

TRANSCRIPT:

OUT OF ALEPO

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



[on-screen text]

War in Syria has displaced over 11 million people, creating the largest humanitarian crisis of our time .

[Title] *Out of Aleppo*

Mohammad Shasho: Hi, I'm Mohammad Shasho. I'm 17 years old. I'm a refugee from Aleppo, Syria, and here's my video journal.

Today I want to talk about the day I left Syria and never came back. We took everything with us, even though they said it was just one month. But that month, that one month, didn't end. Leaving your homeland feels like leaving part of your soul. It's like taking medicine, but my soul keeps rejecting this medicine.

Our first stop was Turkey. From there, my father went to Greece by a boat and then onto Germany. He knew that the trip was too dangerous for the whole family so he went ahead by himself. I remember seeing my dad when we said goodbye to him, and I saw him, he broke into tears you know. I saw my mom praying in tears. I remember when my dad turned around...He started crying but he turned away so we couldn't see it, and he continued to walk. Yeah.

[on-screen text]

Mohammad's father, a surgeon from Aleppo

Mohammad's father: Everyday when I went to the hospital, I saw many dead bodies that had been just thrown to the curb.

[on-screen text]

A bomb struck two blocks from Mohammad's house.

Mohammad's father: The tanks were in the street right by my apartment and would fire shots. During the anti-government demonstrations, many people were injured. And the police would come to the hospital and arrest injured patients or shoot them. We treated the injured in secret. The injured were transported to an apartment, and we treated them there. Many of the injured died. There was no blood supply, no anesthesia machine, so I thought the time had come to leave, to escape.

[on-screen text]

Mohammad's mother.

Mohammad's mother: To this day, when someone mentions Syria or Aleppo, I can't help but get emotional. I just tell myself I have a new life. But when someone mentions Syria or Aleppo or reminds me of the past, the memories return automatically.

Mohammad Shasho: I want to make this film, not just to show my own story. I want to give other refugees the opportunity to show you the glimpse of their journeys. There is a war out there, there are people who are damaged from it, and these are the people.

Mohammad's mother: I certainly hope that my children continue their education in Germany and always finish at the top of their class and that they are a good example for Syrians with their manners and their good behavior. I mean, to be a higher example in this foreign country. I mean, we represent our people, so my children have to represent them well.

Mohammad Shasho: It's such an important meaning in life to have such a good family that helps you, that's always there, like...You always know that there's always someone who will give you this little push in your back and say "Go on. We are right here. We have your back."

My parents sacrifice a lot of things for us. My mom had to be strong to keep the family together while we were separated from my father. And right now, a big challenge for my father is that is not allowed yet to work until he passes his German language test. But, everything needs patience, and everyone's gonna be rewarded for his patience.

[family chatting in background]**[text on screen]**

The family plays a game of "What's Your Name?" in their new language, German.

[Setting] Refugee Shelter in Berlin, Germany

Mohammad Shasho: So we are here at the Refugee shelter, and this is one of the reasons that I wanted to make this movie: to show you the story of us, the refugees who are living here.

[text on screen]

Sean Corleone. Refugee camp manager/ team leader.

Mohammad Shasho: Let's start with how many people do you have?

Sean Corleone: So we have three hundred refugees from different countries. After the war in Syria and after the refugees crisis in Europe came in 2015...2014, 2015 almost one million refugees to Germany. The refugees were in first, what they call it, emergency shelters, and emergency shelters, you don't have a private environment, and this is difficult for many people. And the only solution was to build a finished home. They have this concept of containers, so it looks like apartments. So they get this feeling that they are at home again.

[Setting] Room 2.119 in the refugee shelter.

Sean Corleone: as-salamu alaykum

Additional greetings and introductions in Arabic

Mohammad Shasho: What was the most– the hardest thing for you as you were in Syria?

[text on screen]

Reeham Yousef

Reeham Yousef: I don't feel safe at home, outside, in the streets. It was a really horrible life. The bombs coming here and here, it's to be or not to be, to live or to die. And maybe you will come back to your children or maybe not.

