



Caritas Shqiptar
Albania

A portrait of their journey in Albania

REFUGEES

Photography by *Renuar Locaj*

DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE IN SEARCH OF A SAFE AND BETTER LIFE, BUT ALSO TO
THE COLLABORATORS AND DONORS OF CARITAS ALBANIA, WHO TRUST IN THE
SERVICE TO LOST PEOPLE AND IN THE WORK OF CARITAS ALBANIA.

This album was produced by **Caritas Albania** with the financial support of **Caritas Austria**, **Caritas France** and in cooperation with the Border and Migration Police.

Prepared by: Caritas Albania
Translated by: Albana Kraja
Printed by: Gent Grafik
Design by: CreativePlus

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Refugees: A portrait of their journey in Albania
Photography by **Renuar Locaj**

Background

Migration is an early human experience for a safer or better life. It has been so for Albanians as well. Albania has been affected by the phenomenon of migration in various forms. Many young people and families still leave our country. It should be pointed out that Albania, due to its geographical position, is affected also by the phenomenon of the transit migratory movements of those who consider our country a destination to restart life. Unfortunately, history, in its drama, repeats itself, and actually we are facing another tragedy, the war in Syria, in Afghanistan, and most recently, in a very violent way in Ukraine, and in many other countries, forcing many people to become refugees: people who escape bombings, violence and destruction.

In the framework of the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the Holy Father addresses us all a direct question: “What does it mean to place the most vulnerable at the center?” He invites us to open our hearts to suffering Migrants and Refugees, to share their sorrows and joys and to learn from their resilience and courage for a safer and better life.

The photo album we are viewing invites us to look at these images and think of those who leave their country for a safer life, invites us to reflect on their difficult and dangerous journey.

These photos show us that the migratory phenomenon is not an abstract one, neither a phenomenon limited to figures and data that increases every day. It is about real people, showing us that those who leave their countries have a real face that speaks, cries, smiles, they have a story that speaks out about a life. Looking at these photos we ask ourselves: “What does it mean to place the most vulnerable, the refugee, the migrant, at the center? Their presence among us calls to live the Gospel, realizing charity works, helping the ones who knock at our door for support and then continue their journey to a safe destination.

As regards the commitment to help and support refugees and migrants, Caritas Albania continues the journey it started in 2015, in cooperation with UNHCR: “to help and support all those entering the country and make sure they are treated with dignity during their stay in Albania”. We are very grateful to UNHCR/High Commissioner for Refugees for the trust, cooperation and shared work

We are especially grateful to the Ministry of Interior and the Border and Migration Police, not just for the ongoing cooperation and coordination, but also for the quick response to these people. I would like to thank all the central and local institutions for the cooperation in identifying the needs and providing all the necessary model services, which are not just humanitarian, but also sustainable services that give safety and dignity to the refugees and migrants.

Likewise, I would like to thank the US Embassy, CRS, Caritas Austria, Caritas Italy, Caritas Germany, Caritas Spain, Caritas Europe, UN Women, which have been since long committed, making their resources available.

This photo album, for which I would like to thank the photographer, Renuar Locaj and the Caritas team, should be an incentive to overcome the indifference to refugees and migrants. I would like to point out that the mission of our work are the ones who are not known, who are invisible, not important, the end ones, who very often suffer our global and individual indifference, but in our Christian culture they are “the first”.

In order to address their needs, we need to develop effective projects and new approaches to protect their dignity, improve their quality of life and face the challenges emerging from modern forms of neglect, denial or persecution.

I would like to encourage not only the colleagues of Caritas, but all people of good will, to face the challenge of migration, especially in this delicate period, because thousands of people are running away from war, persecution and serious humanitarian crises”. I express my sympathy and willingness, because every one of us should be close to migrants and refugees, should find moments to approach and contribute, in order for them to integrate into the host communities.

Archbishop Monsignor **Arjan Dodaj F.d.C**
Archdiocese of Tirana-Durrës,
President of Caritas Albania



Salgi from Afghanistan

One of the main missions of photography is to inspire people to appreciate life. This is done by drawing their attention to things that most of the time are taken for granted, and sometimes are considered as not important. Negligence of what is really important in life is something none of us can avoid. This happens to everyone, and it happened to me as well.

