



world  
jewish  
relief

# Refugee Crisis: ONE YEAR ON



*A bold act of collective generosity will show that the world, particularly Europe, has learned the lesson of its own dark past and is willing to take a global lead in building a more hopeful future.*

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS



# Introduction

In September 2015, as the refugee crisis intensified and we launched our second emergency appeal for Syrian refugees, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote a piece which still moves me. He discussed the moral and biblical imperative to *love the stranger because you were once strangers*. Referring to the refugee crisis, he said that “A bold act of collective generosity will show that the world, particularly Europe, has learned the lesson of its own dark past and is willing to take a global lead in building a more hopeful future.”

It's impossible to separate the Jewish response to the refugee crisis from our own collective history and memory. The Jewish history of being both migrants and refugees in a new land is as old as our people itself. This experience, when traced back, is in the lifeblood of most people within our community.

This history is also tied into the fabric of World Jewish Relief, formerly the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF). The organisation, formed after the Nazi party came to power in Germany in 1933, brought together many leading British Jews – including Simon Marks of M&S fame and Dr Chaim Weizmann, the first President of Israel. They did two things: they raised a huge amount of money to support Jewish refugees and they lobbied the British government to let Jews fleeing war and persecution into the country.

Following Kristallnacht, over 10,000 unaccompanied, predominantly Jewish, children travelled to the UK

on the Kindertransport, spearheaded by CBF. It's a story frequently recounted – children travelling to Liverpool Street Station to meet their volunteer foster parents, clutching only their most cherished possessions. The organisation was also fundamental in the bringing 732 concentration camp survivors known as ‘The Boys’ and helping them to build a life for themselves in the UK. These people – whether from the Kindertransport, one of the Boys or one of the tens of thousands of others who received our help before, during and after World War 2, have grown up to love Britain and richly contribute towards it. Quoting Lord Sacks again, “As long as human history is told, these acts [the Kindertransport] of humanitarianism will stand as a triumph of the spirit over political expediency and moral indifference.”

Jewish memory shapes our morality. When the pictures of Alan Kurdi hit the news in September 2015 amidst the wave of refugees and migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean, our community remembered what had happened to us. The support that we received was overwhelming as we led the British Jewish response to the crisis.

Over the coming pages, we will show the support that World Jewish Relief gave to refugees over the past year. We know that this crisis is far from over; about two-thirds of the world's refugees have been in exile for more than five years. We plan to continue our vital support for refugees as the need remains significant.



## Paul Anticoni Chief Executive World Jewish Relief

The response from our community to the refugee crisis was exceptional. I'd like to thank each and every person who contributed to our appeal for enabling the Jewish community to come together and make such a huge difference to the lives of thousands of refugees impacted by war and persecution.

We have made a huge difference to:

# 17,557 Lives

## BACKGROUND TO The Conflict

The United Nations estimates that 400,000 people have lost their lives in the Syrian conflict since it started following the Arab Spring in March 2011. What began as anti-government protests quickly flared into the full-scale civil war in which over 11 million Syrians are estimated to have fled their homes. Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and those opposed to his rule continue to battle each other - as well as jihadist militants from so-called Islamic State.

The majority of those escaping the conflict have sought refuge in neighbouring countries or within Syria itself. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria (as of August 2016). Meanwhile about one million have requested asylum to Europe.



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# 1m

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2013

## WORLD JEWISH RELIEF'S

# First Syria Crisis Appeal

In September 2013, two years after the initial uprising, the humanitarian crisis in Syria reached catastrophic proportions. World Jewish Relief launched an emergency appeal, supported by 14 major communal bodies.

World Jewish Relief's initial response focused on the immediate distribution of humanitarian aid such as food and shelter, supporting some of the 70,000 Syrian children living in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan.

The second phase of this response was to focus on the provision of psychological support services. We provided child-friendly spaces to refugees who fled Syria and training to Jordanian and Syrian volunteers in how best to deal with crisis refugees.



