Morning Is No Longer Morning. Nor Is Night Truly Night

A collaborative newspaper publication



Morning Is No Longer Morning. Nor Is Night Truly Night is a collaborative newspaper publication featuring stories and personal histories of people who have travelled along the Balkan refugee route and settled in Europe. Most of those involved in the making of the publication have participated in a series of workshops and dialogues that began in countries along the Balkan refugee route, where many were stranded for months and, in some cases, for years. Since then, they have continued writing about their lives in exile throughout the trilogy of collaborative newspapers.

This third publication follows the stories first introduced in *Until I Become Home* and *A Memory Without Evidence*. The images and texts in *Morning Is No Longer Morning. Nor Is Night Truly Night* reflect on the conditions that were imposed on refugees after they managed to settle in Europe. Some contributors continue to live in asylum centres or without secure legal status, while others have built their lives in Europe and are now raising a second generation. Structural violence and institutionalised racism run as a common thread throughout the essays, poetry, and reflections gathered in this volume, alongside a persistent longing for stability, peace, and recognition. The writings consistently approach refugeehood through the lens of class struggle while foregrounding forms of care that extend beyond individual destinies.

Challenging the portrayal of refugees as passive victims of decontextualised violence, the newspaper presents the voices of displaced people as articulate, thoughtful, and politically engaged. Their experiences illuminate systemic conditions that speak not only to forced displacement but also to the broader, universal experience of movement across borders. *Morning Is No Longer Morning. Nor Is Night Truly Night* brings together visual documentation of migrants' lives in their host countries alongside testimonies, essays, poetry, and oral histories told from the perspective of those who have found safety, however precarious.

The title of this volume is derived from Etaf Abdelrahman's essay, In the Journey of a Lifetime, Exile Multiplies, in which she reflects on the multiple exiles that her family has endured. Writing from her new life in Ljubljana, Europe, she watches the genocide in Gaza unfold, confronting once again the dislocation, loss, and a fractured sense of time that have marked her family's history. Yet the title itself also speaks to the perspectives of the volume's multiple contributors, many of whom reflect on lives divided between places and countries, between where they come from and where they now live, and between different experiences of belonging.

The collaborative newspaper project was initiated by photographer and artist Jošt Franko along the Balkan refugee route and across Europe between 2020 and 2026.

Nor Is Night Truly Night.

I Am the Only One Hanging Between the Two Places

Mohamad Abdul Monaem

In a poem he created after a long meeting with the Palestinian-American philosopher Edward Said in New York, Mahmoud Darwish wrote:

He says:
I am from there.
I am from here.
I am neither there nor here.
I have two names,
which meet and part.
I have two languages,
And I forgot in which of them I dream.
What about Identity? I said.
He said: It is self-defence.
[...]
Identity is an offspring of birth,
but in the end,
it is the creation of its bearer,
not an inheritance of the past.

This poetic introduction, this conversation on exile and identity between Darwish and Said, both Palestinians living in displacement, the former in Lebanon and the latter in the USA, serves as an entry point to explore identity and the language of culture or, rather, how an individual might approach the construction of his identity. From there, specifically from the phrase "identity is the offspring of birth, / but in the end, / it is the creation of its bearer," my discourse will move to the changes that refugees experience having lived in their new countries across Europe for a decade or more.

I argue that what has happened and continues to happen to every one of them is a personal experience, its depth and impact shaped by the new environment. Let me first say that I am absolutely certain that refugees never lose their original identity; they pass it on to their children, generation after generation, so that it lives with them for four or five generations at least.

A little while ago, the Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo* published an interview with me, and the questions revolved around Arabic culture, politics, and society. What surprised me were the readers' comments below the article on the newspaper's website. One of them wrote, "Thank you for this interview, now we know the refugee community better – they're just like us". What I read between the lines here is that, over a decade after refugees began arriving in Europe, much of the local population still doesn't know who these refugees are. The phrase that struck the most was "They're just like us". Communities, then, search for similarities, they feel at ease with those who are like them. This begs the question: did they have cultural preconceptions about other societies – and I'm referring to the societies of the Middle East? Perhaps people predominantly used Orientalist thought and knowledge base as a frame on which they built their understanding of the East. Or perhaps it was the media's failure to portray the newcomers and introduce them to European society.

