

LA MAISON DES JOURNALISTES & MAGNUM PHOTOS PRESENT

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CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES OF EXILED JOURNALISTS AND MAGNUM PHOTOGRAPHERS



Cursed Stray Dog's Promenade I

Text: Beraat Gokkus (Turkey)
Photograph: Larry Towell

The sky turned dark,
Doors shut down against me.
Heavens, within a breathing distance,
Hid behind the doors.

At odds with gatekeepers behind opened doors
This is a promenade of a cursed stray dog;
The stray dog with a bruised nose.
Grudgingly, as fed up with roads, humans,
Those whom I came eye to eye
Everybody in silence
Unfit to fill the words,
Howling of a storm pours inside me.

I'm lost.

I turned around the closed doors,
But only me that could fit
Where I cried out – uttered screams
There is no second me who would be reflected,

The sky overclouded,
Doors shut against me
My words imprisoned inside me
The key made up of breath,
The possibility of wanting, imprisonment inside me
Doors shut down against it

This is the cursed stray dog's promenade,
As I am fed up with roads, people with a deep grudge,
When loneliness devoured my marrow
To the deepest hole of the earth
I'm lost

The street and the dog
Began to rot out under the rain
I'm looking for Mustafa.

Jumping over the cliff,
Dreaming to get rid of the dream he saw,
If Mustafa was not a son of scepticism
Would he delve into the darkness of a mountain?
Like his deceased mother's breast.

Mustafa who sits behind me
For sure, police will raid his home
He committed the biggest crime
He dreamed the dream of the 1,400-year-old orphan

Doors shut down against us
Toasts and laughter
A sharp wind through space
The shadow of paradise from a distance
High heels smashing asphalt
To the ear of the dog:

La speranza è la porta aperta
Sull'avvenire

Hope is the door which opens to the future

THE EYE OF YASMINA KHAIDRA

AGAINST THE TIDE Democracy has placed a Monty Pythonesque figure in the White House, Alexander Nevsky holds the reins in the Kremlin, Pinocchio is telling tales in Florence, Paris is drowning in its own mirror, and Checkpoint Charlie is being moved to the Hungarian border. In the meantime, under Arabian skies, hookah smokers dream of odalisques and flying carpets while, just a stone's throw from Mecca, the children of Yemen die of hunger and cholera. Every morning we wake up to the news that a poet has choked to death on his own stanzas, that a musician has hanged herself with her guitar strings, and the evening news tells us, in gory detail, that a conductor has committed hara-kiri with his baton. I pinch myself and think, I need to hear a different story, to believe that there is still hope, that we haven't lost sight of love. I pinch myself and refuse to wake up. I want to go on dreaming of wheat fields as golden as the summer of first romances, of multi-coloured birds that shine brighter than shooting stars, and of the laughter of maidens as their senses awaken. I would give up all my mornings to keep dreaming of lakes shimmering in the breeze and of rainbows haloing huge waterfalls. But my sleep is troubled and my dreams blurred. All I can hear are military bands blaring, exalted by the deathly silence of prayers and songs. What are we becoming? Extremism captivates the masses; human hearts turn to stone. The dislocated bodies of migrants rot on murky shores, yet not a soul shows concern. Meanwhile, from their noisy tribunes, zealous demagogues bring down governments one by one. People kill in the name of God, they kill in the name of peace, they kill for the sake of killing, they kill in the name of nothing, because nothing matters anymore. Ethics are no longer a guide, scruples are thrown to the wind, and bullies with inflated chests feel no shame as they parade their murderous ideologies down grand boulevards. What happened to our promises, did we bury the pledges of "never again" we made to our dead heroes? Every day begins with a single wish: that it should end as soon as possible.

At night, the stars grow dim for fear that a drone will spot them, and insomniacs haunt the laboratory of discord like poltergeists and polish their devilry. The powerful want to redefine sovereignties, redesign borders, reshuffle the cards, and set the most arbitrary rules to rank nations. Is this the New World Order? What order is there, in the disorder that tears peoples apart, turns certainties up-

side down, and conjures up enemies at every turn? What is new, when we realise that yesterday's genocides are today's genocides, and that our prayers of the past are but eternally pious wishes? We keep dehumanising ourselves, giving up our peace of mind as if each generation sought a slice of the tragedy. Nobody cares to remember the lessons that should enlighten us, let alone teach them to others. Fear and emotions march in step and set the pulse of a turbulent period that openly surrenders to its own demons. Yesterday we castigated Jews, today we incriminate Muslims. Tomorrow we will crucify albinos in public, throw gypsies and madmen to the lions, and burn our ideals in our hatred-fuelled crematorium. This breeds confusion and hasty generalisations. What can we do about it? How are we meant to find our way in a world full of illusionists where people strive to convince us a nag is a unicorn, diatribes are raised to the rank of prophecies, and people's consciences are deftly muzzled? What can we say about humankind giving its future away to a king-size carry with a hand in every conflict and his finger on the nuclear button? What can we expect from a future of mass exodus, absurd warfare and bellowing nationalism when racism is finding its voice, and discord is becoming an anthem? An awakening. That is what we are waiting for. A simple, necessary awakening. The awakening to one's self. The awakening to the responsibility of the individual. The awakening to the power of our free will, instead of letting manipulators of all ilks tell us what to fear and what to doubt. The awakening to the natural order of things, sovereign and unalterable: if the world is flawed, it is up to us to deal with its flaws. The awakening to this eternal truth: we alone are the architects of our dreams, we alone are the gravediggers of our peace of mind. Our fate lies in our own hands, and in no one else's. Nothing forbids us from enjoying a dance step borrowed from a foreign culture. Nothing forbids us from travelling across the world to make friends. When we build illusive walls to protect our so-called shelters, all we accomplish is that we stifle most of our audience, for only narrow-mindedness creates borders between humans. Let us open our minds and our arms wide, and we will move mountains. Let us listen to our hearts, and we will hear them beat in time with our prayers. Because life will be meaningful only when we can share all the things that make us happy. To lead a fulfilled life, we must understand that the biggest sacrifice we can make is to keep on loving life, no matter what comes our way. Let us turn a deaf ear to the Domsday preachers, and let us heed only the calls of our sisters and brothers. Let us elect our idols only among people who make us dream, because the things that make us dream make us better people. Let us keep in mind, once and for all, that the only shared future we have is measured by the reach of the choices we make.

Goodbye Father, Goodbye Friends.

Text: Hani Al Zeitani (Syria)
Photographs: Stuart Franklin

I still remember the moment I heard my name being called to be released from my second grave. It was the morning of November 14, 2012. I went up a long flight of stairs dressed in nothing except for a brown linen jacket that my wife had given me the day I had been buried in my first grave; and a piece of green cotton cloth, green as the fig tree's leaves, covering my privates. My legs were incapable of carrying the weight of my skeletal body, they were completely numb for not being used to walk for eight whole months. On that day, I did not know my destination. I was headed towards the unknown, blindfolded and handcuffed in a long chain with other people. I did not know how many they were, but I could feel that we shared the same fate. We were kicked into a bus by a man who had an unbearable voice and considered himself to be our God. We were then dropped in a small square that I found out later was the entrance to my new grave in Qaboun on the outskirts of Damascus.

Somebody removed my blindfold before burying me in my third grave. The sun was too bright, I couldn't

open my eyes. I wished that this person would put the blindfold back on my eyes. It was obvious that my eyes would fail to endure the bright light. I was no different from a caveman who stayed in a dark cave afraid to leave and go outside in the light. Yet this was my one and only wish after nine months of complete darkness inside two of the graves of the Air Force Intelligence Directory in our country. I tried to look at the sun again but I couldn't. I tried over and over again, but each time my eyelids would twitch and tears would start running down my face. My eyes teared, not from the pain caused by the truncheons battering my worn out body nor from the electric shocks stunning it, but because of what they were witnessing. I was afraid of this beaming light, yet my soul longed and looked for it. Since then, I developed the habit of looking directly to the sun, especially after having been moved to my fourth grave where I was allowed a few hours a day of fresh air. I was constantly looking for it, not to feel its warmth or enjoy its rays but to contemplate its clarity. It was a solar disc fixed in the heart of the sky woven from golden threads. Its beauty





exceeded even the lunar splendour in a way that melts your heart, yet it's hidden behind a great halo of light. A disc that despite being only visible to the naked eye after much gazing, reveals to the soul that what hinders the divulgence of truths is their prodigious clarity, not their mystery.

