

THE STORIES: NASRUDDIN



First name: **NASRUDDIN**

Last name: **NIZAMI**

Age: **31**

Country of origin: **AFGHANISTAN**

Living in **Greece** since: **2007**

SHORT SUMMARY

Nasruddin is a foreign language professional working in GCR as an interpreter. The members of his family live around Europe. He left Afghanistan trying to avoid political persecution and he has applied to obtain the refugee status both in the UK and Austria, where his applications were rejected. He returned to Greece and after a series of adventures he has managed to fully integrate into Greek society.

“DIFFICULTIES MAKE US STRONGER”

NASRUDDIN'S STORY

He left Afghanistan for political reasons; he was threatened by the Afghani government and terrorist groups because his father and his brother belonged to the opposite political party. At the age of 21, (October 2007) he decided to leave Afghanistan illegally, through Iran and Turkey. He arrived at Samos with the intention to go to the UK, where his cousin resides. He left Greece in December 2007 and arrived in the UK, where he applied for asylum.

The authorities found out that he came from Greece, so based in Dublin relocation scheme their decision was to send him back to Greece (country of first reception). After 8 months of staying in London, during August 2008 he returned to Greece.

He stayed in Athens for 8 more months and then he left once more for Austria, this time, in June 2009. He applied for asylum, his application was rejected again and in December 2009 he returned to Athens. He now stays in Greece for 7 years. In the beginning, he encountered many problems with the language, with his accommodation (he was staying with other 7 people in one apartment) and unemployment. Neither the State nor the civil society organizations provided any help to him. Without knowing the Greek language, he was looking for a job with the support of a Pakistani fellow already residing in Greece for 30 years, who was reading the advertisements of the job sector of the Greek press.

DIFFICULTIES IN JOBS

He finally managed to find a job in a hotel in Zakynthos (an Ionian island) -in March 2010- as the janitor's assistant, in order to learn some skills and the language. He worked two summer seasons in this hotel, he learned Greek quickly, but he still had difficulties with the language as well as with the working hours (he was working 14 hours a day with a very low salary), the racist mentality (he was told that he was taking the job of the Greeks). Furthermore, he was working illegally and without any social insurance and security. Every time the local authorities were conducting controls of the situation in the hotel, they were hiding him in a closet in the basement of the hotel. The second season (2011) he worked

It took me many tries to get to and stay in Greece.

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legally, however, although his contract was part-time, he was obliged to work more than 10 hours a day.

BACK TO ATHENS

In 2012, he returned to Athens, wishing to change his living conditions. He was tired, he had no friends and was exhausted by the work. He had earned some money in case he stayed unemployed and started taking Greek language classes in GCR (until then, he did not know to speak or write). Still, he was facing racist attacks because, as he noted “everyone judges you by the colour of your skin”. But difficulties and obstacles make you stronger” and thanks to the Afghan community and the many languages he was speaking (Farsi, Pashto, Dari, English and Greek) he found a job in IOM as an interpreter and then as case manager in the reintegration service of the organization for Pakistanis, Afghanis and Bangladeshis. He worked there for 1 year, until November 2013 because his contract was not renewed. In the meantime, his asylum application was rejected without any interview and all he had was his pink card (which only shows that his application has been submitted) valid for 3 months.

TOWARDS SOCIAL INCLUSION

During his stay in Athens, he has worked as a volunteer in different refugee communities and in December 2013 he applied for a job in GCR, where he still works as an interpreter. In 2015, he passed the exams for the basic knowledge of the Greek language and received the A2 Certification. Finally, in March 2016, he obtained the refugee status and since 2015 has also worked on a voluntarily basis in the “Solomon” multicultural magazine, which is published

by refugees and immigrants from a vast range of countries and has as its scope to show to the societies of Europe that refugees and immigrants are an integral part of them. However, he notes, “sometimes society do not accept ‘aliens’ with a pleasant way. Battling for the rights of the minorities is a means to wake the world and the European societies up. However, mass media do not show the issues they affront and present only the negative aspects and images of the current refugee crisis”.

Mass media only present the negative aspects of refugees.