

ISSUE 22

OCTOBER  
2017



# Baismag



# Dear Readers,

Until you leave education, September is always a month of intrepidness. It recalls a sense of excitement, curiosity, and a little bit of fear. Suddenly, no aspect of your life is certain, from how demanding the classes will be, to whether you will get on with your housemates. Yet as the days of September fall behind you, there's a rhythm that appears seemingly out of nowhere, and before you know it, the month has come and gone. This issue has attempted to capture a sense of this feeling with a number of articles around the theme 'First Impressions', from amusing anecdotes from a Third Year in Moscow, to inter-cultural dating tips and tricks (quite possibly taking inspiration from the First Years' Weekend). We also have a more political section, a *Great Debate*, and a look into a future where Syrian refugees can return to their homeland. Thanks to all the students of International Studies who wrote articles, helped edit, drew illustrations, and sorted the layout – there wouldn't be a magazine without you. We hope for all those new to the course, this issue gives you a great first impression of what the team and contributors of Baismag can create.

*Elsa Court*  
(Editor-in-Chief)

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# THE WASHER FROM DUTCH HELL

By Julia Moore  
Illustration by Jiacheng Ji

I walked in the house on August eighteenth  
Walls surrounded me, white, brown, green  
I peered into the bathroom and to my dismay  
I found a brown washer on its way to decay

Now it wasn't just broken, it was dirty as hell  
And don't even get me started on the smell  
Here follows the terrible story, how it all unfolds  
From the filth within to the broken door

Caked with dirt, teeming with mold,  
squiggly black hairs stuck to its door the door  
that wouldn't open  
that truly wouldn't budge  
A big black door  
with a big black grudge

I called the repairman  
who took his grand time  
coming to fix it  
and its green foamy grime  
Seven days later  
he arrived with his tools  
ready to make my washer good as new

Finally at last armed with bleach and a sponge  
I was ready to scrub it to glam from grunge  
I opened the door and cleaned it well  
This story was taking a turn from shitty to swell

But I spoke too soon  
You see,  
I threw my entire load of clothes  
into the washer, there it goes  
I turned the thing on  
life seemed good  
Until I opened the door  
and there it stood  
Broken in my hands once again  
the door had snapped  
at my excited hands



I pressed my hand up to the door  
Just inches between  
me and my clothes that had just been cleaned  
They were glistening, bright  
Just ready to be worn  
Instead they remained trapped  
looking forlorn

I called the repairman once again  
Hoping that he could put an end  
To this hellish nightmare in my life  
To this door that kept me up at night

The repairman arrived just the next day  
With a brand new door and a scolding "nee"  
Finally, this door could be the one  
That unlocked my clothes revealed the sun  
This door was a new beginning for me  
It would give my clothes life, set them free

Ten minutes later the repairman was done  
New door, new life, I could see the sun  
As a clean lavender smell arose  
I jumped for joy and embraced my clothes

I closed the washer back up again  
With a new load of wash and a clear head  
When it was finished I grasped the handle again  
This time it worked fine, my friends

This story is not too unfamiliar I imagine  
For other internationals renting in this fashion  
Whether it's a broken washer or a moldy shower  
Or a fridge that smells like the milk's gone sour  
Just close your eyes, take a deep breath,  
Buy some bleach, and drink to your death



# THE GREAT DEBATE:

## WHAT ABOUT

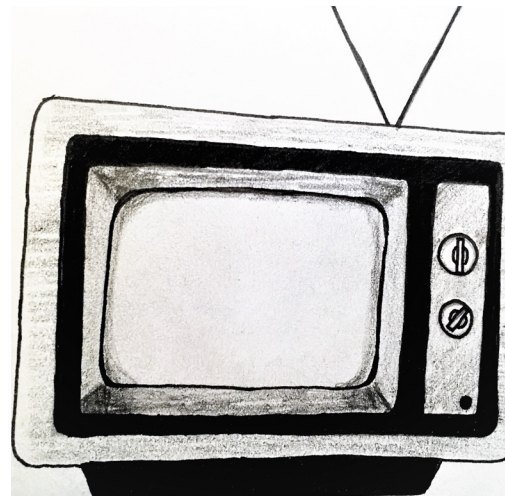
By Jitze De Vries

Over 400 deaths. 600 more missing. A large city was the target of mother nature yet again, destroying everything in her path. However, as many of you might think of Houston or a city in Florida or perhaps Bangladesh, these figures actually belong to somewhere a shorter plane-ride away, yet somewhere that the Western-oriented media refuses to cover as in-depth as its Western counterpart: Freetown, Sierra Leone. The bias of the media in its selective reporting on primarily “Western” news stories might seem straightforward, but it can be argued that this plays a large role in maintaining a harmful worldview based on the clear distinction between the “developed” West and the “developing” rest.

