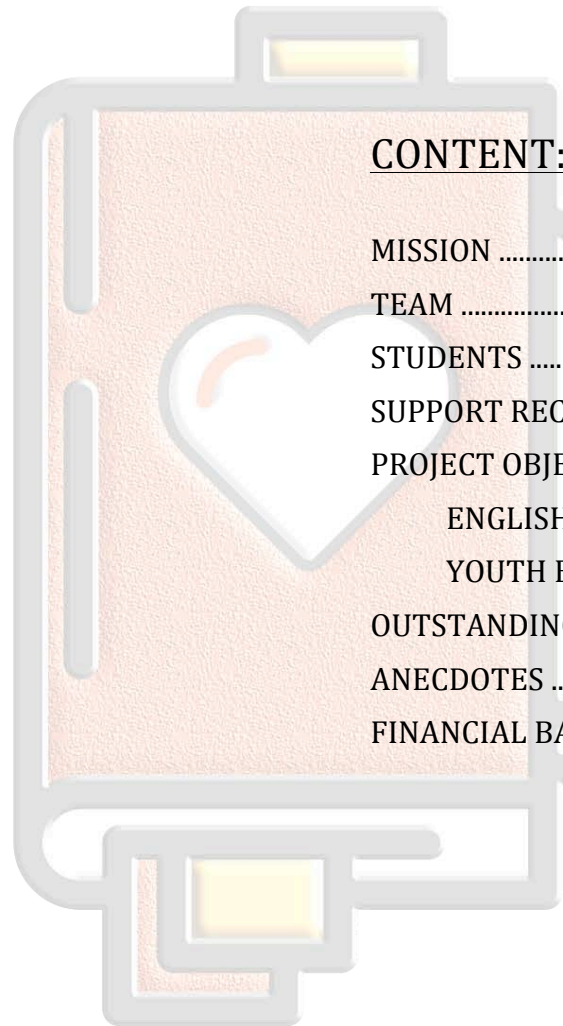




ANNUAL REPORT 2019

ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA HABIBI CENTER



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# MISSION



The Habibi Center is a non-formal education project that was started in Greece in August of 2016, and officially registered in the National Association Register in Spain under the name “Asociación Española Habibi Center” since October of 2018. Its principal mission is to provide support at different levels to refugee youth between the ages of 13 to 19, coming from various countries who are or have been in conflict – mainly from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also from other countries situated in the Middle East and Africa – who have seen themselves obligated to remain on a temporary or undefined period of time in Greece.

The Habibi Center is a safe and secure living space, where we offer education, values surrounded by multiculturalism, affection and respect. In it, we try to help young people with a high degree of vulnerability, anger, frustration and uncertainty obtain self-esteem, confidence and independence necessary to build a dignified and quality-filled future within our society.

# TEAM

## **STEPHANIE**

I arrived in Greece in 2015, with the intention of helping for one month, but I saw so much need I decided to continue. I worked in the Kitchen of one camp in the north of Greece with young people who resided there. After a short time of teaching English classes with a friend, we decided to close down the kitchen and open up an education center: the Habibi Center. I had a lot of dreams of creating an educational center for refugee youth but I never imagined it would be like it is today. Although it may sound strange, the Habibi Center is like a child to me. It has been a great adventure giving birth along with raising it. Even though I was a first time mother and with no previous experience, this project has grown strong and healthy, and is becoming something beautiful and special. It has become a home, not only for me, but for everyone who has passed through it. The Habibi Center is a place where the youth, many of whom are unaccompanied minors, belong to a family, OUR family.