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# 2015 WHAT HAPPENED TO MAKE US APPEAL AGAIN?

*According to The International Organization for Migration, more than 3,770 migrants died attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. Most died on the crossing from north Africa to Italy and more than 800 died in the Aegean crossing from Turkey to Greece. The summer months are when most fatalities occur, as it is the busiest time for migrants attempting to reach Europe.*

Globally, the movement of people seeking refuge from conflict is the largest since the Second World War. The primary reason for this dramatic acceleration in displacement is the conflict in Syria. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, including three million Syrian refugees - of which more than half are children. The border shared with Syria is where the vast majority of these people have congregated, with some Turkish towns seeing their population more than doubled.

Yet it was the death of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian who drowned in the sea off Turkey and whose picture took over the national news for days in September 2015, that shocked the world into a realisation of the human horror of the refugee conflict. Given World Jewish Relief's history and our role as the UK Jewish community's response to international disasters, we felt the moral imperative to act again.

MORE THAN  
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# The Appeal

World Jewish Relief's 2015 Refugee Appeal has been our second largest ever emergency appeal, after the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004. Thanks to the generosity of the Jewish community it has raised £943,692, as of August 2016.



**£944k**

raised

## REFUGEE CRISIS:

# World Jewish Relief's Response

## TURKEY

World Jewish Relief's needs assessment concluded that refugees were most vulnerable at the beginning of their journey. This meant that the Turkish-Syrian border was where we first turned our attention. By supporting people close to their country of origin, this is likely to stop them from embarking on the long and dangerous journey across Europe.

Cold, bitter weather characterises the winter in this region. These harsh conditions exacerbated the suffering of millions of refugees on the border, especially for those who inhabit unheated camp housing. Despite temperatures plummeting, the flow of people fleeing Syria did not decrease. Children and the elderly are the groups most at risk from contracting hypothermia; in winter 2015 several winter-related child deaths were reported in Syria and across refugee host countries. In addition, the risk of respiratory infections was high from indoor pollution as people used unsafe methods like burning plastics to warm themselves.

To avert the risk of humanitarian tragedy, adequate insulation for individuals is essential to preserve core body temperatures. Therefore winter clothing and sleeping items were provided to protect children from the elements. 3,169 children received winter kits through World Jewish Relief's partner, the International Blue Crescent, (IBC) with whom we have been collaborating since 2013.



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In addition to meeting essential needs, the distribution of winter kits strengthened the connection of the children and their families to the schools. A widespread concern among Syrian refugees is that their children are becoming 'the lost generation' who will not receive a proper education. Over 60% of refugee children in Turkey are not enrolled in formal education programmes. An entire generation stands to be lost to conflicts as children go without the social, emotional and intellectual development that regular attendance in school would normally provide.

By providing winter kits, we removed a crucial barrier to people enrolling their children at school because many families are understandably prioritising expenditure on heating over schools. This project specifically targeted families with multiple school-age children for whom these costs are a burden. Children who received the winter packages have been far more likely to come back to their temporary education centres and access much-needed services there, because the distribution has proven that attention to their holistic needs will be





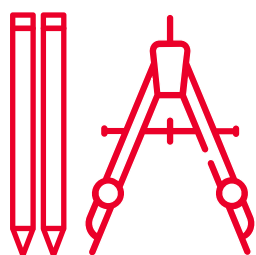
addressed. In a similar way, we distributed 2,050 back-to-school kits for Syrian children on the Turkish-Syrian border, which supported children and their families to achieve some normality after being uprooted from their homes and schools.

