

2021

ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

Refugee VOICES

From the Beneficiaries of the
Odysseus Academic Network's
'Scholarships for Refugees' Initiative



#REFYOUNGEES



Odysseus Network

ULB

Academic Network for Legal Studies on Immigration and Asylum in Europe

FOREWORD

Starting in 2015, the Odysseus Academic Network for Legal Studies on Immigration and Asylum in Europe decided to launch an initiative to enable refugee-students to participate in its annual summer school. By participating to the summer school, refugee students will have the possibility to gain knowledge in European immigration and asylum law and to further their education, which may have been interrupted by their forced departure from their home countries. The project entails costs which the Odysseus Network - a non-profit organisation - cannot cover alone. The Summer School is entirely self-financed and does not benefit from any financial support other than the fees paid by the participants.

Thanks to our crowdfunding campaign, we are for the sixth time able to host 10 refugee-students at the Odysseus Network Summer School taking place in Brussels from 28 June to 9 July 2021. These scholarships cover the costs of transportation, daily expenses in Brussels, and a portion of the tuition fees. The Odysseus Network is grateful to all the donors as well the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) that accommodates the refugee-students in university residences.

In order to support this year's crowdfunding campaign, we created a social media platform to share faces and stories of persons who believe that a different model of integration is possible. Join us on Instagram and Twitter by following the hashtag **#REFYOUGEES**

This booklet allows the recipients of the scholarships to tell their story - to have their voices heard. We are grateful to all the recipients of the 2021 Refugee Scholarship for their participation in the Summer School. Please note that some of them are not included in this booklet as they preferred to keep their profiles and stories, which contain sensitive information, private.

PRÉFACE

Depuis 2015, le Réseau académique Odysseus d'études juridiques sur l'immigration et l'asile en Europe a lancé une initiative afin de permettre à des réfugiés-étudiants de participer à son cours d'été annuel. L'objectif est de leur permettre d'acquérir des connaissances en droit européen d'immigration et d'asile et de poursuivre leurs études qui peuvent avoir été interrompues par leur départ forcé de leur pays d'origine. Ce projet engendre des coûts que le Réseau Académique Odysseus ne peut supporter seul en tant qu'organisation sans but lucratif, le cours d'été étant entièrement auto-financé par les droits d'inscription payés par les participants.

Grâce à une campagne de crowdfunding, le cours d'été peut pour la sixième fois accueillir dix étudiants-réfugiés. Les bourses couvrent les frais de transport, les dépenses quotidiennes à Bruxelles, et une partie des droits d'inscription. Le Réseau Odysseus exprime sa gratitude à tous les donateurs ainsi qu'à l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) qui offre le logement aux réfugiés-étudiants.

Afin de soutenir notre campagne, nous avons créé une plate-forme de médias sociaux pour partager les profils et les vécus de ses personnes qui croient en un modèle d'information différent. Rejoignez-nous sur Instagram et Twitter en suivant le hashtag **#REFYOUGEES**

Cette brochure permet aux bénéficiaires de raconter leur histoire - de faire entendre leur voix. Nous sommes, à ce titre, reconnaissants envers ces derniers pour leur participation au cours d'été. Certains d'entre eux ne sont cependant pas inclus dans cette brochure car ils préféreraient garder l'anonymat concernant leurs profils ainsi que les informations sensibles liées à leurs parcours.

On behalf of the Odysseus Academic Network
Au nom du Réseau académique Odysseus

Prof. Philippe DE BRUYCKER
Coordinator of Odysseus - Coordonnateur d'Odysseus



Abuljana Abeer

Nationality: **Palestinian**

Field of studies: **Master degree in Political Science at ULB**

Profession: **Collaboratrice polyvalente at Bxl refugees & junior researcher with HumMingBird research 2020**

Date of granting refugee status: **2020**

The Member State which granted my protection: **Belgium**

My Story

As a Palestinian woman was born and raised in Gaza Strip, I had many difficulties to prove myself as a feminist and socio-political activist in our community. It started when I decided to study law and the dream of being a lawyer. But that dream never lasted. I was obligated to choose less intense job as it considered a male oriented position. I was stubborn enough to choose another field which will lead me on somehow to my dreams. I studied English-French literature at Al-Azhar university which allowed me to follow international news and read publications in both languages. Even though, I faced a lot of obstacles during my studies due to my activism and my own perspectives.

In 2018, I worked as a project coordinator in Community Media Centre CMC on combating violence against women in Gaza Strip. I was so active on terms of gender-equality, political participation and engaging more women in the decision-making. Later the same year I was selected to participate in an exchange program called "Future World: Equality for everybody" in the Czech Republic. This allowed me to leave Gaza for the first time in my life and have the chance to come to Europe to raise my voice and speak up on behalf of Palestinian women. I decided to not return back to Gaza and ask asylum in Belgium to maintain my life and my freedom.

