

POV 1

My name is Mohammed. I was born in Syria, before the war broke out, and my family lived in peace in the countryside. We had a farm where we grew olives and kept livestock. I had three brothers and two sisters then, before the war.

After the war broke out, we woke one morning to screams from my parents. The government troops had set our olive grove on fire in the night, claiming that our father was fighting with the resistance. The olives were over five hundred years old, some of them- they had been in our family for as long as anyone could remember or tell stories about. Olives grow slowly and are beautiful trees. But now they were gone.

My parents went to the village, where my father sat with the elders and decided what we could do, for without our olives, we would starve. My mother went to her family, and wept, taking us little kids with her.

We decided to stay with our family, but three nights later the planes came over and bombed our village. My youngest sister, Fatima, was killed and my mother had a narrow escape. After that we decided to become refugees- to travel to the nearest border and throw ourselves on the mercy of the Lebanon. But there were already thousands of refugees there, so we moved on, walking so far...I can't remember all the places we went through, some friendly, others not. It got colder as we moved north, and the people less friendly. Eventually, we found ourselves in Germany, where the government had let in a huge number of us. We didn't speak German, but we did speak English, so we applied to come to the UK, and eventually we got here. We are a Muslim family, and wherever we went, we found a mosque to pray. Allah was always with us, no matter where we travelled, no matter how tough life was.

I dream of our farm in Syria, but it's gone. Now I dream of becoming a British citizen, of working hard at school, and eventually becoming a dentist or a doctor. Then I can provide for my family, and we will be safe. For, deep down, that is what I dream of most- of being safe.

POV 2

My name is 'Esther' (up to student whether to use real name or take a role with a different name) I have lived around here all my life. I live with my Mum most of the time, and at my Dad's alternate weekends. It's OK as long as we all remember which week we're on!

My dream is to go to Japan to teach English. Japan seems such a different country, but I love Manga, and the films of Studio Ghilbli, which seem to come from such a different place! So I want to go to Uni, and take a degree, and then I'll need to do a short course in TEFL- Teaching English as a Foreign Language, then I can try to get over to Japan. I don't want to go forever, but I dream of exploring the world before I settle down, and this seems like the ideal way to do it. I don't have a faith, but I know that my family are OK about me going, and that we can stay in touch through Skype, or Facetime, or whatever. I won't really be apart from them like people used to be - and I'll always have their love with me.