



SCHOLARSHIPS FOR REFUGEES

2025 ODYSSEUS SUMMER SCHOOL

REFUGEE VOICES

**From the beneficiaries of the Odysseus
Network's initiative "Scholarship for
Refugees"**

#REFYOUNGEES

FOREWORD:

Starting in 2015, the Odysseus Academic Network for Legal Studies on Migration and Asylum in Europe decided to launch an initiative to support the participation of refugee students in its annual summer school. By attending the program, refugee students will have the possibility to gain knowledge in European migration and asylum law and to continue their education, which may have been interrupted by their forced departure from their home countries. This initiative 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 able to grant a full scholarship for onsite participation to 10 refugee-students at the Odysseus Summer School, taking place in Brussels from 30 June to 11 July 2025. This scholarship covers travel costs, daily expenses, and tuition fees. To all other refugee students not selected for a full scholarship, we offered the possibility to follow the program online free of charge. The Odysseus Network is grateful to all the donors as well as the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) that accommodates the refugee-students in university residences.

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 2025 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 contains sensitive and private information.

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 a pu accueillir 10 étudiants réfugiés au Cours d'Été Odysseus avec une bourse complète pour la participation sur place. Les bourses couvrent les frais de transport, les dépenses quotidiennes et les droits d'inscription. Pour tous les autres étudiants réfugiés non sélectionnés pour une bourse complète, nous avons offert la possibilité de suivre le programme en ligne gratuitement. Le Réseau Odysseus exprime sa gratitude à tous les donateurs ainsi qu'à l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) qui offre le logement aux étudiants réfugiés.

Cette brochure permet aux bénéficiaires de raconter leur histoire et 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 préféraient 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

#REFYOUNGEES

Pius Giembe



Nationality: Congo (DRC)

Field of Studies: Sustainability, Social work

Date of granting of subsidiary protection: 2025

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

My name is Pius Bigembe, and I am a Congolese (DRC) national. I came to Uganda in 2012 to escape the conflict between M23 and the Congolese government, spending a decade as a refugee. In 2022, I was fortunate to receive an online scholarship to study in Barcelona. I expressed my interest, and thankfully, my application was accepted, leading to an admission letter. I applied for a visa, and on December 13, 2022, I traveled to Spain to pursue my Master's degree in permanent training in Sustainability: Environment, Society, and Economy. I hold a Bachelor's degree in social work and social administration from Kampala International University, along with a Master's degree in sustainable development from the University of Barcelona. I have accumulated six years of experience working as a social worker for refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda. Upon my arrival, I filed my asylum application with the Spanish police and the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR). In April 2025, my application was approved by the Inter-ministerial Commission on Asylum and Refuge, and I was granted Subsidiary Protection.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

As a person who experienced the complexities of migration with a multifaceted background, in this Summer school I expect to gain knowledge, build networks and advocate for inclusive migration practices to better navigate refugee and asylum rights and contribute meaningfully to EU societies. I am committed to contributing to fair and effective asylum systems and deepening my understanding of legal frameworks, engaging with experts, and connecting theory with lived experience which will strengthen my ability to advocate for humane migration policies and support vulnerable populations across Europe and beyond.

Viktoriia Palahniuk



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: International law

Profession: PhD student in International Law

Date of granting of temporary protection: 2022

Member State granting protection: Lithuania

My story:

I am originally from the Kherson region in Ukraine and left my home shortly after the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022. Continuing my education in Lithuania and in Italy, I developed a strong commitment to international humanitarian and refugee law and human rights protection. I am passionate about defending and advocating for the rights of forcibly displaced people worldwide. Participating in the Odysseus Summer School represents a unique opportunity for me to deepen my knowledge in EU migration and asylum law, meet like-minded peers, and further my aspiration to advocate for more humane and rights-based migration policies across Europe.