Today, six years after that incident, I stand in the window of my house which overlooks the cemetery of Grenelle in the fifteenth district in Paris. I observe the wreaths decorating the tombstones, each one clearly identified by a name, under a sky that has no horizon. Sadly, the sky today is overcast and raindrops are starting to tap on my window. It would seem peculiar to say that I have grown fond of this view. I love watching those tombs from my balcony in the House of Journalists, after becoming a refugee exiled from his own country, and this odd emotion could be a source of comfort

for me. In our distant country which ancestors used to call “the noble land”, my sky was without horizon, it was square-shaped and limited by the high walls of prison Adra where I was buried alive for more than two years. From my grave, I could see a sky covered with missiles instead of clouds. From my grave, cell 303, I could hear missile launchers instead of raindrops.

Today, I am a refugee standing in front of his window feeling bitter at the sight of flower-decorated tombs. I look at the view and I hear mothers wailing from “our dear nation”, demanding to know where their kids were buried and wives looking for the remains of their loved ones to decorate their tombs with flowers. Yet no one listens to their demands and nobody feels their agony. What eulogy would soothe Ayham Ghazoul's mother Mariam's heart? Her son, Ayham, was a kind friend

and a beautiful and helpful human being. She has been dreaming for five years of a grave where she can bury her son. A grave where she can go to visit her son whenever her longing for him is too immense to endure; where she can talk to her son and blame him for leaving too early. Five years have passed and Mariam hasn't stopped looking for the remains of her son who was murdered and hidden by a dictatorial regime that has been ruling for 48 years. She only wished to give him a last kiss and to attend his funeral like all other grieving mothers. Is it true what they say that the soul remains wandering, lost among the living until it finds a grave where it can finally rest? Will my soul remain in agony until I find Ayham's place and go to him? Is it not through burial that a person really dies? I couldn't answer the questions I saw in Mariam's eyes when I first met her three years ago in Beirut right after

I was released from prison. Also, I am nothing like Mariam, I wasn't born a mother who could feel pain and agony. And I have only known Ayham for four months, or maybe for four years, if we consider the pain we shared inside two of the graves we were interred in.

I met Ayham at the end of 2011 and we became fellow human rights and free speech activists in our country, Syria. However, in less than two months, on February 16, 2012, exactly, we became two bodies pressed together with the bodies of six of our fellow activists inside one of the graves of the investigation department of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, a grave under the name of Cell 16. The grave, in which eight living people were imprisoned, measured roughly three square metres. We had spent there almost one month before declaring a hunger strike, which lasted for five



days, in protest against our dire situation. As a result, we were transferred to an even worse grave, where impending death was materialising before our eyes day and night. There was no other purpose to this grave but torture for the mere pleasure of it. It was an underground room that measured roughly thirty square metres and which was empty of everything but a hundred living people, who couldn't find enough space to sleep all together. We were united by one hope, the hope of leaving this dark grave to see the sun and to feel its daily warmth. We took advantage of the heat of the sun to forget, for a moment, the ordeal of the electric shocks which the jailers administered using an improvised device, made of a stick at the end of which a bare electrical wire was remotely activated. One month later, Ayham left our grave, and I wish he hadn't, while I stayed there for eight more months before being transferred to

a third, a fourth, a fifth and a sixth grave.

No lament would solace Noora's heart – our friend and the great lawyer – while she mourned her husband Bassel Al Safadi, whom she had married and lost in the same prison. The same hands that had been smeared with Ayham's blood executed Bassel, the genius software developer who had ranked 19th on Foreign Policy's list of Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2012, and refused to hand over his corpse to Noora, the bride of the revolution, as we used to call her. Two years had passed in Adra prison and the two love birds, Bassel and Noora, singing to us behind the bars of our grave melodies in the hope of a free tomorrow. I was transferred from Adra grave with two other friends to another grave, which measured roughly two square metres, inside the Air Force Intelligence Directorate. The hope hunters killed one of the

two lovers and converted the other's hope of freedom into the despair of a world where justice would prevail.

In my faraway country, this story wasn't merely that of Noora and Maryam, but of thousands of women who lost their loved ones and couldn't bid them farewell. During that month, the Syrian regime published and was still publishing hundreds of lists of the detainees whom it had tortured to death in its prisons. I have read throughout that month the names of fellow activists, who lost their voices inside those graves, in the death lists published successively by a murderous regime that had become confident that no power would punish it and that no international authority would summon it to answer for its crimes.

Today I am in exile. I stand before the window of my room, disregarding its space, while envying the inhabitants

of these graves as I listen to the intimate memories of their loved ones. What lament would solace my being as I envy the dead! Seven years of my life have passed, half of which I spent moving alive between graves, and the other half moving between countries as a refugee, unable to visit the grave of the closest one to my heart, my beloved father. On his deathbed, my father was still hoping to see me for one last time, which would not have been possible, thus leaving me with the heartbreak of my involuntary absence during all those years. Today was an exception. It was the one-year anniversary of my father's passing. As I couldn't attend his memorial service, I found myself this morning wandering the streets without a destination until I reached the famous Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

I went and visited the tomb of Honoré de Balzac and thanked him for

his unfinished human comedy. His story kept me company at the bottom of my tomb in the civil prison of Adra, in the heart of cruelty. I had a long exchange with the father of realism, but why was I so confused at the memory of *Father Goriot*, his best novel? I also visited Auguste Comte, the founding father of sociology, to tell him that total submission to power and blind trust in political positivism in no way protects society but, unfortunately, often ends up destroying it. Instilling a religion of humanity in hope to preserve it is only a myth.

What elegy would I say about the human rights situation in our country where the right to bury the dead has turned into a priority claim? What can be said about helpless international institutions turning their backs on the spectacle of our country; dead without tombs and tombs without epitaphs, people living forgotten in the depths of their graves and others who can not even bid farewell to their dead!

In Syria, truths are obscured, not by their ambiguity but by their blinding clarity, just like the sun. This brilliant disc behind a dazzling light cannot be perceived by blind eyes.

This disc suspended in the firmament, woven with resplendent gold threads, surpasses the lunar star in splendour. The soul itself vanishes in its halo of light. And, although we struggle to observe it, the sun always reveals what prevents us from contemplating the truth.



Am I really Released from Prison?

Text: Rowaida Kanaan (Syria)
Photographs: Richard Kalvar



“Is anyone there? Can you hear me? I was arrested by the security forces and I do not know where they brought me. Can someone help me?” November 2018. The voice of Ms X breaks through the silence at the Scène Nationale in Chambéry. Like a magnet, she attracted five women and a man among the public to share their stories. I was the new one in the courtyard of the women’s prison in Adra, in the suburbs of Damascus. We wander, my friends and I, encompassed by high walls, trying to steal some of the morning rays of sunshine. As if we were guests on a morning radio show, and I, the host who animates the debate, we start a conversation. Our discussion on April 10, 2013 on distant dreams... the dreams that are as simple as seeing our family and friends again, and eating the meals that we used to eat, without giving them much thought. The dream of going to the sea, to contemplate the horizon without our eyes running into a wall. Walaa says, “We will remain here until death. At most, we can dream of a greater portion of olives or potatoes, or less severe punishments.” Our dreams are interrupted by the sound of keys and the steps of the jailer, Abou Ali, who opened the door and said in his croaky voice, “Rowaida Kanaan, you are freed!” I am riddled with a mix of emotions, incessant tears, as I must abandon my friends, but am overcome with the joy of rebirth. Walaa concludes our morning programme: “Do not forget us, tell our stories. Tell the world of our suffering.”

I tried to stay in Damascus but the

regime threatened me with another arrest. I decided I had to leave. I imprinted the details of my city, Damascus, and burned into my memory the smiles and laughs of my friends that I left behind in prison. I also left because I cannot support another attack on my dignity in my country, Syria, after three stays in prison that exceed a collective 12 months. I promised my friends to speak of them, and to tell the world what they endure every day in the prisons of the Syrian regime: rape, sexual harassment and torture. I have convinced myself I can, in one way or another, continue the fight in another country.

