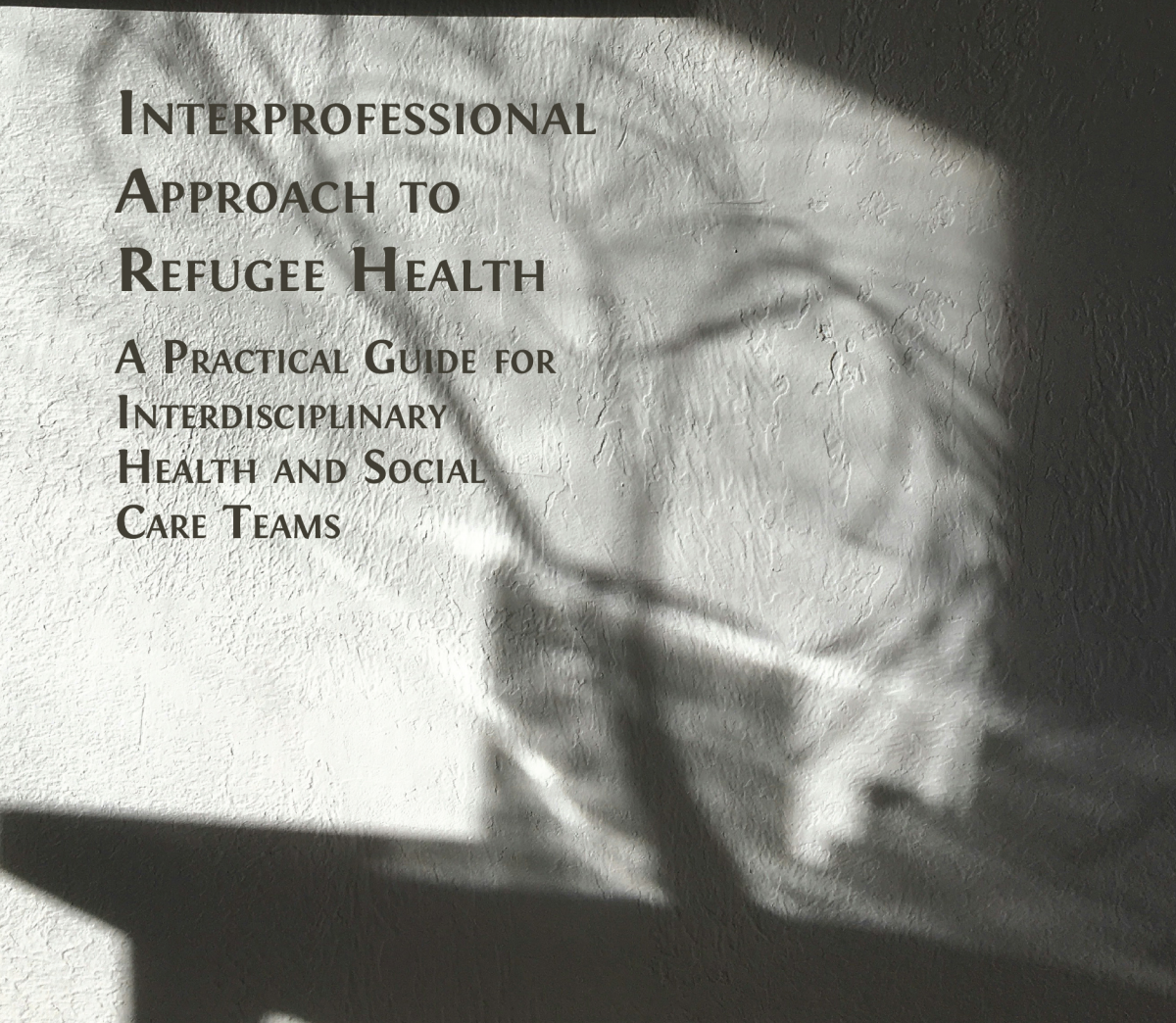


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AND SARAH QUINN



**INTERPROFESSIONAL
APPROACH TO
REFUGEE HEALTH**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
INTERDISCIPLINARY
HEALTH AND SOCIAL
CARE TEAMS**



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0. Introduction

*Emer McGowan, Djenana Jalovcic, and
Sarah Quinn*

Global displacement of populations continues to rise, with millions of individuals and families forced to move by conflict, persecution, climate change, environmental degradation and socioeconomic instability. As displaced populations seek safety and refuge in host countries, they frequently encounter complex challenges that can have profound implications on their physical health, mental wellbeing, and social integration. People with refugee experience can face significant barriers to accessing appropriate health and social care, including linguistic and cultural differences, legal and administrative challenges, trauma-related mental health conditions, and socioeconomic exclusion. Overcoming these barriers requires not only compassionate care but also a coordinated, interprofessional response. This book explores the complex intersection of health and social care in the context of forced migration. It aims to illuminate the health-related challenges that refugees can face, and the strategies and approaches that health and social care providers can implement to support these vulnerable populations.

