

“You always wish it’s your last day here in Komunisia.”

A. and Y., from Sudan
21st of May 2011, Komunisia

A. and Y., refugees from Sudan talk about their living-conditions in Igoumenitsa, the second largest port from Greece towards Italy. We are sitting in the mountain, looking at the port-area of “Komunisia” how the refugees call it. A few hundred refugees from all war-zones of the world are living on this mountain. Some days ago, at the 3rd of May, the refugees’ settlements in the mountain have been attacked by fascists out of a demonstration. Afterwards the police drew an invisible ‘red line’ and prevented refugees from entering the city. More than 450 refugees have been arrested in May 2011 – double than the average monthly arrests of 2010. Police guards the garbage cans and so the refugees are starving from hunger. We are sitting on this mountain in Europe and we hope for their chance to go!

What is Komunisia?

Y.: Nothing. Only a station to cross. I don’t have any friendship in Igoumenitsa. Only it is a port in Greece that can take me to another country, to another situation. Komunisia is cruel. As a shortcut to your question Komunisia means nothing and anything for me in the same time. I want to cross this country from Igoumenitsa, so it means anything for me. But in my memory nothing.

A.: Oh, bad things: the most bad days in my life. I saw in the world many countries where people are hungry. Now here we become a piece of it. For us this is like big jail. They control you. They want to put you down, they want you to leave. And you get more sad when you see the people all the time, who can pass easy. We don’t belong to European countries and so we are not allowed to go on. To stay in a situation like this because you don’t have paper - for me it’s not enough! I think everybody has a right to go, he has right to leave. And I also don’t think all this land it belongs to anyone. I think it belongs to God, it is not ours. I want to go. Maybe I want to see the world, yes. I want to meet people. Maybe I don’t like this country, I like that country. I have friends in one country. Maybe I want to marry someone from there. Maybe I want to get education or something. Maybe I go for health. It

makes you sad because you know this road is very easy. But for us it’s very hard. The price for this ship for us is very expensive. You can stay here like you can die everyday because you cannot have it.

Can you say how long you are in Komunisia? And what do you feel how long you have been here?

Y.: Oh, it is a very long time you know! I have one year and one month in Greece. First I went to Patras trying to travel and when I didn’t succeed I came to Igoumenitsa to try from here. I have six months in Igoumenitsa and I don’t succeed until now. Six months it means 180 days. I think it is 180 years, maybe more. Everyday is equal one year for me. You know how many days we stay without any food? I will be like an animal if all I can think is how to find food. Being human is to think about how to improve myself, how to find a new job for example. I am in Europe, or I imagine I am in Europe. But I always think about food. In Africa in my country I didn’t think about food. And our very, very bad government is even better than this, because it does not lie to the world. You are the big liars of the world. You have a white skin but a black heart.

A.: I am in Greece two years and half. Six months now in Komunisia. Six months, how long they are? I can’t count, it’s

unbelievable. I think until now I dreamed. Sometimes I don't think I am here. I wish I am not. You can't go back, you can't pass. I think everybody here if he finally goes out from here, he will need a doctor. Here we cannot think. We cannot get out these problems from inside. I think it is not normal to eat from the garbage. When somebody is looking in the garbage and the others are looking at him... I think someone is not normal when this does not touch his feelings. I don't think this will finish when he goes far away from the garbage. I think inside this will stay. One day more here in this bad situation is very, very long. Here is the main wish you will go. You always wish this is the last day here in Komunita.

Can you describe one day in Komunita?

Y.: I wake up in the morning and all I think is how I reach Skupidia (*greek: garbage*). If I reach Skupidia, if I will find something or not and how to keep myself from police. If you find a good police he will say to you "Fig, fig" (*greek: Go!*). If you find another police he will catch you, arrest you and take you to prison. Come back from Skupidia to share what you find. Perhaps find nothing. Come back to look if any friend find something he shares with you. And then you stay in the mountain. Nothing else. Later when the ports control opens, you will go to try under trucks. Maybe you will crash. Maybe you will ride "dangle", I don't know what this word means in English but you can translate it "under trucks". Maybe you succeed, maybe you have an accident. We have many accidents here and we have many dead in the trucks. We know that this is dangerous. And police beats you cruelly. Police will beat you cruelly just as if you have killed his father. In one day you can find police broke more than five legs. You move in the mountain and you see broken people. Sometimes police put his shoes on your neck when you come out. I don't know if it's sadism. If you manage to "dingle" okay: Congratulation! If not you

will go back to the mountain and start the same again. It is one day, but it is repeated. Today, tomorrow and also the day after: Skupidia, trucks – nothing else.