In 2019, I was accepted in political Science program at ULB to continue my dreams and activism. Since that day, I devoted myself for the refugees and migrants who fled their countries of origin to keep their lives safe like me. My life experience as a Palestinian refugee in Belgium gave me a practical sense of understanding the process of asylum and migration. This is how I became very interested in understanding better those processes and in gaining expert knowledge of law and policy contexts. I started my journey as an Advocacy intern with JRS Europe within the Solidarity Corps volunteer program. During this internship, I had the chance to learn more about the field from different perspectives. I was able to follow and

analyze the debates on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. I monitored EU policies and activities and participated in online events and meetings, notes taking as well.

Furthermore, I participated in analyzing the impact of Covid-19 on asylum reception and immigration detention and developing recommendations for public policies on a more comprehensive Common European Asylum System. After my internship, I was recommended to volunteer as a translation mediator with JRS Belgium in detention centers which widens my horizon a lot about the detainees' living conditions and their asylum procedures.

In November 2020, I joined the HumMingBird project: Enhanced migration measures from a multidimensional perspective as a Junior Researcher in the VUB. Mainly, I am working on qualitative interviews for the HumMingBird research including translation and analysis.

Currently, I am working as a Collaboratrice Polyvalente in Plateforme citoyenne de soutien aux réfugiés. I am responsible for greeting and hosting refugees with Dublin procedures, homeless, transit migrants, and migrants without papers when they arrive at the center and guide them throughout their stay. In addition, I direct them to the socio-legal and psychomedical services they need. It is a turning life experience working in the frontline with refugees from different backgrounds which motivates me to gain more in-depth knowledge on the field.

Why choosing the summer School?

The SUMMER SCHOOL on EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy is of great interest to me and I believe my current experiences as a refugee and working in migration and asylum field constitute an added-value for my participation in this program. I am truly interested in this course and I believe it is a good opportunity for me to build my future and later find a job in this sphere. Furthermore, joining this course would allow me to have access to all the information and knowledge it has to offer.

“ I believe it is a good opportunity for me to build my future and later find a job in this sphere”



Silsila MAHBOUB

Nationality: **Afghan**

Studies: **Engineering**

Current activity: **Currently also a student in New Bulgarian University in Sofia, studying Economic department accounting and controlling.**

Date of Granting : **02/01/2015**

The Member State which granted my protection: **Bulgaria**

My Story

My other half success and life starts from Bulgaria, since I am in here I started to learn the language and feel part of community and be easy for me the communication with people.

I started with my dream job, which is working with Refugees, in the Caritas Sofia office, which was and is the most interesting topic for me to work on and help people for better integration.

The achievements are little but I believe that step by step I can go for it to my big dreams, due to my experience that I work with Refugees. I am now a member of a board which is established in 2020 by UNHCR Bulgaria. The aim of the board is to have an advisory role and provide constructive input into the decision-making processes in the country that concern policies related to refugees , -asylum –seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. The board name is Refugee Advisory Board in Bulgaria.

The other good achievement is that also I am member of Afghan Refugees Experts Network in Europe ARENE, is a European- based, Afghan refugee-led network of active experts focusing on the area of migration, asylum and integration. The aim is to lead the advocacy initiatives for better protecting the rights of all asylum- seekers and refugees, including those from Afghanistan’s origins in Europe, and also seeking to interact with the European institutions on building inclusive and fair policies on refugees’ rights. Among all these I am also representative of Culture Trade and Exhibition promotion of India in Bulgaria through Indian Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Among all these I completed my other dream which is to become and entrepreneur, my business starts since last year, the business is to making of a new brand which a fashion design company A combination of Eastern and Western style, and also offering work space for refugees.

In my country I was working in TV and Radio, and UNICEF.

My other dream or achievement to say is that I am writing book, which in May 2021 my first book was published and the other one soon will be publish.

Why choosing the summer School?

When I see the annoncent in FB it looks so interesting for me the only reason is that I am working with Refugees, I know the law about Bulgaria and a bit about other countries, but if there is such a chance to take part in summer school and to know more about the law in EU so why not. Which will help me to be more good in my job when I know the law more.

“Which will help me to be more good in my job when I know the law more.”

ANONYMOUS TESTIMONY

Nationality: **Kyrgyz**

Host Country: **Italy**

Why I want to study at the summer school?

The summer school is a facilitator of minds and a huge opportunity to look at Immigration and Asylum law from the legal perspective. It discloses all study I've studied in the field of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights. The Knowledge acquired in summer school I will use to write a highly developed thesis in Asylum Law.

As I am volunteer in the organization named Refugees Welcome Italia, it will help me to work in local community with refugees.

“The Knowledge acquired in summer school I will use to write a highly developed thesis in Asylum Law.”

Behzad Sabeti

Nationality: **Afghan**

Field of Studies: **Peace Building and Conflict Resolution**

Date of Arrival in Europe : **August 2020**

Host Country : **Belgium**

My Story

I obtained my bachelor`s degree in English Literature. I have worked in many national and international organizations in reconstruction, capacity building, awareness, and organizations in Afghanistan.

I completed my Master`s degree in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution from India. Subsequently, I completed my fellowship degree in research, management, and leadership skills from Hiroshima, Japan.