Meeting these people, whose stories are brought to this exhibition, made me reflect. Some of these children played the role of parents, while some parents, tired and overwhelmed by hunger and the hardships of the long journey, were more sensitive than the children.

In what they have experienced I could see the overthrow of everything that I and all of us take for granted. Being in front of them, I started to ask myself 'How strong is a human being?', 'Is there a price for freedom?', 'Is there an end to human's effort for a better life?'. Things that we all, in the comfort of our reality, consider clichés.

Life, the will for life and to truly live it, that is, to say beyond physical survival, is what I understood and felt from their unspoken words, what I saw in the looks that they hid from me, in the sadness that was hidden behind every child's play.

They were the perfect photography models because they loved life. And this willingness is the extraordinary energy that gives beauty even to the greatest sadness.

Being among them, I realized that I no longer just wanted to just take pictures. I had to tell not only their story but also what I felt. I was taken over by the fragility and while thinking I understood how lucky we are, just because we live in Europe, just because in our country there is no war and there is no dictatorship.

I felt a need to clearly state that all of us have to fight injustice everywhere in the world and that everyone has the right to live and develop in peace, security and tranquility.

Renuar Locaj Photographer



Omer from Egypt





Tahir, ten year old boy from Syria.



The uncertainty about the future keeps Abdulgani, a young Syrian refugee, awake all night.

“

Since 2015, our country has become a transit route for thousands of refugees and migrants who are forced to leave their countries and seek a safer life. They travel in groups, alone or as a family. The journey starts in the country of origin and lasts a long time where a part of their journey is also organized by smugglers and paying large sums. Some of them walk for days on foot, in places, areas dangerous for their lives, many are separated from the group or get lost, others die on the way.



Shafiqqa from Afghanistan



Mofizur just heard the voice of his family back home in Bangladesh.



The Guardian Grandpa
The war on Taliban forced Arzi to leave his homeland Afghanistan.
His old age did not stop his pursuit to ensure safety for his grand-daughter Elahe.



Khalid from Egypt



Hossein from Afghanistan

“

In every religion, the protection of children is very important. The creator's desire is to support children at every step, to guide them to the right path.