Zahraa Kareem Jabbar



Nationality: Iraq

Field of Studies: MA in International Relations, with a specialisation in the MENA region

Profession: student

Date of arrival in Europe: 2016

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

As someone who is both academically and personally connected to the field of refugee and migration studies, I am passionate about participating in this Summer School. Being a refugee myself, I feel a strong sense of responsibility and purpose to contribute to this field, whether through advocacy, policymaking, or leadership. I believe I am here for a reason, and that reason is to give back, support others, and represent voices like mine. I am originally from Iraq but spent my childhood in Yemen. I was forced to leave Yemen in 2014 due to the war, after our home was destroyed. We sought refuge and safety, eventually arriving in Europe, for which I am deeply grateful.

Ali Abdirashid



Nationality: Somalia

Field of Studies: Development studies

Profession: Social work

Date of granting refugee status: 2024

Member State granting protection: Ireland

My story:

As a refugee living in Ireland and a professional working in the social work sector, I am deeply committed to supporting vulnerable individuals, particularly those facing homelessness and addiction. In addition to my full-time role, I also volunteer with refugee and asylum-seeking communities, helping them navigate Irish systems and integrate into society. My academic background in community development and development studies has equipped me with a solid foundation to understand complex social and legal dynamics.

Why have you chosen the Odysseus Summer School?

I believe that the Odysseus Summer School will greatly enhance my knowledge of EU asylum and immigration law and policy—tools I urgently need to better serve the people I support. Being multilingual has allowed me to assist individuals from diverse backgrounds effectively, and I see this training as an important opportunity to deepen my legal understanding to ensure fairer, more informed support and advocacy. In Somalia, I was targeted by terrorist groups because of my work as a community social worker. I was forced to leave my home country for my safety. Despite the challenges of displacement, I remain committed to helping others rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Tsabeeh Adil Mohammed Eltayeb



Nationality: Sudan

Field of Studies: Master's in International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

Profession: Student

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

Participating in the Odysseus Summer School is not just an academic opportunity for me—it is a personal and professional milestone. I am originally from Sudan, a country that has endured years of political instability, armed conflict, and humanitarian crises. I had to leave my home due to the escalating violence and the collapse of basic services and safety, especially after the outbreak of internal war in April 2023. I come from Sudan, where the recent internal conflict deeply affected my family and me. When violence erupted in our hometown of Wad Madani (Gezira State), we were forced to flee toward Kassala in search of safety. The journey was difficult and only possible thanks to the advice and support of a friend and family. Eventually, I arrived in Europe, seeking not only safety for myself but hoping to one day reunite my family with me in a place of peace and stability. Before becoming a refugee myself, I worked in the humanitarian field, supporting displaced and vulnerable people. Today, I live this experience firsthand, and it has given me a deeper sense of empathy, determination, and responsibility. I am more committed than ever to completing my studies in international cooperation and humanitarian aid, and to using my voice and skills to advocate for others. What once was a profession is now also a personal mission.

Why have you chosen the Odysseus Summer School?

This Summer School offers a unique space for me to deepen my understanding of EU asylum and migration law and to contribute meaningfully to future policy and protection frameworks—something I care deeply about not only as a student and future practitioner, but also as someone with lived experience. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to learn, grow, and share my perspective with others.

Zana Hanafi



Nationality: Syria

Field of Studies: BA Management

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

I am originally from Kobané, a Kurdish city in northern Syria. In September 2014, over 200,000 civilians, including my family and I, were forced to flee due to the brutal attacks and oppression by the so-called Islamic State. After years of instability, my parents decided we should seek safety in Europe. However, our journey exposed us to another harsh reality: the European asylum system.

We first arrived in Hungary, where we were met with hostility and hate crimes. Due to the Dublin Regulation, we were not allowed to seek asylum elsewhere, which left us feeling trapped and invisible within a system that claimed to protect us. Eventually, we were able to settle in Belgium, where we were granted refugee status in 2019 and began rebuilding our lives.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

When I heard about the Odysseus Summer School, I was thrilled by the opportunity to learn more about EU asylum and migration law. As someone who has lived through the system, I want to understand how it is supposed to work on paper—and why it often doesn't in practice. My goal is to gain the knowledge and tools needed to humanize migration policies and contribute to a fairer, more compassionate system.

