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<<First Name>>, greetings from Greece.

As 2017 comes to a close, we reflect on what has been an intense, productive, often heartbreaking, yet beautiful year of assisting refugees and asylum seekers in the field. Our clients teach us every day how precarious and precious life is, not to take anything for granted, and how privileged we are to be able to do this work.



We are also amazed and humbled by how much Advocates Abroad has grown, and we are constantly inspired by the fierce dedication, selflessness and talent of our army of volunteers. Advocates has had a continuous presence in multiple hotspots throughout Greece, including Lesvos, Athens, Thessaloniki, Chios and Samos. We recently started a mission on the island of Leros, where there has been virtually no legal aid, and also assist countless refugees elsewhere in Europe, Turkey, and remotely.



Since Advocates started last year, we have had on our field missions:

158
ADVOCATES



27
INTERPRETERS &
TRANSLATORS



8 MEDICAL
PROFESSIONALS

OVER

60

LAWYERS AND LAW STUDENTS SUPPORTING OUR FIELD TEAMS BY WORKING WITH US ON OUR REMOTE TEAM AND RESEARCH TEAM, AND IN OUR EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE LAW SCHOOL.

We have been featured and cited in various international media as well. Here are some highlights:

- [Lawyers on the front line - the refugee crisis in Greece, video by IBA Global Insight](#)
- [The unbalanced scales of refugee justice by Yola Verbruggen, IBA Global Insight April/May 2017](#)
- [Greece urged not to send refugees back to Turkey, video by John Psaropoulos, Al Jazeera English](#)

Please read the beautiful piece below, written by one of our most recent Field Team Attorneys. It is a heartfelt reflection on what it is like to work in the field in our role as Advocate.

We wish for comfort, peace and hope for all of the refugees and asylum seekers we have worked with. And we wish you and your loved ones all the best in the New Year.

Warmly,

Ariel Ricker

Executive Director

Advocates Abroad

As we rely heavily on individual donors, we humbly ask that you consider making a charitable contribution to Advocates Abroad before the end of the year so that we may continue this important work. Advocates Abroad is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. <https://advocatesabroad.org/donate>

Notes from the Field

Charlie Martel is an American attorney from Washington, D.C. who recently completed his field mission with Advocates Abroad on the island of Samos. He also supervises law students contributing to our Research Team through our externship program with the University of Baltimore Law School.

Inshallah. It's an Arabic word that means, "God willing", and reflects a sense of surrender to what we cannot control and what divine fate will ordain. We hear it often in our work with those seeking sanctuary. They have suffered the worst that we as humans can inflict on each other. They have watched as the bodies of their mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, have been pulled out of the rubble they were killed in when war planes bombed their homes. They have been mercilessly tortured by regimes and rebels. They survived harrowing flights of escape, shot at by border guards and nearly drowned when flimsy rafts they were told were safe almost sunk. They now live in overcrowded refugee camps that do not meet minimal standards of space, security, hygiene and health.



They bless our work by rising above all of this, and by meeting us not just as victims of the wrongs they have suffered, but as colleagues and friends with so much to give. And so we meet an interpreter, fluent in four languages, working two jobs, volunteering with the local refugee service house to teach English and swimming, mourning his lost family, and living in the camp. With all of this, he gifts our work with intelligence and mischievous humor, bringing smiles and laughter to us and our clients even as we work through the horrors they have experienced. He is a bridge to the world our clients have lived in, and without him we could not possibly have crossed over to meet them. We meet another interpreter who continues his beautiful work as a painter and sculptor from the camp, and tells us that “I want to learn and share, because if you do not do these things, you are like a beautiful house with no one inside.” We meet a client who was a journalism student until this became too dangerous, and shows his craft by telling his story so well that we sit on the edge of our seat to hear it.

The people we work with have been often in war but not of it, seeking only to escape from its violence. And there are those who are so very damaged by what has been done to them, for whom the harm has been so great that our

work requires us to be more akin to caregiver than colleague.

We meet a husband and wife, expecting a child and terrified they will be separated by the random and inhumane asylum process. They have done the most hopeful thing human beings can do, bring life into the world, in the hopeless squalor of the camp. We share moments with those seeking shelter, walking the streets to cafes and moonlit beaches, and learn about what they hope to do if only the world will let them. Their humanity is a humbling and majestic thing.

In all of this, there is something that includes and goes beyond the legal work we do for those we serve. There is a power to presence, that we have come to be with them in this moment, to experience their humanity and let them know they matter.

Perhaps our work together will be the key that opens the door that they can walk through to leave the horror of the past behind, to walk to a future of peace, happiness, and sanctuary.

Inshallah.





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