What is your experience with police?

A.: Since I came to Greece I have problems with police. If police is in the same place than you, he will arrest you. Police puts you in one place, they transfer you to another place. They don't have place to leave you, but still they arrest more. They find bad words for you. They don't give you food, they don't give you anything, you just sleep, sleep... They want you all the time to feel: I have to go out from here, because I will go to jail. I think this is politics. And when they put you in jail after they put you far. So far! They bring you far from Komunita. We don't have money for the bus. We walk, some they walk for three or four days. When you come back here you need to sleep one week. This is what they want: one month you cannot try to go. Maybe after some days they will arrest you again. Sometimes they don't arrest you, they just hunt you with the car. When you fall down, when you break your legs or something they just laugh and then they go. And they say "Malaka". They run after you, they try to make us afraid.

Y.: They give us a paper to leave Greece. I don't know how to leave Greece. Maybe they want us to fly? To be just like angels and fly across the sea? In despite of all of our problems in Africa made by European Union and America by supporting our governments or supporting wars: Okay, you make war in my country. You want me to stay in war today to loose my life? Why? What you will have from that if I die? I am here because my country is not safe. My government is not justice, they were thieves. They stole my food and they stole my life to kill me if I say no. So I come to Europe because Europe has the responsibility. We want to stay alive until our age is finished. In peace. But you make

our countries just as a piece of fire. How can we stay alive?

How is the general situation in Greece right now?

Y.: We know Greece is a poor country, with big economical problems and tying rope on their neck. But the Greek government don't want us to cross. They say: "We want refugees to go." But actually, if they want me to go: give me a strong paper to cross! All the European countries press Greece to close doors but why Greece accepts this? Now all the world says: "Fuck Greece!" Because you are cruel to us, and they don't know you are pressed by the European Union. We are here until we die or have a solution. By this money you need for all prisons, print a document to let me go.

A.: I blame all European countries, because they know this situation in Greece. And still they are controlling Greece not to let anyone come. They know we have a real bad situation if we cannot go out of here, but they don't care. If we don't reach there, we don't belong to them and it's not their responsibility. In one thing Greece is right: this is not only their problem, but from all European countries. And fuck: you cannot leave somebody die because you say, you have fingerprint in Greece! You make these rules and you can change it!

What was going at the 3rd of May?

A.: They made a demonstration. There were also people from other villages. They came here and they all say we have to go out. We didn't understand them. They talk only helenika (*greek*). They came here and we understand: they are not our friends. They closed the port, the port was not working. They were playing music. And you feel something is not okay: they are putting music, but they don't enjoy. We were playing football, we were calm. They attacked us with rocks. Some of us also

they throw them to keep them in distance. Then the police came and helped them, the police was using gas and something other, like big balls. Some they cannot see: problems with their eyes. And all are running. You think you are in Afghanistan. We were just playing football and they attacked us, civilian and police together. We go up in the mountain and we know once more not everybody is the same. I think they are just stupid. But after this everything is danger, because more control, everyday they catch us. The problem is we are eating from garbage, and even if someone has money he needs to go to supermarket to buy something. At these places they arrest us. If you go down the hill, you will be in jail. Until that day we played football. Now I don't know if I have the power.

And after they changed all the truth. They have camera. They make video. They changed the whole story. They show them enjoying down with their music-party there and we attacked them. They changed everything. Okay, they don't want to help us. But to lie like this! They put it in the internet to show all the world to say: Don't accept them! If you take them they will make problem. Nothing else was more bad than this! The government helps them also. They put in the media what they want to show. In Athens it is more bad, they kill. I don't know what other European countries wait for. They wait if they put us in one line to kill us one by one? You go with your organisations far away to countries like Afghanistan. But you have people here in Europe who are hungry. Why you go so far? There are people near to you that need help. Like Greece Europe want to make us fed up and go back. Only back, not in front. And most Greeks they still think this country belongs to them, we have to go out of here. It is their mountain. And still we are here and we don't die.

What would you like to say to the world?

Y.: We can work, all people here are young. Why don't Greek want us? Look at

United States of America. It's very strong, why? At first they have cultures. Second they take anything from the world that can be good for them to improve their country. Now here in the mountain there are doctors, engineers, lawyers, artists. The Greeks don't want to know anything from us. They think we are only illness, illness. No one is ill here in the mountain, because if he is ill he will not survive it. Why you stay away from us? We have ideas. Now I am away from my country more than one year. I have no money I have nothing to eat but I am alive. If we put you in my place and my situation, you will die within one week. When we left our countries we knew that we will find hardness. But not like this. We think the biggest hardness is how to reach Europe and we don't know the surprise we will find more hardness in Europe. What are you waiting for? You must have a solution for us. It is my message to the world, to the real world not to the lie-world. There is a lot of organisations in the world talking about human rights. Aren't we human?

