

The background image shows a classroom setting. In the foreground, two young girls are smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind them, other children are seated at wooden desks, some looking at books. The wall behind the children is decorated with a grid of colorful drawings and posters. A yellow box with the text 'WHY COMICS?' is in the top right corner.

## WHY COMICS?

***Why Comics?*** Educational Charity brings contemporary humanitarian and social issues (such as racism, conflict, migration, trafficking and climate change) into the classroom through interactive literary comic books based on real-life testimony.

Our resources build empathy and enhance learning for 7-18-year-old students and teachers alike, alongside national-curriculum relevant lesson plans to support multiple subjects.

**\*\* Download our [Teaching Guidance Note](#) for a step-by-step guide to using our resources \*\***

# Meet Mohammed...

Mohammed is from Syria. Since the start of **Syria's civil war in 2011**, the violence, conflict and destruction has ravaged the population.

Mohammed was called up for the army. He hid, as he knew he needed to provide for his family. He went to Erbil in Kurdistan and worked tirelessly to send money home. Eventually, the conflict reached Erbil and Mohammed had to make his way to Turkey.

Mohammed paid thousands of Euros to smugglers and began the long journey to Norway, first getting a boat to Greece.

Sadly he was caught and fingerprinted in Hungary. According to the **Dublin Agreement**, the country in which you are first fingerprinted is the country where you must seek asylum.

Mohammed eventually reached Norway, where he anxiously awaits to find out whether he will be returned to Hungary.