In Paris, this beautiful city that I appreciate, despite all the chaos of the asylum process and the never-ending paperwork tasks, I looked for ways to share my thoughts on the fate of my friends in prison. I have found myself remembering my friend and French-Syrian director, Ramzi Choukair, who told me that he was producing a piece of theatre on detained Syrians. We discussed, and I participated in, the second representation of the piece X-ADRA, named after the prison where they are, or where they had been locked up. Since its beginning in 2011, the revolution constituted, for Ramzi, the most important moment in modern Syrian history. However, he felt deprived of this historic moment where people broke the walls of their fear that were erected by the military regime. He also was wondering what he could do, how he could help.

In 2015, he met Miriam, who was recently liberated from prison. She

told him of the suffering of women there. The force and violence in her testimony revived his obsession with “doing something for the Syrian revolution, for my Syrian revolution”. He decided to put on a piece of theatre that would have actresses played by survivors of the regime prisons. He chose to do this in order to recall the preeminent role of women in the Syrian revolution, and also to pay homage to their role in the society of their country. Thus, X-ADRA was born.

X-ADRA has already been shown in the cities of Mulhouse, Annecy, Chambéry and Mannheim, in Germany. In the play, we are five women and a young transsexual man, between the ages of 20 and 60, and we tell our stories in Arabic with subtitles in French. We recount the conditions of our detention, before being forced into exile in France and Germany. Forced, because we wish to return to Syria, but only when peace and democracy are established. Over written texts by the writer Wael Kaddour, we play our own roles, our stories intersecting to tell the story of X, still detained and only aspiring to one thing, to leave this despicable place. We tell stories of Hell, and the methods of dehumanisation employed by the regime, the constant violations of human rights. We tell of the reign of Hafez el-Assad, the father, and that of his son, Bashar. In fact, three generations of prisoners are on stage. The story of Hind, imprisoned twice in the eighties, is different to that of Ayat, arrested before the revolution, which is still different from those of the women incarcerated since the begin-



ning of the revolution. However, the criminal regime remains, and still uses the same torture methods.

My story is about my friend Khaled, who was arrested with me and who is still detained. "I love you", are the last words that I heard him say, an hour after our arrest, then his voice disappeared, and I have not had any news. I have searched endlessly, but I have not found him. His parents told me he is possibly dead, or still in prison, like the more than 500,000 prisoners and disappeared persons in Syria. I decided to carry his story loud and clear, so that the world could know of his honesty and humanity. So that the world could know he sacrificed his life so that his compatriots could live in dignity. Speaking of him has not

been easy, mostly because I feel partially responsible for his incarceration. I had already been arrested because of my work in the independent press, which is forbidden in our country. He had taken on the habit of accompanying me, thinking he could protect me. But, we could not protect each other. I could do nothing for him.

When, on stage, Ayat speaks of her friend Manal, who was raped in 2010 in the local police station of Political Security in Damascus, it brings to me the voice of Abir, still detained, who had been touched more than once in front of her husband, to force her to confess to crimes she had not committed. When Hind speaks of the little Soumaya, who made her forget her suffering, it reminds me



of dormitory number three, and the cries of Ahmad, the child born in prison in 2013. He was born to a father neither he nor his mother knows, as she was raped in prison, and is still there. The stories reach their peak with the story of Ola, who I knew in Adra. She told me one morning, in the courtyard of our prison, that if she leaves, she will become a "him", that is what she would like to be. Ola was the young woman that Ali "killed" to become the man with whom I share the stage. Ola, who was so humiliated, so oppressed and tortured, had acquired in prison the strength to become Ali. And Ali gained the courage to speak out. He learned that nothing is more precious than liberty, and that deserves these fights and sacrifices. The strength that emerges from all

of these stories creates the value of this piece. We have succeeded in communicating to the public how we were able to face the violence and torture during the months and years of detention, how we are now navigating our new lives, and the feeling of alienation in our countries of exile.

After each show, the audience asks many questions. Someone asked me if we can make phone calls to detained persons. I responded with sarcasm, "We are not in France, my dear sir. We are in Assad's Syria, and there are thousands of men and women rotting in regime prisons, where they may die without their families ever knowing."

A woman asked me, "How do you



keep living after all that you have suffered?" She did not know that in Syria, grief was our ordinary state. Oppression was part of our biology, and prison made me stronger and more resilient. Prison in Syria is the hardest experience in existence. Therefore, the details of everyday life are insignificant, and I adapt quickly.

One could imagine that we got used to our stories, having told them thousands of times. The truth is, however, that each time I tell my story, or hear the tales of my friends, I feel as if it is the first time. They give me the same effect. They transport me, and throw me between four walls and a closed door. In the beginning, it was not easy for us as actors, as we were not trained in theatre. As far as

I am concerned, I had fear, as I was confused and anxious about performing to the public. I had a habit, as a reality of my job as a radio journalist, of hiding behind a microphone. It was not easy, as I was still missing my dear friend Khaled. Speaking of detention in a general sense, as well as him specifically, cost me especially in the beginning. However, with some practice, I conquered my fears and timidity.

Putting on a piece of theatre for the first time was anxiety-inducing for Kinda. She was afraid, but it was also a great moment of growth. By the fourth show, she was more at ease. She was pleased with the sincere reactions of the French audience. She found that they were rather well informed on the situation,

and that gave her a sense of satisfaction. At the end of each show, I was always more convinced that theatre is one of the best ways to fight all forms of oppression in the world. The fight for a cause does not have to be limited to protests, to press communications, or to calls of solidarity by politicians in the countries where we live now. Art is one of the most effective tools to spread a sincere voice and calls for justice. The piece will continue to be played in France and in Europe, until Prisoner X is liberated and can tell her story herself. We will then be able to open the cells to let in the sun and fresh air, because, if we do not, we will always carry our prisons with us, wherever we go.

Like the Wolf of Ouarzazate

Text on Zaki prison by Hicham Mansouri (Morocco)

Photographs of Fleury-Mérogis and Meaux prisons by Paolo Pellegrin

I Dogs surround me. I can't see them in the dark but I can hear them barking next to me and trying to bite me. I have stones in my hand for protection. I try to fend the dogs off. This had gone on for about ten minutes until I woke up. It was a nightmare. Just another nightmare.

It's 4:30 AM. I get up and quickly jot down the dream in my notebook before I forget it. Everyone else is asleep. The stench of the mattresses and corridors turns my stomach. I look at the armoured door, its latch, the bars on the window. I try to get back to sleep but I can't. Getting up and making myself a coffee?... A little mayonnaise jar is what I use as a cup. I drink my coffee and smoke a cigarette in the corner by the toilets, blowing the smoke out the little round window. A hole. It reminds me of the old ships' porthole.

II Why am I here? It was a complete set-up by the secret service. I was in my flat, a female friend of mine had just arrived when, minutes later, the vice squad, ten plainclothes policemen, broke down the door, beat me up, made me undress and then filmed me naked on the bed. First, I was charged with running a brothel, then the charge became adultery. Despite the flagrant contradictions in the case, the judge, after a Kafkaesque trial, sentenced me to ten months in prison.

To get revenge, the Moroccan secret service ordered my transfer to Block D, known among prisoners as *Zebbala*, which means rubbish bin in Arabic. Block D is usually for repeat offenders but it also houses dissidents who are being punished. It is made up of two buildings and a yard. There are around 15 cells meant for 15 prisoners each, but which sometimes house between 40 and 60 prisoners each.





The cells are so crowded that most of the prisoners sleep on the ground. They have to wait their turn to get a “bed”. The order of arrival is not always respected because the cell boss, the *Lcabran* (corporal), makes these decisions, not the administration. Newcomers can buy a bed for about €50. The prisoners about to be freed can sell their beds a few weeks before they are released. So there are only a few beds left for those who cannot or do not want to pay. The administration does not set any rules such as curfew hours for instance. The prisoners known as *Lcrafa*, or bond servants, are in charge of distributing bread and meals. They sometimes smoke as they plunge their dirty bare hands into huge cookpots and give out disgusting undercooked chicken bits. Nearly all prisoners (organised in groups called *Laâchra*) warm up their meals on hotplates. Although hotplates are officially banned, the administration allows prisoners to use them.

III When the officers took the infamous prisoner mug shot, one of them told me “So, you’re the one from the February 20 Movement [Morocco’s February 2011 Protest Movement], aren’t you?! We’re going to take good care of you here!” My first day in prison... I was handcuffed, and the guards took me to “my” quarters. In the corridor that led to my cell, the stench of urine and dampness wafted from the cell blocks. It was like a scene out of an old film, with dozens of prisoners crammed into the cells and massed against the doors. Their faces were unlike any of the faces you see on the outside. Their bodies told a story of brutal brawls: facial scars, tattoos, gouged eyes too. They reached out through the bars shouting “Chief, bring him in with us, bring him in here!”