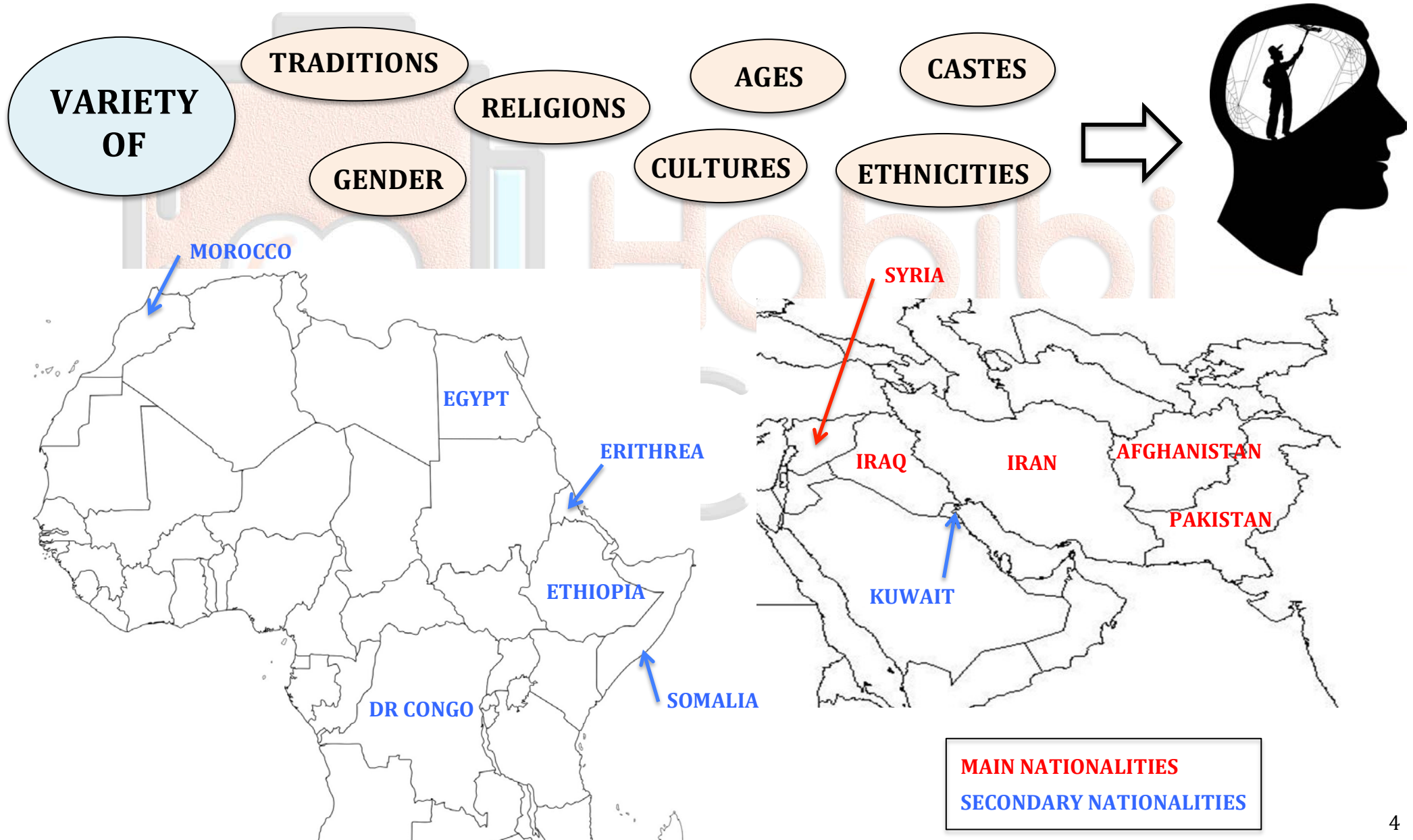
## **ALEX**

In December of 2016, by chance, or maybe not, I landed at the Habibi Center. Those four weeks in the north of Greece captivated me. Although I had to return to Scotland, where I was living, I continued to be involved with the Habibi Center, giving online Mathematic classes and helping to improve other aspects of the project. It was in January of 2018, when I decided to leave my time in Scotland behind, and move to Greece indefinitely, to become fully involved in the project and to enjoy the day-to-day intensity of the center. During this time I have worked more and have carried more responsibility than ever in my entire life. The recompense is simply feeling that we play an important part in the lives of many young people who are fighting to make a humble mark in our society and who seek to be respected.