Let us return for a moment to the society of refugees, whose members, after these long years, have in general acquired the knowledge of new languages, and most of them no longer rely on government support for their livelihood. They hold different jobs and make money, some of them have even succeeded in building enough capital to start their own businesses, primarily restaurants. But this is just an eight-hour workday – afterwards, they return to their private life, which largely revolves around their families and friends from their homeland. Most of them have no social connections with their new society.

Let us now look at the broader picture: there is no "cantonisation" as such, a particular geography or places where refugees would live, as the vast majority of them live among the local population. But look more closely, and a clear demarcation appears. For example, most refugees have a reasonable understanding of the law, and they avoid making mistakes. But they do so without even the most fundamental cultural knowledge; they do not, for example, follow local television channels; instead, they watch their national broadcasters and news from their home countries on the internet. There is a consequence to that: refugees acquire no new knowledge or culture and remain fully tied to the original culture (politics, political news, songs, music, drama, television). Here, we register quite clearly the extent of this cognitive distance, but also personal isolation from the environment around them. The connection with society is merely a connection that allows them to earn a living.

To these trees, uprooted from their soil and planted in a new place where air, water and soil components are different, this is an experience of alienation and an attempt to grow roots again. Perhaps successful, perhaps not. Love, ties, marriage, children, and friendships are aspects that are fleeting and rare. They manifest through relationships between some of the men and local women, but the same cannot be observed when it comes to refugee women: the number of their relationships with local men is close to zero. This, of course, is a result of religious distance and societal rejection on both sides. The local society still tends to see the newcomer as less, and approach them from a position of superiority, even if subtly. For their part, the new (refugee) community does not readily accept the European way of life, coming, as most of them do, from religious and conservative societies. This, in my opinion, is one of the most important reasons for the lack of social integration, at least in the first and second generations of refugees in Europe.

Let's turn to hope for a minute, because life would be narrow without hope's openness, and look forward to the new generation, the generation that goes to school every morning and works there and builds friendships, because this is the generation, I think, we can count on for a more open future between human societies.

Let me share with you my personal experience with my four children from a few months ago, when the dictatorial regime in Syria fell, and my joy was indescribable. I was jumping like a child, happy to get the first gift he had been dreaming about. My children, however, couldn't really grasp the reason behind my joy. Days later, I discussed with them the issue of returning to Syria. My children have lived with me here in Europe for ten years; when they arrived, even my daughter, the oldest of them, was not yet ten years old. Now, they're teens and young adults.

"How do you feel about returning to our house in Aleppo?" I asked, and their responses shocked me, because I thought that they would quickly agree with me. Their answers, however, were anything but:

"What about my friends and school, will I never see them again? And will I have to stop playing football at my club..."

The second one said: "No, no, I'm staying here. This is my room and I love it, and this house, but maybe I'll go with you for a short visit, and then we can return."

The third one, a girl, said: "Will I be allowed to wear whatever I want, like here? And how will I bring my boyfriend with me to live there, is that allowed? And what's the weather like? I'm not used to extreme heat. I would love to see our extended family, but only for a short while."

The fourth one, the nineteen-year-old, said: "Yes, I am an Arab from Syria. But I am also Slovenian. I want to be there and here, I want to be in a relationship with a young man who speaks my language, but not there, I want him here, and I also want a school and a university to go to, and I want to see a roe deer in the city park come up to me. Who will feed her if I leave?"

I am the only one hanging between the two places, I am the one who falls asleep over there in Aleppo every night and wakes up in Ljubljana in the morning. Yes, the second generation has taken root, but the roots of us, the parents, don't go so deep and have not yet taken well to the soil. We are the most fragile generation, but the future ones will spread their roots between the two civilisations. They will develop new educational curricula and policies for their generations, so different from what we have imagined ours to be in our time, the future world will be increasingly open and multicultural.

I am the one who falls asleep over there in Aleppo every night and wakes up in Ljubljana in the morning. Yes, the second generation has taken root, but the roots of us, the parents, don't go so deep and have not yet taken well to the soil.

Mohamad Abdul Monaem is a Syrian poet, writer, and publisher of Palestinian origin. After his home in Aleppo was demolished in the civil war, he fled with his family and found refuge in Slovenia.


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European, But Without a Passport








Zied Abdellaoui

My story is a very long story. It's becoming longer by the minute. I still have no papers. I still live *sans-papier*. Right now, I am in France, but I don't really care where I end up, France or Britain or Vienna. Czech Republic or Hungary. *All of this land is my land*, like Bruce Springsteen once sang.

