

REFUGE

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve and Advocate the Cause of Forcibly Displaced People

*I Have Been Displaced
since I Was Five Years Old*

*A Place where There Is Peace,
Is where I Want to Live*

*The Most Important Thing
for Me Is My Life Is Safe
and Peaceful*

*33 Years On,
The Needs of Displaced
Are Bigger than Ever*



I Have Been Displaced since I Was Five Years Old

Citra Ayi Safitri

Displaced; that is the word that describes most of the 25 year journey of Musa's life. He is one of the millions of descendants of Afghan ethnic minorities who seek asylum in other countries. Since the age of five, he was forced to live with fear and threats. His father, the school principal in his village, was forced to take him to Pakistan in order to save the family. At first they felt ok living in Pakistan, but this feeling did not last long. In 2004 ethnic and religious minorities living in Pakistan began to be targeted in murders and bomb attacks that continue to this day. As a teenager Musa faced many difficulties and threats. Being not even allowed to go to school or work, he decided to flee again in search for a safe place.

"I paid an agent in order to leave Pakistan. I had no other choice with the threat of being killed in sight. From Pakistan I went to Thailand, Malaysia and finally to Indonesia, where I met others that promised to take me to Australia. Unfortunately, Indonesian security officers arrested me on the way. Then I got detained in an immigration detention center" said Musa.

"I met with JRS in the detention center. They help refugees and organise many activities in here. Every time JRS comes, I feel calm because they often bring news and help us with a lot of things. I feel comfortable to share my grief and the difficulties experienced here. I am grateful JRS is here." JRS organises soccer games, aerobics and yoga sessions in the detention center, but more often

just comes to speak and listen to people held against their will here.

Recently Musa was granted refugee status by UNHCR after they found that Musa's life will be in danger if he returns home. After 20 years of restlessness and fear Musa is finally able to apply for resettlement to Australia; his first real chance to leave behind threats to be uprooted over and over again, detained, jailed, injured or killed. This is a glimpse of hope for him, in what can be described as a hard life so far.

*"Hopefully one day I can study again, work and be together with family. I long for a safe place where I can forget my worries about me and my family, a place where the law and courts listen to me." ****



Children forced to flee with their parents participating English learning organized by JRS at Immigration Detention Center

A Place where There Is Peace, Is where I Want to Live

Indro Suprobo

Mebratu Selam lived in Indonesia for a while now. He was granted "Refugee status" by UNHCR. Twenty-six years ago, he was born in a small town in Ethiopia into a family of an ethnic minority. After graduating high school he had studied at the Academy of Engineering, but did not finish it. Fortunately, after training in the field of construction engineering with good results, he was recruited by a company and worked as construction worker. But his life was soon to change due to threats and insecurity, forcing him to leave home in search of safety.

"The government often acts using threats, violence, coercion, and even actions that result in death," he remembers.

Mebratu's family was supporting an organization that was critical of the Government. Injustice and discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities motivated them to engage in political education often criticizing the authorities. In January 2011 government officers came to his family's house asking them to hand over the entire land they owned. Facing this unjust request, his father resisted by openly refusing the authorities request.

"They dragged my father to the large land belongs to us. They forced him to hand over the land to the government. Because he still refused, they beat and tortured my father cruelly until he lay on the ground in a state of unconsciousness. As a result of the abuse, a month later my father died," he recalls with sadness.

The government did not allow people to attend the father's funeral at a cemetery arguing that the opponents of the government do not need to be remembered. *"At the funeral, soldiers came to prevent the presence of those who wanted to mourn him. I was angry and quarreled with the soldiers. Because of that*



I was beaten and arrested and put in jail for three months," he said.

Since then the government monitored Mebratu's activities closely. Even then, he continued to provide political education to young people secretly. Injustice and persecution witnessed and experienced by minorities making it hard to stay quiet. *"Sometimes we get together to discuss what has been done by the government to a minority and what we should strive for."*

On one night in August, two soldiers captured Mebratu at home bringing him to a unknown location. *"They put me into a dark room. My hands and feet tied. In a curled up position, I was beaten and kicked. They beat me all night,"* recalls Mebratu with sadness and anger. *"If you and your brother do not stop opposing the government, I will kill you,"* he was threatened by one of the soldiers that night. They forced me to sign a statement that contains the willingness to support the ruling government

party. I had to sign it because I could not stand the torture. Then they released me.

At midnight in mid-August, three soldiers came back to my house. That night, I managed to escape, while my older brother was caught and imprisoned until now.