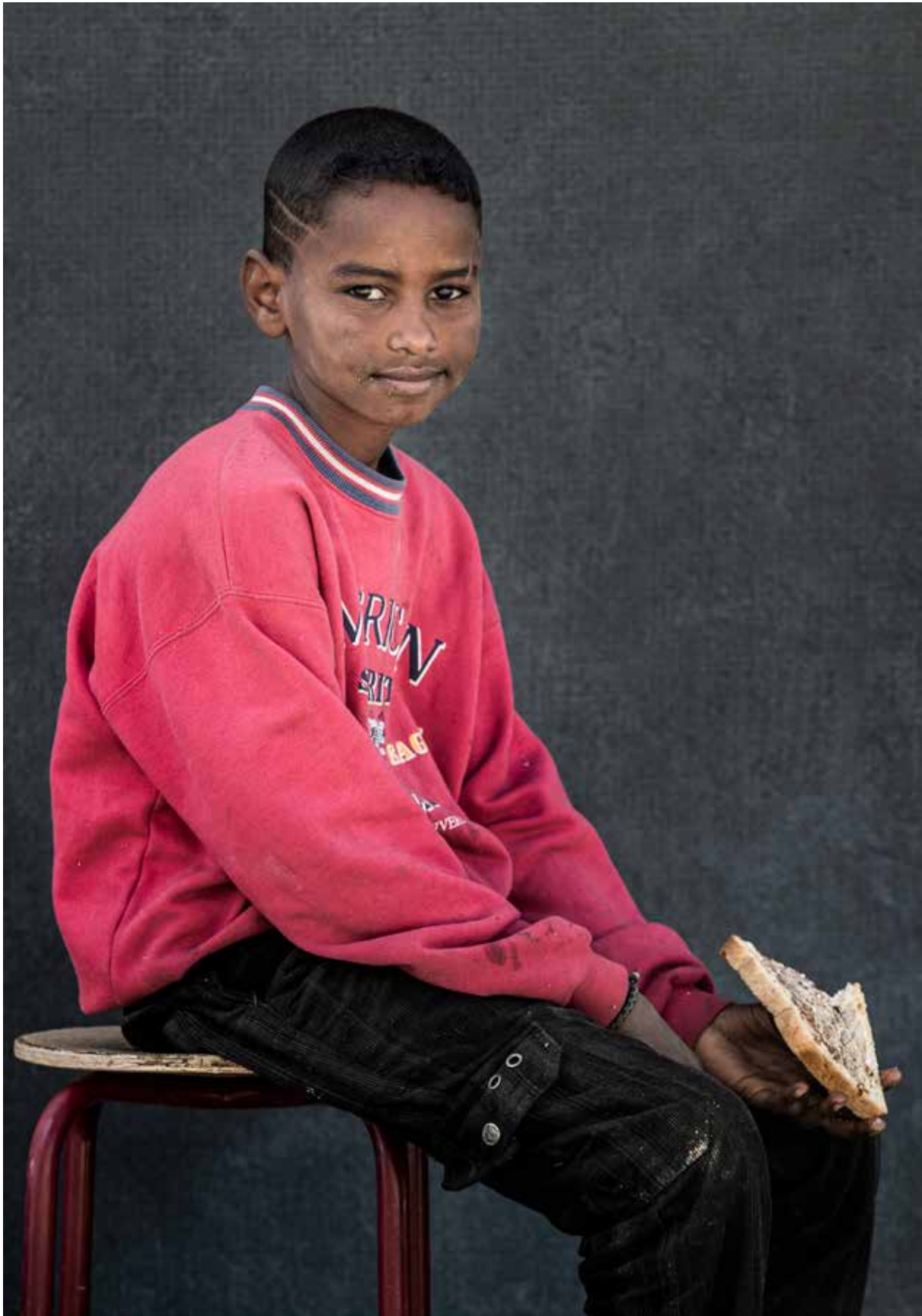
His Grace, Haxhi Dede **Edmond Brahimaj**