When, after making my way across Europe, I first came to France, I lived in Paris for a little while, in a house full of Tunisians in exile. The landlord of this apartment in Paris we lived in threw our belongings onto the street without a warning. I lost a lot of books I was carrying with me throughout my journey. Books I got in Greece, books I acquired throughout former Yugoslavia. I then moved to Lille. The North is less racist. It's simpler, poorer. Not pretentious and fancy at all. Racism that exists here is built solely on the fear of the poor, fear fuelled by capitalism – fear that the migrant will take your job. Accommodation in France is generally hard to find and dire. Especially for a bunch of migrants. I rent a little room now in Lille. I work in a market every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday – I get called when there isn't enough workers. It's risky, really risky, as the police come to the market regularly. But after so many years, one learns very well how to live *sans-papier*. If you're in a good mood, no one will ever stop you, this is what I've learned. In Zurich, in Vienna, anywhere in France, I've never been stopped – all you have to do is just act like you belong. That's our life. Acting like we belong. After all these years, I don't look like a migrant anymore. I have assimilated with my looks: I often joke that I look blonder, that my skin looks paler.

Life is easier now than a few years ago on the Balkan Route, of course, although I wish I would be able to settle down and live freely, without worry and fear. I don't care where I end up, just that I could live as a free human being, with my papers settled.

Not much is left for me in Tunisia. Since I left my home eight years ago, both my parents have passed away. I was not able to visit them and say goodbye. I only saw them through video calls. My father would call me regularly to see how I was doing. But in the end, I couldn't say goodbye, go to their funerals. That's life. That's just how life is for migrants. But how could I feel sorry for myself, with everything that is happening in Gaza. All my sadness has gone to Palestine. All my tears have gone to what the people have endured in Gaza. I truly cannot have any more tears left for myself.

While I was in a refugee camp in Zurich, I came to realise how things work here in Europe. There was this Protestant Church in the city that helped the poor – and one day, I found two migrants on the street, who just arrived in Switzerland. They looked like they just fell off the train. One was from Algeria, the other from Morrocco. I've forgotten their names by now. I wanted to help them, so I took them to the church, which provided food and clothes for us. We came there after hours, just a few minutes too late. They said: "Sorry, we are closed." I thought to myself, are they kidding us, look at the state of the two guys I brought there. But truly, how could we be mad at them? In this brutal Europe, with everything we have endured, they were the ones who helped us, they gave billions to help migrants in need. They indeed help – but inside the organisation and within their working hours. They're nice people, but serious and organised, they embody the Protestant ethics. I told the two guys, habibi, this is not Palestine or Latin America, where we we'd get food at four in the morning. This is Zurich, and we've arrived after hours. You'll have to wait till the morning. The guys looked really battered up and hungry. In the end, the lady who closed the gate in front of us took pity and brought them some sandwiches, juices, water, even restaurant coupons. Their eyes widened, they smiled. "Welcome to Europe, my friends," I said.

And so I've lived in Europe for over eight years. Regardless of what my papers say, I've become European. This is also why I try to read up and understand the sociopolitical context of it, now more than ever. And I've come to realise that the 19th-century mentality still runs the European Union, its borders, immigration policies, and geopolitics. The cynicism and Machiavellianism of the Occident are inane. Of course, they won't allow migrants in legally, but they will scavenge uranium mines, dig for oil and gas, and create wealth on the backs of the poor in the regions we migrate from. Our lives and our regions are sacrificed to maintain a comfortable living for people born under the European sun.

And so, for us, everything is complicated.

It's more than complicated.

I often feel like we are back in the period before the French Revolution. The bourgeoisie, the nobility, the aristocracy, the popular class is in charge... The sons and daughters of the elite will become lawyers of Epsteins and Einsteins and we – if we happen to graduate from law school one day – we will get to defend Mohammads and Mamadous. This is France today. This is the society we live in. This, too, is the European Union. We are watching Enlightenment ideas crumble amidst the wars, starvation, and analphabetism of the world.

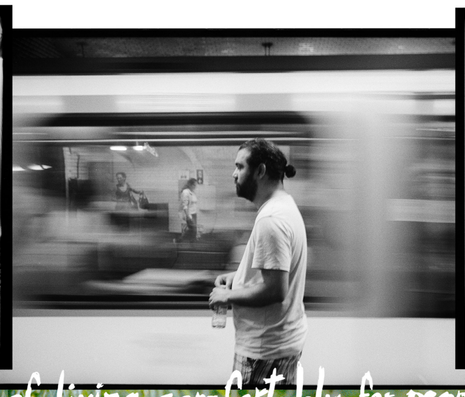
We live in the times of *Das Kapital*, once again.