This book aims to be a resource and practical guide for health and social care professionals to prepare them to work with, and provide services for, people with refugee experience. It is targeted at health and social care professionals who are new to working with people who have been forcibly displaced. As the number of people with refugee experience continues to increase, health and social care professionals in a range of contexts will be tasked with providing effective, equitable, and culturally responsive health and social care to refugee populations whose needs are complex and often unmet. Research has demonstrated

that refugees can present with complex and unmet healthcare needs, and that health professionals can feel underprepared to adequately meet these needs. The intention of this book is to provide practical suggestions and evidence-based approaches to assist health and social care professionals to improve the services they provide to people with refugee experience. It is not only for health and social care professionals, but also policymakers, educators, students, and anyone committed to building more inclusive and equitable healthcare systems.

Drawing on current evidence, global best practice, and frontline experiences, this book features contributions from authors with backgrounds in a range of different health and social care professions including nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy. The heterogeneity of the contributors and range of professional practices presented mean that this book will be relevant and useful to a variety of health and social care professionals. Factors including mental health challenges, trauma, chronic illness, housing insecurity, and language barriers contribute to a complex picture that demands a holistic and person-centred approach. No single profession can fully meet the diverse needs of people with refugee experience. Effective care delivery relies on the collaborative efforts and effective teamwork of professionals across health and social care. Given the diversity of the contributing authors' backgrounds, it is not possible to give a list of definitions used in the book. Where applicable, the authors have included definitions of key terms within the text of their chapter. The reader should take these into account, along with the professional and geographic background of each contributing author, when reading their contributions.

The book is primarily focused on providing care for people who have been forcibly displaced and as such encompasses people with refugee experience and asylum seekers. While much of the content will be relevant to other types of migrants, the text has been written with those who have been forcibly displaced across countries in mind. Throughout this book, readers will find analysis of key themes such as health equity, mental health and psychosocial support, person-centred care, cultural competence, interprofessional collaboration, and integration. Real-world case studies and reflective practice prompts are presented to support both academic inquiry and practical application.

Across the globe, the number of people forcibly displaced continues to rise as people flee war, persecution, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and the effects of climate. Behind each statistic is a person with a story, a family, and a way of life that they have had to leave behind. The need for compassionate, culturally competent, and accessible health and social care has never been greater. The lived experiences of people with refugee experience are of central importance in this book. No two refugees will have the same experiences.

To bring lived experiences to the centre of our attention and to illustrate the far-reaching impact of forced migration in a person's life, personal stories from three people with refugee experience are included in this introduction. These writings demonstrate the importance of listening to someone's history and experience when working with them in a health and social care context. Each person is very different, but each conveys the trauma of leaving their country of origin and being forcibly displaced, and how their experience of being a refugee continues to influence many aspects of their life.

Personal Narratives

Personal Narrative 1: Before and After

There is a deep scar that divides my life into before and after the war. Everything else is in between.

Before

Peace, prosperity, freedom, growth, care, love, brotherhood and unity, fun, travel, education, work, joy... My life was no different from the lives of my peers in any other part of Europe. And then the unimaginable happened.

In Between

The war swept my homeland, catching us unprepared for all the horrors that it brought. Some saw it coming, but for the majority of us it was inconceivable to think that it could happen to us. We lived and loved

together, shared values, respected each other, and built the country and our future together. The country in which I was born fell apart. Our friends became enemies. "Our army" with its heavy artillery besieged the city with tanks and cannons targeting the city. We demonstrated for peace. We took over the streets that were blocked by masked gunmen. Until they started killing us. Every day, every moment from every weapon they had. In disbelief that the war was happening to us, we started to gather the pieces of our destroyed lives, homes, families, friendships, libraries, schools, hospitals... like *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by connecting it with gold... we started putting our lives together, connected by the only gold we had, our unbreakable bonds of love, respect, solidarity, and friendship.