A.: I knew from European countries past, where people got problems only because of different colour, different skin but I thought it is past! I thought they are living together. They don't care for your skin or something. But when we come here we find these things still. This is Europe. All the time you say. "You are too many! We can't help everybody!" They try to make you fed up and angry, maybe you go back. There must be truth in the world, because they don't tell the situation, they give us wrong pictures. Because we the people here, we don't have cameras, we don't have TV to produce pictures about our situation here. I think they must come here and talk to us. And if they come here I don't even think they have to ask, because our situation here is the answer to any question. Nobody can stay without food, without job, without education without life. Maybe after you are crazy. If really they care and they have good heart they must come here to decide something about

Greece. Because what is going on here it's hell. It's not only something about food. *What is the most bad thing happened to you in Greece?*

Y.: That police woman, on the day I arrived. I will not forget. I arrived in Greece. I find police. We have two days walking without food. We asked the police to give us food. They said: "No. This is no hotel." Oh, is it Europe? We had cigarettes in our pocket, we asked them to let us smoke. "No. It isn't hotel." After that we are tired and hungry. This police woman ordered me to clean all the police station. By force. I am tired and I can't do that. She tried to beat me. Other police man stopped her. I clean the station. In spite of I am hungry and I am tired. I want to ask this inhuman girl: If you want me to work, give me food! The food is the power for work. I know I am in your country. But I am not an animal! Even if you have animals in your home and you want it to work for you, you will give it grass. Why you don't give me food and let me to work for you, when I am so hungry and tired. You are not the president. You are still now police. In all the world police are the most bad people in the country. I felt hate for you. And if I find you again, I will beat you, Malaka! Yes, write this: "Malaka!"

What are you most afraid of?

Y.: I am afraid of police. And afraid to die of hunger. Do you believe someone is afraid of hunger in Europe? We are afraid to be hungry. To die of hunger. Now you are with us, you see we make tea. Because we have nothing but tea. Tea and water to keep alive. Until you find food. Until police will let you look for your food. I can speak more and more about our situation. But anyone who will read this report he cannot imagine. Afraid of police, afraid of hunger, afraid of racists... Afraid to stay here. Afraid not to succeed to leave this country. I don't know what I am more afraid of. And I don't know if I cross Greece if in any country I will have a normal life. I

don't know if my life will be in any country of skupidia. My body will be dirty? I will wear dirty clothes like the homeless? I don't know if I ever will live a normal life. Because every year feels like 10 years. I think I will need much time. I don't feel I will be back to be human. Because in this year in Greece I feel like I'm an animal.

A.: Like everybody: afraid that I will stay here. And more if they will start to send back! Deportations to Greece I mean. Some countries in Europe they stopped to send back when they find the fingerprint in Greece. At least now you are safe that you will not come back. Before you were afraid if you go you will come back. You lose time, you lose many things. Money, some they go from airport they paid some thousands and then they come back.

Papandreou the president he talks sometimes about us. They prepare something for us and this makes me afraid. The racists attacks here or in Athens is not by accident. If they lose, they try to find reasons to attack you. And maybe then they say: "We want to deport everybody from here to his country. We don't need." When you have come here and you were asked about the problem in your country, when you go back it's a big problem, you know? You will be in jail for long. They beat you and maybe more. I know because UK they deported Sudanese. Someone they beat him and then they killed him in Sudan. If Greece finds a way to deport, they will deport. And even more than in Greece you will be in trouble if they will deport! If they pay for Turkey they will also accept to have us deported there. And Turkey also is bad. Too many things they can do...

What about fascism and racism in Greece?

Y.: I want to ask them: What is your own idea? We tell you we have problems in our country. And we don't want to stay in Greece. What's the problem? You are against us or against your government? We

have no problem with you. We have nothing with Greeks. We only want to cross. So why you are against us? Greece is Europe's gate. European countries make problems in our countries. We want to save our lives. But anyway, we don't want to stay in Greece. Everyone knows staying in Greece means to finish your life like this. No one wants to stay! Take these primitive ideas from your mind!