# STUDENTS



LIMIT OF STUDENTS  
WITH 2 TEACHERS

30 - 35

# STUDENTS

LIMIT OF STUDENTS  
WITH 3 TEACHERS

40 - 45

The older students, the ones that will be staying permanently in Greece or those waiting to be relocated to other countries, have been with us for over a year. Others have left the Habibi Center because they have been relocated to new countries of asylum or have outgrown the school or have other responsibilities that don't allow them to continue with the heavy schedule of classes.



During 2019, approximately 100 students have gone through the Center, 30% of these students have been in the country with at least one family member taking care of them, whilst the other 70% are or have been unaccompanied minors. These children normally live in shelters where they receive legal coverage and other basic needs.

# SUPPORT RECEIVED

## LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

This project has been sustained since it's beginnings thanks to the help of various Spanish groups. Two of these groups committed a fixed amount of support for 2019. One of the groups wanted their support to go specifically to pay the rent of the center and the donations of the other group were destined to pay different day-to-day expenses of the project. A third group who could not commit to a specific donation, committed to host a few cultural events to raise the maximum amount of money possible to donate to the project.

This was the first year we had people commit to support their grain of sand on a monthly basis. This commitment has helped us in moving forward in the stability that project and the children deserve.

## MONTHLY DONATIONS

## PUNCTUAL DONATIONS

Some people have also decided to support us in specific ways. One of these ways has been by raising money creating cultural events such as concerts and theater plays. This form of collaboration is a special way of mixing solidarity and festivity of an event of these characteristics with the educational and cultural component. Another form of support has been through individuals who have raised funds reaching out to family and friends.

We have also received support from a group of students from an institute in Athens who have decided to collect school materials for our center. It encourages us so much to see how some young people have initiated activities such as these because they feel the need to help others who are more vulnerable than them.

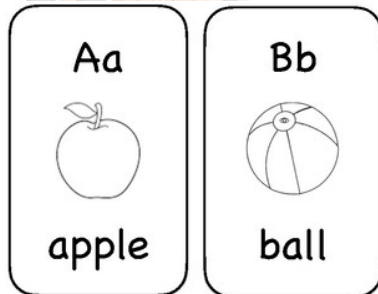
## YOUNG STUDENTS



# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH CLASSES AT ACADEMIC LEVEL

The Team members understand that without a **structured** and **constant** progression, the learning of this language will no longer be effective and runs the risk that the young people will lose their motivation. Therefore, as soon as they have finished taking the level test to know which group they best fit, we insist on the importance of attending classes from Monday to Friday, and to try to give 100% daily so that the learning speed of the group can increase.



Our teaching begins, for some of the students, at the lowest level. They don't know the sounds of the letters of our alphabet and their correct reading. Without the help of a translator and with as individualized and personalized education, in a few weeks, the young people acquire a sufficient level to start incorporating new vocabulary and basic grammar knowledge.

As students increase their level, apart from learning new concepts and improving their communication, they are encouraged to gain autonomy. Thanks to class dynamics and an open and creative vision of learning, they are helped to learn how to learn in the way they feel most comfortable.





# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH CLASSES AT ACADEMIC LEVEL

When young people have been a part of the Habibi Center “family” for a while, and it is considered that they have reached an optimum level, they are offered the opportunity and help in the preparation and payment of the official Cambridge exam – Level A2 and B1, commonly called KET and PET respectively. In this way, in addition to being able to use the learning of this language in their day to day, they are also equipped with the official certificates that will facilitate the search for a better job and will help them with their asylum interviews and/or family reunification, and progression of their studies.