Rape came into my mind immediately. Am I going to be raped? Is that their plan?, I wondered. It must have been fairly obvious to the prisoners that I was not a regular here. My clothes, my belongings, the way I looked at things, the fact that there were no tattoos or scars on my body, and even the way I walked. These were all clues that this was my first time inside and that I did not belong to “the world of crime”.

IV After five months, as I had almost completed half of my sentence, the regime came up with a new set of charges. This time, they charged me with spying and with being a threat to national security for work I did for Free Press Unlimited, a Dutch NGO. These charges could lead to a prison term of five to 25 years. New case, same judge. From adultery to spying...

I was moved to a different cell after my hunger strike in protest over living conditions in the prison, and I soon realised that Ahmed was the cell boss, or rather the emir. One evening, Boubacar, a Senegalese prisoner with a keen interest in music, played an Ivorian song for me. Ahmed immediately asked



him to turn off the music as he felt it was *Haram* (forbidden by Islam). During our free time, the cells were opened, and prisoners were allowed to visit one another. Ahmed however refused to let three homosexual prisoners into our cell when we were free to walk around. He scolded me several times for letting a Dutch prisoner, a neighbour of ours with whom I chatted and swapped books and newspapers, into our cell. He said, “*He’s a Kafir*” (disbeliever).

One evening, a night guard wanted to joke with us through the bars to kill time.

- “*Ahmed, sing us an Oum Kalthoum or an Abdelhalim Hafez song!*”
- “*I don’t sing stuff like that!*”
- “*What do you sing then, Bob Marley?*”
- “*No, Nasheeds.*” [from Anashid, an Islamic religious hymnody]

Then, without anyone asking, Ahmed began to sing a “hymn” used in Daesh’s digital propaganda.

V Every Friday I wait impatiently for my family to visit – when they manage to get in. The queues are endless. My family must wait four hours in the heat or the cold and deal with corrupt guards, who often forbid them from bringing me newspapers or books. A guard comes to get me. He recognises me from a piece of paper that has a photo of me pasted on it – the photo they took on my first day of incarceration. A photo with a sad look on it. When I go outside, I walk quickly in the prison yard, like a child leaving school and eager to see his parents again.

And every day, except for weekends, I wait for the time when we can go out for a short walk. It is in prison that I understood the importance of walking. A real lifesaver. I remembered the caged wolf at the zoo in my hometown of Ouarzazate. It paced back and forth non-stop. During my first walks, I noticed that all the prisoners circled around the yard anticlockwise. I said to myself: so that is what “killing time” means. Well, I decided to do the opposite. I didn’t walk anticlockwise but in sync with time, because, as the saying goes, “if we kill time, time will give us back what we deserve”.

The ten months have passed. And I can finally leave the prison, on interim release, because the second trial for undermining national security has still to come, an accusation so much more serious than the one for adultery. Yet, I am free to move around. Better, I find out that the ban on leaving Moroccan territory has been lifted. In any case, as soon as I got out of jail, I decided to leave the country. My country.



Not Born to Be Nannies

Text: Maria Kuandika (Rwanda)
Photographs: Cristina De Middel

I'm a 30-year-old woman. I come from a beautiful country, the land of a thousand hills. Everyone has heard of Rwanda because of the genocide that took place there in 1994. Back home I was a journalist, but today, when people ask me what I do for a living, I don't know what to say. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I had to flee my country and seek asylum in France.

I've been here for almost three years now. France has become my adopted country. When I first arrived, I wanted to further my studies, get a doctorate, write a book and keep working in my field. Perhaps I could

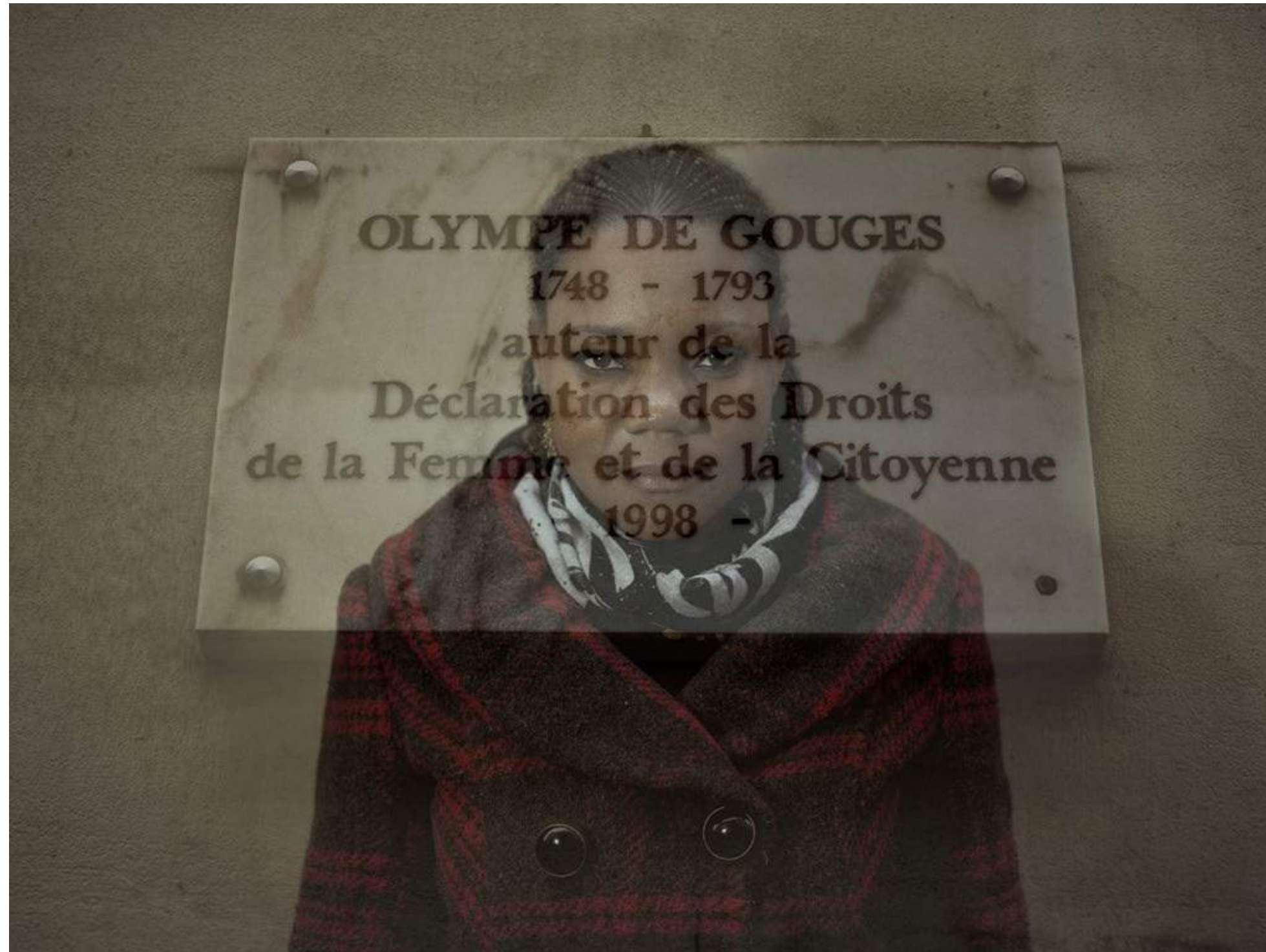
even become a renowned investigative journalist. But most people I met made it abundantly clear that my plan was unrealistic. I cannot forget the reaction of a close family member when I told him about my plan. He said outright to forget about it, that I would never find work in France if I entertained such hopes. I was stunned by his reply, and asked him why, since I felt confident in my abilities. He explained it was because I wasn't born in France and my French wasn't good enough. According to him, journalism is a very closed-off milieu that not just anyone can access. It was very difficult, even for native-born French

people. But I didn't let this discourage me.