A.: Police or any kind of power they can't control them. I don't know what kind of power they have because they can do everything. They can hurt. So how you can be safe? If they give me paper here in Greece I don't want to stay. After you are legal you can say: Shut your mouth! But it does not change anything. Because you will be always blamed and guilty. I know that here in the jails there are many people that they are not Greeks. They are there for nothing, just because someone blamed them for something or they were in the wrong place in the wrong time. If you are doing the same things than Greeks they are safe but you go in jail. It means you are not the same. This is the problem: also if you get papers always you are down and always they are up. We can't live here, we can't feel okay and safe in this country. We have to leave and they have to let us go out from here. The only solution: Give us paper for some months like the Italian government. We pass legally and we will not come back here. After that we choose where we want to go. Not everybody wants to go to the same country. For European countries it is not a problem. Some they will go here, some they will go there. At the end it will be okay. We go out from here and we will see if this problem will finish.

What does respect mean to you?

Y.: In our situation you ask about respect? Before I came to Greece I don't think there is something like this situation here in Greece. Greek civilization is known in all over the world. It's an old civilization. It is

the same as Chinese civilization or Egypt. But Greeks left it in the past and don't try to improve it. And don't try to produce it in a new look to the world. All the world forgets Greek civilization. They forget the country called Greece. Now all the world suddenly remembers there is a country called Greece by the refugees. All the world look now on how they are cruel to refugees. They don't give refugees any rights. So Greeks have done a crime on themselves. Maybe they robbed their own civilization. They robbed from any mind Sokrates, Platon and all those who made your civilization. I don't hate Greeks. Really, inspite of all that I see. They had more than 500 years under Turkey. They had time under Germany. And now they have no picture of Greece. Greeks themselves they don't know what are they. Greece needs to die to have a new life. Because this life is no honour for an old civilization. Now you have nothing. You have nothing, you don't have any culture to give to the world. You can be more than this! But I'm sorry to say that: you are lazy. You don't improve your civilization. Now Greece has nothing, only tourism. And if tourism will stop, you will have your food also from Skupidia. Right?

*What would you like your life to be like?
What do you wish for your life?*

A.: My wish? There is only one wish: to leave! Okay, I can remember everybody wish to be happy. To be safe. To find a good life. To find someone to share. To find people to care for and they care for you. I don't want to loose my hand or my head or my eyes. I saw here in Greece really, some they loose a part of their body. They broke their feet and their hands or more bad. Some get problems with health. You loose your power. For this you can get quickly sick. I wish I will not loose my health before I am out of here. And I told you: I wish another power, help that is coming from outside. Not from Greece, because I don't think this will be. Other European countries they have the power to

change. Only to stop deportation it's not enough. I hope they will make a real step to finish this problem. Maybe like headache: I have headache and you give me Panadol. Maybe I have headache because I have other problems. You have to find a real solution. Not only now for these days in Komunisia. For Greece forever. Why don't they punish Greece? It's not only civilians, it is also the government that treat us like this. And I think in Europe there are many ways to punish them for this. Nobody said: Hey stop this mistake! I wish nobody will have to pass Greece! Because the people coming will be like us. I wish just I will forget one day everything I got here in Greece.

Y.: When I left my country I want to save my life. To be alive. I had a job in my country. I had money. But I had to leave my country to save my life. Now all my hope is to save my live from Greek racists. To cross this country. Maybe anyone in the world dreams to be rich. But I don't want this. I want to have a home. Have a shower. Have clean clothes. Have work. Because now my mind is stopped. I wake up at the morning and I don't know what to do, or what is happening to me. I don't know if I will be safe from police and safe from racists. I don't know. My mind is stopped. I can't improve myself now. Only I need a normal life.

Is there something you want to say to the Greeks?

A.: When they go to their church, I don't know if they are listening to Gods words. Because if they do, this cannot be their feelings. If they go out after prayer. And people they are near to them in the garbage. What are they doing in the church? The reason to go to the church: if you see something outside like this, you have to stop. You have to listen. You have to share. You have to ask why. Not to blame us. You know exactly why we are doing it. The reason is there are people like you. If there is people kind in this place I

will not be in the garbage. More exactly: if you see somebody who needs your help and you can do it, you must do it. If you cannot help, don't be angry at him. Don't be his enemy and don't say all these bad words. What are they doing in their church? They only put candles? They are singing only? I know in the Christian songs there are words inside to help. There is too much to do, not only just to sing! This all is not yours. Maybe you are lucky in this place. But you don't make the sea, make

this land, you don't make this sky or this mountain here. It's not for you only. Don't say: "Go out from here!" Before many years Greeks they have much. Now they are poor. Not poor of money, poor of too much things. Money is coming and money is going. But there are too much things, if you loose it you will never get it back.

Thank you.

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