

Speech by Mehran, 25 April 2021 (English translation)

Malala Yousefzai said, “Becoming a refugee is never anyone's first **choice**. This is the **last choice** and the only **choice** they have to leave their homes for their safety, for their future.”

The fear of the future and of what is going to happen in an unknown land is not any less than the fear of the past that we had in our own country. Fear of the unknown future and escaping from the past. The only option I had was to put aside these fears and to leave my country, illegally, and to come here, illegally.

Five years later, I still cannot forget the horrors that I felt when I crossed the border and my fear of being arrested by the border guards. As you have perhaps realized from the news, very few people actually manage to escape from their country of origin and find a safe refuge in a new destination. After all that I had already been through to get here, it seemed that safety in a new country was not a given. It was the beginning of a new mountain to climb.

It is never an easy choice to become a refugee. But sometimes there is no other option but to leave your familiar surroundings, the people you love and cherish, your own culture and your historical roots. We must be born again, with a new language and culture, in a country that we do not yet understand. It is only with the grace of God that I have come this far.