In my head I rewound millions of times the memories from the beginning of the war. The scenes I had watched from the window of my office: the enemy tank just two blocks away firing at the municipal building. In black and white. Sounds of the shells being launched. Sounds of the shells coming towards you. Sounds of explosions. The thick unbreathable air filled with the dust of destroyed buildings and smell of gunpowder mixed with burned lives and livelihoods.

The bread-line massacre. The first of many massacres of people trying to live.

No water. No electricity. No food. No windows. No fuel. No communication. No transportation. No...

Destroyed libraries, research institutes, educational institutions, health facilities... A gaping hole in the ceiling of my brother's room. My cousin killed while collecting water. Her two small children survived. The entrance to my building blown up. My little cousin killed while playing with his brother in front of their building, his brother severely wounded.

People killed and wounded in their homes, offices, streets, shelters, while collecting water, waiting in the bread lines, attending the funerals. Children killed and wounded everywhere, while they were playing inside and outside. On their way to and from schools and during their classes. Health workers killed while saving lives. News of family members, friends, neighbours who had been killed, wounded.

Dead bodies lined up in front of the hospital morgue. Washing the office floor in the hospital, the blood, flesh, and brain of an unknown

person killed in front of it. Cleaning the debris of what was left of our sitting room after being directly hit by a shell. Hoping for this nightmare to end.

Peacekeepers. International humanitarian agencies. Incredible humanitarians of all professions who left the comfort and safety of their homes to support us, defend our collective humanity, experience the horror, help, witness, and share.

The power of life. Finding energy to survive from precious moments we shared with others. Joy of seeing loved ones alive. Long and strong hugs we gave each other every time we met, like it was the last time. Warm, irresistible scent of the tasty pie that mama magically made of rice and flour, the only staples we had. Being fit from always running to avoid snipers and carrying dozens of litres of water to the top floor of the building on the top of the hill where we lived. Listening to the music on a crackling radio connected to the car battery. Celebrating when the rabbit-shaped thermometer showed the room temperature of eight degrees next to the woodstove in the middle of the long and cold winter.

We carried on. Fought back by being dignified in life and death. By going to work, distributing medicines and medical supplies, helping others, sharing, partying, grieving and hoping together, by organizing make-shift shelters, health facilities, support centres, radio programs, exhibitions, performances, concerts, book readings, festivals...

Every day every citizen of this besieged city was going towards her or his shell or bullet, or away from it.

No past. No future. Present, in between.

No safe place. Fear for my family, fear for my friends, fear for my life. Will this bloody war ever finish?

Walking through the vibrant streets of a European metropolis filled with happy, worryless people. Lost in a new and beautiful place. Not belonging. Crying uncontrollably. Waiting for any piece of news from my home and fearing that it would be devastating. Crying uncontrollably. Fainting. Attending language classes with other refugees from other parts of the world who understood. Attending rallies to stop racism. Crying uncontrollably. Waiting for resettlement. Living in uncertainty. Crying uncontrollably. Checking newspapers for any photos from the besieged city. Recognizing people. Violently shaking. Crying uncontrollably. I

survived. Feeling guilty because I survived. Crying uncontrollably. It never occurred to me to seek professional help.

News from home. Genocide.

Resettlement.

Military intervention.

Crying uncontrollably.

Recurring nightmare: endless columns of the enemy soldiers and tanks are advancing towards my home city.

Peace.

After

Starting a new life from scratch as who I was did not count. Working hard to be able to support rehabilitation and recovery efforts back home. Being positive and hopeful. Healing through the war stories told over, and over again. Making new friends. Finding spaces to grow and develop in a new country. Going back to school. Finding a new home. And homeland. Nurturing friendships. Feeling safe and free. Making life choices to enable me to give back. Feeling the pain of intergenerational trauma of First Nations and Indigenous People on whose land I settled uninvited. Feeling responsible for supporting others who have been experiencing war, genocide and displacement. Solidarity. Finding peace with my own multiple identities. Loving my new home country. Her vast land, beautiful lakes and magnificent autumns, her diverse people, and all those working on truth and reconciliation.

Through work witnessing peace negotiated in two countries after decades of war. Hearing a helicopter triggers the memory. Violently shaking.

Keeping positive and hopeful. My tears dried out but the excruciating pain of seeing other people suffering remains.

Returning to my country of origin and being there for its rebuilding and fragile recovery.

