

## **The Made in Migration Collective: Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

We acknowledge other members of the Collective who can't be identified because it is not safe to do so owing to their legal statuses, and we wish them all the luck.

### **Hassan Altaweel**



I am 34 years old and am working now as postman in a small town in northern Sweden. I was born and raised in Jaramana in Syria, a suburb of Damascus. My family comes from a small village called Hadar in the Golan Heights. It is in the “UNDOF”, the UN peace force’s unarmed area between Syria and Israel.

I am part of a large family with 5 children. We belong to a minority group called the Druze who live mostly in Syria and Lebanon.

I moved to Sweden in 2015 because of the war in Syria. I chose to start a new life, to try to make some of my dreams come true.

In Syria I started working in a clothes factory when I was 10 years old. But I have also had various small jobs like home electrical installation, administration in a sales company etc. Finally, I worked for 7 years in customer service for the Syrian insurance federation in their office on the border to Lebanon.

I studied Science at high school in Syria and graduated in 2004. I started to study Arabic literature at the University of Damascus. I also took short courses in Computer Science and English.

When I came to Sweden, I studied the Swedish language and an IT course about Office365. I have done a training programme at the IT department of the local electricity company. I am very interested in IT and computers and would like to develop my skills in this field. My plan is not to be a postman forever!

## Alaa Alustrum



Alaa Alrustum is a Syrian cartoonist and journalist. He is currently working as a cartoonist for *The Independent Arabia* newspaper. Alaa studied at Damascus University. He worked as a cartoonist for *Baladna* newspaper in Damascus, and the government closed the newspaper in 2007 because of a cartoonist criticizing the elections in Syria.

He was ranked first in a caricature competition sponsored by UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in 1997. He worked as a TV reporter in Aleppo. Foundations of the *Alraddar* news site. He wrote a comedy sketches program called CBM for MBC. Furthermore, he won the People's Vote Award at Global Cartoon Competition Highlighting Activism Against Gender-Based Violence sponsored by The United Nations Population Fund Jordan (UNFPA) 2017.

He emigrated to Sweden after the Syrian war has begun. He published his caricatures in Swedish newspapers and held several art exhibitions and workshops to teach children and young people how to draw caricatures.

Alrustum participated with several of his cartoons in a book that collects cartoons by Syrian artists in Amsterdam 2017. He worked in dubbing for children's programs on Swedish television in Stockholm UR in 2020 .He shoots short comedy clips and publishes them in the social media.

My Twitter account : @Alaa\_Rustum

[https://twitter.com/Alaa\\_Rustum](https://twitter.com/Alaa_Rustum)

My Instagram account : 3laarostom

<https://www.instagram.com/3laarostom/>

## Anoosh Ariamehr



Anoosh is a creative social writer who has been active in Afghanistan's media on freedom of expression and opinion, women's rights, social equality, minority rights, class discrimination, systematic government corruption, racism, and religious-cultural stereotypes.

The dissent and critique of traditions in a traditional society caused him to have no choice but to leave his country. While was a refugee in Greece, he collaborated with organizations that help displaced people.

From his point of view, there is nothing sacred, everything can be criticized. As human beings, without any beliefs or with different beliefs, we can have a peaceful life in a society, if we want. Because of this way of thinking, Anoosh was attacked even by religious fundamentalists in Europe. He relocated to the UK and now he lives in the north of England.

Anoosh has a great love for photography and has learned it by taking short courses and he wants to study in this field in the future. He believes that by combining emotion and reality through the camera lens, we can see the world beautifully and record unique moments forever and share them with others.

Anoosh is happy to be involved in *The Made in Migration* project and be a part of this valuable Collective.

## Owain Astles



I'm a film and theatre-maker, activist and photographer based in Bristol and working across the UK. My practice focuses around representation and empowerment of marginalised communities, art as activism and immersive environments in film and theatre.

