



# PAVIE'S STORY

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*Pavie is a 20-year-old girl who fled Afghanistan with her family when she was 9. She and her siblings stayed in Iran for 4 years without their mother, before traveling through Turkey and by boat to Greece where they lived for 2 years as unaccompanied minors. After 4 years they were reunited with their mother. Pavie now lives in Germany with her family, goes to school, writes poetry, and created the podcast, "Now You Hear Us," to amplify the stories of other young female migrants.*

*"My voice alone cannot carry the message so far, but our voices together can break down the wall of injustice and inequality."*

**"And what would cause one to leave home? This is the heart wrenching question that I ask myself every day. What did we run from, and what did we find refuge in? Did we run from war, from economic problems, when our life was in danger? Or maybe it was all of those things. And what did we lose along the way? Our loved ones, our nation and soil, our memories? Or was it everything? Yes, it was everything.**

I always wanted to be the voice of the voiceless, but now I wonder, where do I start? Should I start with the long-term stress and exhaustion of migration? Should I be the voice of the young girls who never had the chance to shine, or the kids who were so hungry they did not have the energy to cry? Should I be the voice of the beaten down and depressed men and women, or the forgotten children strewn in the cold and wet tents of refugee camps? Should I speak of their confused and unclear futures or their heavy and burdened hearts? Should I speak of their worried minds that do not know what tomorrow will bring? Or of the faint light still present in their hearts? The only thing keeping them alive is the light of faith. They awake every day with the hope of having their voices heard, and how sad it is to see their eyes as hope withers away day after day.

I want to share what life is like living in this manner. You open



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your eyes and see people who have been prevented from exercising the most basic of their human rights. They make due and claw away at the challenges, practice silence against hunger and disrespect until they reach the open sea or the blazing desert.

They lose their loved ones along the way, but this is only the beginning of the journey. They step into new territory. Living in deplorable conditions, far from what anyone should experience. **Ultimately, this leads them closer to the belief that peace is a concept only written in books and has no meaning in reality.**

Yet even with all of these hardships, they somehow keep a smile on their lips that astonishes me. Hope is a familiar word for these modern-day refugees.

This is but a part of the story that I have seen with my own eyes, and yet there is so much left unsaid from other displaced people, whose hearts harbor a vanishing ray of hope, who look to my voice, to your voice, to our voices. **My voice alone cannot carry the message so far, but our voices together can break down the wall of injustice and inequality.**

### **Why do people leave home?**

Each one of us has our own reasons as to why we leave everything behind, why we take this huge risk and make this decision. War, not having the opportunity to study, economic insecurities, fear of gangs or terrorists, persecution based on your gender, sexuality, political affiliation, ethnic identity, or simply not being safe.

Just imagine living in such a situation with an uncountable amount of danger, with the possibility of losing your loved ones every second or the most important person in your life -- yourself. All of these thoughts, these risks are painful...they are deadly, but when you have no other choice except risking your life...your only chance to feel alive again...this is how the choice is made. But you tell me, what would make you leave home?

### **How do we prepare for the unknown?**

If you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, how can you possibly prepare yourself to leave everything behind? I never could have prepared myself for making such a huge decision.



It will always be hard to remember those feelings again -- the reasons why we left. It was a nightmare. If I was to describe my feelings as a teenage girl fleeing home, I felt fear, an infinite amount of stress and pressure, pressure in every way you can imagine, and in some places I just wished death. **But through all of this, I couldn't ignore this small light of hope in me. Every time, it showed me all of my dreams and it pushed me to be strong and fight for my future, whatever that might be.**

I close my eyes and I remember all of the terrifying moments; the sound of the smuggler's voice, hunger, thirst, adrenaline as we passed over borders in absolute darkness, the over-crowded rubber boat. I remember having no choice and no voice. I felt powerless and I was powerless.

And even after all of this, the journey and the unknown, many of us are still "illegal." Hearts are shattered again, families are separated once again, and once again, our future is unknown.

### **What is it like to start a new life?**

Starting a new life, in a new place, with new people – most of whom have no idea what it is like to leave their home and everything behind -- it's one of the most challenging things that I have ever done.

Starting a new life with our own people, our families, those who have made this journey with us: they aren't always the same people anymore, they are broken, they have lost loved ones, they have lost themselves in making this journey. Now they have a new opportunity; perhaps they never had the chance to study before, to think outside of what they know. However, the most important thing here is missing – what about the time that it is going to take to heal ourselves?

**Children, teenagers, adults, my people – all of us, every one of us who left for whatever reason, are hurt and are in pain, but we have to continue living and we can't give up.**

It feels as though we are starting from zero, learning a new language, waiting years for our documents, learning an entirely new culture. After all of this, we still don't always have the power to stay. We wait to hear, can we stay or will we be sent back? And if we can stay, if I can stay, the first thing I would do is to let myself heal and to start dreaming again.