Later the enforcement of an Anti-Terrorism Act further complicated the situation of the minorities critical to the Government. The law legitimates to accuse anyone who does not agree with the policy of the Government to be a terrorist. Against these so called terrorists, the Government acted arbitrarily, arrests, beatings, persecution, and even deaths were a result. *"I was afraid because of the threats so I was forced to flee to Kenya and get to Indonesia,"* said Mebratu.

In Indonesian exile he found new friends. *"For me, JRS is like family, they would come to visit me, say hello, invite me to chat and listen to my stories. JRS provides financial support and*

pays for this room. JRS even will come and wait for us when we are sick and in hospital to the extent that they themselves forget to eat lunch. I am very grateful for all of this," he said.

Awaiting his resettlement to a third country, he hopes to learn on a free online course in Project Management as a preparation for work in the future. He is willing to be settling in any country as long as it is safe and peaceful. *"Place me wherever you want, what is important is that I can live like a human being."*

Mebratu is only one of millions of people who were forced to leave loved ones in search of a secure and humane future. Encountering friendship and solidarity by others in situations where one feels most vulnerable rekindles hope in the midst of adversity. ***

The Most Important Thing for Me Is My Life Is Safe and Peaceful

Saefudin Amsa

'I am going to die here' thought Dinesh when drifting on a wooden boat between Indonesia and Australia. The engine broke down in the middle of the Indian Ocean leaving destiny in the hands of the current and ferocious waves. For days Dinesh did not eat and could only drink water from the rain. Together with dozens of fellow passengers he grow weak from hunger and fear. Men, women, and children had to face the danger of death at sea.

In hunger and despair, some people tried to lure fish with improvised fishing equipment to at least be able to feed the children and women. If lucky one or two fish a day could be caught. For the rest, they just relied on drinking rain water to survive.

Ninety-five days they were floating in the sea.

"It would have been better to die in the sea than have to suffer upon my return to my country," said the 17 years old Dinesh. At the age of 12, he was forced to join an armed group in Sri Lanka. Hundreds of other children suffered the same fate.

"I do not like guns. I do not like war. I am afraid to see people dying, but I was forced to do it." During one of the violent clashes, he run away and hid in a safe place, but was caught by government soldiers, who jailed him for five months. One time as a drink water truck entered the prison he escaped running and hid for two months at his brother's house. Unfortunately, he was caught again by armed

groups and government informers and returned to custody. While detained he experienced repeated violence and severe torture.

After he managed to escape again the only option for him seemed to leave the country aboard a boat with dozens of people suffering a similar fate. Like his older brother, who had fled to India, Dinesh was seeking asylum and a safe place.

Drifting in the middle of the ocean full of desperation and fear Dinesh and his fellow refugees were found by an Indonesian fishing boat in March 2013. *"It was like a miracle and grace from the Creator,"* said Dinesh. *"The fisherman gave us instant noodles and towed our boat ashore. There were security officers but we did not care anymore. At that time, the only thing we had in mind was food,"* he recalls.

Dinesh and others in the boat were detained at an Immigration Detention Center, living in cramped conditions, locked in a stuffy room for 24 hours a day, during the first month. No fresh air, no sunlight, only iron bars. In such circumstances, he still remains grateful to be given the opportunity

to live and obtain food, all is better than the two months in the open sea with fear and without food.

In a detention center it is easy to lose hope. *"At that time I did not know how long I will be locked in a prison like this. When JRS came and visited us every day, I felt very happy to have friends here. JRS also helped me to get documents and assisted me,"* says Dinesh.

November 2013 Dinesh was excited and full of hope after receiving his refugee status from UNHCR. Now he is waiting for a third country to accept him for resettlement. *"If it is free I want to learn anything. I want to learn English, computers, whatever,"* said Dinesh. *"Initially I wanted to go to Australia. Now I do not care how long I will stay here or where I can go after this. The most important thing for me is my life is safe and peaceful." ****



JRS facilitate some activities such as sports, gardening, and excursions to enrich detainees life in the detention center

33 Years On, the Needs of Displaced are Bigger than Ever

Lars Stenger

The year 2013 has seen more and more people forced from their homes and countries. Driven by fear of violent conflict in Myanmar and the Middle East, threats of life, torture and serious abuse, children, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters see no other way as to engage in perilous journeys to safety.

But the increasing need is not merely measurable in numbers, there is not only threat in the lack of food and housing for the millions on the move. The biggest need arises from the decline in solidarity and empathy. Nurtured by xenophobia and a one sided focus on national security many tend to forget about the humanitarian principles and the rights mankind agreed to uphold globally after the human catastrophe of the Second World War.