I have worked in numerous accredited organizations in both the public and private sectors in Afghanistan. I arrived in Belgium in August 2020.

I have been working as an active volunteer since on very early days of my arrival to Belgium with Vluchtelingen werk Vlaanderen to provide information on the asylum process and Dublin procedure, rights of refugees, and asylum seekers in the Belgium territory.

Why I want to study at the summer school?

Joining Summer School in EU Law and policy on immigration and asylum would be a positive opportunity for me to uplift my knowledge and understanding of the EU approach for setting up uniform policies & legal jurisdiction on immigration and regularization policies.

I believe that the Summer course on European Union immigration, asylum law, and policy would upgrade my critical thinking and competence in analyzing the root causes, crucial aspects of the asylum process, EU perspective on regular and irregular immigration.

“I believe that the Summer course upgrade my critical thinking and competence in analyzing the root causes, crucial aspects of the asylum process, EU perspective on regular and irregular immigration.”



Abdu Shoman

Nationalité : **Yéménite**

Domaine d'études: **Droit**

Occupation actuelle: **Licence en Science politique à l'Université de Paris Nanterre**

Date d'arrivée en Europe: **3 janvier 2018**

Pays d'accueil : **France**

Pourquoi ai-je quitté mon pays

J'étais contraint de quitter mon pays à cause de la guerre entre Houthi et l'Arabie Saoudite

Que peut m'apporter le cours d'été

De par mes études universitaires en droit et mon expérience de réfugié, ce cours d'été a suscité mon intérêt :

- d'un point de vue académique pour mieux comprendre , analyser et comparer les systèmes juridiques d'immigration européen,
- d'un point de vue personnel pour éclairer d'une autre lumière mon expérience et mon statut dans mon pays d'accueil,
- et enfin , pour pouvoir accompagner d'autres réfugiés que je peux être amené à rencontrer dans mes missions de secours populaire et de bénévolat

“Ce cours d'été a suscité mon intérêt pour éclairer d'une autre lumière mon expérience et mon statut dans mon pays d'accueil et pour pouvoir accompagner d'autres réfugiés ”



Asmaa YOUSUF

Nationality: **Egyptian**

Area of studies: **political science: minority rights, migration, refuge, race and contestations to liberal democracy.**

Profession in my country of origin: **researcher and trainer.**

Date of arrival in Europe: **31.05.2015**

The member state that granted me protection: **Germany.**

Why choosing the summer School?

I want to join the summer school because the course is intriguing for me both academically and practically. Namely, academically, I have a Bachelor and a Master of Arts degree in political science from the University of Alexandria in Egypt, where I also undertook a one-year training program to enroll for a Ph.D. Moreover, I am a Master's candidate at CEU. My research interests include critical perspectives on race and ethnicity, minority rights, border, migration, refuge, and contestations to liberal democracy, with a focus on Germany. Furthermore, I have worked as a journalist from 09.2016 to 08.2020 with Amal, Berlin, a local news platform, where I wrote about refugees, women in exile, deportation, family reunification, and problems in refugee camps in Germany. And I intend to keep writing about these topics as a journalist. However, my readings in asylum and refugees laws and policies need to be methodologically systematized. Therefore, I am truly interested in the course where I can gain knowledge in labor migration, and asylum law.

“I am truly interested in the course where I can gain knowledge in labor migration, and asylum law.”

ANONYMOUS TESTIMONY

Nationalité **guinéenne (Guinée Conakry)**.

Diplôme: **licence en Sociologie de la Santé obtenu à l'Université Général Lansana Conté de Sonfonia (Guinée)**.

Activité actuelle: **Je suis étudiant en Master 1 de Sociologie et recherche sociale à l'université de Turin (UniTO)**.

Date d'arrivée en Europe : **19 juin 2017**.

Pays d'accueil : **Italie**

Avant de fuir mon pays j'étais encore étudiant et je travaillais comme transitaire dans une société de transport de Ciment.

Je suis arrivé en Italie lundi 19 juin 2017. Et un an après, les autorités italiennes m'ont donné la protection subsidiaire.

Mon parcours:

Mon parcours en Italie en tant que réfugié n'est pas du tout évident, mais dès le premier jour de mon arrivée, je me suis fixé un seul objectif: CONTINUER MES ÉTUDES. Après avoir appris l'italien, j'ai commencé à travailler comme **Médiateur culturel** et **Interprète** dans les centres d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile et dans "les commissions territoriales pour la reconnaissance de demandeurs d'asile". En plus j'ai travaillé avec la police italienne pour la lutte contre les crimes commis par les migrants ou des crimes dont les migrants sont victimes (vol de voiture, prostitution forcée, "le caporalato" qui est une sorte de travail forcé souvent lié à des organisations mafieuses, à savoir dans les Pouilles à la **Sacra coronaunita** dont ces travaux sont souvent exécutés par les migrants). Outre, j'ai présenté pas mal de travaux dans le domaine de l'immigration dans certaines matières de mon département, et mon rêve est d'obtenir un doctorat en Sociologie des Migrations.

#REFYOUNGEES

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