Barkay Mahamat Tahir



Nationality: Tchad

Field of Studies: Droit international

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: France

My story:

Avant mon arrivée en France, j'ai exercé les fonctions d'Huissier au sein du Cabinet du Premier Ministre (à ne pas confondre avec l'Huissier de justice). Placé sous l'autorité du Bureau des services du protocole, j'étais en charge de l'accueil des personnalités officielles, de la préparation logistique des réunions de haut niveau, ainsi que de la gestion du courrier entrant et sortant. Mes missions comprenaient également le traitement documentaire et la tenue des archives institutionnelles.

Étant moi même une personne réfugiée et étudiant en droit international prévoyant une poursuite d'études en Droit des étrangers, ce cours représente une opportunité idéale qui s'inscrit naturellement dans la continuité de mon parcours académique, lequel m'a révélé une passion grandissante pour cette discipline. Ayant découvert très tôt ma passion pour la plaidoirie, je suis devenu très enclin à l'engagement pour la justice, nourrissant un intérêt marqué pour les mécanismes juridiques qui préservent les valeurs essentielles de respect des garanties juridiques et des mécanismes de non discrimination.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

Intégrer ce programme me permettrait ainsi de mieux comprendre les dynamiques législatives en constante évolution et d'acquérir des outils pratiques pour contribuer efficacement à la protection des droits des personnes déplacées en tant que futur avocat en droit des étrangers.

Soultana Sheikmous Shukree



Nationality: Syria

Field of Studies: Arabic literature, French literature.

Profession: Educational schools monitor working on conflict mediation between refugees and host communities, Social worker in the health and public awareness sector, Volunteer in education.

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

As a refugee myself who has volunteered within refugee communities in two different countries and as someone who has a long history and professional experience in working with different NGOs and humanitarian organizations focused on conflict resolution and addressing the integration challenges faced by refugees, I believe that participating in the Odysseus Summer School will greatly enhance my personal, academic, and professional background, empowering me to better support and advocate for refugee communities. Now that I am newly settled as a refugee in a European country which is Spain, I am determined to contribute through this program to developing effective integration processes between the host society and the refugee community, ensuring the protection of both sides' rights and reducing conflicts and challenges. My ultimate goal is to become an active and impactful agent within the asylum process and to help build more inclusive and resilient communities.

Sandreen Youssef



Nationality: Syria

Field of Studies: MS in Human Resources Management, BS in Information Technology Management, Minor in Data Analytics.

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

When God grants you a new chance at life, it means he sees in you someone capable of changing it. After I spent 11 years living as a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, where I pursued my university education despite facing tremendous challenges. Unfortunately, I experienced severe abuse from a young man, which left me hospitalized for over six months and has kept me in ongoing treatment for nearly two years just to be able to walk again. Despite this, I refused to give up. I migrated to Spain in search of a new life and a chance to continue living as an ambitious young woman who still believes in humanity despite all that I have been through. This opportunity could open doors for me to learn, work again, and most importantly to show everyone that I AM HERE , trying to build again the life that God has granted me after enduring violence and the hardships of starting over in a country so different from the one I once called home. I hold on to my faith because I truly believe that success in this life is worth trying for, again and again.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

I am deeply motivated to participate in the Odysseus Summer School because it represents an exceptional opportunity to expand my knowledge of European migration and asylum law within a rich academic environment. Coming from a background where I have witnessed first-hand the challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities, I have always felt a strong sense of responsibility to advocate for social inclusion and human rights. This personal experience has shaped my academic journey and professional goals, driving me to seek every chance to deepen my expertise and broaden my impact. I believe that this program will allow me to exchange ideas with inspiring scholars and practitioners, refine my understanding of migration policies, and acquire practical insights that will strengthen my ability to design and implement meaningful projects both at home and internationally. It is not merely an academic ambition for me — it is a personal commitment to stand by those who are often unheard.