I continued to discuss my career objectives with everybody, from other Rwandan nationals to French integration counsellors and social workers. Almost everyone told me the same thing — to not pursue my goals if I wanted financial and social stability in the future. Instead, they advised me to look into professions more accessible to foreigners, such as those in the care or security sectors. I came to understand that this was, unfortunately, the reality. The truth of the matter is that these sectors are more open to fo-

reigners, to say nothing of refugees and migrants. The countless little "help wanted" ads people put up in all sorts of public places for supposedly less rewarding jobs say it all.

I was crushed and frustrated, but had no other choice than to change my career path. I therefore decided to become a childcare worker. I began to look at training courses and re-wrote my CV. During another meeting with my social worker, she told me that my project was likely to be approved by Pôle emploi, France's national employment agency. Even if it wasn't, she said, I could become a caregiver or so-



cial worker instead. These people had nothing but my best interests at heart, and gave me advice with full knowledge of the facts. They knew how things generally panned out for people like me. But I, for one, felt utterly lost. I wasn't convinced; I was sure that there must be something else out there for me. One thing was certain: I had no desire to become a cleaning lady or a caregiver.

And so, I decided to take a different path. While journalism remains my calling, there are other fields that appeal to me. One of these was human resources. Sure, I didn't know where to start. But this was my own

personal challenge and I began to investigate. During my job search, I came across Wintegreat, an organisation that helps refugees launch their careers and not move down the career ladder. Wintegreat is partnered with large companies like L'Oréal, which offers six-to-12-month internships to refugees. The programme makes it easier for them to enter the French workforce.

I came across just such an opportunity and applied for L'Oréal's Diversity and Inclusion HR internship. At the time, I had zero self-confidence. Having never worked in this field, I doubted I had the necessary skills.

But I still applied. After being short-listed, I was interviewed. Then, I got the internship! At the end of the six months, I understood what working in HR involved. From there, I began planning my future, which is important both in and out of the office in France. What I need now is a diploma. Today, when I tell people about my career goals, everyone, including my advisor at the employment agency, believes that I can achieve them.

This is an important step in my life as a refugee, a great opportunity even, but one that many black women do not get. They are still limited

by racial stereotypes inherited from French colonialism that dictate their skills. By telling my story, I'm telling theirs. We wish you would understand that we didn't travel by air, sea, or other means you may have heard of, just to take advantage of French welfare and exploit the system. We're not here to have children with five different fathers and get rich off government aid. We wish you would understand that jobs like caregiver, housekeeper, doorman or nanny are not intrinsically destined for me – for us. I have great respect for such professions and for the people who practice them, but let me make up my own mind



about my life choices. I, too, have hopes and dreams. I'm not asking you to pity me or treat me like the unfortunate refugee in need of your help. I'm not asking for special treatment either. I'm simply asking for guidance instead of stereotypes about what I can or cannot do.

One day, I was at the supermarket buying groceries. A little girl saw me and her face lit up. She smiled and called me Lily. Her mum stepped in and told her I wasn't Lily. She explained to me that her daughter had mistaken me for her nanny. That's when I realised that most nannies I come across are black.



Long Walk to Freedom

Text: Thelma Chikwanha (Zimbabwe)
Photographs: Patrick Zachmann

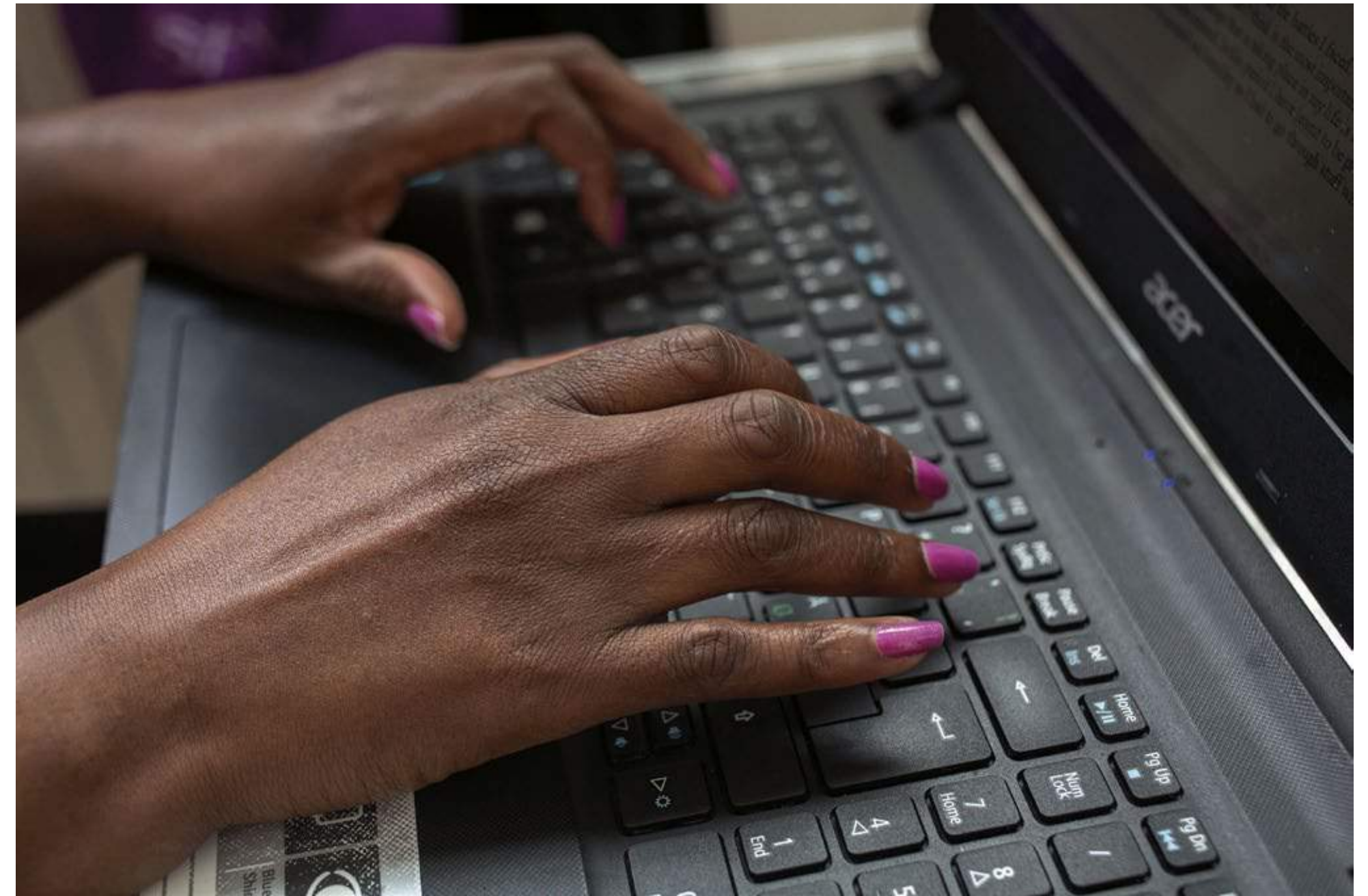
My journey in exile began in Sweden where I made my first application for political asylum and believed all would go well in the country which has a great human rights track record. I was given shelter at a camp for gays and lesbians in Surahamma, located about an hour and a half from the capital city Stockholm.

There I witnessed gross human rights abuses and violence against the gays and lesbians who lived in the refugee camp. I was particularly alarmed by the fact that those who were supposed to be the guardians and protectors all turned a deaf ear and blind eye to the physical abuse of the residents there. When after three months I was told that I would be transferred to France where my asylum application would be heard owing to the Dublin Regulation procedure, I felt a sense of relief. I hoped that somehow things would be better on French soil.

Little did I know that I would be jumping from the frying pan straight into the fire. I arrived at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport at 11 AM on 23 January 2017, where I was received by a police woman who gave me a piece of paper with an address to go to. I told her I did not know how to get there and I did not have money to pay for my transportation to go to the address which happened to be in the suburb of Melun. She then advised me to go on the streets and beg for some money.

I eventually made my way to Melun, but unfortunately the place was closed and I was left stranded with nowhere to go and no language to communicate with, since my French vocabulary was limited to *bonjour* and *je t'aime*.

I later on found my way to the police station where I was assisted in finding overnight shelter through the emergency 115 facility where I



stayed for a week before a French family offered to accommodate me. They stepped in to do what the government should have done for me and for that I am eternally grateful.