RESULTS EXAMS A2 (KET) 2019					
CANDIDATES	CERTIFICATE B1 WITH DISTINCTION	CERTIFICATE A2 WITH MERIT	CERTIFICATE A2	CERTIFICATE A1	NO CERTIFICATE
8	2	1	2	3	-

RESULTS EXAMS B1 (PET) 2019			
CANDIDATES	CERTIFICATE B1	CERTIFICATE A2	NO CERTIFICATE
10	-	10	-

\* We still don't have the results of the exams taken in December for 5 candidates for the KET and 7 candidates for the PET.

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



Some people may simply see the Habibi Center as a center to learn English, but those of us who work there see it in a different way. The team works hard daily to see **healthy and balanced growth in the young people**. Most of them, whether they are residing with a family member or as unaccompanied minor are surrounded by a multitude of negative factors such as depression, emotional instability, illiteracy, uncertainty about legal situations or security problems. In spite of their young age and any of the above factors, we often emphasize the following quote:

*"YOU CANNOT GO BACK AND CHANGE THE BEGINNING, BUT YOU CAN START WHERE YOU ARE AND CHANGE THE END."*

C.S. LEWIS

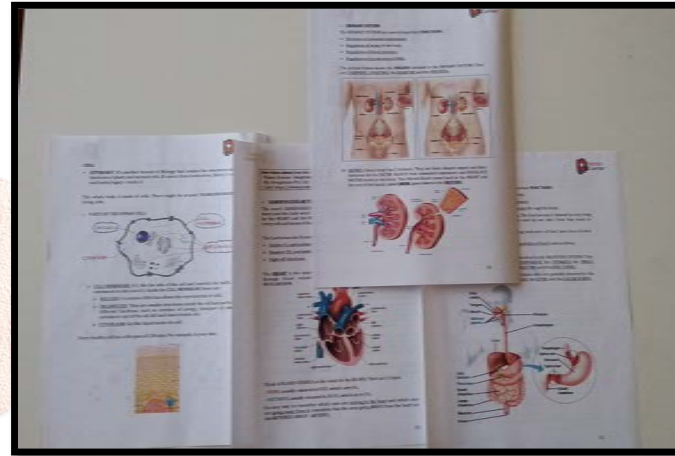
Many of these young people have never been valued as they really deserve. Hence, their self-esteem and confidence are in most cases nonexistent. In the center we try to help them set short, medium and long-term goals and to work to acquire them. It is true that at their age they start with a disadvantage in our society, but that does not mean that with effort and motivation they cannot reach their goals.

It's an immense motivation for us to see how many of them are already building a dignified present and sowing to also achieve a stable and quality filled future.



# OUTSTANDING ACTIVITIES

Alex spent a week at the beginning of the year with different young people of level B1, to hold a workshop on Anatomy and Physiology of the human body. The students had the opportunity to learn the names of the different systems and organs of the human body and their functions.



Thanks to the donation of different laptops from The United States and the help of Rick, a volunteer from that same country, we were able to hold two workshops in July, with two different student groups, where the basic use of the computer was taught including Microsoft Word and different Google tools. They also had time devoted to learning to type.



# OUTSTANDING ACTIVITIES

Anahí, a Spanish photographer and a volunteer helped run a workshop in August using a pinhole camera. Several students were able to build their own cameras with shoeboxes and then play with them for a week, learning about classic development processes.



Javier, a Spanish volunteer who has been supporting the Habibi Center since its beginnings, brought his experience to Athens and held a one-week workshop in August. Two different groups of students enjoyed learning different aspects of science, such as the universe, biosphere, hydrosphere, life and cells, the properties of light and basic concepts of electricity.

# OUTSTANDING ACTIVITIES



Anne, a Finnish volunteer, who has collaborated with the Habibi Center on various occasions, returned in July to run an interesting artistic project. This time, 7 of our students created 2 self-portraits using the collage technique. One of the portraits represented their interior, revealing their fears, goals, skills, experiences and perspective of their daily life in Greece. In contrast, the other showed their external appearance, the one everyone can see. In addition to the two self-portraits, the youth also had the opportunity to illustrate with words the reasons why they chose to reveal their inner selves with those particular images. They also gave their basic information, as it would appear in their asylum documentation: age, nationality, asylum status, and a few other facts which you would know in the first 5 minutes of meeting them. After 2 weeks of hard work, we were able to exhibit the project in an art gallery, so that the world could see their thoughts in person. A book with scanned copies of our students' work is in the process of being published so that anyone who would want to get a copy would have access. We hope to have it available for sale in the first few months of 2020.