I remember. Walking through the streets of a once-besieged city that looks like any other European city. Beautiful and vibrant. As I walk her streets, I remember people killed and wounded in this street, at that corner. I can still clearly see where once the sign "be aware of sniper" was placed. I can still hear sniper bullets around my head. As I cross

this bridge, I see my cousin crawling over it from the occupied part of the city while they were shooting at her. When I climb the mountains around the city, I realize what easy targets we were. I hate fireworks.

Recurring nightmare: endless columns of the enemy soldiers and tanks are advancing towards my home city.

Somehow, 29 years later still feeling vulnerable.

I am not safe and free until everyone is safe and free.

Personal Narrative 2: A Son of a Stateless Society

Telling or writing your own story might seem like an easy task, but it is far more challenging than it appears. To narrate a life spent in continuous struggle, fighting just to declare “I am alive”, this is no simple feat. I ask myself, was this struggle my choice? Or did I fight because there was no other option but to resist the darkness that sought to consume me, to annihilate me?

Imagine the worst atrocities that a hegemonic structure bent on annihilating an entire people could commit: civil wars, massacres, deaths, the stench of blood, tortures. Envision babies, children, the elderly, women, pregnant women, and helpless people being brutally burned alive. Is it possible to stay silent in the face of such horrors? To remain indifferent? I couldn't stay silent. To be silent, I would either have to kill myself or be killed.

I wanted to describe myself this way: I am a son of a stateless society. To know this, to be aware of it and to live with this awareness, and either to be totally silent in the face of a system that is so thoroughly assimilationist, or to fight against it. This is my reality. I had no other choice. The poverty that enveloped me and my family, and all the negative conditions it caused, stemmed from the colonisation of my country. It took me a few years to understand and recognize this.

Colonialism is like a dark hole. I am not talking here about the Western kind of colonialism but instead about settler colonialism, which denies your existence and builds its own state on your land. If you want to live here, you must exist within the homogeneous national identity they desire. This is why I compare settler colonialism to a dark hole. This dark hole tries to pull you in no matter what. If you resist assimilation, this system will resort to all sorts of brutal policies to subdue you. It sees

itself above the people and all social values, organized and constructed on a single national identity, and it employs every fascist practice to melt all different ethnic identities living within the borders of its constructed nation-state into the same homogeneous national identity.

In this system, being Kurdish is enough to be killed, imprisoned, tortured, or impoverished. This is the oppression my people have been subjected to for a century. For a hundred years, the Kurdish people, who have endured numerous genocidal attempts and hundreds of massacres, have tried to survive in this vortex of oppression. The oppression has not ended; it continues. Despite this brutal oppression, the Kurdish people, one of the ancient nations of the fertile Mesopotamian geography between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, do not give up their language, culture, and identity.

I wanted to describe myself as an individual who is part of such a social identity. All the uniqueness that makes me who I am emerged under these social conditions. In primary school, when I told my teacher that I wanted to be educated in my native language, Kurdish, I was subjected to physical and psychological violence and eventually expelled from school. This experience shaped my consciousness, leading me to become a human rights activist in my high school years. I witnessed a major civil war following a period of armed internal conflicts. During my university years, as an activist fighting for our most natural human rights, many of my friends who fought alongside me were arrested and imprisoned. Balancing the fight for justice and my academic studies, I evolved my struggle into the academic field and continued the intellectual fight for Kurdish rights at an intellectual level as an activist.

The state declared curfews, and explosions and gunfire were heard everywhere. The sound of a bomb explosion, the screams of fear from the crowd, the smell of blood... The sound of bullets hitting walls, war helicopters and planes, and fear... Living during all this had become shameful for me. Yes, living can sometimes be a heavy burden. Innocent people were being killed, and I was alive. It is impossible to describe in words how heavy this burden is. Having narrowly escaped death a few times did not make me happy because I lost many friends and human rights defenders in these terrorist acts.

During all this turmoil, I continued my master's education and began conducting professional academic research. In my master's

thesis, I wanted to investigate the sociological manifestations of this century-long oppression the Kurds have faced. I aimed to research the societal trauma caused by war and genocidal policies inflicted on the Kurdish people, particularly focusing on recent social memory. Through intellectual activism, I wanted to pay a small part of my debt to my people. However, as in all other areas, the field of academic research had come under heavy pressure from the ruling powers. Academic freedom had almost vanished, and conducting critical and objective academic research on the Kurdish question had become forbidden. People were being killed, unjustly imprisoned, exiled, and subjected to demographic cleansing in the Kurdish region. Any critical voice or study of these oppressive policies was also banned. Researchers who wanted to advocate for the Kurds and to document history through academic work were being expelled from universities one by one, in an attempt to render them passive individuals.

