

**Amari was only 16 years old when he arrived in the UK:
“Hope never left me. In my heart I always wished for a better life,
where I can be who I am and feel like I belong”**

Amari* has been living in a refugee camp for as long as he can remember.

His mum left him there to travel and provide for his family. He stayed with his father who had mental health issues. Amari suffered verbal and physical abuse because he was part of a minority group and because he was gay.

One day his mother came back and decided that leaving was the best option for Amari, who could no longer live in his community and was at risk of being detained and eventually killed. That's when his journey began: he was first trafficked into Libya where he was forced to work and was beaten every day, then he travelled to the UK in a lorry together with other people he didn't even know and reached Scotland.

Along his forced travel, Amari only witnessed violence and chaos. He was only 16 years old.

Amari explains: “I was living in a hotel, I didn't know no one, I didn't trust people around me and nobody provided me with information about my status and my family. I didn't have any clothes; I remember it was cold and I was rarely eating, I had troubles sleeping because of nightmares.”

The social workers didn't believe he was a minor: “They kept saying that I was 18 years old and that they didn't believe my story, they assessed me in 10 minutes and never provided me with the right information I needed at that time.”

Later he was referred to JustRight Scotland who provided him with legal assistance. The legal team challenged the Social Work decision and – only after that, he was taken into care and was assisted by a guardian.

He lived for 2 years in a limbo, not knowing what would happen to him, the Home Office kept asking why he left Africa and moved to UK.

He told his story over and over again: “I can't return to my country because I am gay. I am scared of the community and the police. Gay people are not accepted in my country and the authorities do not protect them. They hurt them. I also cannot hide anymore. I cannot hide who I am. I have accepted who I am after a long time. I hope to get protection and be able to express myself and have a good future. I hope I will start feel safer so that I can live my life as I am.”

JustRight Scotland

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Amari has now been granted refugee status in the UK. He is studying part-time in college, and he hopes to become an interpreter to be able to help other migrants like him: "I speak 5 languages including French and Arabic, I hope I can assist other migrants who are going through the same process I lived so I can help them communicate how they feel, what they had lived and why they want to build a new life here in Scotland."

In the meantime, he is also looking for a part-time job as "I would like to start gaining new skills, being part of the community, and supporting myself like other of my friends are doing."

When asked why he never gave up, Amari says: "Everything I went through is sometimes indescribable but hope never left me. In my heart I always wished for a better life, where I can be who I am and feel like I belong."

**To protect the confidentiality of the people involved, identifying information has been changed.*