
World Refugee Day. Dawood's testimony: "A lot of people are born in the wrong places, but every human being has the right to live, to build a future and to have hope"



[is looking at a photo of a young man who recently reunited with his brother in one of the hotspots in Greece. He thought his brother had died in one of the many shipwrecks at sea. Ahkmad looks at this photo, that the Community of Sant'Egidio recovered and displayed yesterday, 19 June, during the prayer vigil for the victims of migration in the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, and is full of hope. He has not seen or heard from his cousin Osama for the past year, but he speaks of him in the present tense. He refuses to give up, even though his friends say they saw him jump off the boat that left Libya and sank with its cargo of broken lives on the eve of Refugee Day 2023. "His name is Osama," he tells SIR. "He's 22 years-old. The last time I saw him was in Syria in 2013, when I left for Italy, he was a child then and I waited for him here. He is a sweet boy. He liked to swim and play mini-football." He went to Lebanon and then to Libya, he says: "He was on the waiting list for a humanitarian corridor, but the memorandum with Libya had not yet been signed, so he decided to leave. Lebanon, where he had moved to, was a difficult place for Syrians: he was about to be repatriated to Syria, where he was supposed to do his military service, for an indefinite period. He decided to leave and join Ahkmad: "Last year, on the Day of Prayer for Refugees, I went to Greece to look for him. They put me in touch with the Red Cross, but we couldn't find him. He left the country with the aim of building a future for himself, far away from the war." A dream that, like so many others, sank in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea.](#)



[. He arrived from Afghanistan and now works as a cultural mediator for Sant'Egidio. "I first arrived here 20 years ago, I was 17", he tells SIR. "I was born during the war. I went through it all. I decided that I would leave in order to have a future, a better life. I am a member of the Hazara Shia ethnic minority, who have long been the target of persecution in Afghanistan. I had no hope for a life in a country like this." Today, if possible, there is even less hope: "It is a forgotten country. At the first](#)

Doha conference, the world decided to turn a blind eye. Violence against women, schools closed for a thousand days, poverty, unemployment, thousands of young people trying to flee: Afghanistan is one of the countries with the highest number of refugees.” What happened two days ago off the coast of Roccella Jonica, with 66 people reported missing, 26 of them children, originated there, says Dawood: The boat left Turkey eight days ago on its way to Italy, but fate decided otherwise. Dawood left Kabul and travelled through Iran, Turkey, Greece and finally Italy. “I walked for many days and many nights, under trucks, by sea, crossing the Aegian Sea, an endless journey, 55 hours of navigation,” says Dawood – “I lost a friend.” In all, Dawood's "journey of hope" lasted 11 months. “When I arrived in Rome, I was 18 years old and I discovered the Community of Sant'Egidio,” he explains. “I joined the ‘Gente di pace’ (‘People of peace’) movement. Today I work with migrants, the humanitarian corridors, helping others, people like myself, trying to give them hope. Not many people are as lucky as I have been.”

“So many die while chasing the dream of a better life.”

Dawood has one thing to ask politicians and decision-makers: “How many times have you spoken to a refugee? To find out the real reasons for their decision to flee?” “The deaths in the Mediterranean are the result of European selfishness: instead of opening safe routes, humanitarian channels, providing visas for workers, they allow this to happen. They are closing the borders and building walls.” Instead, migration is a reality that should be tackled with intelligence, without judging those who arrive into Europe: “Many people are born in the wrong places, but every human being has the right to live in peace, to have a future and to hope for a brighter life for himself and his family.”

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