During such a period, my master's thesis was also obstructed, and the institute where I was to conduct my research threatened me, saying, "We cannot accept this work; if you insist, we will expel you from school." However, I did not want to give up, and I completed my research and wrote my thesis. Unfortunately, as expected, my thesis was not accepted by the institute, and I was forced to find a new thesis topic. However, I did not abandon my research field. This entire process made life increasingly unbearable for me. I had to either remain silent, becoming a mute devil, because, for me, remaining silent in the face of oppression is also supporting it, or find a new alternative to continue my activism. These harsh conditions led me to emigrate from the country because I needed to feel free to say that I was truly living.

In Exile

Exile is the common destiny of the children of Kurdistan and I have become a subject of this common destiny. The fascist state policies that intensify every day, the government's increasing repression in all areas, and the growing pressure on dissenters compelled me to emigrate to a northern European country to continue my academic education, marking the beginning of my exile.

Experiencing exile first-hand led me to question this phenomenon and how I should navigate this process from my perspective. For me, exile is not the imprisonment of the “cursed identities” (Fanon, 2023) that I carry, but rather a space where an intellectual reclaims and asserts their power. Thus, exile can be seen not as a well of suffering or the depths of despair romanticized by others, but as a site heralding a new rebellion.

The state of exile or the garden of sorrow that comes with separation, in my view, is not just about being far from home or longing for a lost home. It is also about re-engaging with one’s personal political history. Being exiled, especially coming from the Kurdish area ingrained with memories of war and violence, means embarking on this journey with a certain memory and engaging in new intellectual activities within this new homeland. For the oppressed, exile can signify a colonial history in their memory and simultaneously a rebirth in the present. Exile serves as a space of protest, a place where the body can find new freedom, and where a wounded language and fragile identity can emerge as new political subjects.

Exile is a space where the fragile, the overlooked, tries to define itself between existence and non-existence. Edward Said (1996), while discussing exile from Palestine, does not describe it as a pit of destiny. Instead, he views this traumatic space as an area of liberation. He describes it as an opportunity for the intellectual, encountering new narratives and witnessing new geographies, to facilitate the reformation of their distant homeland here. When we speak of the Kurdish area, we see that the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan, from the moment it began to emerge on the 20th-century stage, particularly affected the Kurdish intelligentsia with significant experiences of exile. Drawing inspiration from this historical legacy, I find myself closely aligning with Edward Said’s definition of the intellectual in exile. I do not want to view exile merely as an area of suffering or nostalgia. Instead, following Said’s perspective, I want to contemplate how an intellectual in exile can transform exile into an intellectual capacity, a field of knowledge, and even a celebration.

Exile should be read as a place of escape, a refuge for dissenters, not only from a totalitarian regime, war, and violence but also from a society steeped in hatred. Hence, although I may be in exile out of necessity,

this necessity also presents itself as a desire. For me, this situation is not merely a trap or a pit of nostalgia. When I came into exile, I asked myself how I could turn the political consequences of this into a new living space. How can we resist fascism? How have those who have been unable to see their families and loved ones for years endured exile? Imagine coming from a deranged social realm and experience of political power, and, for you, exile is both a refuge and a place where you can consciously shape your daily existence into a form of personal political resistance.

While exile often leads to some becoming pathologically introverted, it functions exactly as the veil Said mentions. For Kurds and other stateless peoples, it becomes a space to meet, encounter, and dialogue with transnational values. Exile is a form of neighbourliness; it is a place where you recreate and share certain values through your own agency. In this sense, exile has been for me an area where I established my dark memory with an anti-colonial consciousness and viewed it as a place to liberate that memory.

With such an understanding, I reconstructed the reality that made me a subject in the diaspora. I completed my master's degree with a thesis focusing on Kurdistan's century-long colonization in a northern European country where I have lived for about seven years without ever falling into despair. I strive to strengthen and transform the struggle I maintain for my people using the advantages my current circumstances provide. For me, the diaspora has been a space where I develop new perspectives and strategies, meet people from different nations who share common concerns that strengthen my struggle, and nurture my hope further. This struggle and hope have allowed me to work in a field today where I can create solutions for the challenges of people from various nations and serve them.