* Zied Abdellaoui is an asylum seeker from Tunisia. He studied political sciences and has travelled 4,517 kilometres back and forth on the Balkan refugee route before reaching Europe almost four years later. He currently lives in France.











Our lives and our regions are sacrificed in the name of living comfortably for people born under the European sky

A Diary

Matiullah

8 July 2021

I managed to get out of a very difficult situation and found safety in Italy, despite all the dirty games and unfair European border policies. After countless attempts to walk through the Balkan Route – coming as far as Slovenia, Hungary, and Romania – I was always pushed back, at one point all the way to Turkey.

I then tried my luck and decided to reach Italy by boat. With 114 other refugees on board, we sailed for five days and nights, and after a mind-blowing, heart-wrenching, and almost deadly journey, we were rescued by the Italian coast guard in the middle of a deadly storm.

I now strongly hope for an opportunity to continue my higher education. This is also my mother's dream. However, I understand that I will face many obstacles and a long process of getting legal documents as an asylum seeker.

19 March 2022

I had my asylum interview two days ago. It went well. Now I am waiting for a positive answer. The waiting is stressful, but I still have hope.

20 May 2022

I moved from southern Italy to central Italy, to a city about one and a half hours from Rome. During the first days, I had no place to stay. After long conversations with the prefecture, I was granted six months of accommodation. This helped me obtain my residence permit card and refugee travel passport.

9 January 2023

After the first accommodation period ended, I was lucky to get a study opportunity. I started a one-year caregiving course, consisting of six months of theory and six months of practical internship. If I pass the final exam, I will be able to work in hospitals and residential care homes.

21 December 2023

Last month, I successfully finished my studies. I started working as a caregiver. Earlier this month though, I had to leave the accommodation centre, because there were no more funds to support me. I was lucky to find a job quickly. The company I work for has also provided me with a room.

Intizar

4 July 2024

Between December 2023 and mid-2024, I experienced some things that I had expected in a way. At my first job as a caregiver, where I worked for almost seven months, I was exploited. I was not treated as promised. The company did not keep the conditions they mentioned during the first interview.

I was promised a fixed salary but ended up being paid on an hourly basis. They also tried to give me about 30% of my salary in cash instead of keeping me fully on the books.

Because of this, I decided to leave that company. In late July 2024, I moved to Merano, a city in northern Italy near the Austrian border. I found a new company there, which I consider better, with more adequate rules and regulations.

8 February 2026

Life has not been easy since my arrival in Italy. I have faced many challenges: harsh living conditions, lack of proper care in camps, long waiting times for asylum interviews, and limited opportunities to study what I really want. I started learning Italian on the Duolingo app on the very first day I entered Italy and practiced for at least two hours each day for more than a year. Then I attended language classes for beginners, provided by a bunch of Italian teachers who were volunteering to teach refugees in the city square near a church.

I asked the camp management many times to forward my request for a grant so I could continue my university studies, but it did not work. They said there was no financial support.

Still, I am thankful that I was offered a one-year caregiving course. This allowed me to find a job, integrate into Italian society, and support my family back in Afghanistan. My hope is to study nursing in the future.

For many refugees and asylum seekers, integration in Italy is very difficult. There are language barriers, a lack of job opportunities, and exploitation at work without proper contracts. Even for refugees who are well integrated and have legal jobs, renting a room or apartment is one of the biggest problems. There is mistrust and prejudice against refugees.

Many people consider all refugees as bad. At work, we are often not treated equally. In many cases, we receive lower salaries for doing the same job and are asked to work more than others.

My family is fine, thanks to God, and I support them financially. Life in Afghanistan is very difficult. The country is sanctioned and isolated, and surviving without work or income is a serious challenge. My family wishes to leave the country, but honestly, it is almost impossible.

Matiullah Intizar is an Afghani refugee living in Italy. He works as a caregiver and wishes to pursue his education in healthcare.



In the Journey of a Lifetime, Exile Multiplies

Etaf Abdulrahman

I, Etaf, a Palestinian woman now past sixty-five, had carried exile with me for twenty years before returning to Gaza in the 1990s with the ill-fated illusions of Oslo. I thought displacement was behind me. How deluded I was.