As conditions continued to deteriorate in Syria, it has become clear that humanitarian needs must encompass long-term solutions and so World Jewish Relief turned our attention to longer-term needs for the people in this region. 90% of refugees in Turkey live outside of camps, with limited access to basic services. Women refugees are particularly vulnerable in these situations. In desperate economic circumstances, sexual exploitation of women and other protection concerns are increasingly noted. In partnership with IBC, in June 2016 we set up a Women's Support Centre in the underserved area of Islahiye, Gaziantep province, Turkey, 30 kilometres from the Syrian border.

This centre, which runs daily during the week, offers a range of training courses like computer literacy and traditional handicrafts aimed at assisting women to gain employment

# 2,050

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and support themselves and their families. Language instruction in Turkish and English is also offered, in order to support women to acclimatise. Dedicated psychologists from within the Syrian community provide psychosocial services to all participants and women are informed of their legal rights and able to receive advice and care. All staff at the centre are themselves highly qualified Syrian refugee women.

Reem\*, a Syrian woman on the computing course, said "We've been waiting a long time for something like this... We have to improve our skills because we want to help our children to be even better than us and have even more opportunities. If we grow a new and better generation than before, maybe the world will be a better place."

With IBC's strong background in running community centres for refugees, this will be the only one of its kind in the area to tailor services specifically for women.

*"This centre gives importance to Syrian women and puts us first. It makes me feel safe. We are from different parts of Syria here - Aleppo, Homs, Latakia - but we are all one family here. We are all the same, and we all care about each other."*

**Focus group participant,**  
Women's Support Centre. June 2016

\*real names changed to protect anonymity.

## REFUGEE CRISIS: WORLD JEWISH RELIEF'S RESPONSE

### GREECE

World Jewish Relief has been working in Greece since Autumn 2015. Since early 2015, Greece has received over a million refugees and migrants arriving on its shores. The arrivals have predominantly come from countries in conflict, including Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. For the first period of this exodus, the refugee populations on average stayed only a few days in Greece before making their way across its northern borders further into Europe. This route has been closed to them since February 2016, when the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) shut its borders, leaving a now-static population of approximately 59,000 people stranded in Greece, as of August 2016. For Greece, a country hobbled by financial crisis for six years, this requires deploying enormous logistical efforts for an already overstretched asylum system.

World Jewish Relief's programmes aim to improve the standard of living of refugees and people in need of international protection. We have been responding to the needs in Greece since September 2015, supporting 12,311 refugees through the provision of humanitarian essentials, medical, legal, social and protection services.

For those in transit, we aimed to meet the acute, unmet and largely short-term humanitarian need. A mobile medical unit stationed at Idomeni, on the FYROM border, by our partner, the Greek organisation, Praksis, provided 4,837 people with essential medical care from October 2015 until March 2016. During this



**12,311**  
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in Greece

time the border crossing had closed, leaving 12,000 people trapped there. This situation led to medical needs becoming exhaustive as diseases spread in the cramped conditions, as well as the unsafe environment and lasting complications from war injuries.

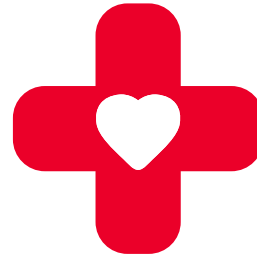
The collaboration with Praksis continued throughout the year. An initial project on the island of Lesbos made use of a team of expert paramedics and rescuers to respond to the influx of boats of refugees arriving on the island's shores. The team was highly mobile and able to respond to the shifting context and diverse geographic landings of the boats. They assisted to stabilise the refugees' boats as they arrived on shore and helped people to safely disembark from the boats - prioritising children, elderly, women and vulnerable cases. They also provided emergency first aid and paramedic support to the many who were overcome by hypothermia and distributed water, food, dry clothes and hypothermic blanket to those arriving.

Also on Lesbos, Praksis, with World Jewish Relief's support, initiated an emergency intervention to transfer 81 unaccompanied minors to a refugee transit facility. These minors had been held in prolonged

administrative detention on the island as there was no suitable place for them. Minors are not allowed to be accommodated together with unrelated adults. Children are particularly vulnerable to prolonged exposure to violence and displacement, as well as disadvantaged through their lack of access to support. Syrian children, who form the majority of refugee children in Greece, often cite feelings of depression with little hope for the future.