I am a resident at Bristol's Pervasive Media Studio and Creative Director of Pastles Productions, a production company creating films for social change. Previous projects include a BBC Arts creative documentary about solitary confinement in Young Offender's Institutions entitled *To My Younger Self*, *Sleeping Rough*, a docudrama film about street homelessness in the UK, a short drama called *The Hardest Fight* about using boxing as a way of fighting against depression, and a short documentary series commissioned by Rife Magazine, called *Crisis and Hope*, about homelessness services in Bristol.

After studying Theatre and Spanish at University of Bristol, I spent time studying and working abroad, in Spain and New York, working with local communities to create film-based campaigns around cultural integration and housing rights. I am one of the lead organisers of Bristol Homeless Action Week, an annual event centred around involving people in Bristol's homelessness community, through campaigning, educational events and the arts. I've worked with Cardboard Citizens, a homeless theatre company, in delivering *Cardboard Camp*, a theatre residency at Bristol Old Vic working with people with lived experience of homelessness. I'm currently developing a participatory documentary in collaboration with Shelter working with homeless single mothers, inspired by practices of Participatory Video and Photovoice.

## **Rajni Avagyan**



Rajni Avagyan was born in St. Petersburg in an Indo-Armenian large family of 5 children, parents and grandparents. Soon after she moved to live in Armenia but had chances to study and live in such countries like Thailand, Lithuania, and now Sweden. Having access to so many cultures made her become very open and flexible to differences and adaptable in new environments. Moreover, it gave her chance to learn 5 languages.

She is a psychologist in her profession and has mainly worked in education systems as school psychologist and teacher recruiter. In recent years she even tried teaching career. Right now, she lives in Sweden with her husband Saghatel Basil and works in a school as a teacher assistant. She moved to Sweden to live with her husband in 2018.

## Saghatel Basil



Saghatel Basil was born in Croatia to an Armenian father and a Syrian mother. He lived, studied and shifted residences alternatively between Aleppo, Beirut and Yerevan; which made him an avid explorer of cultures and a curious researcher about development and its challenges.

These diversities contributed to his decision to study political science at Yerevan State University in Armenia. However, life too had its own surprises and it took away his sight. That made him see life in a different perspective and it paved the way towards deeper understanding of life, the nature of the human being and the various kinds of human struggles. Saghatel specialized in human growth and advancement, precisely in interactive training, cultural meetings, and building bridges.

In 2005, he founded a center called "Art River" in Aleppo, that turned later into an important venue for cultural exchange and dialogue in the city. It served as a café-library, in addition to serving as a gallery and a theater. In 2013 after multiple pressures from Syrian regime and war he was forced to close "Art River" and flee from the country as it was life-threatening for him to remain in Aleppo.

In recent years Saghatel published two books. The first book in Arabic titled "Diaries of an outstanding citizen" was inspired by the events in Syria and its unending challenges. The second book titled "Articles by White Crow" is about identity problems of Armenians in homeland and diaspora.

Right now, he lives in Sweden and continues writing books and working with teenagers. Saghatel has started a project named "Art River In Your Home" which aims to revive the memories of "Art River" and allows others to take part in spreading the center's mission and culture.

## Mimi Finnstedt



I am a Brit living in the county of Jämtland in the geographical centre of Sweden, but demographically in the big, empty North! I have lived here for over forty years with my Swedish husband and our four children who were all born here.

When our children were growing up we lived in an even more remote village where we lived on practical self-sufficiency. For the last twenty years we have lived in the borough of Krokomb, not far from the town of Östersund. I used to work in Östersund teaching English and as a translator, but in 2003 I was fortunate enough to start working in our local community with refugees and integration. Through my work I got to know very many wonderful people who enriched my life in Sweden. When I heard through a common friend in England about The Made in Migration project, I contacted Rachael and invited her to come to Krokomb to meet my friends. In the ten days she spent with us in April 2019 we made 19 interviews with people from 8 different countries and invited a group of about 30 people to an English tea party where they showed Rachael their treasures from home! Rachael's time here was greatly appreciated by all who met her, and we feel privileged to be part of this amazing project!