Yelyzaveta Bilash



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: MA student in Security Studies

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Slovakia

My story:

Currently living, studying, and working in Slovakia. I arrived in Slovakia three years ago with my mother and younger brother, after fleeing the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. We were granted temporary protection, and Slovakia has since become our second home. I am currently volunteering with Freedom of Choice, a women's rights organization in Slovakia, where I write articles on various topics. This work allows me to raise awareness and advocate for human rights, something I'm deeply passionate about. Previously, I worked as a volunteer coordinator at Mareena, an organization established by UNHCR in Slovakia. There, I supported fellow Ukrainian refugees in Banská Bystrica by conducting interviews, identifying challenges, and helping them access housing, legal aid, and humanitarian support. This hands-on experience not only deepened my empathy but also sparked a strong academic interest in refugee issues. It led to my bachelor's thesis on refugee poverty in France and the role of international organizations in its alleviation. In comparing this issue across France, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, I was struck by how universal the refugee experience can be, regardless of country, the emotional and structural challenges remain strikingly similar.

This growing interest in refugee rights and protection is what draws me to the Odysseus Summer School. When I received the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship, it was the first time I truly felt the power of an international organization like UNHCR, not as a distant institution, but as something that directly changed my life. It made me realize how important this kind of support can be, especially for people like me. That experience has stayed with me and is one of the main reasons I want to dedicate my future to helping others in the same way. That's why I'm truly honored to be selected for the Summer School, and I believe the program will give me the tools I need to deepen both my academic work and future professional path.

Milen Uqbay Mesfin

Nationality: Eritrea

Field of Studies: Law (LLB, LLM in International Economic Law)

Profession in the country of origin: Legal Advisor

Date of arrival in Europe: 2023

Member State granting temporary protection: Belgium

I am an Eritrean passionate about human rights, migration justice, and international law. I am deeply committed to advancing refugee rights and strengthening legal protection for people on the move. Participating in the Odysseus Summer School represents a unique opportunity for me to deepen my understanding of EU asylum law and to contribute more effectively to the work I do with migrant and refugee communities. My experience as a legal advisor and mediator, combined with my academic background, has shaped a strong desire to engage in migration-related legal work and advocacy. If possible, I would prefer to share my personal migration story anonymously.

Robaba Arefi



Nationality: Afghanistan

Field of Studies: Master's in Political Science

Profession: Student

Date of arrival in Europe: 2023

Member State granting protection: Italy

My story:

I am Robaba Arefi, originally from Afghanistan and born in Mashhad, Iran, date of birth: 31/03/1994. I arrived in Italy on October 18, 2023 through the Sant'Egidio Association based in Rome and I currently live in Bari. I am currently a student of Political Science at the Aldo Moro University. I have previously worked as a social worker as a cultural mediator at the ETNIE Association, where I served immigrants from different countries as a teaching assistant and translator. My desire to participate in this summer school is due to my interest in issues related to social justice, migration and intercultural dialogue. This course provides a valuable opportunity to deepen my knowledge in the field of political science and strengthen my role as a social activist in a multicultural environment.

Warsame Omer



Nationality: Somalia

Field of Studies: International Economics

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Greece

My story:

As a Somali, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of conflict and displacement on my community. After studying International Economics and Trade at Zhejiang University of Science and Technology in Hangzhou, China, I gained valuable insights into global trade dynamics. My studies led to opportunities working with diverse clients in import, export, and languages, further broadening my practical experience.

Due to ongoing challenges in Somalia, I sought refuge in Europe. In December 2024, Greece granted me international protection, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to rebuild my life. Since arriving in Europe, I've also had the privilege of working as a volunteer interpreter with multiple NGOs supporting refugees in Lesbos Island, Greece. My fluency in English, Arabic, Somali, Chinese, and Turkish has been invaluable in this work.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

I'm excited to participate in the Odysseus Summer School because it perfectly aligns with my interests in politics, trade, and humanitarian fields. I'm eager to learn from experts, share experiences, and network with like-minded individuals. This opportunity will enhance my knowledge and skills, enabling me to make a more significant impact in my work with refugee communities and contribute to meaningful dialogue and solutions.