Food, shelter and healthcare are some of the fundamental human rights which one would assume that France, as a model of democracy and human rights, would easily uphold. However, refugees in France cannot take these rights for granted because the process to accessing these rights is long and often leads to the violation of these same rights. This is mainly because of the absence of an organised and effective system for dealing with the refugee crisis.

However, I will always be grateful to people like Dalila and Benoit Delmonte, ordinary French citizens who have taken it upon themselves to step up where the government is founding lacking. It is through

selfless heroes and heroines like the Delmontes that thousands of refugees in France have a roof over their heads while trying to negotiate the red tape during the application for refugee status which can take anything between six months to even ten years. I shudder to think of what would have become of me if they had not offered to accommodate a complete stranger from Zimbabwe.

I came to live with Dalila and her family after the intervention of a mutual Swedish friend and colleague Karin Elfving, who informed them that I had nowhere to go before they invited me to stay with them for as long as I wanted. I still remember that cold day on the 28 January when I arrived in Mantes la Jolie where I was going to stay with people who had no idea whether I was a psychopath or a serial killer but were still willing to accommodate me because according to them, "It was the right thing to do."

I felt a sense of comfort when I was picked up at the train station by Dalila and her youngest daughter Leila. I was a bag of nerves, I kept wondering if this arrangement would work out. "Would they like me, will we have chemistry?" were the questions that kept playing on my mind at that moment. I did not even think about whether they'd have animals in the house or not because I am terrified of all animals, especially cats.

I'm sure Dalila could sense my discomfort and she did her best by engaging me in conversation until we arrived at this big, beautiful house with the biggest garden I had ever set my eyes on. I couldn't believe this family was willing to take the risk of having a complete stranger stay in their home. I couldn't believe I'd finally be staying in a home after having stayed for an entire week in the homeless night-shelters where one has to call 115 every morning in order to secure a place to sleep at night.

The 115 centres open their doors at 5 PM for the night and at 7 AM the homeless people are sent back on the streets with their luggage. I must say this was the most traumatic experience I have had apart from losing my husband and father of my child a decade ago.

The red tape one encounters during the process of applying for asylum is enough to land someone in a mental institution. I had to wait for an entire month before I could visit the prefecture where I was supposed to lodge my application for asylum. During the four-month period I could not access government support for my basic health, housing and food.

Before embarking on this journey, a friend and colleague who had gone through similar experiences told me that it was not an easy road but this had not prepared me enough for what I encountered. A lot of people not only lose their self-confidence



during this period but their minds too. Those who manage to keep their sanity during this period of waiting emerge stronger. I am among the few who became stronger. As a matter of fact, my character has improved in more ways. Being a journalist whose name could open any door in Zimbabwe, I must say this process humbled me because here, my name is not even worth the paper it is written on. It kind of hurts though. After having lived most of my adult life in the limelight, getting preferential treatment, I now have to wait in line with everyone else to get basic things like an identity card. I recall that it took me two weeks and a mini protest to get my ID renewed after waking up at 3 AM to get to the prefecture at 4 AM every day. This is because to the French government, I am just another refugee, an inconvenience.

Going to the prefecture is every refugee's nightmare because one can never anticipate what one finds there. But there's no way of going around it as it is a necessary evil. My first experience was at the Melun prefecture. For me to gain entrance in this place where IDs are issued, I had to be there at 5 AM even though the place opens at 9 AM. I had to endure four long and cold hours with other refugees, some who even had babies with them. I finally got my ID which allowed me to start the process of seeking asylum and six months later I was invited for an interview. I'm one of the fortunate people as I got my refugee status two months after the interview.

In January 2019, I celebrated my second anniversary in France and I can say that some of my achievements so far are managing to secure a job as a babysitter and acquiring basic French. And now that I am finally settled into my own apartment, I have an air of confidence because I no longer have to rely on handouts and have found a spiritual home in the form of the American Church of Paris where I take part in the African Fellowship meetings regularly and have a sense of homecoming.

I however cannot help but feel cheated by the French administration which seems to not care about the welfare of refugees. I feel there is no real support for refugees to be integrated into society. For instance, my status was granted in November 2017 but I still have not had the opportunity to have something as basic as French lessons or any form of intergration programme which the government always says it does.

I cannot understand why the authorities say they welcome refugees and intergrate them into society yet they fail to build capacity for them. The administration does not take into account the skills that refugees have so that they can build on them for the prosperity of the nation. I still cannot understand why a government would choose to have people burden the social system when they could otherwise be productive and make a meaningful contribution to the economy.

But then again, this is not a priority for government. It is no wonder why we have thousands of people on the social welfare system. It is therefore not surprising that thousands live on the streets of Paris and are addicted to substances like drugs and alcohol.

My life as a babysitter has not been entirely bad because I was fortunate enough to find a family whose children I really get along with. But initially, it was not easy for me to accept that after covering big events like the US presidential elections and the G8 summit among others, I would one day be someone's domestic worker.

It has been a humbling experience, but I thank the Bechet family for accommodating me into their home and not making me feel like a domestic worker but a part of the family. I however do not think most families treat their domestic workers in that way. It has not been easy trading the pen for the broom but I guess that this is where I am right now and I have to find a way to make it work if I am to survive.

Cursed Stray Dog's Promenade IV

Text: Beraat Gokkus (Turkey)
Photograph: Antoine d'Agata

Died out the street lamps
Through the cemetery
the light that fell on my window,
Completely disappeared
So as the dead souls could comfortably sleep.
In this charming night
The laughter, which fell to the street from far away, also
disappeared little by little

We otherwise loved laughing too much
Some know well
We really knew how to laugh
Also wandering shoulder to shoulder

Every night, we were used to loving an angelic chick
In neighbourhoods, we walk in fits and starts
We burn the winter with our dress

Some know well
We really knew how to laugh

Now dried all the leaves
Thinking about you
Wandering in the past
Thinking
Crying from deep
Voice of a man who I don't know

Died out the street lamps
Looking at my window through the cemetery
So as the dead souls could comfortably sleep
Altogether disappeared the light

What would warm up this darkness?

A hole is being opened at my heart
Loneliness is ringing out
The blue wall is muted
Looking at me
When falling into wells
The man who turned his back and left
Will you suffice to pull me up?



The Monologue of the Homeless Man

Text: Hassanein Neamah (Iraq)
Photographs: Gueorgui Pinkhassov



I have been told that the subject I will write on will be published. But what subject can I talk about? Do we write down what readers are supposed to want to read or what we want to express? Or rather what the media wants to publish?

But are you kidding me? No one understood the reality of things but Charlie Chaplin, he told them he was sorry... I do not want to be a ruler; that does not concern me. Charlie Chaplin said he did not want to be the dictator... Tell them, my friend... Tell them he wanted to help everyone regardless of their identity, whether they are Jewish or not, black or white... Yes, my friend, we all want to help each other, and this is called humanity!

It is Jean-Claude, a homeless person who spends his time in front of Le Sully café, located on rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, in the tenth district of Paris. Jean-Claude, a rather unusual name for an immigrant of Rwandan origin.

He had a big green backpack that he carried around everywhere he went. He wore a round coloured hat that looks like the one worn by Arabs covering the top of his head while the rest of his unkempt hair hung from the sides. He held a bottle of beer in one hand and a joint in the other.

He looked exactly like a stage actor as he could change his facial expression and he could do it fast. He could go from being angry to being shocked and sometimes even dis-

gusted and he never expressed joy except after watching the kids of some customers.

He once told me that he considers the terrace of the café as his own theatre, a place where he can say whatever he wants. A monologue in which he gathers his memories without paying attention to the customers of the coffee shop.

I love comedians like Charlie Chaplin, Jim Carrey or Robin Williams. Yes, Robin Willimans! But, are you kidding me? They sent him to create comedy among the American soldiers during the war, my friend... What was the name of the movie? *Good Morning America*? No, No, it was called *Good morning, Vietnam*! But my favourite comedian is Eddie Murphy! The man can make me cry laughing! And who do we have in France? Damn... We don't even have comedians! Really? Who is France's comedian, Jamel Debbouze? Sure, the man is a comedian but he is not the top one! Who else can it be? Vincent Cassel? Not really, my friend! We don't have comedians like Louis de Funès anymore. I don't even think we have comedians to begin with. Damn! I can't even remember a French comedian... who is France's comedian?

