

RAS 02

Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru

Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales

Ymateb gan: Gesajda Asllani, Coleg Sir Gâr

Response from: Gesajda Asllani, Coleg Sir Gâr

### “What is it like to be a refugee”

Refugee, it's a word that we've been hearing for years, but what really is a refugee? A refugee is an individual that has been forced to flee his or her home country for protection and a better life. Some of the many reasons that they have fled their country are reasons like war, slavery, trafficking and physical abuse. They flee their home country with hope for a better life, but fleeing their country brings about other risks as some people might know, for example, most refugees come to the UK in a lorry. When they emerge from the Eurotunnel, many refugees make the common mistake of thinking that all their problems are solved. But this is not the case. After having arrived in England, they are met with a whole new host of problems. Racism, the legal battle for citizenship, the language barrier – the list goes on and on. Racism is something that some newcomers might experience when they arrive in the UK. People seem to be not fair to refugees because they think that we come here to take their benefits and their jobs, but this is not the case! Refugees and asylum seekers are often dehumanised and this is unacceptable. Are people really worth less for being from a poorer country?! Some people tend to say racist slurs such as “Why don't they go to a different country?” but questions like these are invalid. Countries in the Middle East have accepted MILLIONS of refugees whereas the UK right now has a refugee population of about 117,000. That's just 0.18% of the UK population. Last year alone, Germany welcomed 431,000 refugees into their country. But still, people who seek refuge in the UK are subject to overly-patriotic attitudes. Personally, I have been subjected to racism in my own school. As I went to sit at the table, one boy, who I won't name, whispered “terrorist” as I approached. I'm sure you can imagine how this made me feel.

Judging someone because of their origin or religious belief is a mistake made by many people, which hurts many people. It makes them feel unwanted in this society. As we all know about the organisation called ISIS which is causing an terrible war and it's spreading fear everywhere. It's

affecting the individuals in Syria also other individuals in different parts of the world, I remember during the summer I saw a video of a little Muslim boy and his mother having dinner at an American restaurant, near their table were some American people that were talking about ISIS and saying that all Muslims are like them and that they are all bad, you could see the little boy was very upset about what was said about him. His mother didn't hesitate to protect her son from these negative comments. Just because some religious individuals are using religion as a reason to make war it doesn't mean that all individuals that believe in that religion think the same. We are different individuals from each other we have different opinions , choices, lifestyle, religion and that doesn't mean we are all bad or good, at the end of the day we are all humans we all make mistakes but we need to make sure not to include innocent people in our problems. Being able to start a new life in another country without knowing anything about it or how to communicate with someone who doesn't speak your language is harder than it looks. I remember the first week when I arrived in the UK, it was totally different from what I was used to in Albania.

To be able to stay in this country refugees have to go through difficult legal procedures which take a lot of time. They have to give an interview about why they came to the UK. The interviews are given at a building called The Home Office, then they decide if they are going to allow you to live in this country or not. If they allow you to stay then they will give you a five year permission to stay in the UK. After five years you can re-apply for indefinite permission to remain here which means that they get permission to stay in this country and they don't have to apply ever again. If they are awarded permanent residency here, then they are legally a UK citizen.

Then, there is the language barrier. I was lucky enough to have good language-learning skills, and I started learning English in school in Albania. However, not all refugees have this opportunity. Not being able to speak the language also poses a risk of being bullied.

But on the good side, the best thing that has ever happened in my life was moving to the UK, the help that I've received from people has been unbelievable. What this country has done for me, I never thought it would happen. I have had the opportunity to have a better education, which is not

corrupt like it was in Albania. I've met so many different people and learnt so many new things that will lead me to a brighter future. Being a refugee is an amazing experience; there are moments that I wish I never experienced, but there are good moments as well, such as meeting people from across the world and visiting new places.

I'm very thankful for everything that this country has done for me, and the majority of people who treat me the same as the others and give me opportunities to try new things and the most important letting me build a new life here. *The end!!*