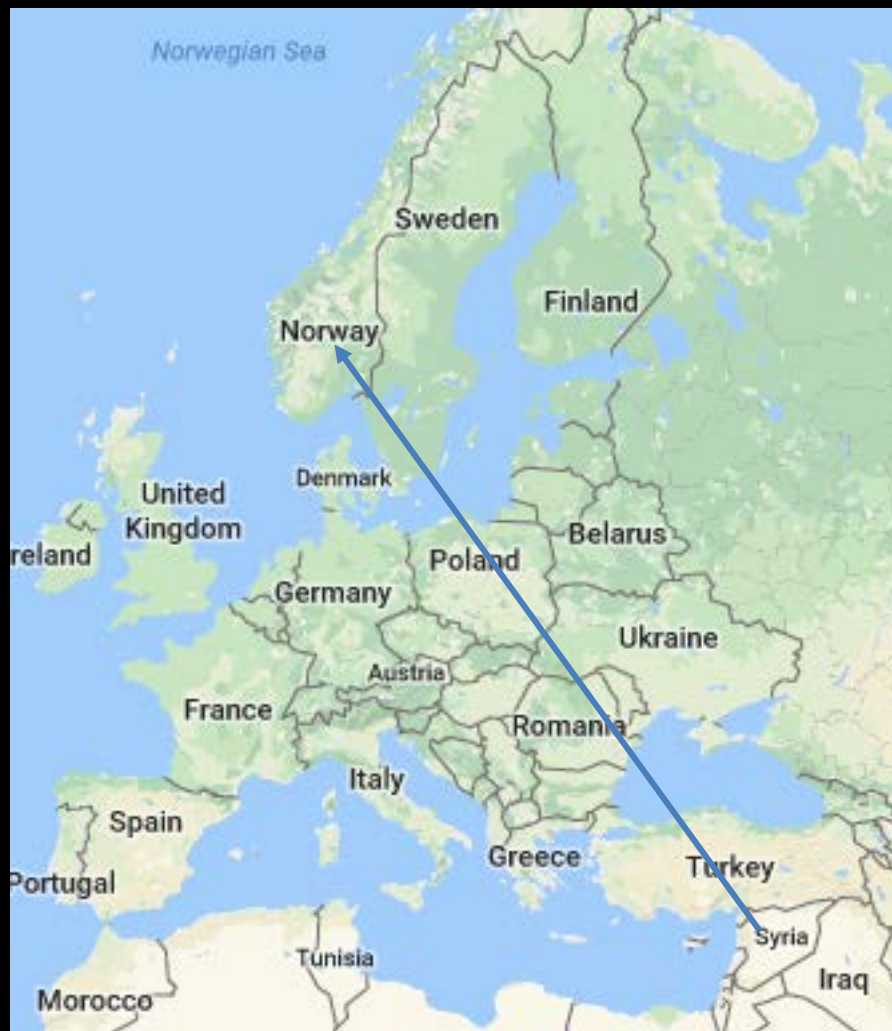


**Funded by Norwegian People's Aid**





# Where is Mohammad from?



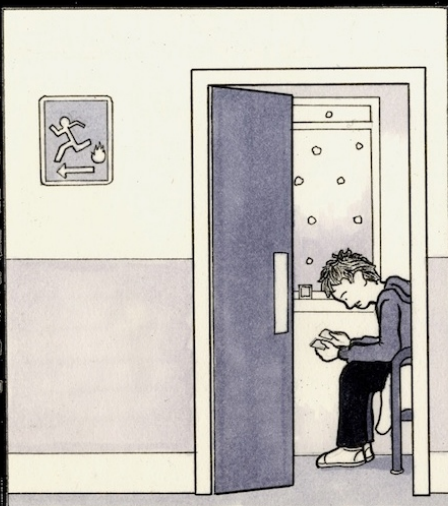
Mohammad travelled  
from Syria to Norway.

Syria to Norway is over  
3500 km.

*Now read  
Mohammed's Story as  
a class*



# MOHAMMAD

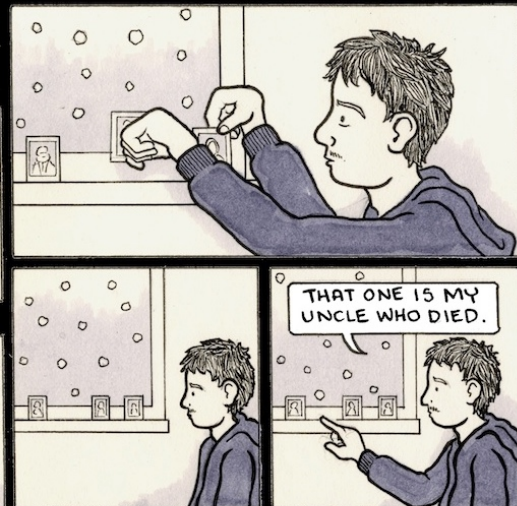


I MISS MY PARENTS.  
SO MUCH.



THEY ARE STILL IN SYRIA WITH MY YOUNGER BROTHERS AND SISTERS. MY FATHER IS AN INVALID.

I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM FOR THREE YEARS NOW.



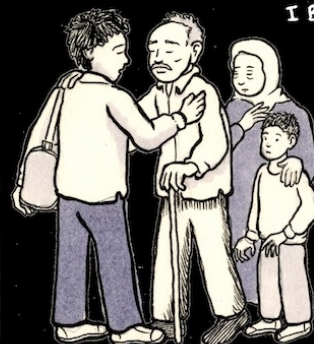
THAT ONE IS MY UNCLE WHO DIED.

MY BROTHER AND I WORKED AS LABOURERS TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY. WE HAD NO SAVINGS. I BACKED THE PROTESTERS BUT IT MADE LIFE HARD FROM THE START.



WHEN WAR STARTS, JOBS VANISH. AND YOU CAN'T EAT IDEALS.

I WAS CALLED UP FOR THE ARMY. BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO FIGHT! WHAT USE WOULD I BE TO MY FAMILY AS A CORPSE ON THE BATTLEFIELD? TWICE, THE SECURITY FORCES CAME KNOCKING FOR ME. ONCE, I WAS OUT. THE SECOND TIME I HID UNDER THE BED. I KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO FLEE MY HOME.



I SAID GOODBYE TO MY FAMILY AND LEFT FOR ERBIL, IN KURDISTAN, TO SEEK WORK. I PROMISED TO SEND MONEY, AS SOON AS I COULD.



ERBIL IS DRY, ROCKY AND POOR. I FOUND WORK LABOURING AGAIN - LONG HOURS AND BACK-BREAKING. FOR TWO YEARS MY BODY WAS IN AGONY. BUT I WAS ABLE TO SEND MONEY HOME TO MY FAMILY.



I RENTED A ROOM WITH ANOTHER SYRIAN GUY. EVERY NIGHT WE WATCHED THE NEWS FROM HOME. AND IT JUST GOT WORSE AND WORSE AND WORSE.



EVERY TIME THEY SHOWED THE AFTERMATH OF AN EXPLOSION, MY EYES WOULD SCAN THE FACES OF THE DEAD AND WOUNDED - THINKING, WAIT! WAS THAT MY BROTHER? MY FATHER? MY MOTHER?