There is no home for us, our home is destroyed. I think that is the worst thing in the world, to lose your home. It's really a big problem when you have just a son who has autism, and then to live with him with the war, it's a horrible life. When you live in Syria, you know that you should leave, you should find a way to leave.

My man was here before me two months, as I came alone with the three children and we escaped in the sea. My son was very, very small, so he can't walk. I have him all the time here [points to her chest]. So it was horrible for me because, really, I don't know how to swim, and I have three children with me, so I faced so many difficulties in my journey. And then I arrived in Berlin and he was waiting me.

This is our new home. This...It's a simple home, but it's okay for us. here, the children sleep, and they spend most of their days, and we have another room. It's here, we sleep here. And we are very lucky we have a small kitchen here, so we can make our food here alone. Nobody share us.

I think, in Syria, every family has somebody lost, so all I wish is the war in Syria stops soon and that our children have a good life and a quiet life, you know?

Sean Corleone: the most challenging things here are that to keep the people happy. We don't make difference between religion or between nationality or between race. We all human being, and we should treat like human being.

[Setting] Morgenstern Theater

[text on screen]

Mohammad reads a poem he wrote.

Mohammad Shasho: It's different here, Mohammad, completely different. It's not like in our home. Our traditions, our culture, our language is all gone. Everything's foreign, and only loneliness is in your friend. There's only the hole that strangeness leaves in my heart. Every day, it gets bigger and bigger.

[text on screen]

Theater Morgenstern, a children's theater in Berlin that works with refugees.

Daniel Koch, co-director, Theater Morgenstern

Mohammad Shasho: When onstage, I hear nobody, it's just me, the stage, and my acting

[excerpt from one of Mohammad's plays shows and the audience laughs]

Mohammad Shasho: Theater means a lot to me. I can be who I want to be. I discover another me.

Actor on stage dressed as a nun: Do you believe in God?

[continuing exclamations from actors and audience laughter and applause]

[text on screen]

Pascale Senn Koch, co-director, Theater Morgenstern

Pascale Senn Koch: What is really important to us at the theater is that it represents a space without borders – in contrast to the rest of the world where there are more walls and borders. We do away with those completely. It's a place of encounter, no matter the cultural background. It's about a sense of togetherness based on equality.

Mohammad Shasho: I met a lot of other refugees, teenagers who came here alone, and they became very dear to me.

[text on screen]

During the initial wave of refugees, close to 100,000 children made the journey to Europe alone. Most of these unaccompanied minors came from Afghanistan and Syria

A., 19, escaped Syria via Turkey to Germany in the back of a truck – alone. His father, a policeman, was imprisoned for his anti-government views. He asked that his identity not be revealed because of safety concerns.

A.: I spent two days in the back of a truck without food or a bathroom break because the driver was afraid of the police. To him, I was nothing but “a product.” I am a refugee, I came here to live in peace. I am not ashamed of it. What Germany offers is the opportunity to further my education, to learn, and to live the life of a regular human being.

Homesickness? You have to feel homesick. But to me, home is where I live, where I am content. That to me constitutes a sense of home and belonging

[text on screen]

At age 16, Mohammad A. made the solo journey from Syria to Libya, across the Mediterranean to Italy, and eventually to Germany.

[rapping in Arabic]

Mohammad A.: A refugee is a human being, just like any other human being. He has rights like anyone else, and that is how it should be. Some people hate us, some people like us, and some people are afraid.

Mohammad Shasho: How did you feel on the boat?

Mohammad A.: We were 340 people on a small boat. With us were women and children and pregnant women, too.

[text on screen]

Original footage of Mohammad A's boat crossing the Mediterranean.

Mohammad A.: When I was on the boat, I felt like I was going to die and that I would never see my family again. It was like a dream. My dream is to become a dentist, and I dream that all people live in peace and all religions love each other, all people love each other. And nobody says you're Black or you're white, and nobody says you're Muslim or you're Jewish

[text on screen]

On December 19, 2016, a truck deliberately drove into a Berlin Christmas market. Twelve people died, and 56 were injured. ISIS claimed responsibility.