I saw Jean-Claude for the first time when I arrived in France three years ago when I discovered Le Sully, thanks to an Iraqi friend. He told me that this café was an important landmark in the lives of all asylum seekers. I spent a lot of time in front of a cup of coffee, watching the street life.

Its customers came from all walks of life. They were artists, employees, unemployed, alcoholics and prostitutes. Their origins were diverse; they were Arabs, French, African and Chinese.

After 6 AM, when the café opens, customers are few. But in the afternoon, this morning coffee place turns into a loud night club filled with so many people that customers can barely find a place to sit. A rhythm that lasts until 2 AM.

At first, because of my level of French, I did not understand what Jean-Claude said. But I managed to catch words and sometimes the names of the movies he mentioned. He told me one day that he was passionate about cinema and dreamed of being a comedian. "You" answered a client, when Jean-Claude asked who was the French humourist today. "Me! No! A humorist? But no, I'm not, frankly! No, no" He started to laugh still feeling flattered. In Paris, a person like Jean-Claude is not used to receiving compliments. However, these words are enough to cheer him up. One day, I bumped into him on Boulevard Hausmann, I told him that I knew him and that I listened to him in front of Le Sully. My words surprised him, he told me he did not expect that. In our life, Jean-Claude and people like him are marginalised and their speeches devalued. They constitute a forgotten class, whose number is however far from insignificant. According to the newspaper *Liberation*, last year, Paris had more than 3,000 homeless in the margins of the general order that governs the world.

“America is the one ruling now and anyone who contradicts it will either have to face war or be seen as a terrorist. America was the one that set all this up. Saddam fought the Americans. They called him a dictator but at least he fought. And we said America shouldn’t enter Iraq... Are you kidding me? Look at the Iraqi people now! Just forget it, my friend!”

“Hey! We’ve had enough of your nonsense! Just go away! Stay in front of the Opera and maybe you will earn some money!” a customer shouted.

“Hey, who are you? Russian?” answered Jean-Claude, “What are you doing here? You know we’re in France, the country of liberty, equality and fraternity, my friend! We’re not in Russia and are you being serious? Here I can speak my mind, I came to Paris for the free speech and to be able to live freely! Who are you to shut me up? This is France, not Russia!”

What the client said bothered him a little. He took off his green backpack, put his beer bottle aside and took out a piece of hash. He staggered a bit as he moved towards a girl. A girl who was a regular customer at Le Sully so that he could ask her for a cigarette.

He took his cigarette, cut a small piece of carton so he could roll his joint. He left the porch of the café. He swayed as he rolled his cigarette while talking angrily. He returned to the porch to drink his beer, smoke his joint and to carry on with his stories.

“This is all my mother's fault, she brought us here. She is the one who said we had to move from Rwanda to Belgium. She said Rwanda is being ruled by tyrants, my friend! I never liked Belgium, I went to prison there. They said I raped a girl! Really!? Yes, yes, you raped her while you were intoxicated and you can't remember! Are you serious? No

one forgets this kind of moment if they have really done it! And I haven't. Now I am out of prison, you bastards! Back then, I told myself I needed to go to Paris. I love Paris, I really do. I love its people and this is the most important thing to me. I love Paris even if it gives me no place to stay and no social aid!”

When a friend asked me to write this article, I first considered writing about the lives of three Iraqi refugees who arrived in France after having to leave their country. These people were not available, so I thought about Jean-Claude. I wanted to meet him, ask him questions to get to know him better. At that time, I did not attend Le Sully regularly. The last time I was there, Jean-Claude, full of anger, screamed that someone had stolen his backpack, this bag he considered his home. How could he live without his bag? With his clothes stuffed into a large plastic bag, he smoked and drank alcohol without restraint. He looked down and started talking.

“I feel cold here, everything is cold and feels cold, from the people to the weather. I didn't want to come to Europe! This is all my mother's fault. Yes, my mother! I wanted to stay in Africa! Yes, Africa where my friends are. Damn it, my friends! I had a woman and not just any woman! All the women were my woman. All the women were my lover. We had kids in Belgium but she took them away. She took them away and told me to pack my things and leave. I told her this was OUR house. She said it was hers and hers only. Really? It was my house as much as it was yours! Pack your things and leave! Leave and become homeless. Leave and eat from the dumpster! This is my place! These are my kids! Damn it.”

After this meeting, Jean-Claude completely disappeared. I had no idea where he was and I had not heard anything from him. This is the reality of the situation of the homeless: without home, without shelter, without a phone! They are totally





detached from the world that does not care about their lives. It took me several days to find Jean-Claude by the Boulevard Hausmann. We sat in a café overlooking the main boulevard. The scene looked strange to some passerbys who looked startled. I ordered a coffee and he ordered a beer at nine in the morning. He told me that his mother took them from Rwanda to Belgium to seek asylum. But he loved Paris, liked to be here. He considered what he was doing on the terrace of the Sully as a way to kill the time. But he was waiting for luck that would change his fate and make him a comical monologist. I did not know if he was serious but it remains a legitimate and beautiful dream. He apologised when I told him that Saddam Hussein was a dictator and that he buried Iraqis in collective graves. He replied that this was a little-known truth, but we agreed on the tragedies that the peoples are suffering because of the United States. We talked for an hour or more. I told him that I was going to write an article about him and that a photographer would take a picture of him. The idea pleased him. He told me that he was going through a difficult time in his life but that he would come back to rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. Which he did.

Whenever I pass by Le Sully I come to greet him. Sometimes I sit down with friends and listen to his speech. His sarcastic comments make me laugh. He says that to go perfectly well, it would be enough for someone who is hungry to eat a hot dish of beans and meat. He could then stand up and dance with his lover. And if he did not have a lover, he could dance alone with his beer bottle. Jean-Claude manages to find a new subject every day for his monologues, paying attention to the smallest details. When the Magnum photographer came with me to take the picture of Jean-Claude, he asked him to light his cigarette and watch the camera. Jean-Claude felt embarrassed. It turned out that he

did not appreciate when someone was giving him orders. When the photographer went in the café to take pictures indoors, he said: "The last picture is the one that counts. This gentleman asked me to light my cigarette and to look at the camera so that he can have his picture, and the photo is what matters most! Our importance is even less compared to what appears in this photo in the end."

An Evasive Absolute

Text: Larbi Graïne (Algeria)
Photographs: Jérôme Sessini





It is not without apprehension that I write these few lines for D'ici. Apprehension, because I must fill in for what was supposed to be Jesus Zuñiga's task and who, for health reasons, could not carry it out. Having said this, I may have already denied what is deepest in him. He who desired to recount this forgotten France, of which we speak insufficiently, has he ever given up? In any case, forced to submit a blank copy, doesn't Jesus Zuñiga have us face silence, vacuity, creative emptiness, a space of possibilities in which all may be redefined? Narrating, it is restoring things and naming them for their origins, from their very nature.

Exiled, he must have wanted to see his adopted country in the same light he had seen his native land, coming back to the same places, searching for life in the abandoned or soon to be uninhabited spaces, always moved by an impulse of empathy for uprooted people of all kinds. Through his peregrinations, he must have discovered by chance these depopulating lands, the cities that empty themselves, the traditions that died. He had landed in Creuse, where the situation seemed to be painted as a duel between life and death, fertility and putrefaction. Since the 19th century, the shipyards of Paris and Lyon have not ceased to drain the young male population. In the 1980s, the men were still required to spend five days a week in Paris before they could return to their homes, after a long train ride. The industrialisation effort of the 1960s could not put a break on the rural exodus from which the region suffers. Agriculturally rich, dotted with farms and greenery, Creuse has preserved places that evoke the Middle Ages. People speak with an Occitan accent, a remnant of the Marchois dialect that has receded with the exodus to the big cities. Between the latter and the countryside remains an irreducible difference in tempo, despite the insidious introduction of hyper liberal times which have arrived without mixing completely. Even with the existence of fluid and slow times, inferior to the rapid speed of politics and media, one would have said that old age comes early here. It happens with the children, who, in order to work, must

either leave, or solicit the withdrawal of their parents. In Souterraine, one of the troubadour's ancient fiefs, we struggle to keep Eden alive, the only cinema in town. In addition, Guéret, whose name (premonitory) evokes the wilderness or fallow land, suffers from being unable to retain its inhabitants. Spiderwebs accumulate in the dark recesses of houses, door frames and windows. Erosion threatens the foundations. Here we have dreams of settlement, which, however, do not prevent vexation. The police barricades to repress pro-migrant demonstrations are erected in the same place where half a century before, thousands of kids from Réunion were brought to repopulate the middle of France. It is what I believe, what Jesus Zuñiga would have wanted to say: even when the human world is near to achieving its desires, those seem to seize an absolute that, nevertheless, becomes evasive right away.