Amir from Afghanistan



Samira



Munib



Fatih



Heba



Hana

The Story behind the photos

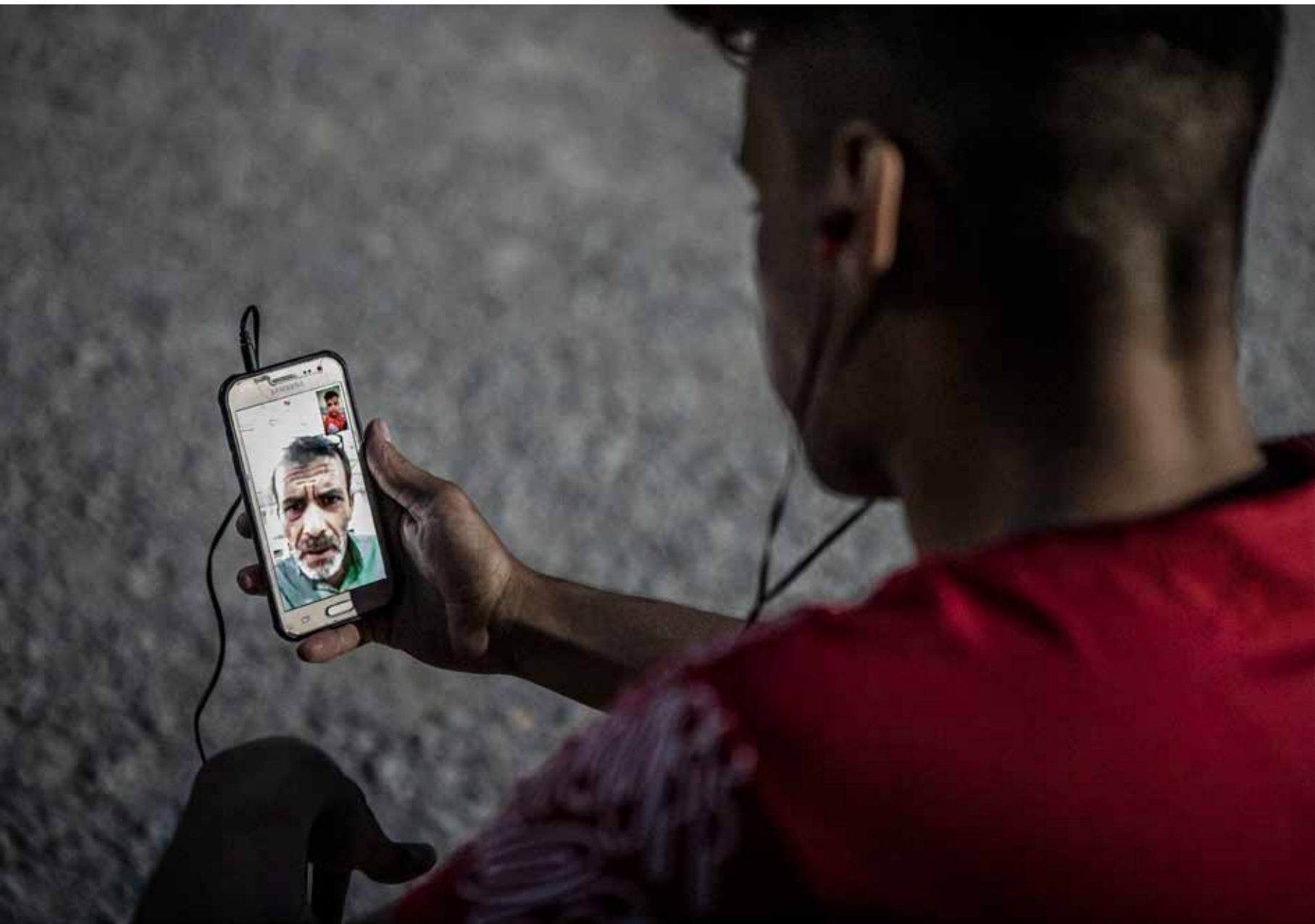
The family of Musa Havaresul and Nazik Omar from Sudan

The father is 49 years old and has attended university studies. They have 5 children and left Sudan due to difficult living conditions. They have been travelling for almost 4 years. The journey has been very hard. At first they travelled from Sudan to Turkey and then moved to Greece, where they stayed for 3 years. “We have stayed in a camp with very difficult living conditions: there was no food, no hygiene, no educational and social opportunities for the children.” At first they thought Greece was their destination country, where they could settle and enjoy life. The procedure lasted for too long and after three years they received a negative answer. So, they were forced to go to Germany; they walked from the camp to cross the Albanian border. The journey was really difficult, in particular during the night when climbing the mountains, children were really frightened. “When we were close to the border the police caught us and brought us in the camp. We were terrified, but then we noticed the police were behaving well with us and this calmed us down. Our conversations with the staff, the hospitality of Caritas Albania, made us feel at home. We are really grateful for this and our family wholeheartedly thanks you.”





The little Sasa from Egypt.



*Kusai assures his father back home in Syria
that he will be safe.*

Ridwan, a trained nurse from Syria, could not afford a medical treatment when his feet were bleeding from the ten days long walk he undertook alone, before arriving in Albania. He lost everything with his home that was destroyed during the war. He does not know the whereabouts of his family. Not even sure if they are alive.