The French philosopher Voltaire (2004) said, "We only have two days to live, it is not worth spending them kneeling in front of scoundrels!" I did not kneel in front of fascism for my own individual interests and chose the struggle. Life has been a field of struggle for me since I was born and will remain so until there is not a single oppressed person left on earth. I would like to conclude my personal story with a verse from poet Adnan Yücel (2013): "that fight has not finished yet and it will continue until the earth's surface will be the surface of love."

Personal Narrative 3: My Only Sorrow

Hassan Alipanahzadeh

Writing this text wasn't easy for me. I opened my laptop several times and sat down to write, each time starting with a thought that would take me on a journey, dragging me down like a terrifying nightmare. Along with the fear, anxiety, and worry that tormented me, I would close my laptop again, with a heart full of sorrow, without having written anything. I sought help from my friends who were writing about their own experiences. It was effective; I felt that I wasn't alone, that all of us were going through similar pain, and that this shared feeling was a source of comfort and healing for our wounds.

The story of my fate is a strange one—unbelievable to some, a tragedy to others. It's the story of someone who was born into displacement and migration from the very beginning, the story of an ethnic group that has always suffered, that has never had an identity or a place and has always experienced bitter genocide and forced migration, even within their own country (Raza, 2018).

Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, who spared no effort to exile and massacre my people, even forcing religious clerics to issue a Fatwa to justify his actions, began the slaughter and exile of the Hazara people. Many still believe in that Fatwa today, and it has been the ideological basis for terrorist groups in Afghanistan for the genocide of the Hazara people (Hakimi, 2023).

When the Soviet war and the civil wars intensified, the fear of war, the killing of innocent people, and famine forced my father, a poor, illiterate villager who was opposed to migration, to leave his homeland. The only seemingly better destination was Iran, due to the linguistic and religious similarities and our limited financial means, given the young age of his children.

I was born in Iran in a state hospital. My mother said that Iran was at war with Iraq at the time, but it was still better than Afghanistan. While I was in the hospital due to some medical problem in the neonatal ward, a rocket hit nearby. My family thought I might not survive, but the part of the hospital where I was remained undamaged. Many times, in my life, I have wished that the rocket had hit the part where I was; maybe it

would have been easier, simpler for me. But fate seemed to have another plan for me—to survive and fight for my life.

We lived in Iran for years with a special ID card for Afghan refugees, labelled with large red letters. Without any human or civil rights, my only chance was being able to go to school. Despite the relative calm during that time, even with that ID, my father was arrested and humiliated several times under the pretext of not being allowed to work or to be in Iran, before being released. But even that seemed better than being in Afghanistan, especially during the initial period when the Taliban were taking over. Every day, we were tormented by distressing news of Hazara massacres, hoping that the Iranian government wouldn't force us to return.

In 2002, Tabriz, the border city where we were living, was declared a restricted area for Afghans. We had to leave the city and everything that we had made from scratch—our home and friends that we had grown accustomed to and found some solace in. This time, my father was no longer young; the wrinkles on his forehead testified to his tiredness and inability to endure more humiliation, relocation, and confusion. After discussing with friends and relatives, and with the relative calm created by the presence of the United States and its allies, and the fall of the Taliban regime, hopes were higher, and my father was determined to go back to Afghanistan. Despite all the challenges, I had just been accepted into university and wanted to celebrate this, but I knew I would be alone and had to continue the journey on my own. My father, who had always been my support during tough times, squeezed my arms and said, "You have grown up now. Stay and finish your studies so that you don't end up like me—displaced. Have a better fate." I found strength and tried to continue.

After completing my bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Tehran, while the light of hope was still shining in Afghanistan, I decided to go back to my homeland, both to share the little knowledge I had gained with my people and to perhaps find my lost identity. I will never forget when I said goodbye to my closest friend; his eyes were filled with sorrow as he told me, "You're lucky you studied." He had decided to go to Germany via Turkey and the illegal routes. He even suggested that we go together, but I was tired of migration and determined to go to Afghanistan. I firmly declined and went back. I started working at

a private medical university and, a year later, joined Kabul Medical University as a faculty member in the Anatomy Department. It was fulfilling for nearly a decade that I was in Afghanistan. Despite the insecurity, explosions, pressures, and ethnic discriminations, I felt good in my homeland. I felt useful and had become a positive role model for the younger generation of my relatives, especially those in Iran. I always encouraged them that education was the only way out of this tough situation.

