clothes, his hygiene and help him to wash clothes. They say: **"Caring for him gives us a good feeling, because we ourselves needed help in Afghanistan and there wasn't anybody to care of us."**



Photo by Mohammad Teimouri

Roholla and Mahjan prayed for Muhammad's health and they are looking for someone else to take care of him, when they will leave. In the end they hope, that they can live with their family in safety in a European country and that their children can fulfill their dreams.

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Written by **Soran Dilo** and **Mahsa Bami**



# What is your talent?

## Zoreh, 33, Iran

“I worked as a kids’ book illustrator for the last ten years. I painted pictures for about 50 books and for a few 3D video games as well. I love to create characters and monsters.

I started to paint portraits here in the camp. Portraits of kids. **It drives me crazy, when I have nothing to do.** I like to work something. For somebody. Actually, it’s more interesting for me to paint here than to paint at home. **It is the first time, that I don’t have to earn money with what I do.** Every day, kids knock on my door and ask: Is it ready? Is my portrait ready?

When I was a kid, there weren’t many books for kids in Iran. I cut the illustrations out of the newspaper. I know, that’s what all artist say: But I love to paint since I was a kid.”



Photos by Mohammad Teimouri



## Masoud, 32, Iran

“My father told me every day, to come with him. He worked as a karate coach. But I didn’t like to fight. So my father said: „Chose any sport in the world, I will pay for it.“ **Today, I would not be able to live my life without sports.** For me, exercise is more than just physical - it’s therapeutic.

In Iran, I worked as a metallurgy engineer and as a fitness coach for 15 years, taught roller-skating, gymnastic and outdoor climbing. In camp, I have a daily fitness class. We don’t have any tools at all but we can do sports nevertheless. **When you love sports, you can do it wherever you are.**

If I change the life of just a single one of my students, I will be proud. Yes, I think, sports can change lives. I keep saying: A healthy mind is a healthy body.”

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Interviews by **Junaid Iqbal** and **Soran Dilo**



**Rahimeh, 33, Afghanistan**

“My talent is knitting. I learned to do it by myself when I was 6 years old. I developed very fast, so I had a knitting class when I was 15 years old. Now, I can make everything that I want. I make the clothes for my family and sometimes also for others in camp. I have my own ideas but sometimes I’m inspired by things I see in the internet.”



**Ali, 38, Iran**

“I produce, operate, mix, master and play heavy metal music. I’m interested in music since my childhood and I have been a musician for the last 22 years. Heavy metal is a music genre that protests against religion, government, politics and more. With music, I express my opinion. I want to tell the people about my protest.”



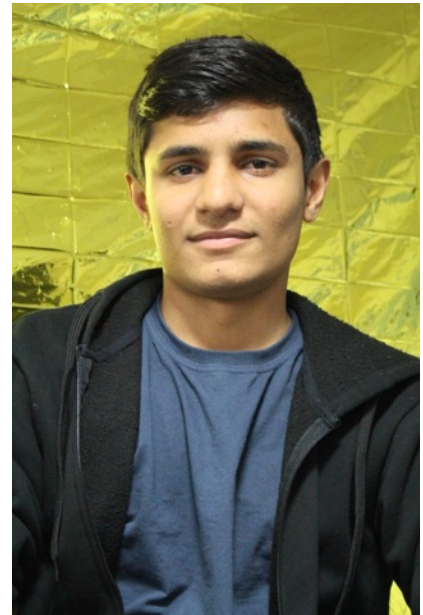
**Messan, 20, Afghanistan**

“I was 10 years old, when I started dancing. My idols are Michael Jackson, Jennifer Lopez and the Indian actor Shah Rukh Khan. I want to take dancing classes and become an actor in Bollywood movies.”



**Cristion, 43, Nigeria**

“When I was 34 years old, I started with fitness to make my body look like a statue. I have to learn more to become a coach. 3 years ago I injured my shoulder and I stopped to workout. I want to start again.”



**Rizwan, 17, Pakistan**

“In Pakistan, we have the tradition to decorate cars and rooms for weddings. Back home, I made different articles for weddings such as paper flowers. I want to become a professional in the future.”



# Prevention is the best treatment

Soran Dîlo studied health, safety and environment at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science in Tehran. Here is his advice for the people in camp - and outside.

## Sugar

More than 80 percent of type 2 diabetics die of heart disease. Type 2 diabetes is a disease that can damage the organs of your body such as the eyes, the liver and the kidneys. Sugar is one of the causes of this scary disease. We use too much sugar in camp. Please ask the staff at places where tea is served to put just a little bit of sugar in your tea. It will help you to stay healthy.

