

ITV websites use cookies. By continuing to browse the site you are agreeing to our use of cookies. For more details about cookies and how to manage them, see our [cookie policy](#).

✔ Continue

itv



NEWS

Your area

Topics ▾

ITV REPORT 14 March 2018 at 10:48pm

From a Syrian war zone to work experience in Parliament: One refugee's story



▪ Video report by ITV News International Affairs Editor Rageh Omaar

Two years ago Ishmael was living in the infamous Calais jungle, now he is settling into his final term at university and has started work experience in Parliament, but getting here wasn't easy.

He traveled for 12 months after leaving Syria and lived in the jungle for 13, hoping for the chance to start a life in the UK. He almost gave up, before the British Government agreed to resettle him.

Ishmael and many other children were handed a lifeline when Lord Dubs, a child refugee himself, campaigned for the "Dubs amendment" that allowed 3,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be fostered in the UK.

Before arriving in here, a 15-year-old Ishmael had to, for the first time, leave his home city of Aleppo alone and navigate his way to Britain.

He said: "That moment I can not forget, there are no words that can describe that feeling.

"When I left my family it was the most difficult moment for me, to leave them as I might not see them again."



Ishmael studies for his politics degree at a university in London Credit: ITV News

Ishmael had to travel a notoriously dangerous route, taking a boat from Turkey to Greece, a journey thousands failed to complete.

Then, a month later, after walking or travelling on train through much of Europe, he arrived in the jungle, where he remained for 13 months.

After sailing to Greece on a cramped boat, Ishmael thought he had overcome the most difficult part. When he arrived in Calais he realised the worst was yet to come.

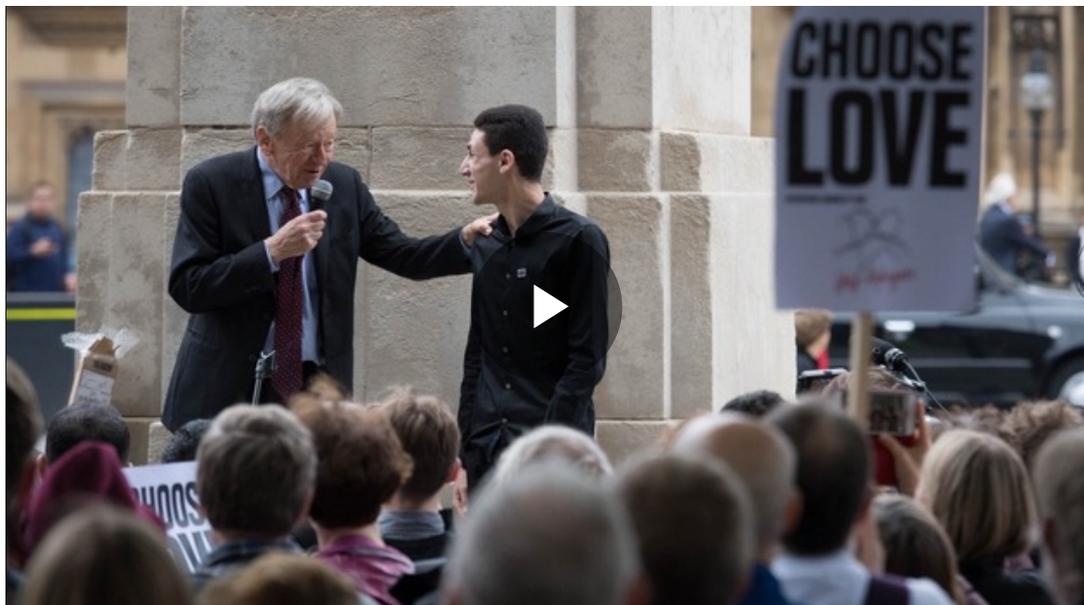
"I realised that the worst part for me was to be in the jungle for 13 months and lose hope.

"After that you have no idea where you will go. I thought about giving up, especially after the French government decided to destroy the jungle."

Then Lord Dubs, who was one of 669 mainly Jewish children to arrive here from Czechoslovakia in 1939, got his amendment through Parliament.

That meant Duncan Lewis lawyers, working alongside charity Safe Passage, could apply for permission to allow Ishmael to come to Britain as a child refugee.

Lord Dubs says the UK could be doing more to help child refugees.



After trying to enter the UK illegally hundreds of times Ishmael says it was like a "fantasy" to be allowed to enter legally.

Once in Britain he was fostered by a loving family and enrolled onto a politics course at a London university.

Now, at 18-years-old, he has started a work placement in Parliament with the man who helped bring him here, Lord Dubs.

Ishmael says his ultimate goal, after leaving Syria, was to start a new life in Britain.

"I learned in my education that it was a democracy and humanitarian so UK was always my target. Through television and education, I learned this," he said.

Now he wants to help the thousands who weren't so lucky, by campaigning with Lord Dubs in the House of Lords to bring more refugees here.



Ishmael tries to phone his parents in Syria from his flat in London Credit: ITV News

"There are millions who are still there and they work hard to survive and make it work and they hope that peace will come without being killed."

Last updated Thu 15 Mar 2018

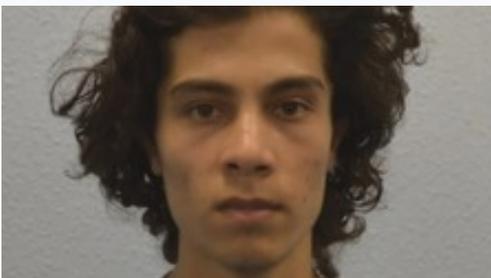
[WORLD](#) • [SYRIA](#) • [REFUGEES](#)



TOP STORIES



Boris Johnson points finger at Putin over nerve agent attack



Parsons Green Tube bomber guilty of attempted murder