# ANECDOTES

Welcome to the Habibi Center! This is what some of our students tell the new volunteers. This simple gesture is a way of saying that they feel the center like their own home and they are kindly opening it up to the new arrivals.

Our first student, an unaccompanied 17-year-old minor, arrived at the Habibi Center in July 2017. She began at the lowest level of English (A1), but by March of 2018 she had already acquired her B1 official certificate. This past May, after two years of studies, she got her school diploma from a Greek school. These last two summers she has been working at a hotel on one of the Greek islands. Now, with her Greek asylum papers, she has become independent, responsible for herself, lives in her own apartment and works in Athens, without any help from the government. She is an example for others to follow, as we have seen her growth from the first day of her arrival.

We have a 17 year old boy who lost so much on his way to Greece. Now, alone in Athens, he is trying to mold himself to his new reality. It is hard for him to assume his situation and, although he has been fortunate to have been accepted to a prestigious American school, he often thinks of throwing in the towel and start working for fast money. Despite this, we try to convey all the serenity possible and we are seeing him move forward little by little in the psychological, academic and social level.

Pakistanis, Afghans, Syrians, Iraqis, Africans...

Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Africans...

Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis ,Atheists...

Hazaras, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Heratis, Tajiks...

It is an immense joy to see how different ties of friendships have been created among the students, without taking into account their nationalities, communities or ethnicities, where they come from, or even what they believe.



# ANECDOTES

With the passing of time, some of our female students have decided to stop wearing the *hijab* (the handkerchief Muslim women wear on their heads). For some of them it has been a simple act of freedom, of feeling that they can do what they want without anyone dictating how they dress and without feeling less Muslim. The reason for others has been so they are not so discriminated and can fit in, even though they would like to continue wearing it.

We also had a 17-year-old boy who, apart from coming to his hour and a half class, asked us if he could spend the whole afternoon with us, even if that meant he was in a classroom studying alone.

He said he did not feel comfortable at his shelter and, in his own words, he said: the center is the only place where I feel at peace and the only place where I can disconnect and leave my headaches aside.

A new, 17-year-old student, arrived at the center last January. He started at a very low level but very quickly he let us know that he had a tremendous desire to learn and improve. He took the KET exam last June and did so well, he received his B1 certificate with distinction. His hunger didn't stop there and he continued to learn at an accelerated pace. In September, he started preparing for the PET exam. He quickly surpassed his teammates and the scores he got on the practice tests showed that he would have the scores to obtain the B1 certificate. The only problem that stopped him from taking this exam was his legal situation. At the end of November he had to move to his new country of asylum, Northern Ireland. However, arriving there he didn't have to start from scratch. Upon his arrival, they saw a person who was self-confident and with great potential.

Two of our 17-year-old unaccompanied minors lived at a camp on the outside of Athens. Everyday they had to take two buses, an hour long, and then the metro for another 40 minutes. However, they were always the first to arrive and always dressed with a beautiful smile.

# ANECDOTES

The student that has been with us the longest, has been here for almost two years. He was 15 when we met him. Two of his family members already live in Scotland, for almost two months now. But he along with two younger brothers and his father are still waiting to receive their plane tickets and be reunified with them.

He began at the lowest level, learning how to write and identify the letters and sounds of our alphabet. Academically, he has been able to prepare for the PET exam and getting closer to passing it.

Psychologically speaking, darkness seems to consume him to the point that neither as a person nor as a student he is advancing at an ideal speed. It is very difficult for him to digest the fact that as soon as he makes new friendships, these friends disappear having been accepted and relocated to other countries.