## Teeth (take care of your teeth)

Many people don't know how to brush their teeth properly. Improper brushing can cause as much damage to the teeth and gums as not brushing at all. Hold your toothbrush in the same way that you would hold a pencil and brush for at least 2 minutes. Brush your teeth and also your gums, the tongue and the roof of the mouth. You can get advice about dental care from Aleksandra, the dentist in the camp.

## Lung cancer

World wide lung cancer is a major cause of death. When you smoke cigarettes, cigars or pipes, you have a higher risk of lung cancer. Tobacco smoke is toxic. There are more than 7000 chemicals in the smoke. 2 million people die per year. So, let's remove this disease from our life and our family life.

## Toilets

Keeping the toilet areas clean is an important factor for good toilet hygiene. Dear refugees in camp, please after using the toilet and washstand, clean the area from any pollution, because types of viruses and bacterias can be transmitted to other people. Also, after using the WC wash your hands with soap.



## Lice

Everyone knows about lice; these annoying insects and human parasites. Usually, we find them in the hair of children. Both kids and parents should be more careful. To protect yourself from lice, it is useful to bath and use warm water and soap. Here are some ways to reduce lice infection in our camp: change your underwear every day and shorten the hair. In emergencies: Boil the clothes at the high temperature of 60 degrees and iron them.

## Winter

During the cold season, you need to protect yourself and family members from the effects of cold weather. Remember to wear clothing like sweaters, boots, hats, gloves and scarves. Wool clothing keeps you warmer than cotton. You should also wear a hat and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs. We also often see your kids without good shoes. When you have cold feet, you risk to catch a cold. Or worse: pneumonia!

# One day in Germany...

Eight months ago, our first game was a disaster. We were scared of the ball. They dribbled around us. And in the end, we were very sad. We lost 2 to 1. And our coach Bojan told us: "I'm proud of you. You shot one goal."

Now, we are very happy, because we really know how to play. We are a team of eleven girls and women between 8 and 30 years: Firouza, Zolhija, Madina, Rihanna, Asonya, Majabin, Henna, Sarina, Somaja, Anana and Morsal. We practice every day. Bojan, a former junior player for Redstar Belgrad, shows us how to pass, to shoot, to dribble and he tells us, not to grab the jersey of the others. We have had three more challenges against local teams. For the first game, we went to Vranje. We won the game 6 to 0. We were so happy. **We thanked Bojan a thousand times and he was proud of us.**

We watched the movie "Bend it like Beckham". And some of us learned a lot from this movie. We played the second game against the team, that had beaten us before. But this time, we played better and we won with 3 to 1 goals. We were running better, passing better, shooting better. And Bojan was so happy and proud of us.

A month ago, we have had our latest challenge. We were sure, that we would win. But when we started playing, we didn't have time to blink and they shot the first goal. Some of the girls play for the national football team of Serbia. We had no chance and lost 7 to 1. **We were so disappointed and in a bad mood for days.** Bojan said: "Don't worry. I'm proud of you that you shot a goal."

With Bojan's practice we could find a way to win two games. But we are in Preševo for one year and this camp makes us tired. When we dribble and get close to the goal, we

don't have enough energy to score. The girls from Serbia dribble perfectly and shoot the ball strongly. We told Bojan we need more



Photo by Mohammad Teimouri

practice. Now we play every day and get better and better. When people are watching us, they call us Ronaldo.

We hope, that when we reach Germany or other European countries, **that we will have enough energy to play perfectly and will win as many challenges as possible.** Then we will come back and visit our great coach Bojan. That is our promise to him.

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Written by **Madina Azizi** (15), **Zolhija Azizi** (15) and **Firouza Azizi** (13)



# Try a perfect chicken biryani



## Ingredients

- 1 kg chicken
- 1 kg Basmati rice
- 2 medium sized onions
- 250 ml oil
- ginger
- 1 chopped green chili
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 5 tablespoons yogurt
- salt
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon paprika powder
- 1 teaspoon cardamom
- 3 fresh mint leaves
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 lemon (decoration)

Recipe by *Junaid Iqbal* and *Sulaiman Ali*



Photos by Mohammad Teimouri

## Method

First, we prepare the Masala: We mix the cinnamon, the cloves, the turmeric powder, the paprika powder, the mint leaves, the bay leaves and two tablespoons of salt.

