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| Unravelling the Mediterranean migration crisis |

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| * **Amed’s story** |

Amed was living in Damascus where he was studying to become a doctor. He explained that in order to become a doctor or a lawyer in Syria it was necessary to support the Ba’ath party, the ruling party of Bashar al-Assad, the President of Syria: ‘*You need to be a member of the Assad’s party. They give you a card and a phone number, which you have to call in case you hear somebody saying bad things about the party. I denied becoming a member of that party*.’

Amed had experienced difficulties from the age of 16 years when he started his military service and was sent letters asking him to explain why he had not joined the party: ‘*They wanted to know everything about me. They forced me to repeat an academic year during my university studies due to my political beliefs. They warned me that this would happen all my life if I didn’t join Assad’s party*.’

Amed left Syria and travelled to Saudi Arabia to join his father in April 2011, 20 days after the revolution started but he decided to return in order to document what was happening: ‘*I was watching on TV that the situation in Syria was deteriorating. However, I returned to Syria two months later. It wasn’t easy for me to sit and observe the regime killing people. I returned in order to help people there. I went to Damascus, Aleppo and Homs. I started taking photos and recording videos of the regime’s atrocities. I wanted to send these photos to news channels*.’

Amed moved from city to city but in late 2011 was attacked and taken into detention where he was interrogated about the photographs he had taken, beaten and tortured. Ahmed was released unexpectedly because the head of the prison knew his father. He went to live with his mother helping people who had been displaced within Syria: ‘*I was a one-man NGO for one year. I was giving them medicines, clothes, whatever I had. I was approached many times to fight with the regime. But I denied taking a gun and killing people. I was receiving threats for a year*.’

He was about to get married but his wife-to-be and her family were killed when a bomb hit their house just five days before the ceremony. In December 2012 Amed decided to go to Lebanon where his brother was living. He stayed there for nearly a year but found it impossible to secure work so he and the remaining members of his family went to Jordan before travelling on to Turkey and Greece.