Iryna Smirnova



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: Master's of Law

Date of arrival in Europe: 2025

Member State granting protection: Belgium

My story:

Since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, I have been forced to seek refuge in European countries. Since the summer of 2024, I have been living in Brussels, where I am actively seeking opportunities to continue my career in the legal field. However, the lack of proficiency in French remains a significant barrier to entering the workforce in my area of expertise.

Why did you choose the Odysseus summer school?

I am confident that the Odysseus Summer School will provide me with invaluable knowledge in the area of migration and asylum law, particularly concerning the rights and protection of Ukrainian nationals. Furthermore, I believe that this experience will enhance my prospects of securing employment with international organizations that specialize in legal cooperation and humanitarian support for Ukraine. I am eager for the opportunity to deepen my understanding of European migration and asylum law, and to contribute meaningfully to the legal protection of displaced persons.

Hana Ganji



Nationality: Afghanistan

Profession: Prevention Assistant, gender-based violence

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: Greece

My story:

I am very interested in learning about law, especially the difference between how laws are written and how they are actually applied to people, particularly refugees in Greece and other countries. The Summer School is a great opportunity for me to study topics related to migration and refugee rights, which are deeply connected to my own life experience. I was born as a refugee and never had the chance to attend university because of my status. Although the Geneva Convention says that refugees have the right to protection and to education, in reality, I never received these rights. Being a refugee was not my choice. My parents were forced to flee Afghanistan and move to Iran, and later, I had to leave Iran and come to Greece to find safety. In Iran, I had no right to study, no legal right to work, and no protection. I worked without insurance, and as a woman and a refugee, I was constantly at risk. If you became a victim of gender-based violence, you were seen as guilty, first because you are a woman, and second because you are a refugee. Escaping from Iran was my personal decision to seek safety and a life with basic human rights. I hope that by studying at the Summer School, I can better understand the systems that affect people like me, and use that knowledge to help others in the future.

Liudmyla Lifanova



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: Law

Profession in the country of origin: Attorney

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Belgium

My story:

My name is Liudmyla Lifanova, I am Ukrainian and I have a legal education from Ukraine. Before the war, I worked as a lawyer and later as a licensed attorney, representing clients in court and serving as the head of the legal department in a bank. I arrived in Belgium in March 2022 after the full-scale invasion by Russia and was granted protection here. Belgium has provided me not only with safety but also with the opportunity to study and build a new professional path. I am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Social Work at PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts, studying in Dutch. This transition allows me to continue working with people, defending rights, and promoting inclusion. Participating in the Odysseus Summer School will help me deepen my understanding of EU migration and asylum law, combining my legal background with my current studies and future work as a social worker.

Anonymous

Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: Law student

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Germany

I am from Donetsk. The city was occupied in 2014, and since then my life has been full of moving around. I finished school in different places, then started studying International and European law in 2021. However, in 2022, I had to leave again because of the full-scale war in Ukraine. It wasn't the first evacuation, but definitely the hardest. In the face of all this, studying became the one constant. It gave structure to chaos and helped me stay focused when everything felt uncertain. This Summer School feels like the right place for me to connect everything I've lived through with what I want to do next. For someone planning to work in this field, this is not just another academic course, it's a chance to learn directly from people who shape the law, engage in real debates on current EU policy, and connect theory with what actually happens on the ground.

Oksana Koval



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: MA in Fundamental Rights

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Spain

My story:

I did not work in this field before the war, but after I left Ukraine in 2022, at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, my professional path became closely connected to displaced persons and temporary protection frameworks. This direct experience led me to pursue academic studies in human rights, and I am currently enrolled in a Master's programme in Fundamental Rights at Carlos III University in Madrid. I didn't make a deliberate decision to leave my country. On the first day of the war, it suddenly seemed that safety could only be found by crossing the EU border. I know that this idea of a "safe Europe" is shared by many, and it shaped my own decision, not as a planned migration, but as an instinctive search for security in a moment of deep uncertainty.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

Migration can place people in vulnerable situations, and it is essential that protection systems work in practice — and for everyone. That is why I want to keep learning and stay connected to the real-world challenges behind these legal frameworks. I see the Odysseus Summer School as an opportunity to further focus and deepen both my academic and professional knowledge, particularly in the area of international protection.