For a Pakistani chicken biryani, we need just one big pot. We start with cutting the onions and browning them with lots of oil. As soon as they are golden, we add the minced garlic, ginger and a chopped green chili. After a few minutes we deglaze with little water, add the masala and 2 teaspoons of tomato paste. We let it cook for 10 minutes. Then, we add five tablespoons of yoghurt. The yoghurt will make the biryani creamy.

After the yoghurt, we add the raw chicken, that we have cut in small pieces before. We let it cook for some time until the oil starts to come to the surface. We add the cardamom.



After five minutes, we put water into the pan - for one kilogram rice we will need about 1.5 litre water. Before we add the rice, we wash it and put it into cold water for five minutes. As soon as the water in our pan is boiling, we add the rice. After a few minutes, we put two A4 paper sheets under the lid, so that the steam can not leave the pot. Like that, we cook the rice for 10 to 12 minutes - and it is ready, our Pakistani chicken biryani.





# Bolani

## Every Afghan loves that

Photos by Rihanna Amiri

### Ingredients

#### Paste

1 kg flour  
Salt

#### Sauce

4 tomatoes  
1 green chili  
3 tablespoon vinegar  
Chili powder  
Garlic

#### Filling

1 kg potatoes  
1 kg leek  
500 g tomatoes  
2 onions  
1 clove of garlic  
Turmeric  
Spicy curry powder  
2 green chillies



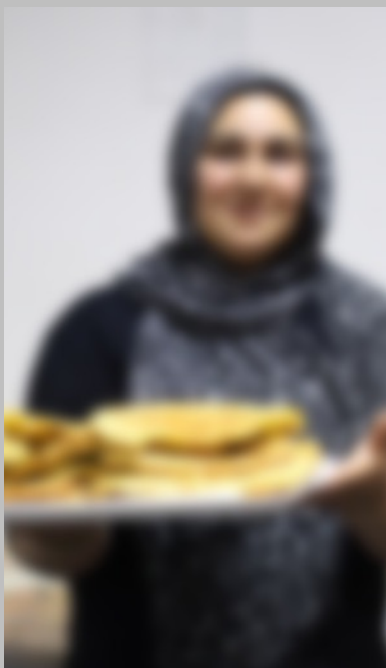
### Method

Here is how I make a perfect bolani in Afghanistan: First, I make the paste by mixing the flour with water and adding 2 teaspoons salt. Next, I steam the potatoes until they are soft. I fry onions with leek and tomatoes. I mash the potatoes and mix it with the leek. I add the spices. The filling is ready.

Now, I split the paste into small balls, each about as big as an egg. I start to flatten the paste – use lots of flour! I make it very flat, as big as a plate. Then I put a spoon of the filling on one half of the paste and close it carefully.

After that, I heat oil in a big pot. I put one bolani after another in the pot and deep fry it. 20 seconds are enough for each side. Now, take them out of the pot and they are ready to serve.

I serve the bolani with yoghurt and a sauce. For the sauce, I chop the tomatoes and the green chillies. I add vinegar, garlic and a little bit chili powder. That's it. Enjoy.



Recipe by *Maria Azimi\**

\* Maria doesn't want her photo to be published online.



# Who we are, how we work

Stories can not be more international, more multicultural than those in the magazine you are holding in your hands. Written in a small computer room in a refugee camp in Serbia. Created by people from Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Iran and Switzerland. The stories are about people from even more countries. Within a few weeks, a team of 19 people who are living in the camp planned the magazine, looked for stories, wrote the articles, took pictures, created the design.

The working progress for this magazine was not that different from the one of Swiss newspapers I worked for. There is one difference though: The language. The magazine is written in English, even though it is not our mother tongue. Half of the group speaks Urdu, the other half Farsi. However, we found a way to understand each other. The majority of the group decided about what topics would appear in the magazine. Most articles were written with the help of Google translate.



The magazine looks as it looks thanks to our great writers. Ali Hassan created the design of the magazine. And with Mohammad Teimouri, we were able to find a professional photographer in the camp. Parallel to the work on this magazine, Mohammad started to teach a small group of young talents how to take professional pictures. We hope, that his students will take the pictures for the next magazine.

In the end, it took us more than an hour to decide, what will be on the front page. We discussed dozens of titles and photos. The final picture and title were chosen to make a point: With all the different people in our team and within our magazine, we can present an accurate image of the daily life in camp. What you're holding in your hands right now, is a little inside look into the life of a refugee.

Photo by Mohammad Teimouri

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Written by *Dominik Galliker*

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