[Setting] Berlin Christmas Market

Mohammad Shasho: I felt guilty and ashamed because it's obvious that this happened to destroy our image. Even if it's safe here, the war is still inside. Syria is the definition of danger right now. And then coming here and seeing this happen means that danger is everywhere. I can't say how much I respect the German society, especially in Berlin. The people here are strong, and this thing could never shake them.

Seeing all these photos, all these videos, I have sometimes nightmares. People die like flies. I was just so mad. You always want something to stop this, you know? You gotta be strong in life to go on. You can't always hide.

[Setting] Train

Mohammad Shasho: Germany is the new start, the beginning, my new life. When I came here, I had a goal in my mind, I had a motivation. Coming here, it's true that it's a new country, it's true that its culture is totally different. I didn't fight the change. I accepted it.

[text on screen]

Berlin after World War II

Mohammad Shasho: Since I came to Berlin and learned the German history. and the memories of Germany's own war are everywhere.

[text on screen]

Destruction of Aleppo and Berlin

Mohammad Shasho: It's ironic that the city that was so destroyed during World War II and that people once fled from and lost their home is now the city that welcomes people who also fled war and lost their homes. The irony like...It strikes you everyday

[Setting] Hermann Ehlers Schule

Mohammad Shasho: My biggest challenge here in Germany was to learn the language as fast and as good as possible so I can integrate in the German society and continuing school because school was the main goal here in Germany for me.

Since I was a kid, I always loved to go to school, and it was such a holy place to me. It was my second home. Mainly, the school decides our future. Because of the Civil War, a whole two generations are gone. There are a lot of kids at my age – 16, 17, 18 – who are fighting with the rebellions right now. There's a lot of them who can't even leave Syria, and their education and their social life is gone. All this grace is gone.

To us teenagers, the refugee teenagers, school is like the first gate to interact with the German

culture.

[text on screen]

Simone Vogler, school principal

Simone Vogler: Can you describe what it was like for you to integrate into German society?

Mohammad Shasho: Going to a new country and integrating to a new society, it has a twist. It's like a wave. Either you ride it or you fight it. So the secret is to know how to ride the wave, so you can use it to get your own way.

Simone Vogler: You said riding the wave is the secret, so how do you deal with the Germans? How do you get on with them?

Mohammad Shasho: These differences, you just need to accept them and learn from them, you know? Combine what you know and what you get from here, so you can get the best thing

Classmate #1: I gained new experiences, new realities, and a new culture. It's always good to learn about other cultures and learn other languages

Simone Vogler: What do you miss most about where you came from?

Classmate #2: I miss my home.

Classmate #3: I miss my family, my friends, my school, and my home – everything.

Simone Vogler: What about you?

Mohammad Shasho: childhood. I miss my childhood. It's like six years is stolen from me, you know? I lost my home, I lost my country. This old, safe, very good life is lost. But I got motivation to get everything right after this war ends.

[text on screen]

Aleppo 2013

Mohammad Shasho: You have always this tiny flame, it's always burning and then, when the memories come, it fuels the flame and it just starts to roar, and you always have this feeling right there that there's something missing. There's a lot of people where there's sort of shame for being a refugee. like "nah, I don't mean I'm called refugee," or like if he call me refugee, he's

not respecting me or insulting me, and I don't think so. I am a refugee because I have a home to go back to. I am a refugee because I have a target to reach. I left it for a lot of time, but, at the end, I'm going back.

Six years and it's not ended. All those people who are dying right now, I want to pay back for their lives. My dream is to be a doctor, I want to study at Harvard. After when I build myself, I want to go back to Syria and start building it, and that's my dream to make a free, new, very developed Syria.

[text on screen]

Mohammad thanks BYkids and his mentor, Anja Baron, for the opportunity to make this film and to shine a light on the lives of refugees.

[24:40] CREDITS ROLL