Gaspard Cizungu

Nationality: Congo

Field of Studies: Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation

State granting protection: Uganda

My story:

My name is Gaspard Cizungu. I am a Congolese national, currently living in Uganda as a refugee. I am a committed human rights advocate with a deep-rooted passion for supporting vulnerable communities, particularly children, refugees and displaced persons in Uganda. I hold a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy and a Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation, along with additional training in Migration Studies, Child Protection, Project Management, and Data Management, Analysis, and Visualization. Being a refugee myself, my lived experience has strongly influenced my educational choices. The desire to understand and advocate for the rights and obligations of refugees under international frameworks has been a key driver of my academic and professional journey. Through my advocacy work, I have come to realize that many refugees face enormous challenges accessing clear and reliable information about their legal rights especially regarding their social, economic, and humanitarian protections. Beyond advocacy, I focus on community sensitization and helping displaced individuals navigate these complex systems. Attending the Odysseus Summer School represents a valuable opportunity for both professional growth and personal development. I am particularly interested in gaining a deeper understanding of EU migration and asylum policies, especially from a legal perspective, as well as the most recent developments in laws affecting displaced populations. I look forward to intellectually engaging with peers and experts from across Europe who specialize in migration and asylum issues.

I was born and raised in Bukavu, a town in South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo. My father worked as a Human Resource Officer for the national Water and Sanitation Service. Over time, tensions grew in our community when people accused him of favoritism in job placements. We received threats, and on four occasions, unknown armed men came to our home at night asking for my father. He was eventually transferred to Mbao, a town in North Kivu province, near Beni. Not long after our arrival, the area was attacked by ADF-Nalu rebels. They devastated the community, but for unknown reasons, did not enter our house. This led neighbors to falsely accuse us of having ties to the rebels. The threats escalated, and just five days after the first attack, ADF-Nalu returned. Everyone fled in different directions, and in the chaos, I found myself alone displaced, and eventually crossing into Uganda, where I've lived as a refugee ever since. This traumatic experience became the turning point in my life and the beginning of my journey as a refugee.

Ibraheem M. Rasras



Nationality: Palestinian (refugee of 1948)

Field of Studies: Political Science, International Relations, Human Rights

Profession in the country of origin: Researcher, Student, and Human Right Activist

Date of arrival in Europe: 2024

Member State granting protection: none (resident as student in Italy)

My Story:

I left my home country in 2024 to pursue further studies in Italy, compelled by the instability and ongoing conflicts that have shaped daily life in my community for decades. As a Palestinian, I have witnessed firsthand the harsh realities of occupation, displacement, and systemic human rights violations. These lived experiences have been central to my academic journey, reinforcing my commitment to understanding and challenging the global dynamics of political misorientation, authoritarianism, and state failure. Through my research in human rights, social justice, and political economy, I strive to contribute to a broader intellectual and political transformation—one that centers the voices and struggles of marginalized communities across the Arab world and the Global South. I am committed to being part of a new generation of thinkers working for peace, justice, and sustainable development in regions long excluded from global decision-making.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

As someone deeply engaged in the study of political economy, human rights, and the challenges of governance in the Arab region, the Odysseus Summer School presents a valuable opportunity to deepen my understanding of European migration and asylum law within a broader geopolitical context. My academic and personal experiences have shown me the urgent need for just and well-informed policy-making in situations marked by displacement, statelessness, and the ongoing crisis of postcolonial statehood. As a Palestinian refugee, I believe this program will allow me to critically engage with leading scholars and practitioners, reflect on current European legal frameworks, and connect them with the lived realities of communities in crisis. I see this experience as a vital step toward strengthening my ability to contribute to inclusive, rights-based policy development in Europe and across the Mediterranean region.