From 2008 to 2021, Israel waged five major wars and rounds of bloody assault, leaving 4,300 martyrs, more than 56,000 wounded, and tens of thousands displaced and disabled.

War left nothing intact: the shape of our house, the rhythm of our day, even the arrangement of our bodies. After every onslaught, we ran our hands over our bodies, counting our limbs, and thanked God for our survival. We prepared an emergency bag with documents and certificates, and hung our abayas by the door, ready for another escape.

Normalcy became impossible. The ordinary is something children never knew. My grandchildren.

In 2021, I was uprooted again. I left my homeland, my family, my small house, and my memories. I departed for Slovenia to reunite with my son, his wife, and my two grandchildren through a family reunification program. Another exile, with no face and no end.

At my age, there were no opportunities to learn Slovenian, no programmes designed for the elderly. Still, I enrolled in a primary school to study the language. I worked diligently, completing the second grade with top marks in both mathematics and language, and I continued advancing through classes. I devoted two hours each day to studying and graduated with distinction. I do not know who will come across my story, but I hope the Slovenian government and the countries of the European Union provide the elderly with better opportunities for learning and integration.

I soon realized that language is not just a means of communication, but a bridge to a new life, a tool for integrating into society and understanding its customs and history. I realized that helping refugees and immigrants acquire new skills alleviates the pain of alienation and separation from their homeland, even if only a little.

For four years I have tried to adapt, yet my heart remained in Gaza. Then came what defies imagination, a war of extermination more brutal than anything we had endured since the Nakba of 1948. Israel has destroyed ninety percent of the homes, eighty percent of the infrastructure. Beneath the rubble lie tens of thousands of the missing, their homes and shelters turned into landfills and mass graves.

Ninety percent of the Strip's population has been displaced, 1,900,000 people left in the open. Those lucky enough to find a tent are unprotected from the summer heat, the winter cold that gnaws at their bones, or the missiles that burn them alive as they sleep.

As for those killed by Israel through bombardment, sniper fire, burning, and starvation, their numbers have exceeded 61,000 at the very least, those whom the Ministry of Health was able to register in its official records. The estimates from the British medical journal *The Lancet* suggest that the toll has surpassed 186,000. However, between the world's bickering over numbers on the one hand and Israel's denials, criminalization of the victims, and stripping away of their humanity, the tragedy of these people is lost. The so-called civilized nations of the First World forget that Israel has turned the Strip into a ghost city and executed life itself within it. This is genocide in its most complete form.

I sit here in my room in Ljubljana and wonder: how many times can a human being be cut off from their own roots? How many times can a body endure exile?

The Gaza Strip, that small stretch on the Mediterranean measuring no more than 360 square kilometres, does not deserve to see all its hospitals, universities, and schools destroyed. It does not deserve to have its sidewalks turned into graves under the feet of the displaced, under the muzzles of snipers and drones. It does not deserve to have its blood mixed with scattered flour and sewage.

How did the so-called civilized world agree to the 'victimhood' of those who slaughter others by every means, broadcast in sound and image? How could it permit the bombing of a besieged land with hundreds of tons of American and European explosives, a force more destructive than the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all under the pretence of 'self-defence'?

I open my eyes each morning to Gaza. Morning is no longer morning, nor is night truly night. Everything has blended with the scent of blood and smoke. The news is not news, but a daily tally of who remains and who is gone. I have lost more than two hundred members of my family, among them my mother, Hadbaa, who was recently starved to death. Grief no longer belongs to names or faces, it has become a single shared wound, as boundless as death itself.

What laws are these that speak of human rights while children die of thirst before the cameras? What century is this that allows starvation to ravage infants, the elderly, and women besieged between the sea and the walls of occupation? The world does not stand by as a spectator, the world is a partner, trading roles between those who supply Israel with bombs and those who cover its crime with cold rhetoric.

From afar, I see people pouring into the streets. Only these loud voices remind us that we are not alone. But the leaders of the world are faceless, all vanished behind a cracked mirror called "double standards".

The essence of the story is not complicated: occupation. That is the name, that is the root. There is no meaning to belated European recognition on paper while occupation endures. There is no meaning to borders drawn in ink while Israel redraws them in fire and steel.

Glory to the martyrs who have become faces in the memory of the earth, healing to the wounded who carry their bodies like new maps, and freedom to the prisoners who teach us the meaning of steadfastness. We do not await mercy from the world. We await the hour of return to Palestine, free, sovereign, with Jerusalem as its capital.