## Mohamed Idris ``Dufla``

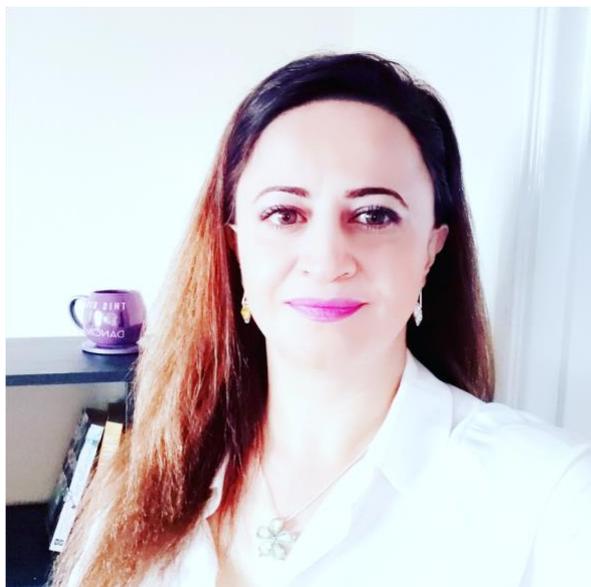


My name is Mohamed Idris known as ``Dufla``, from Eritrea. I belong to the ``Afar`` ethnic group who are residents of the coastal areas of the Red Sea. I have studied BA degree on economics. I came to Sweden in May 2013. I left my homeland Eritrea because it is ruled by a dictatorial government. There has been war and insecurity for many years. Freedom and human rights are very limited there. I live in Mörsil in Åre municipality, Sweden with my wife and our two children. I am a mother tongue language teacher and study guide, as well I support students coming from Eritrea in other subjects so that they reach and level up their knowledge requirements.

I thrive very well in Sweden because there are endless possibilities you can take part in and here you decide your own life. Sweden is a beautiful country, so I am learning to explore its nature. In my spare time I like to be outdoors. In the winter, I like to ski and play in the snow with my children. In the summer I like to be outdoors a lot and discover new places in the local community, hiking in the mountains etc.

It is my pleasure to participate in this *'Made in Migration'* project and to be able to meet all the wonderful people and their unique stories.

## Gunel Ismikhanova



My name is Gunel, from Azerbaijan. I'm a Human Rights lawyer. I have 14 years' experience on human rights. I was working Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Also, I was candidate for Parliament 2010 years and 7000 people elected me. I was teacher at Western University in Azerbaijan and worked on various UN projects. I speak 5 languages. I authored 70+ Journal articles on Women's Rights, Human Rights, Internally Displaced People and Refugee Rights, gender discrimination, and domestic violence.

I am director of a Community Sponsorship Group called the Kingsbridge Community Sponsorship Group. I was a participant in *Creative Recovery: Mapping Refugees' Memories of Home as Heritage* project with Plymouth University. I am a volunteer [The Spirit of Community 2020](#), via project via Hope in the Heart.

It is my pleasure to be one part of The Made in Migration Collective. I am completely convinced, that participating in this project, I will develop my knowledge.

I am a single mother.

## **Abdul Rahman Khalaf**



My name is Abdul Rahman Khalaf, they call me Abdul because it's easier. I was born in the city of Al Qamishli in the North East of Syria in 1995. I was a kid full of dreams. I was dreaming of everything beautiful. Until the Syrian revolution began on the 15th of March 2011. Until that time I was a child as any child in this world but then suddenly I started to feel older and conscious. At first, I was very happy. People met in the streets and we screamed for freedom. My dreams grew strong for a better future full of freedom ahead. A future in which I can express my views freely and without fear. But dreams soon disappeared one by one, one day after another. With every bullet, shell, missile and raid the many dreams were destroyed.

I had started studying law at the University of Damascus. I finished two years of undergraduate studies. I could see a light at the end of the tunnel. But the harsh war erased that light. I felt lost, perhaps as a ship in the ocean without a compass. No land near, nor a lighthouse which could make me feel safe. I decided to leave because I refused to be a criminal and fight for a person who wants to be president for life. I left because my belief in freedom began to grow. Eventually freedom became the only religion that I believed in.