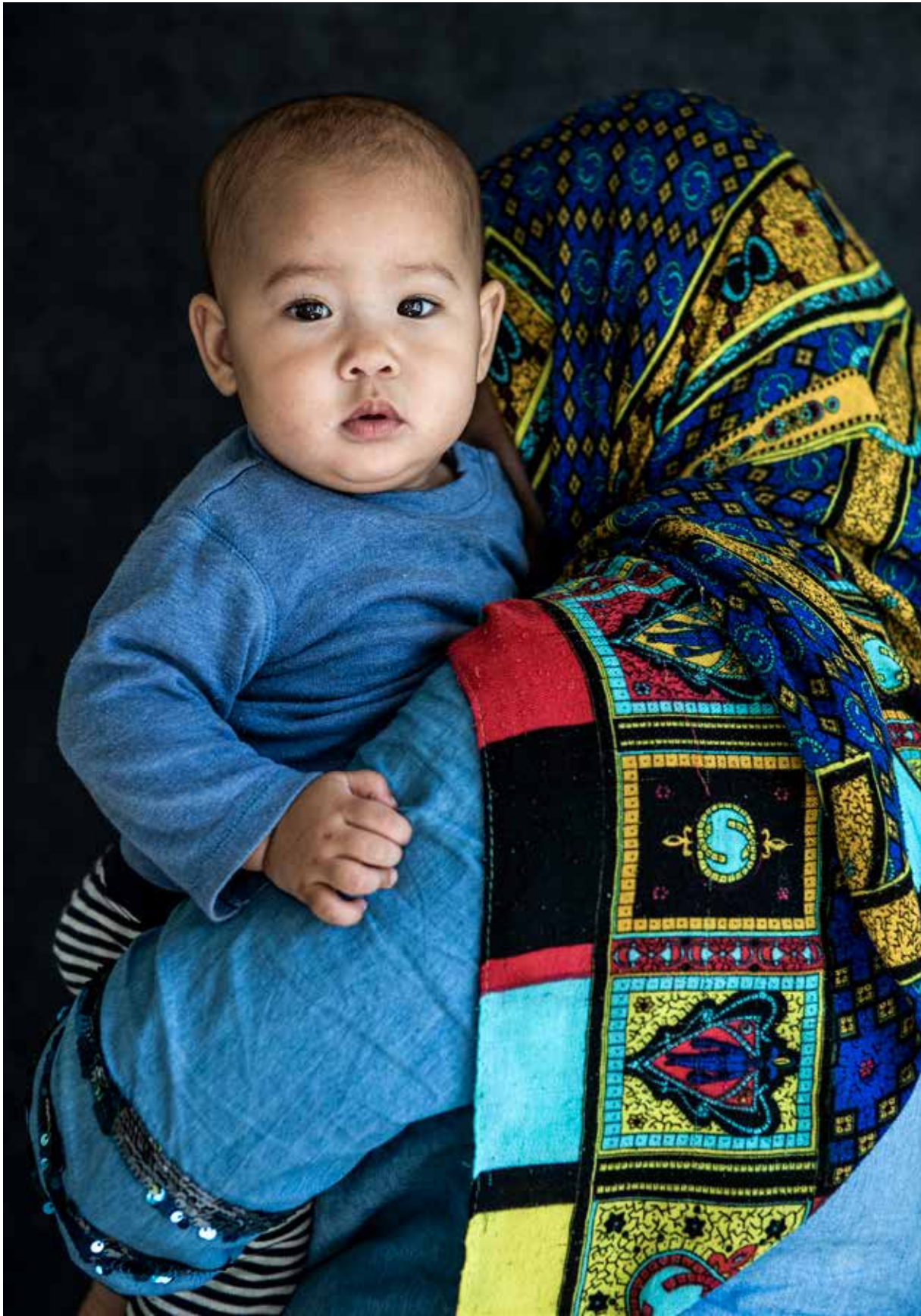


Sandi from Syria

“

The voice and moral authority of religions and faith-based organizations is fundamental to sustaining the debate over mixed flows, centered on the essential aspects of dignity and human rights.

Mr. Pablo Zapata
Former UNHCR Albania Representative



Mamisa with her Mother from Afghanistan.



Mother and Children
After losing her husband, Selma has been trying to ensure a safe life for her children.



Haroon from Afghanistan

“

I had a very difficult journey. I was pregnant while I arrived in Albania and did not know the language. But I decided to do something - to be strong and to continue my life.

Congolese refugee



*Father and Daughters
Ibrahim from Afghanistan is determined to ensure
a safe future for Yalda and Salgi, his two young daughters.*



Mazin with his friends from Syria.



Saied from Egypt dreams about rebuilding his life.