Following violent incidents, with severe consequences for the minors' mental and physical well-being, they were transferred to an open and safe facility catering specifically for their vulnerabilities. In collaboration with the relevant Greek ministries, Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Praksis mobilised resources quickly to act on behalf of these children. These children have found a safe and protective environment which caters to their basic needs, medical and pharmaceutical care, legal, psychosocial and psychological support as well as recreational and educational activities.

Through a fruitful partnership with the Greek Council of Refugees (GCR), World Jewish Relief has continued to work with vulnerable children. GCR holds specific expertise on legal and social services for refugees. A dedicated team of lawyers and social workers working with unaccompanied minors provides for the holistic needs of children through best interest assessments, legal casework and social welfare services. GCR, with World Jewish Relief's support, have also undertaken distribution of essential relief items to 2,762 refugees in Greece. Winter blankets, sleeping bags and raincoats protected people during the cold winter months, and supermarket vouchers helped families choose what they most needed



# 4,837

people provided with  
essential medical care



for themselves. Wheelchairs, often forgotten in emergencies, eased mobility for the many injured or disabled. Women and children on the move are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, in addition to being left doubly vulnerable when their specific needs are sometimes ignored and set aside by humanitarian responders. Sanitation kits focusing on maternal and child health have been distributed to refugee parents in Athens, and emergency accommodation for vulnerable cases has also been provided.

We always coordinate with the local Jewish community when we can and the Greek Jewish community have been particularly responsive, gathering clothes and other items to donate to refugees.

## REFUGEE CRISIS: WORLD JEWISH RELIEF'S RESPONSE

### BRADFORD

After the UK Government promised to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to the UK by 2020, it became clear that the crisis was no longer something that was purely an international issue; it became a domestic one too.

That was why we created a programme, through our local partner Horton Housing, which draws on our sustainable livelihood programmes expertise from the Former Soviet Union, where we support people to gain employment.

It aims to help 1,000 Syrian refugees of the 20,000 refugees coming to the UK to integrate into British society. This programme is funded exclusively by private donors, entirely separately from the refugee crisis appeal for our work in Greece and Turkey.

The programme has been piloted in Bradford and we are looking to expand elsewhere in the UK. It enables refugees to gain confidence and language skills and provides them with essential training to understand the UK workplace better. Refugees will access vocational training, work placements and post-placement support. By helping refugees into employment, they become better integrated into UK society.

*“World Jewish Relief’s employment programme for resettled people is an excellent initiative which is supported by the Jewish community.”*