THEN THE PICTURE WOULD CUT AWAY



AND I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FALL ASLEEP, FOR WORRY.





IN TIME, THE TURMOIL REACHED ERBIL. ISIS WERE ON TELEVISION EVERY DAY. WHEN A CAR BOMB BLEW UP OUTSIDE THE U.S. CONSULATE, I SAW WHICH WAY THE WIND WAS BLOWING. SO - I LEFT, FOR ISTANBUL.



I WASN'T ALLOWED TO WORK IN TURKEY. EVERY DAY MORE SYRIANS ARRIVED, AND FELT LESS WELCOME. WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE FORCED TO BEG IN THE STREET.



I HAD NO FUTURE THERE. I WAS USELESS TO MY FAMILY. THEY NEEDED MONEY TO SURVIVE - SO I HAD TO FIND WORK!



THAT MEANT TRAVELING TO EUROPE - MY ONLY HOPE...



A SMUGGLER OFFERED ME PASSAGE, FOR 3000 EUROS.



I PHONED HOME AND TOLD MY FATHER THE SITUATION. HE LISTENED CAREFULLY - THEN TOLD ME TO LEAVE IT WITH HIM.



WHEN I PUT DOWN THE PHONE I FELT WAVES OF SHAME. I KNEW MY FATHER WOULD HAVE TO VISIT A LOAN SHARK... I HAD DRIVEN MY FAMILY INTO DEBT.



IN MY MIND, I SWORE AN OATH. THAT WHEN I REACHED EUROPE, I WOULD WORK NIGHT AND DAY, UNTIL THE DEBT WAS REPAYED, A HUNDRED TIMES OVER.

MY CROSSING WAS BLESSED. THE BOAT WAS OLD - BUT IT WAS SEA-WORTHY. IT TOOK ONLY 2 AND A HALF HOURS TO CROSS FROM IZMIR TO GREECE. MY HEART SWELLED WITH OPTIMISM. I THOUGHT THAT LUCK HAD LANDED ON MY SHOULDER AT LAST.



THE DUBLIN AGREEMENT IS A LAW WHICH STATES: WHEN A REFUGEE ARRIVES IN EUROPE, THEY CAN SEEK ASYLUM ONLY IN THE COUNTRY WHERE THEIR FINGERPRINTS ARE FIRST TAKEN.

MY GOAL WAS TO REACH NORWAY... I WOULD NEED TO AVOID THE AUTHORITIES ALL THE WAY THROUGH EUROPE.



I HAD A FRIEND IN OSLO WHO COULD FIND ME WORK. ME AND THREE OTHER GUYS WERE MAKING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER. WE ASKED AROUND, AND FOUND A TRUCK DRIVER WHO AGREED A STEEP PRICE TO SMUGGLE US OUT OF GREECE.

I SAW NOTHING OF GREECE EXCEPT THE INSIDE OF A TRUCK. WHEN THE ENGINE STARTED, I CALLED MY FRIEND AND SAID TO HIM -



THEN I FELL ASLEEP, AND HAD MANY STRANGE AND RESTLESS DREAMS.

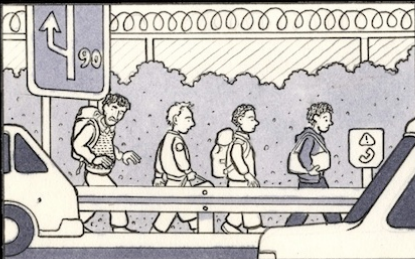
I WOKE WHEN THE TRUCK STOPPED. THE DOOR RATTLED OPEN. IT WAS A CHILLY EVENING OUTSIDE. WE WERE PARKED BY A MOTORWAY.



THE DRIVER POINTED THE DIRECTION FOR US TO GO - THEN DROVE AWAY.



FOR SEVERAL DAYS WE TRACED A PATH THROUGH EASTERN EUROPE. WE WALKED MANY MILES, TO PRESERVE OUR CASH, OFTEN TRUDGING ALONGSIDE BUSY ROADS.



WE CROSSED BORDERS ON FOOT, HIKING THROUGH FIELDS AND FOREST. THE LANDSCAPE WAS LUSH AND GREEN.



WE TRIED NOT TO DRAW ANY ATTENTION, ESPECIALLY FROM POLICE. WE SPLIT UP ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, HIDING BEHIND NEWSPAPERS WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND, HOPING TO BLEND INTO THE SCENE.