In 2021, I was uprooted again. I left my homeland, my family, my small house, and my memories.

I open my eyes each morning to Gaza. Morning is no longer morning, nor is night truly night.

Etaf Abdelrahman worked as a social worker in a high school in the Gaza Strip. Fleeing scarcity and war, she found refuge in Slovenia, where she currently resides.



فقدت أكثر من مئتي من عائلتي، ومن بينهم والدي وإخوتي الذين ماتت جوعاً مؤخراً. لم يعد الحزن مرتبطاً بالأسماء أو الوجوه، بل أصبح جرحاً واحداً مشتركاً لا حدود له كالموت نفسه.

"أفتح عيني كل صباح على غزة. لم يعد الصباح صباحاً ولا الليل ليلاً. كل شيء، حتى الماء الذي نشربه، يحمل مرارة الفقد. لقد فقدت أكثر من مئتي من عائلتي، ومن بينهم والدي وإخوتي الذين ماتت جوعاً مؤخراً. لم يعد الحزن مرتبطاً بالأسماء أو الوجوه، بل أصبح جرحاً واحداً مشتركاً لا حدود له كالموت نفسه.

A Special Place in My Heart



Majdal Abdul Monaem

A lot has happened during the years I've lived in Slovenia. I changed schools, became more introverted, and then slowly began to come out of my shell again.

I came to Slovenia when I was eleven years old and first attended elementary school in Črnuče. At the beginning, it was great – no, it was fantastic. I had many friends, and the teachers were incredibly kind to me. I still remember the birthday party I organized, and how I invited all my friends. I miss them deeply and hope they are all doing well today.

Back then, I also missed my country and my old friends very much. We used to go to the park after school to play, and sometimes I would go to my friend's house so we could study together for upcoming exams. Her name was Shaman, and she was, and still is, one of my dearest friends.

However, as the years passed, things began to change. I became more introverted and often found myself sitting alone, barely speaking to anyone. At night, I would cry because I missed my country and the people I had left behind.

Then we moved to Šiška, and everything felt even harder. My new school was a terrible experience. I felt like an intruder watching my classmates laugh and joke together, while I sat there, unable to understand or belong. Maybe it was because I arrived later, and they had already formed close friendships and inside jokes, or maybe I simply didn't know how to involve myself. Whatever the reason, the feeling of isolation stayed with me until I graduated.