**Richard Harrington MP**

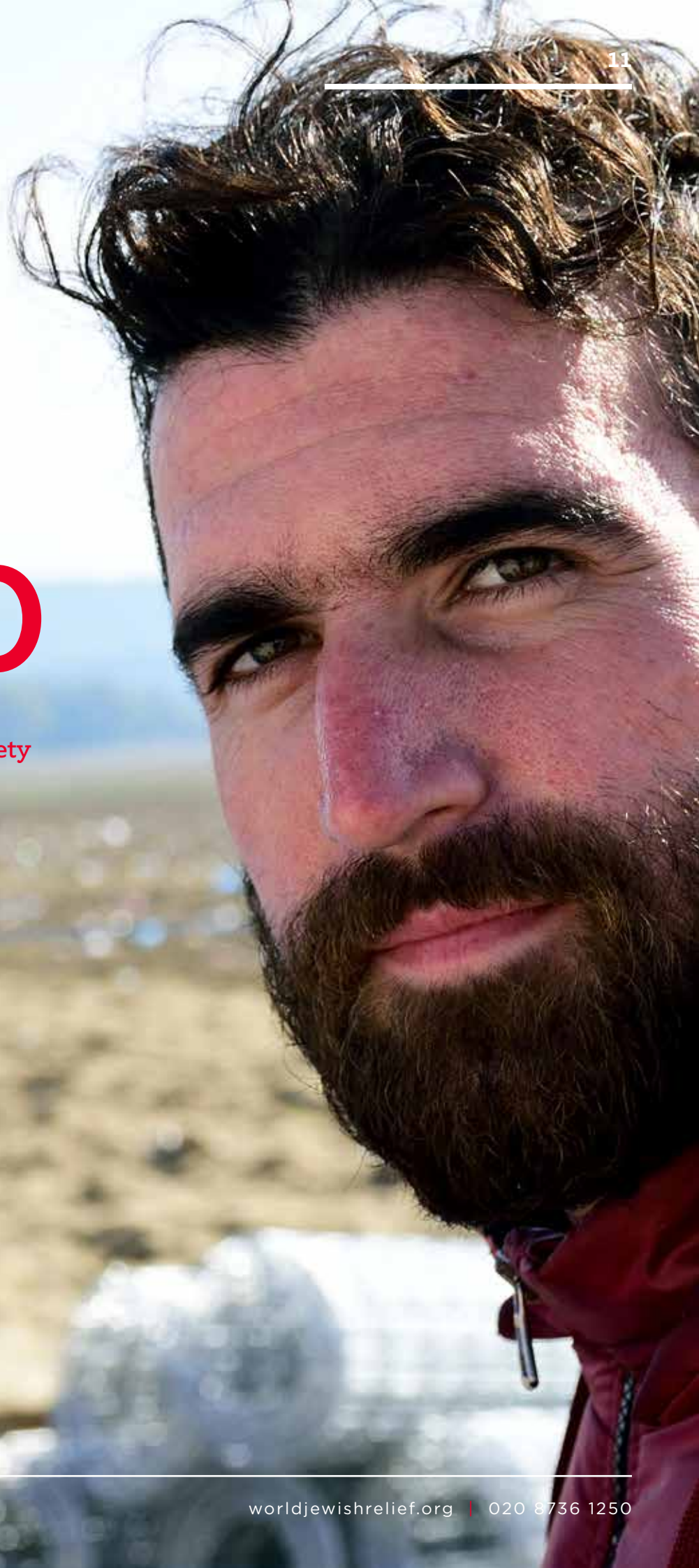
Former Minister for Syrian Refugees



Our project will help

# 1,000

refugees coming to the UK  
to integrate into British society



## ADNAN'S STORY

# Crossing Borders: Cultivating artistic talent

Adnan\*, a sixteen year old boy, arrived to Lesbos together with his younger brother, following a very difficult journey and the loss of many family members. Both of them were classified as 'minors', with no legal guardian present, and therefore held in administrative detention on the island. This detention was incredibly detrimental to the health and mental well-being of the children, who were held in cramped conditions with 200 other minors of all nationalities.

After an extremely violent incident which put the young detainees at risk, Praksis, with the support of World Jewish Relief, and in collaboration with the relevant Greek ministries, transferred Adnan and his brother to a specially set up facility. This camp was home to a total of 81 minors who had all been together in the same predicament. Their new home allowed them freedom of movement outdoors which had been missing from their lives for months.

