My name is Noz and I came to Greece two and a half years ago. Before that, I used to live in Syria with my parents and sister. My father was a successful engineer while my mother was a housewife, who got some help from my sister and me. Life in Syria was not easy. In order to get out of our house we had to be accompanied by a man. My father showed up late at night worn out because of work. As the time went by, children in the streets were becoming fewer and fewer, as if somebody made them disappear. I do not have a lot of great memories from home, but what I will cherish forever is the afternoons. Every afternoon, my mother would play the piano filling our house with beautiful melodies. So, that was the right moment for me to do the only thing that would relax me, dance! Ever since I was a young girl, my dream was to dance, to move. So, if it weren’t for those afternoons and those sweet memories, my journey towards my current location would not have been the same.

One day, my father got back early from work, and there was somethimg different in his behaviour. He looked scared and stressed . I still cannot figure out what he was thinking at that moment. He calls out to my mom: “The time has come!” A while later, my mother shows up in the living room with a large bag that looked really heavy. She gave it to my father and then she turned to my little sister and me. She tried to explain that we had to abandon our home immediately as it was not safe to live there anymore. At that moment, I could not understand why the rush, and the truth is that I did not want to leave. But I knew that I had to obey my parents and become a role model to my sister. In half an hour we had packed everything onto the car and we were ready to go. I had said nothing. I did not dare oppose or ask anything, but everything was working out alright until my little sister realised that she would never see her house or her friends again. She burst into tears and I couldn’t calm her down as I myself could not understand what was going on either.

The driving distance to the sea usually requires 12 days but it took us 15. During the first 6 days, we were using our own car, but we spent the rest of them on a truck, along with a number of people who obviously had the same idea as we did. I had no idea that so many people were leaving. Now, it was making sense why so many children from the neighbourhood had disappeared. Our days on the truck were unbearable. They were the definition of miserable conditions. Each passenger had a bit of rice in one hand and an empty bottle in the other so that he would not have to pee on himself. There were days when I wanted to give up, but then I would listen to my mom’s soothing voice who would always sit next to me. I remember looking at my father’s face. He wanted to hide it, but the fear was so obvious in his eyes. He couldn’t help it despite being the family’s “rock”. We all supported each other. Even my little sister who did not totally understand what was going on kept us united.

I had lost count of days as no light would get inside the truck. One day, the doors opened so suddenly, that blinding sunlight got in. It was like I was losing my senses. I felt somebody push me and I immediately looked for my sister. The minute I saw her, I grabbed her. I would go nowhere without her. My parents showed up a bit later, hugging us tightly as if they had not seen us in years. Since my parents were next to me, I felt comfortable enough to look around and see where I was. Before that, I was too scared that If I let myself free, something bad would happen. As I turned around, I saw the sea. We had reached our destination. At that moment I thought that all bad times were behind us . Little did I know that this was actually the beginning of a new journey! A while later, after my father had spoken to some really weird guys, he came to us and this time he could hide neither his sorrow nor his fear. Right there and then I realized that things were about to change. He explained to us that there was not enough space for him and my mother, therefore, my sister and I would have to board the boat without them. I tried to convince them to wait for the next boat so that we could all be together, but in vain. The decision had been made. I had no alternative but obey my parents. My father gave me and my sister all kinds of potentially useful information. He was a smart man. After hugging us, they gave me a little bag telling me that it contained our ticket money. I looked inside. There was so much money, I didn’t even know it existed. I wanted to ask where we got it, but I didn’t.

That was the last day I saw my parents. I will never forget them. Their faces helped me stay strong for my sister for the rest of our journey. We got onto the boat. It seemed to me that there were too many people, but any kind of doubt was out of the question. We were out at sea all night looking for a shore, but my memory is just a blur. I was exhausted and almost fell asleep quite a few times. However, the fact that I was holding my sister kept me awake. It was obvious that the sea did not want us there. The only thing that calmed me down was thinking of waves as sudden and abrupt dance movements, but harmonious at the same time. That was what encouraged me to keep going. Mornings were no different from nights. The passengers were worn out, half of them were throwing up, others were in shock and others would simply not say a word. I belonged to the last category. I had to be there for my little sister, soothing her when I had to, closing her eyes when necessary, talking to her when she needed her mother and father. Who would have thought that the hardships on the boat would make me nostalgic for the truck? I saw more deaths on this damned boat than a child or even an adult could have seen in a lifetime.

We started taking a glimpse of a shore. A little while later, another boat showed up, different from ours. Why couldn’t we have a boat like that? I thought. I guessed they must have run out of them, so that thought vanished really fast. They picked us all up, one by one, and put us onto the big boat. In five minutes, we were all on shore. It was as if I was stepping on dry land for the first time in my life. I couldn’t get used to it. But, the short moment of happiness had to go away really fast. My father’s words were still echoing in my head: “The minute you get there, you will ask for asylum. It is obligatory that they to give it to you. You will not take no for an answer”. Back then, I could not realize why that seemed so important but in my head, that sounded like my father’s last wish and since I knew I would never see him again, I had to do what I was told with no second thought.

After getting done with all the hustle, I managed to get the chance to talk to a guy who seemed in charge and looked nice. I asked for asylum and he guided my sister and me to a place where there were more children. I didn’t know If I should be happy or not. As I was looking around, kids were playing, people had already become “refugees” to everybody else’s eyes and I felt weird. My sister tried to move away from me but I instinctively grabbed her and held her close to me. She just wanted to play with the other children but I didn’t have the strength to let her go. Suddenly, she looked at me and said: “Everything is fine”! I thought I had forgotten her voice as it was the first time I would hear her speak in weeks. After all, I might not have been the one supporting her but vice versa.

The living conditions of our new spot were bad once again. We would sleep in tents which would offer us no safety whatsoever in case of rain. That is why actually quite a few people got sick. Unfortunately, there were no suitable facilities where these people could be taken care of, so they just suffered , all in one place. The days were going by and nobody was talking about the asylum we all so desperately wanted. In the following months, I managed to find out what this thing that my father was so anxious we should get, was. Three months later, my sister and I managed to get asylum. I had heard so much about life in Greece that I didn’t know what to expect. They took us to a large home where we live to this day. We were offered food, we went to school and had our own bed. At school of course, things were quite hard. For some reason, some parents did not want us there, saying that we were filthy and sick. A long time went by for me to get used to it, but I made it.

Now, I am Noz and I am 16 years old. I came to Greece with my little sister. We lost our parents on our way here, but we know that if it weren’t for them, we would not have the future and the opportunities we have now, so their sacrifice will not go to waste.