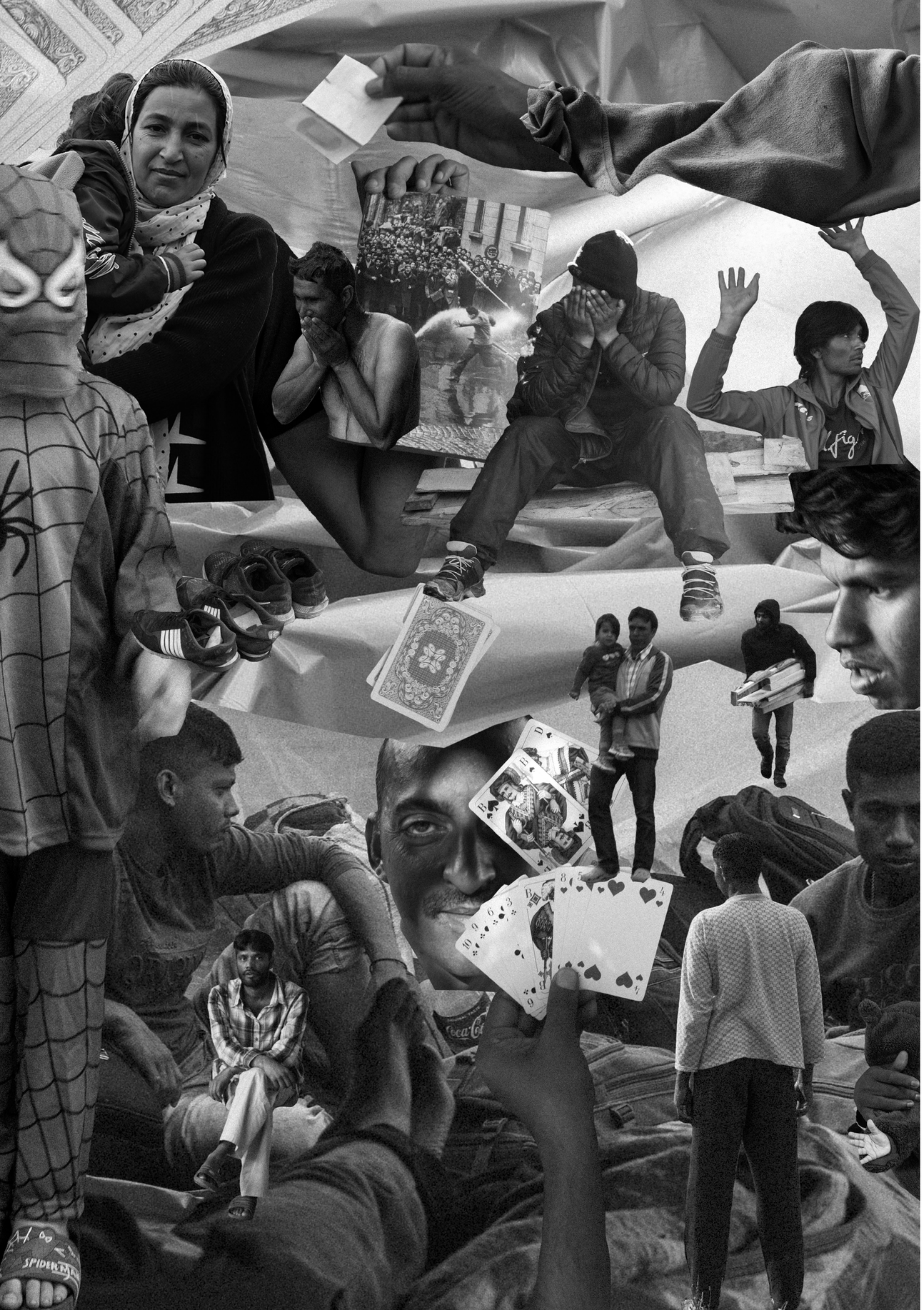
After elementary school, I went to high school and chose a nursing programme. Looking back, it was one of the worst decisions I could have made. I never truly liked anything related to hospital work, so it is not surprising that I struggled and eventually failed. After that, I transferred to another high school. This new school is not bad – I do not particularly enjoy the programme, but I have made friends who make the experience less stressful and more enjoyable.

I admit that if I had been more confident back then, perhaps my experiences in my previous schools would have been different. Still, all those experiences have shaped who I am today.

To be honest, I do not think I could return to my country and live there normally anymore. Deep down, Slovenia has become a special place in my heart. I admire how much people here care about nature, how everyone is respected regardless of what they believe in, and how much safer life feels here. I can express my opinions without fearing for my life, and I hope that one day people in the Middle East will be able to experience the same freedom and peace.

In the end, despite all the difficulties I have been through, I would be lying if I said I would not miss Slovenia if I ever had to leave.

Majdal was born in Aleppo, Syria, in 2006, but she remembers very little about her birthplace because of the war that started before she went to school. She learned the alphabet at home, then travelled to another city in Syria, and eventually joined her father in Slovenia. She is now in her third year of high school, loves reading and writing, and is proficient in languages.



A Letter to the God of the Balkans

Nana Desmond

Dear God of the Balkans, it is me again.

I was once your prisoner for many years.
The torture and inhumane treatment I endured at the hands of your people still live with me mentally, emotionally, and even physically.

I write this letter in tears, with a heavy heart.

I am pleading on behalf of my brothers, sisters, children, and parents who are still in your keeping. I ask you to soften your punishment upon them, so they may not end up like me – or become among those who could not survive what your people have inflicted upon them.

The Balkan route has become one of the world's largest graveyards and, at the same time, a vast crime scene. Countless lives have been broken, buried, or erased along its paths.

So I beg you,
God of the Balkans:

temper justice with mercy.

Nana Desmond (previously known under the pseudonym Desmond Happy) is an asylum seeker and poet from Cameroon. He has been living in an asylum centre in Ljubljana, awaiting a decision on his application for four years. It has been ten years since he fled Cameroon.

