

Letter to the World from Moria (No. 6)

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I am a volunteer translator

I am the father of two children. I am the husband of a woman full of emotions. And above all, I am a human being. It is only one aspect of my current situation, that I am also a refugee, one among thousands of others.

Every day, I work for hours to help people access services and solve their problems. Every day, exhausted, I run 900m distance to eat lunch in a hurry, and quickly come back to continue to help more people.

On these days that I am helping, my wife shoulders all the housekeeping responsibilities alone: she looks after the children, waits in endless lines to get some food for us all, washes clothes, makes some order in our abode. She does all these things with pleasure, so that I can help translate the troubles of the people standing in the sun for hours, in need of someone to communicate on their behalf.

What happens to our children when she needs to go away from our tent and leaves them in our neighbor's tent? Are they safe? Will they not be bothered by someone? Do they miss us? Such questions torture me during the day.

Today, I am sorry that my name is father. I am sorry that I cannot be the father I want to be, or the good husband I want to be. I try to be a good father, and I try to help all the others who suffer in the same conditions like us.

Today, while I was translating the symptoms of a patient for a doctor, a familiar sound of crying reached my ears. I did not have the heart to leave my work half done and check for the person belonging to that voice. So patiently, I continued, trying to keep my attention on the words I had to translate. Yet, that familiar sound set off an explosion in my brain. Finally, when I was needed no more, stressed-out and anxious, I approached the door.

What I had feared, a few minutes before, was indeed true. That was the sound of my wife's crying as she tried to come inside to see the doctor. In her arms, there was our daughter, unconscious. The girl had been vomiting a lot in the tent, she explained, and when they started out for the clinic she fainted. The guard advised me that she should have taken our daughter to Doctors without Borders (MSF). But I wasn't able to open my mouth to utter the words.

The sight of my wife's eyes, now blood-shot, and the sight of my listless daughter in her arms left me speechless and my mind blank. I could not even explain that she was my wife. Only when she started suddenly to shake, did I come back to myself. So I turned to the nurse and did what I did for all the other patients: I described what had happened. The nurse went to have a look, only to tell us that it would have been better to bring her earlier. How could they have come all that distance faster? Did she not know how difficult our living conditions were? When she went to examine our child, I too went back to my work. I didn't want people to stay waiting while sick like my child, in that bad weather.

When my work finished, we started out for our tent: my wife, my daughter and me. Feeling a bit better, my little girl lifted herself and asked for a juice. But...

The UNHCR, the European Union and Greece get thousands of Euros every day. Despite that, they do not hire enough translators to help sick people in clinics inside the camp of Moria and in the big hospital. Lack of translators, even in emergencies, is one of people's most common problems.

To rely on migrant volunteer translators is shameful. Europe should feel shame. When even in its own hospitals, nurses speak no English, how can they expect it from people who come from places where many kids have no access to proper education?

Parwana

p.s. Thanks to the father, husband, human being, volunteer translator, who shared his story and who happens to be a refugee today!