With sadness we see an increasing number of people being detained in host countries when their flight leads them across state borders, being pushed away on boats, planes or on foot; being rejected yet again by host communities for being different. Is it a sign that we have grown too complacent, that our privileges and safety distance us from those in dire need. Is it that we cannot imagine ourselves in the same situation anymore, used to our rights being respected, our homes and cities being safe, we have grown cynical about those asking for our protection and help.

Living in Indonesia where now some 11.000 men, women and children in search of protection from persecution I am saddened by hearing and reading refugees being called 'illegal', seeing children, men and women locked away for months for no other reason than seeking safety.

JRS Indonesia currently works in four locations accompanying and serving the most vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees. Our aim is to enable them to survive the most difficult circumstances and support them in key steps to secure protection



Medan



East Java



Jakarta & West Java



Yogyakarta

and health. The real need is bigger to what JRS can respond to so we need your help to be able to continue and expand our services.

In Medan, one of the entry points to Indonesia, over 1000 asylum seekers and refugees live in the community and immigration detention center. During 2013 three JRS staff in Medan provided 268 activities to 421 detainees (99 Female, 322 Male, age between 1-60 years) detained for long periods of time. Supported by volunteers from the local and refugee community JRS is able to regularly visit the detention center to speak to people and listen to their concerns. JRS provides Information to asylum seekers, refugees and immigration staff. The feeling of not being forgotten by the world is most important to them promoting mutual understanding and the improvement of conditions in the IDC. In physical and educational activities as well as in celebrating religious or cultural events JRS reminds the people detained of their dignity and kindles hope for a better future. JRS encourages local church and civil society organizations to visit the detained women, men and children.

West Java and Jakarta is temporary home to more than half (over 5000) of the asylum seekers in Indonesia many of whom face long waiting times

with only very limited resources. Here four JRS staff provides housing, food, health care, educational and recreational activities as well as needed information to the most vulnerable women, children and men some of whom have survived severe hardship and abuse in their home countries. In 2013 JRS was able to support 142 vulnerable asylum seekers (67 female and 75 male). The needs are bigger to what JRS can cover. Contributions and donations by concerned individuals have enabled us to provide for more people in dire need. A long waiting list and regular approaches by asylum seekers are a sign that more support is needed here.

350 asylum seekers and refugees live currently in East Jawa, with more than half being held in immigration detention. Many of those detained were arrested when trying to leave for Australia; some are survivors of sinking boats having lost members of their family and friends. During 2013 three JRS staff accompanied 200 asylum seekers and refugees detained here, listening to concerns, providing information, cultural, educational and physical activities to reduce the stress they experience while held in their cells for most of the day. In trainings JRS provides the opportunity for Immigration officers working in the detention center to develop their skills and knowledge to be able to better understand the conditions and communicate with the asylum seekers and refugees.

42 refugees are living in Yogyakarta after being released from immigration detention centers, now awaiting their resettlement to a safe third country. One JRS staff and ten volunteers provide English classes and recreational activities to help people to prepare for their future lives and accompanying them during the long waiting for being accepted to move to another country.

Just as I am writing these lines my phone is ringing with yet another cry for help, "We have only this day left, tomorrow we have to leave our room, we have to stay on the road, we eat only once a day, please friend we hope, as we trust in God, please do something for us."

Celebrating 33 years of being with and serving refugees, JRS would like to encourage you to extend your hospitality and support to our brothers and sisters that are here to seek protection.

If you would like to support our services please visit: <http://jrs.or.id/en/campaign/support-our-work/>

EDITORIAL

Editorial Responsibility

Th. A. Maswan Susinto, SJ

Editors

Lars Stenger
Indro Suprobo

Articles Submitted by

Citra Ayi Safitri
Saefudin Amsa
Indro Suprobo
Lars Stenger

Translator

Indro Suprobo
Lars Stenger

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE INDONESIA

Gg. Cabe DP III No.9
Puren, Pringwulung, Condong Catur
Depok, Sleman
Yogyakarta 55283
INDONESIA

Phone/Fax: +62 274 517405
email: indonesia@jrs.or.id
website: www.jrs.or.id

Send your comments and suggestions to
refuge@jrs.or.id



The needs of displaced are bigger than ever.
If you are moved to support our service,
Please make a donation through

Bank Name: BCA (Bank Central Asia)
Bank Address: Jl. Jend. Sudirman Yogyakarta Indonesia
Account holder: **Yayasan JRS Indonesia**
Type of Account: Tahapan
Account Number: **037 333 2001**
Bank code (if applicable): # CENAIDJA#

Thank you for your support
to help forcibly displaced people in Indonesia