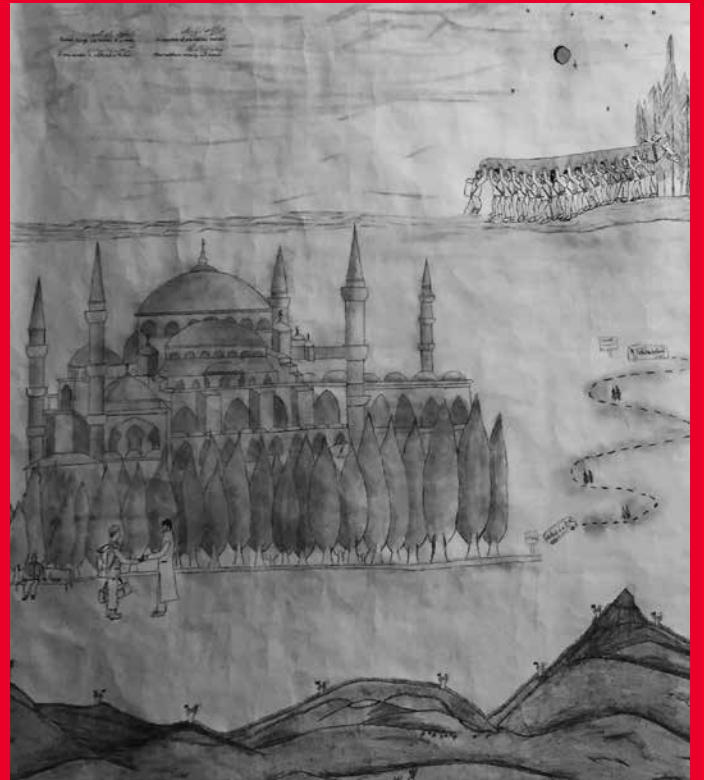
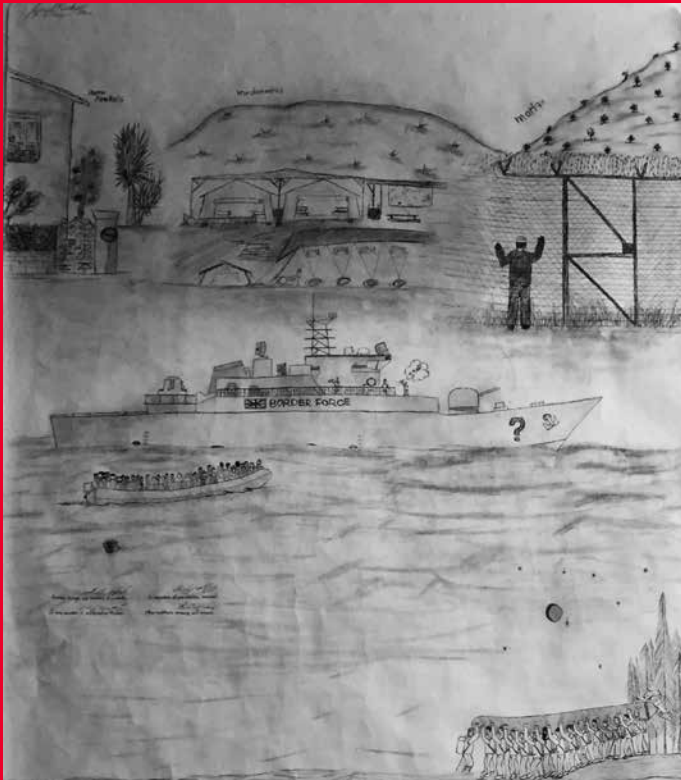
In addition to the international protection it offered, medical and psychosocial support staff were always on call, and regular meals and clothing available. Fun, recreational and educational activities were offered, to make up for all the education they were missing out on.

It was quickly noticed that Adnan was an incredibly talented artist. His sketching and paintings filled the walls of the camp admired by all. Both the staff and other boys clamoured to get a memento of his art.



Adnan was encouraged to cultivate this talent throughout his stay at the camp, and this continued when he and his brother were placed together in a children's home for refugee minors, his new home where he feels safe and cared for. Throughout this period, Adnan has expressed his feelings through his art – and the drawings of his new home are resplendent with the theme of safety and relief. His drawings of his journey are incredibly powerful.

Recently, Adnan's drawings were included in an Art Gallery exhibition in Lesbos in the context of the International Conference 'Crossing Borders'. We hope this will be the start for him to realise his dreams.





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