In Afghanistan, I was intensely involved in my work, focused only on my goals—improving the department and teaching. During my lectures, I had found a unique opportunity to not only teach anatomy and share my experiences but also to speak about enlightenment and resistance against Taliban brutality and dictatorial ideologies. Many welcomed this, although some gave me hostile looks and whispered among themselves.

In the department, my colleagues and I (as the first anatomist of anatomy department) managed to obtain religious and court permissions for cadaver dissection for the first time in years. With the help of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we acquired a cadaver, and I became responsible for the dissection. Despite the fears and threats from religious extremists who opposed the dissection, we began our work. Establishing the first dissection centre after so many years was truly gratifying.

I was full of energy, feeling like I was making a difference, and I was happy that I no longer had to hide my identity as a Hazara. I felt obligated to raise my voice for justice, against ethnic discrimination, and against the prejudice towards Hazara people that even extends, in many cases, to support for their enslavement. In this way, I actively participated in demonstrations such as the Enlightenment Movement and the Tabassum movement (Hugueley, 2019). During the Enlightenment Movement demonstration, I even witnessed a suicide bombing near Deh Mazang Square in Kabul, where about one hundred people lost their lives, just 500 meters away from me (Jawad, 2014).

I always encouraged my students to raise their voices against discrimination and to actively participate in the political and social struggles of our country as educated individuals. My emotions had overcome my fears; despite the threats, I was not particularly afraid and

kept moving forward. I had like-minded friends who were close to me, and they often advised me, for the sake of my safety and that of my family, to temper my criticisms, especially against religious extremism. I had transitioned from poverty to the middle class due to my job, leading a relatively comfortable life, and I felt good about my progress. I was proud of my journey—sometimes slow, sometimes quick, but always moving forward.

But even this period of relative peace didn't last. Once again, there were whispers of the Taliban regaining control, and the sounds of displacement echoed in my ears. I had students with Taliban-like mindsets; their glances grew more intense, their voices louder. Yet many of us still didn't believe that the Taliban would actually return to power. Unfortunately, that day came. I turned to my father for guidance, drawing from his experiences of migration and displacement, as I had no other support besides him and he was aware of every aspect of my life and problems. Although disheartened, my father had no intention of leaving our homeland.

However, he strongly advised me to leave Afghanistan and not return as long as this regime remains in power. He urged me to fulfil my duty as a father to my family, especially to my two young daughters, and to at least provide them with some semblance of peace. Once again, that familiar, painful lump formed in my throat, and, once again, displacement and forced migration led me back to Iran, as it was the most practical option. My daughter, separated from her kindergarten friends, was deeply upset, but there was no other choice, and I didn't have the heart to explain it to her. My entire time in Iran felt like living in a bitter nightmare, one I wished I could wake up from and end.

I had lost everything—my home, my life, and the friends whose departures left me even more saddened and isolated. But what hurt me the most was seeing the younger members of my extended family, whom I had always encouraged to study for a better future, possibly losing their faith in education and that brighter future when they looked at me. Sometimes, I thought of my friend who had gone west when I returned to Afghanistan; now he had a Western passport, a job, and peace. I wondered if, instead of pursuing my studies, I should have made the same decision he did.

I became determined to do something for the sake of my family, my daughters, the younger members of my extended family who looked up to me, and for all the years of hard work I had invested. I knocked on every door until, finally, one opened, and an opportunity to go to Norway as a researcher presented itself. It felt as if I had been reborn after all the despair, and I felt closer to my friends. I was happy, though my daughter was upset at the thought of losing her school friends again. All I could offer was a fatherly promise that this might be the last move.

This was now my new home. I began to enjoy going to university again and the smiles I received from people as I was walking the streets and starting everything from scratch—something I had learned to do several times before. But it wasn't long into my stay that I received the heart-breaking news of my father's death. It was unbelievable; I could never see him again, nor could I be by his side or attend his funeral in Afghanistan. I had lost the pillar of my support, the one whose prayers had sustained me through the hardest days of my life. It was tough, but I endured it, just as I had endured all the hardships in my life, like so many other Afghans. At least I find some comfort in knowing that my father saw my progress and knew I had reached a safe country with my family. My only sorrow is for my fellow countrymen who are left behind, stranded in Afghanistan, and whom I can't help.

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