

Diary from Lesbos. Our first 24 hours in the island

Alarm clock at 7 am and we go to warehouses.

We meet Greece, Ireland, Spain, Czech, and USA in the looks of the volunteers running towards us, happy to receive our help. There is a big desire to help. In Lesbos mountains of clothes waiting to be useful again. An old sock is lively to life in a baby Syrian. A colored scarf turns into a Hijab and a Manchester's t-shirt into the uniform of a young Afghan.

We work together for hours and to understand us we don't need to know English because our affinities prevail and our eyes meet, imagining another Europe. We pile, divide and organize the items. We left the warehouses satisfied and aware to have done our utmost; this is confirmed by the unexpected and pleasant story of 2 funny Spanish volunteers looking for clothes for a baby, arrived with her dad at Pikpa's camp. (one of the center for refugees run by independent volunteers) without her mother, stopped in Turkey. The appointment is for the morning after because in the afternoon the emergency is at the port.

We arrive at 17 pm to help these people, but at the same time when we look around we realize that many volunteers are not able to solve a war's tragedy. Children with bare feet, women without coats, shy young girls looking for support for their personal care. Their life contained in few bags and in a small backpack. They don't laugh, they don't want to joke, but they say "thank you", because every little gesture is a big gift for them. On the contrary, the children run, laugh, eat sweets and wear a smile.

20 pm: departure for Athens. Another step towards serenity.

Tsipras' Europe is not so different from the other closed borders that oblige migrants and refugees to wait. Greece is forced to welcome because of its beautiful sea that doesn't accept gates, but it chooses the absence institutional and the presence of army and police forces who regard with discomfort the volunteers flying to the island's roads.

It is dark, we come back home and the alarm clock will ring at 5 am. We will start our new day at the beach waiting for new landings. Meanwhile, Europe offers billions of Euro to see them anymore.

(By Alessandra Aldini and Arianna Torre)

Second day in Lesbos

Alarm clock at 5 am to join the control groups on the beaches. It is raining. It is useless to go there, migrants will not arrive because with the bad weather risks increase. In addition to the Turkish military attacks, also there is stormy sea. I spoke about Turkish attacks because a young migrant told me about these tragic episodes. The Turks intercept the boats, overcrowded of migrants, and sometimes they break their engines, or worse, they approach the boats with the sole purpose of causing further damage. This is the deal with Erdogan. Europe pays and migrants must not cross the sea.

At this point, we decide to wait a few hours to come back to the warehouses. There is something to do there, but there aren't enough volunteers as anyone wants to work for many hours organizing and dividing mountains of clothes. No one see you, you have no contact with migrants and there isn't visibility. This is the reason why "Un Ponte per..." has guaranteed to the warehouses' organizers the presence of its volunteers.

While we are working our eyes meet the eyes of two young Syrians mothers. They keep 2 infants in their hands, close to their young husbands. They are lucky because they are together and also

for us it is a good day: with them we can give the best of us. We find romper suits, cute hats, sweaters for the young mothers and coats for the fathers. They come from Homs, they are tired, but they want to go on. They don't know about the EU-Turkey deal and they want to arrive to Northern Europe. Needless to mention the European choices, they would not believe in it. We help them and they smile at us. Today we, too, have had our moment of glory.

After lunch we decide to visit the Camp of "Afghan Hill", that during these days hosts hundreds of migrants. Pakistani, Moroccan, Algerian, Afghan, all those people who can't have access to registry. Several months ago they occupied an olive tree grove and the independent volunteers helped them negotiating a rent for that land. They organized a camp where refugees can eat, receive clean clothes, but they can't wash themselves. But it seems like only the independent volunteers care about this...

There is also a specific place for children with some games, but the famous names of the powerful NGOs that issue press releases on the migrant's conditions are missing. They are elsewhere. In the Hotspot and in the camp dedicated to only Syrians. It is not possible to enter there and make a picture. They are impenetrable. The Hotspot is enclosed by barbed wire and reminds of the Hungarian border.

To be greeted by independent volunteers in "Afghan Hill" and then pass close to the Hotspot shows exactly what is happening to the migrants.

On one hand the police, Frontex and the inaction of the important NGOs, on the other peoples of Europe and the wandering peoples.

(By Alessandra Aldini)

19 March 2016

We received news about the signature of the EU – Turkey deal. Now it is possible to start with deportations, and Europe will not be welcoming for them. It is possible for this to happen in Europe? We can't believe that everything will end up like this. But we are still working to select and organize the clothes and all the items received as a gift for Lesbos from all over the world.

After few hours we decide to go and have a look about the camp's situation and to spend some time with the migrants. In Afghan Hill we meet a refined Moroccan man who told us his story: he was forced to leave his country because he was a blacksmith, but with his job he couldn't support his family anymore. He cries because his dream was to reach Italy, where he had a friend who could help him to find a job; but once arrived in Lesbos, he understands that he can't continue his trip. He is blocked in this camp because he doesn't have the right to stay in Europe. He cries and says that he will die on that camp rather than coming back home to see his family starve.

Many people approach to know us and tell us their stories: they smile and shake our hands. Between them a young boy attracts my attention. He keeps his head bowed, because he feels ashamed of his tears he can't hold back. I prefer look around somewhere else, I want leave him free to find his intimacy also in a camp.

We come back home to get us ready for the night on the beach to support Erci, international rescue team, Proemaid, Gfire, Proactiva, Spanish firefighters who have been working for months on the beach helping the landing of the rafts.

We arrived there at about 5 am and it is immediately as a blow to the stomach. Among the people who have just arrived there are the doctors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) who are treating 3 men in cardiac arrest. 20 minutes later, sad eyes tell us that one of them has not survived. The other two guys and the man brought the raft toward the shore.

We focus on other migrants and I start to help a young mother with her three young daughters; one of them is really scared, shivers and she can't stop crying, she calls her mother who has not even the strength to answer her. I try to hug and console her. After some long minutes of silence she understands to be safe and she smiles at me. The woman introduces herself and her children. She's alone and her name is Raja.

I help another mother who asks me to keep her baby in my arms while she changes her wet clothes. I took her, she's crying, she doesn't know me and she wants only her mom. Her wool hat falls down and I remain shocked. She has a part of her face and head burned: terrible evidence about the Russian phosphorus bombs dropped by Russian to help Assad, the dictator. I can't breathe, but I know I have to be strong to help them. Cuddling the baby, I sing her a lullaby and her scared look became calm.

When we end to help this group of people we receive other news about another landing. We run to help, and by chance, I'm enrolled in a human chain to help the landing. I take a baby in my arms while his mom is getting off the raft. I look at him , he's fine , and looks at me. Who knows what he will remember of this.

Even if many hours have elapsed from that night, we will never forget that night. But we try to speak about it. For me, Arianna, Carla, Francesco and Giacomo the sea and its waves will be no longer the same.

(By Alessandra Aldini)