Being with us at the center seems to help him to open up and be more optimistic. We push him everyday to face new challenges with courage and not being disappointed if he doesn't reach them, as long as he has given 100%. The two art projects, in which he was a part of, have helped him a lot to open up and express that darkness that he has carried for a long time.

A 16-year-old unaccompanied minor started classes at the Habibi Center in May 2018 with a low level of English (Level A1). Although she had plenty of personal issues as well as in her shelter, she got used to the centre from the very first day. She got her first official certificate (Level A2) in December 2018 and she was only 1 point under the minimum score to get the Level B1 in March 2019.

After being 1 year with us, in April 2019, she had to move to her new country of assylum, the Netherlands. From there, she let us know that she didn't know how she could thank us enough as she was the only youngster in her camp who could speak English and be able to express herself with no need for intepreters.

Last March, a disease, too quickly took one of our young people. The volunteers at that time suffered a great sadness as we lost a very sweet person who was dearly loved by all. We were afraid that the reaction of the other students would be even worse, but to our surprise, they were the ones who gave us, the volunteers, strength to return to normal as soon as possible.

# ANECDOTES

Some of the unaccompanied youth who start to come to the Habibi Center, have only been in Athens two or three weeks. This means a new home with 15 or 20 strangers, a new city and zero friends. Absolutely everything is new to them.

For all of this and for all the experiences they carry from their long journey, it isn't hard to imagine why some of them, both boys and girls, need to exhibit the appearance of the tough guy. It is a natural attitude of self-protection against the various dangers that lurk around them.

It brings us great joy to see that sometimes even in as short as two or three days that mask disappears to make room for us to see that sweet person, that person who needs love and respect, that side which unfortunately many of them have had to hide for a long time.

We don't really know what makes them change that first appearance so quickly, allowing us to see them for who they are, but we feel that we convey the idea that they can see the Habibi Center as a safe place where they don't need to protect themselves from danger anymore.

For a few weeks, we had a star at the center, one of those that appear in a TV series at an early age. One of those that makes everything revolve around that fictional character that others have created her to be.


In this case, it was after her family was part of a documentary exposing the situation of the refugees in Greece. When it was finished, those responsible for the documentary began publicizing their work in another European country and they invited this young girl to this country to present the documentary live.

The phrases we heard this student speak didn't sound natural at all. They sounded more like fragments of typical phrases a famous activist would use to try to denounce something.

We do not think that these documentaries are a negative thing. However, what we do think is that we have a greater responsibility when we work with young people and that we must be very careful how we use them in order not to harm or hinder their personal growth.



# FINANCIAL BALANCE



<i><b>EXPENSES</b></i>	
<i><b>TYPE OF EXPENSES</b></i>	<i><b>AMOUNT (€)</b></i>
RENT CENTRE	6.300
MATERIALS (books, ink printer, pens, etc.)	537,24
PHOTOCOPIES	1.051,75
ACTIVITIES (sport, birthdays, farewells, outings, etc.)	226,35
EQUIPMENT (furniture, decoration, etc.)	535,21
MAINTENANCE (cleaning products, toilet supplies, etc.)	202,94
SHORT-TERM WORKSHOPS	648,88
VOLUNTEER FORMATION	1.580
INFORMATIVE TALKS IN SPAIN (DECEMBER 2018)	767,22
ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION (bureaucracy, posts, transportation, maintenance bank account, etc.)	526,77
REGISTRATION CAMBRIDGE EXAMS	2.111,45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.487,81</b>

<i><b>INCOME</b></i>	
<i><b>TYPE OF INCOME</b></i>	<i><b>AMOUNT (€)</b></i>
EXCESS FROM 2018	486,40
MONTHLY DONATIONS	770
PUNCTUAL DONATIONS	4.456,75
SUPPORT GROUPS DONATIONS	7.010
EVENTS DONATIONS	2.946,83
MAINTENANCE BANK	0,17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.670,15</b>

<i><b>EXCESS FOR 2020</b></i>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.182,34€</b>