“

He called for this album, these images, to remind us that our main task is to focus on the human”, on the one who is on the journey, on the one whom war and violence have taken away the hope of life but that we, as a good Samaritan, heal the wounds of body and soul by accepting it, but without forgetting to focus on “WE” so as not to be afraid of meeting them. Because what is required of us today is compassion, service, acceptance, in order to prove that humanism in this chaotic society exists and must remain a value.

Archbishop Monsignor **Angelo Massafra OFM**
Archdiocese of Shkoder-Pult



Hala from Iraq



Oufra from Iraq



Zia is traveling from Syria with her daughter and four brothers. When young Narina lost her mother, Zia became both father and mother for his daughter as well as for his brothers.

Mother and Daughter from Iraq





*Friendship beyond all borders.
Mosavi from Afganistan and Abdullah from Syria*



*Father and Daughter
Hiba, a thirteen year old girl from Afghanistan, is suffering from epilepsy.
Her father, Safruddin, had to carry her on his shoulder for days after days to reach Albania.*





*Oufra, Iliaz and Samet from Iraq
The journey brought them together
and they became like siblings.*

“

For 70 years, Caritas has accompanied migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced along their journey.

Operating in 200 countries and territories, Caritas confederation is active in the countries of origin of people on the move, promoting programmes aimed at eradicating the causes of migration; it accompanies migrants in the countries they pass through on their journey, offering them food and water, shelter, psychological support and also information about their rights and the dangers they will face along the way; and it welcomes migrants in the countries of arrival, helping them to integrate.

Caritas will also continue advocating with and for them for regular and safe pathways of migration and for enhanced protection, urging governments to recognize their right to citizenship in the host communities and, finally, assisting them in case of voluntary return. Caritas also advocates issues affecting refugees and migrants. We work to build awareness on refugee issues through building local relationships with refugee and migrant groups and through our international partnerships responding to the needs of displaced people.

Caritas Internationalis



Muhamed from Syria

*Aswad, a young refugee reminisces his family
he had to leave behind back home in war-torn Syria.
He dreams to re-unite with his family one day.*





In the cross-road of uncertainty

The commitment of Caritas Albania:

Albania has been a transit country for refugees and migrants since 2015, and more recently, a country of destination for asylum-seekers. In April 2016 an agreement between the European Union and Turkey came into force. News of this deal spurred on neighboring countries to close their borders in an attempt to prevent continued movement into Europe. With the closure of this corridor, Albanian territory became a primary transit route for asylum seekers crossing from Greece, hoping to make it to the EU.

Caritas Albania, in partnership with UNHCR in Albania, has played a crucial role in ensuring access to asylum for refugees, provision of basic aid, and enhancing the coordination with the Border and Migration Police (BMP), and other local structures responsible for protection services for refugees and migrants. Caritas Albania has established an effective partnership with the Border and Migration Police at the southern border crossing point with Greece and the northern one with Montenegro and Kosovo. Caritas Albania is the first NGO that has responded to the needs of migrants and refugees once the first groups started to reach the country.

For over 8 years we have been supporting people in the borders with hot meals, clothes, hygienic items and providing them access to clean facilities. Interpreters of rare languages, such as Arabic and Persian, have been part of Caritas Albania team. They provided interpretation for people coming mostly from refugee producing countries. Caritas staff has been supporting the local authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs and providing them the necessary medical items, according to doctor's prescription. The asylum-seekers have been supported with transport from the border crossing points to the national Reception Center for Asylum-seekers in Tirana. Caritas Albania has also played the role of a catalysator in the coordination process among local stakeholders, as regards the referral process for these categories. We have actively been engaged in capacity building activities for central and local institutions and worked on the improvement of governmental structures in order for the persons to have adequate treatment during their stay in Albania and appropriate structures to be accommodated.

Caritas Albania staff



Ismail from Syria

“

THE GOSPEL CALLS ON US TO BE 'NEIGHBOURS' OF THE SMALLEST AND MOST ABANDONED.

Pope Francis

A portrait of their journey in Albania

REFUGEES

Photography by Renuar Locaj

