



Project Life, a Home for Young Refugees

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Photo by Wolfgang Maria Weber

A certificate in Persian script with a picture of his father is all that remains from Mohamed Asif Dorani's former life in his native country of Afghanistan. He does not have any further documents, a passport or other pictures. Due to his spiritual and physical development German authorities have estimated his age at 16. June 1 was set as his date of birth.

Asif Dorani fled from Afghanistan in November 2008. His younger brother Abdul Samad (18) was kidnapped from their home town by the Taliban about five months ago. The parents worried about the safety of their second son and therefore sent him to far-off Germany with the help of smugglers. The journey was adventurous and sometimes life-threatening. But Asif somehow survived. Now he lives in a home for young people in Munich called 'Salesianum', where the Salesians of Don Bosco have initiated 'Project Life'. It is an aid project for unaccompanied under-age refugees.

Asif lives on the third floor of the Sale-

sianum with ten other boys who all had to flee from their native countries because of different emergency situations. They have three single rooms, four double rooms, two kitchens, a common room, a bathroom and a shared lavatory. Social workers and educators look after the group of boys round the clock. They support them in everyday affairs like cooking, washing and cleaning. They accompany the young refugees in administrative procedures and help them complete the required forms and write letters. They keep in touch with any other contact points and the school. Primarily the educators help the young and largely traumatized refugees work through their experiences and open up a future in Germany, step by step.

Every time Asif talks about his life, bad memories return: the war in his homeland, the kidnapping of his brother, the farewell to his parents and the almost two-month odyssey from Afghanistan to Germany. He does not know exactly how long this wandering took, but he remembers that they changed cars frequently.

Project Life

Every year hundreds of under-age refugees arrive in Germany without parents. They flee usually under life-threatening conditions from war, dictatorship, pursuit, expulsion, hunger and disasters. They are in a foreign country without their home, families and friends. For that reason the Salesians of Don Bosco in Germany have started 'Project Life'. Since August 2009 eleven unaccompanied under-age refugees live in youth center Salesianum in Munich. Here they find a home and get help in everyday life. Besides they get a pedagogical and pastoral accompaniment to work through their traumatic experiences. The goal of the project is to guide young people in their life, to prepare them for the future and to strengthen them in managing life.