BIRDS SANG. THERE WERE NO GUNS, NO BOMBS, NO DEATH OR HORROR. I WAS EXHILARATED...

TO NAVIGATE WE USED G.P.S. ON OUR PHONES. BY NIGHT WE PITCHED TWO LITTLE TENTS SOMEWHERE INCONSPICUOUS - THEN ROSE AND LEFT BEFORE DAWN.



THE WORLD HAD NEVER SEEMED SO BIG, OR SO FULL OF POSSIBILITY.



IT WAS BEAUTIFUL.



HEY... YOU HEAR THOSE BIRDS?

3:20 AM

THE NEXT NIGHT



THE POLICE PICKED US UP IN HUNGARY. THEY INTERROGATED ME - NAME? AGE? WHERE WAS I GOING? WHAT WAS MY INTENTION? THEY SEEMED SUSPICIOUS AND ANGRY...



THEY DIDN'T LISTEN.

THEY SCANNED MY FINGERS,

THEN THREW ME IN A CELL...

WHEN THEY DIDN'T LIKE MY ANSWERS THEY BEAT ME WITH THEIR STICKS. I ACCEPTED THE BLOWS. I ONLY BEGGED THEM NOT TO TAKE MY FINGERPRINTS.



...AND TWO WEEKS LATER, TURNED ME OUT ON THE STREET.



IN HUNGARY THEY HAVE BUILT A RAZOR-WIRE FENCE AGAINST REFUGEES, A HUNDRED MILES LONG. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HUNGARY WAS FOR HUNGARIANS AND EUROPE MUST BE KEPT CHRISTIAN.



I RETURNED TO THE ROAD WITH A STONE IN MY STOMACH... MY FATE WAS SEALED.



MY FAMILY ARE TRAPPED IN THE WAR-ZONE. THEY ARE IN DEBT, BECAUSE OF ME.





Mohammad is still anxiously waiting for a decision to be made under the Dublin agreement if he will be returned to Hungary.



# Discussion Points

1. What are your initial thoughts and feelings after reading Mohammed's story?
2. Can you explain why Mohammed had to leave Syria?
3. What would you do and how would you feel if you found yourself in Mohammed's position?
4. Does Mohammed's story differ from stories you have read in the media?
5. How was Mohammed treated when he arrived in Europe? Did the reactions differ between Norway and Hungary?
6. **The Dublin Treaty** is an agreement stating that a refugee can only **seek asylum** in the European country they were first finger printed. How does the Dublin Treaty affect Mohammed?
7. How are you different, and similar to Mohammed?
8. How do you think Mohammed is feeling now?
9. How can we help to integrate people like Mohammed into our communities?
10. Has Mohammed's story effected the way you think about **refugees** and **asylum seekers**? How?

If you want to talk to someone about the issues you've read about in the comic, please use the links below

- **Asylum Seeking**  
[Refugee Council](#)  
[Government Asylum Helplines](#)
- **General mental/emotional health support**  
[Young Minds](#)  
[Mind](#)
- **Racism**  
[Childline](#)
- **Migration and refugee issues**  
[Doctors Without Borders](#)  
[Red Cross](#)  
[International Rescue Committee](#)  
[CARE International](#)  
[Migrant Help UK](#)
- **War/Conflict**  
[Child Helpline International](#)

\* Don't forget to read our page about [Staying Safe Online](#) \*





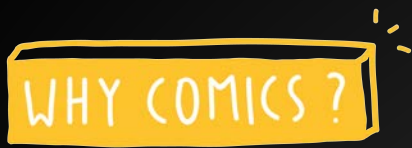
BRINGING CONTEMPORARY  
HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL ISSUES  
INTO THE CLASSROOM

# We Need Your Feedback!



To date, **over 600 schools in 27 countries** have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about our **free interactive educational KS2-5 resources** and **accompanying national-curriculum suggested lesson plans**, co-designed with 7-18-year-old students and teachers. From September 2017, our materials will be disseminated to **over 25,000 schools worldwide**.

Please help us by filling out a [short anonymous SurveyMonkey questionnaire](#) after you have used our materials for our funders. This helps ensure that our great resources remain free.



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HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL ISSUES  
INTO THE CLASSROOM



**SOAS**  
University of London

**Get in touch!**  
**We'd love to hear from you**



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