I ... you

Mohamad Abdul Monaem

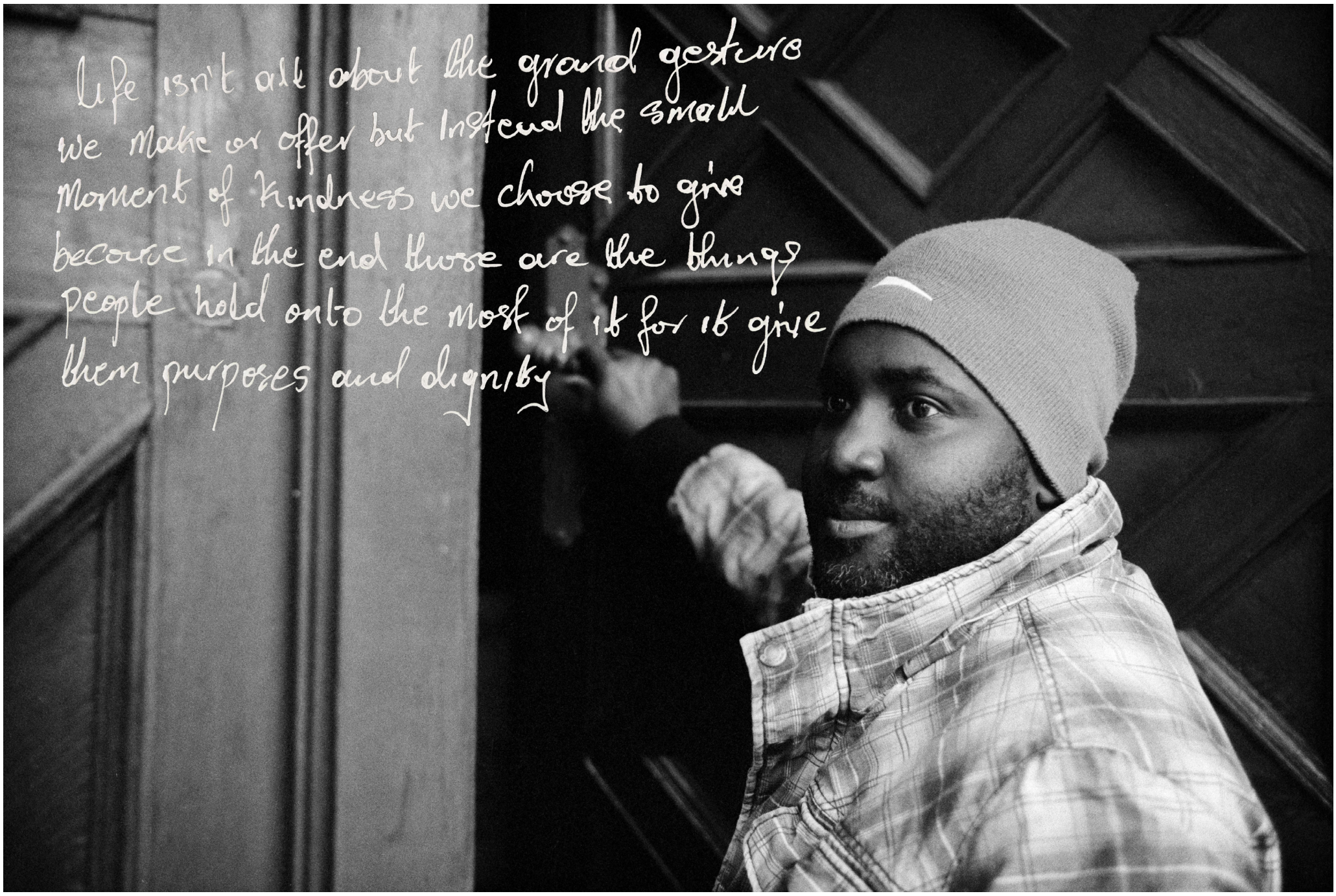
I am you
Do you remember? You left me on the roof of your house in Aleppo.
You forgot me there with a sketchbook, an eraser and some coloured pencils,
And you forgot the rosy laughter on my cheeks.
I travelled often, and you followed me,
And you called me your moon...

I am you
As children, we played together ... you would hide behind the door of your ancient house,
Then peeked out to see me ... but I had wrapped myself in clouds
And made myself invisible to you ... but then I reappeared, lighting up the night and your face.
You laughed and called out: My moon!

You fell in love with every nuun of the story,
And I, like you, loved every star in the sky.
You tell your lover about me in the garden, cloaked by night,
And through my days, I talk about you to the sun.

You fled, migrated – and I did the same.
Together, we walked all the roads,
We smoothed the sea's creases and clothed it in cities,
Then offered it our bodies, the sand on the shores...
Your face didn't change,
And my face didn't change.

You fell in love with the henna of meanings,
You made them shine through the clothes you love to see me in.
And I entered into my whiteness,
While you became my darkness and my revelation.



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