

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADEL HAMAD: A REFUGEE'S JOURNEY TO EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Adel Hamad is a refugee from Syria. He came to seek asylum in the UK after fleeing the conflict in his home country in 2012. He now works for the Resettlement Team of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) and is currently undertaking a Master's degree in International Relations at the University of Nottingham. We had the chance to speak to Adel, who was able to tell us more about his journey to the UK.



Are you able to share some of your personal experience and journey as a Refugee?

In 2012, due to the war in Syria, I made the difficult decision to leave and embarked on a perilous journey. I crossed borders, from Lebanon to Turkey, and then ventured across the Mediterranean Sea, eventually arriving in Italy. However, life in the south of Italy was challenging, and I faced limited opportunities. Determined to find a better life, I decided to continue my journey and headed to France. Unfortunately, the reception there was not as welcoming as I had hoped. After careful consideration, I chose the UK because of its reputation for upholding human rights. It took two years, but in 2014, I arrived in the UK and was warmly welcomed by the authorities. From Dover, I made my way to London, then Birmingham, and finally settled in Nottingham.

As a student enrolled at the University of Nottingham, how do you believe the University can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive academic atmosphere for students who are refugees or asylum seekers?

The University of Nottingham is rightly known as a "sanctuary for refugees". They have provided immense support to asylum seekers, including myself. I initially struggled, but the university offered resources to help me overcome barriers. Likewise, they can organise awareness sessions on how to apply to universities and help refugees understand the criteria for higher education. This support can bridge a significant gap in knowledge and pave the way for individuals from difficult situations to pursue my studies.

We understand that you conducted research concerning Syrian refugees as part of your thesis. Could you tell a bit about this research and some of your findings?

Throughout my master's degree in international relations, I focused my research on the experiences of Syrian refugees, particularly the impact of the terrorism discourse on their lives in the UK. I conducted interviews to explore media perception of refugees. What stood out the most was that none of the refugees or asylum seekers wanted to be labelled as such. It was not their choice to flee their country, and it is crucial for us to stand together and support those who have been forced to leave everything behind due to their race, religion, or other factors beyond their control.