I travelled illegally, that's how they call it, to Turkey and then to Greece where I stayed in 470 days. There was the first feeling of freedom for me in all my life. I tried to enjoy every moment where even the bad moments were lessons that taught me a lot. Exactly on day 470 in Greece I travelled to Sweden through a United Nation's program for refugees. I've been in Sweden for 1400 days when writing these words. My dreams are starting to return. I can now see a glimmer of hope and light at the end of the tunnel. Even if that light is small, I can see it and that is the important thing. I'm on my way towards the light and the future and nothing can stop me.

## Rachael Kiddey



Rachael is a British Academy Postdoctoral Researcher based at the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford. Her current project, called *'Migrant Materialities'*, focuses on the role that material culture – objects and visual culture – play in experiences of contemporary forced displacement in Europe. Rachael is currently working on a book called, *'People Need Things: material culture, memory, and forced displacement in contemporary Europe'*.

The terror and suffering inflicted by particularly the British state historically through land enclosure and theft, at home and all over the world, combined with current British immigration laws which function as violent contemporary colonialism, together with the U.K.'s unceasing commitment to profiting from the arms trade, are the reasons why she is an anarchist.

## Sana Murrani



Sana Murrani is an Associate Professor in Spatial Practice with a background in Architecture and Urban Design from Baghdad, Iraq and a PhD from the UK. She is the Deputy Director of the Doctoral College for the Arts and Humanities at the University of Plymouth, UK. Sana's main research falls within the imaginative negotiations of spatial practices and social justice. She focuses on highlighting the impact of transient conditions of war, conflict, and displacement on people's creative spatial responses to sudden changes in their built environment and the making (or re-making) of the concept of home and collective imaginary housing for the future. Sana's research methods are embedded in participatory action research approaches and creative mapping techniques that rely on spatial thinking, memory mapping, and speculative and imaginative drawing and layering. She is the founder of the [Displacement Studies Research Network](#) and co-founder of the [Justice and Imagination in Global Displacement](#) research collective, working at the intersection between displacement, design, imagination and justice to research, share, and enhance the impact and power of the creative agencies of displaced peoples, their identity, memory and the spaces and places they create and inhabit.

## Caleb Parkin



Caleb Parkin is the third Bristol City Poet. He won second prize in the National Poetry Competition 2016, the Winchester Poetry Prize 2017 and other major competition shortlists. Poems in *The Rialto*, *The Poetry Review*, *Under the Radar*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Coast to Coast to Coast*, *Strix*, *Magma*, *Envoi*, *Lighthouse*, *Finished Creatures*, *Tentacular* and *Molly Bloom*. Commissions include Poetry Society, Lyra Festival, Green Party, National Literacy Trust, Royal British Legion, and The Hepworth Wakefield.

His educational work is extensive, tutoring for Poetry Society, Poetry School, Cheltenham Festivals, Arvon Foundation and First Story. He holds an MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP), with a research dissertation focused on museum and gallery settings. He previously worked in BBC TV and Radio production and as a teacher and Senior Inclusion Worker.

His debut collection exploring queer ecopoetry was developed with Arts Council England Developing Your Creative Practice support. His debut pamphlet, *Wasted Rainbow*, was published with tall-lighthouse in February 2021 and his debut collection, *This Fruiting Body*, with Nine Arches in October.

## **Feruz Weldemichael**



Feruz Weldemichael lives with her family in Krokomb, Sweden. She is studying at sixth form college. Feruz was born in a small village in the north of Eritrea, East Africa. She went to school in Eritrea before her family fled to Sudan. When she moved to Sudan, Feruz went to an Arabic school and had to learn a new language, Arabic. It was very difficult for her to learn Arabic because there is a big difference between the Arabic and Tigrinya alphabets. But she learned Arabic quite fast because she had many Arabic-speaking friends.

In her free time, Feruz enjoys playing with brothers and sisters and doing her homework. Sometimes she and her mother cook special food from Eritrea called Zigni. It is spicy meat with a lot of onion. It is eaten with Injera, which is a soft sourdough pancake. At the weekends, Feruz usually practices driving with a friend as she wants to get a driving licence. Feruz speaks Tigrinya, Arabic, Swedish, and she is also learning English.