Khrystyna Naboichenko



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: Law

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Belgium

My story:

My name is Khrystyna Naboichenko. I'm Ukrainian, particularly from Kharkiv. In Ukraine I obtained a Bachelor's degree of Laws from Kharkiv University of Economics and Law as well as a Bachelor's degree of English language, literature and translation from V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. During my studies I worked as an English tutor for children. In the spring of 2022, due to a full-scale Russian invasion, I had to leave my country. I came to Belgium on the 7th of April 2022 where I was granted temporary protection status. Currently I live in Liège. There I'm doing a Master's degree in Political Science: Global Politics & Political Affairs (full English program) at the University of Liège as well as studying French language.

Why did you choose to attend the Odysseus Summer School?

I have a strong desire to attend the Summer School in EU Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy in order to deepen my understanding of the legal frameworks and policy mechanisms that govern migration and asylum in the European Union. As a law graduate and current Master's student in Political Science in Belgium, as well as the person living under temporary protection status, I have both academic and personal motivation to explore how the EU responds to humanitarian crises and regulates mobility. This program offers a unique opportunity to learn directly from experts in the field, gain insights into current challenges and reforms, and strengthen my ability to contribute professionally to refugee protection, migration governance, and EU policy-making in the future.

Anastasia Boiko



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: Law

Profession in the country of origin: lawyer

Date of arrival in Europe: 2022

Member State granting protection: Belgium

My story:

I left Ukraine due to the full-scale Russian invasion, which made it unsafe to continue living and working in my hometown, Kharkiv. Leaving my country was incredibly difficult, but I have found strength in continuing to serve others – especially fellow displaced people – through legal work and volunteering. Since my Ukrainian diploma does not grant me the right to practice law in Belgium, I have decided to continue my studies in order to obtain a Belgian legal education. This will not only help me better understand my own rights, but also enable me to support others who find themselves in similar situations.

Why did you choose the Odysseus Summer School?

As a person with temporary protection in an EU country and a strong legal background from Ukraine, I am highly motivated to deepen my knowledge of European asylum and migration law. As I am currently continuing my legal studies in Belgium, I believe that the Odysseus Summer School offers a unique opportunity to gain valuable insights from leading experts and to connect with others who share a strong commitment to justice and human rights. I am confident that this program will enable me to contribute more effectively to a fairer and more informed society, particularly in the context of migration and integration.

Serhii Chahin



Nationality: Ukraine

Field of Studies: MA Law, arbitration proceedings, anti-corruption procedures

Profession in the country of origin: Attorney, arbitrator of the arbitration court at the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Date of arrival in Europe: 2023

Member State granting temporary protection: Belgium

My Story

Due to Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, I was forced to leave my homeland Ukraine to ensure the peace and safety of my mother-in-law, wife and two children. I left Ukraine in August 2023, and on 1 September 2023, we were granted temporary protection status in the Kingdom of Belgium. Before relocating to Belgium, I was a legal professional (have Certificate of the right to engage in advocacy in Ukraine) with more than twenty years of experience in the field of law in courts, arbitration courts and law firm in Ukraine. I have experience of co-operation with NGOs in the field of judicial reform in Ukraine as well as the preparation of a draft laws. I was also an arbitrator of the permanent arbitration court at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ukraine. In 2022-2024, I took online the Master's course of Anticorruption study in National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy". Now I would like to find a job where I can apply my knowledge of legal procedures and legislation.

Why did you choose the Odysseus summer school?

During my work as a lawyer and attorney in Ukraine I rarely encountered in my practice international legislation which is governing protection and asylum issues, this was not a major part of my professional work. Now, being in the status of temporary protection, issues of legislation in the field of migration and asylum are especially relevant for me, as well as for tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in Belgium. By attending classes at the Odysseus Summer School I will gain knowledge of EU legislation that rules the granting of asylum, as well as the practical aspects of its application and the activities of the relevant institutions and procedures. Then I will be able to understand this area better and provide information and help to many Ukrainian refugees. In addition, participating the Odysseus Summer School will be an excellent opportunity to establish social contacts with people who are professionals in this field.

THANK YOU TO THE PARTICIPANTS WHO DONATED!

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The logo features the text "#REEFYOUNGEES" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is set against a background of horizontal stripes in shades of blue, green, and yellow. The entire logo is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.