Cursed Stray Dog's Promenade VI

Text: Beraat Gokkus (Turkey)
Photograph: Larry Towell

Last evenings
One fight comes to our door
We feel the cold
Achingly, on our shoulders
In our nose
A fight
From head down towards
On the growing babies

Last evenings
You leave
Lonely streets are left to the dog
The city starts to become a maze
Everything flows and is lost in it

Last evenings
Stops my eyes and yours
All words to be spoken dry up
Drop by drop in the looks
Time gets smaller
Last evenings I lost you
Time is not like something as it is on the wall
Overflows, drops, flows
Our voice gets softened
Side by side, we get lonely
I cannot come where you go
Last evenings
Not a goodbye that falls between us
But a deep longing within us

The musty hotel rooms left behind
Last nights decay into the morning
With your leave, bed sheets visibly blacken
The old city cannot stand our state, resents
Last nights, no corner is left
All burn out in whole
Burns,
Collapses

The Authors

BERAAT GOKKU'S

He was on holiday in Rome when the failed coup d'état of 16 July 2015 broke out in Turkey. The Meydan newspaper where he worked was then closed, like many others, by the regime. Knowing what was awaiting him on his return, he then chose exile.

ROWAIDA KANAAN

A radio journalist and member of the Syrian Women's Network, she was jailed three times before she left her country. Since her arrival in France, she has performed in the X-ADRA play, which features activists who fled the regime of Bashar al Assad.

MARIA KUANDIKA

Before seeking political asylum in France, she had worked for four years in Rwanda for a television channel and a private radio station. Interested in socio-cultural issues, she wants to show the social decline of exiled black women.

LARBI GRAÏNE

He left Algeria in 2013, after having worked for several written press publications. Author of a book of interviews on autonomous unionism in his country, (L'Harmattan publishing), he follows and comments on the Algerian news on his website Mediaperso.

THE MAGNUM ARCHIVES

Wandering characterises photography, and the images of stray dogs taken in the streets around the world by Magnum photographers, here Larry Towell and Antoine d'Agata, remind them of their own condition. Like self-portraits.

RICHARD KALVAR

A member of Magnum Photos for more than 40 years, he has produced a considerable amount of work around the world and participated in numerous exhibitions. Rather than focusing on the dramatic aspects of humanity, he usually explores its unusual facets.

CRISTINA DE MIDDEL

Mixing documentary and conceptual techniques, she aims to allow an «alternative» view and deeper understanding of the subjects she deals with. From this idea, she creates portraits of the first, second and third generations of African women in France.

JEROME SESSINI

Confronted through his work with violence in Kosovo, Palestine, Somalia and Lebanon, he discovered a constant fact: ordinary citizens are always the losers, whether in Iraq, Mexico or France. In his photographs there is reality, and nothing but reality.

HANI AL ZEITANI

A sociologist and researcher working for the Syrian Media Center, he was imprisoned for three and a half years while investigating press rights violations. Flagrant demonstration. When he was released, he left his country for France.

HICHAM MANSOURI

A collaborator of Free Press Unlimited, he was jailed for ten months for investigating corruption and electronic surveillance in Morocco. Recognised as a political refugee by the United Nations, he is pursuing studies at the University of Paris 8.

THELMA CHIKWANILA

A political editor for some of the leading Zimbabwean newspapers and a correspondent for a news agency, she was threatened and forced to flee her country. In France, she continues to collaborate with the agency One World UK, and runs a blog, Naked Truth.

HASSANEIN NEAMAH

Journalist and director. In 2014, one of his films, *C'est moi*, was selected at the Cannes Film Festival, in the short film category. He has written many articles on Iraqi youth. Taking refuge in Paris, he continues to work on his film projects.

STUART FRANKLIN

His coverage of famine in the Sahel in the mid-1980s earned him international recognition. However, his most iconic photograph is that of the Chinese citizen blocking, alone, a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

PAOLO PELLEGRIN

Shifting from architecture to photography, he has continued to cover armed conflict and has produced several reports on prison systems around the world. His work has been regularly honored. He has won ten World Press Photo Awards.

PATRICK ZACHMANN

His preference is for long-form photographic essays covering various topics: Jewish identity, Chinese diaspora, and undocumented migrants. In the Mare Mater exhibition in Marseille, he drew links between the story of migrants who arrived by sea with the story of his own mother, who was uprooted from Algeria.

GUEORGUI PINKHASOV

After many experiences as assistant director and photographer, he left Moscow in 1985 and joined the Magnum agency in Paris. He is known for his unexpected and ephemeral images, based on encounters in everyday life.

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www.maisondesjournalistes.org
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Newspaper Club is proud to support Magnum Photos in sharing the critical perspectives of exiled journalists on World Press Freedom Day. The stories and images in this project highlight the importance of providing a platform for different voices in France and beyond. We believe in the power of print to disseminate ideas and are pleased to partner with Magnum to make this newspaper available for free.

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To be able to take shelter and to find a refuge when one is threatened, to be able to express oneself freely without fearing for his life or of being targeted ... What seems so obvious to us is still out of reach for too many people. "D'ici" (From here) says it loud and clear by restoring the word of journalists who had to flee, often suddenly, because their opinions were disturbing. Now safe, here they can express their words to give density and depth to their forced exiles and their bruised lives. The humanity that emerges from their intimate stories, reinforced by the work of photographers, is a vibrant tribute to the desire and need for freedom that resists forever and ever. This approach highlights how the fight for the respect of the right of asylum and for freedom is essential and necessary. So that these rights finally become obvious.

Ouest-France and Europe Press Solidarité alongside la Maison des journalistes

Ouest-France mobilises each day on behalf of freedom of the press and journalists. Their engagement shows itself in many different ways, in their columns and also throughout concrete actions conducted by Europe Presse Solidarité. This association was created by François Régis in 1991, on the day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and is specifically intended to bring together people who care about freedom of the press, pluralism, and respect for people's dignity. Currently led by Antoine Catta, it organises and puts in place:
- The intervention of volunteer journalists as lecturers who train young European students in Rzeszow, Krakow, Vilnius, and Sarajevo.
- Access to information for isolated; disadvantaged persons: 3,800 copies of Ouest-France are distributed for free each day, in 20 penitentiary establishments. They participate with the help of guards, for the betterment of the quality of life for detained, isolated persons.
- The addition of this special issue is in support of the Maison des Journalistes and of refugee journalists

THE BITTER BREAD OF EXILE “The cruellest pain is to have known happiness and the joy of one’s country; and to be forced, out of a harsh necessity, to the rigours of exile.” In Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Morocco and Algeria, journalists, authors of poignant texts from this journal, *D’ici*, have known this happiness and these stolen joys once praised by the Greek poet Pindar. They have known the warmth of family, the emotions of love, the comforts of friendship, and the recognition of their talent. However, this was before. Before their homeland, under the yoke of despotic masters, became a prison for them, and, for a number of their relatives, a tomb. And it is how Thelma, Maria, Beraat, Rowaïda, Hani, Hassanein, Hicham and Larbi have been forced to taste the “bitter bread of exile” (Shakespeare). It would have been even more bitter if, in France, they did not find refuge in the Maison des journalistes; the only sanctuary of its kind in the world created thanks to the impulse of solidarity from French colleagues.

The project D’ici came from a desire to give the opportunity to these women and men reduced to silence in their countries of origin to speak up, and to allow them to reconnect with their profession. And by doing so, by combining their perspective with that of Magnum photographers whose tireless work testifies to the evils of the planet Earth. From this dialogue between uprooted journalists and international photographers, this unique work was born. In addition to being a gateway for calls of revolution against liberticidal regimes, D’ici aims at raising awareness around what makes democracy so valuable: freedom of speech, threatened at its very core nowadays. D’ici also wants to be an advocate for hope, so that Thelma, Maria, Beraat, Rowaïda, Hani, Hassanein, Hicham and Larbi can once again know happiness and the joys of their homelands. And write – freely – less bitter works.