There are two main issues with the way the media reports news. As already mentioned, one is the selectiveness through which stories of tragedies in countries in mainly Europe and North America are made out to be more tragic than similar events happening elsewhere. A quick look at the coverage of recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium in comparison to similar attacks in the Middle East shows just this. Many try to justify this, for example arguing that the attacks are closer to home. Yet it is undeniable that through this skewed coverage, it is implied that lives in Western countries carry more value, as it is a normality that people abroad are victimized, but an abnormality that such events happen close to home. If we, as a society, are truly striving to see everyone as equals, it is important that the media must play a part in this and thus divide its coverage fairly.

Secondly, when other areas such as countries in Africa or Asia are covered, it is rarely anything other than negative. Academics have noted that coverage of Africa typifies the worst elements of media coverage worldwide. The coverage of the region is thus largely sensationalist and aims to evoke emotional response and guilt in the reader as there is often a donation message attached to it. This perpetuates the idea that developing countries, such as Sierra Leone, are constantly struggling and are not showing any progress. It keeps paternalist views alive through which it is the West’s duty to care for the poor children in Africa, Asia and South America, enforcing harmful stereotypes.

While it seems easy to justify the lens through which the Western media covers world news, it is undeniable that it is a harmful lens which must be adjusted in order to create a more accurate and equal worldview among the Western public.





# WESTERN MEDIA

## **EVERYONE ELSE?**

By Nicole Garwe

Is Western media biased? Yes.

Is Western media justified in its bias? Well...

The deaths in Sierra Leone and the stories of families still searching for their loved ones are tragic and the victims deserve the world's support. However, can we really blame western media for the lack of coverage of this tragedy and others that have happened before?

It has been argued that this bias shows that the western media believes western lives are more important but the fact here is that western media is just that - western. This means it is media that is based mostly in Europe and the United States. Therefore, it will cover mostly issues from these regions. Though in many parts of the world outside of the West, western media (such as CNN, BBC, or France24) is consumed, the reality is that these news companies are based in the West therefore they cater to western issues. People in Europe and in the United States want to see news about themselves, rather than some far away land in Africa that does not immediately affect them. Whilst this sounds flippant and unsympathetic, it is true that we would selfishly rather talk about issues that would immediately affect us over issues that would not.

Another important factor to note is the side of media related to aid. When natural disasters occur, aid organisations immediately rush to help the victims. Unfortunately, certain regions receive more media attention, and thus money, than others. Writing in *The Guardian*, Harry Thompson highlights that aid organisations are constantly trying “to capitalise on the public's pulled heartstrings and setting themselves out to enhance their own popularity and prestige”. Media coverage and aid go hand in hand, and this quote demonstrates that where aid is sent depends on which disasters gain the most attention. Well-known NGOs have greater power to draw attention to a disaster when it can be related to somewhere nearby, rather than a grassroots organisation in a far away country with little funding.

The more a story has a “wow” factor, the more it sells, as the media tends to concentrate on the immediate impact, rather than with a long-term story. Hence why, Africa which is portrayed as poor and a breeding ground for unfortunate situations, does not attract as much attention as a European terrorist. As is argued, the coverage of Africa has always been ‘sensationalist’ and stereotypical. When tragedy strikes in Africa, it is deemed normal. However, a terrorist attack in London is not normal—it has the “wow” factor—meaning it attracts more attention. More viewers. More money. So, is the West justified in its lack of coverage of non-Western countries? It is fair to say it is not justified but it is understandable. The question presents many underlying issues in the way the West in general views non-Western countries. Until stereotypical essentialisms are dismantled in education, politics and all other institutions, we will not see a change in the dominant narrative in today's Western media coverage.

Illustrations by: Victor Rosa Molewijk

By Arianna Conte

A new year has started and with it the student life... which mostly corresponds with a permanent lack of money! It does not matter whether you are a Dutch or an international student, these tips to save up (or even not spend at all) will suit you!

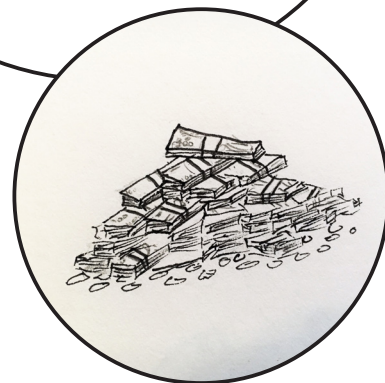
1. **studentenbox.nl**: here you can get a box full of food and discounts for free! You just need to give your email and pick it up here in The Hague. It contains mostly snacks but hey, you don't hear me complaining. The site is in Dutch but there is so little to fill in that you don't even need a good understanding of the language. The website also contains discount codes for everything from pizza to stationary.

2. **Scoupy**: this site/app is the holy grail for every student! Each week there are discounts or even things for free available on supermarkets. You buy them and in two days you get part of the money or the whole amount of money back, depending on the deal. Furthermore, new offers help you decide what to eat, which is not a minor issue when you now almost always have to cook for yourself.

3. **surfspot.nl**: for all things technology, for a great discount. As a student, you can receive Microsoft Office software for just €4, instead of the normal price of nearly €130! You can also buy discounted hardware such as laptops, e-readers, printers, and second-hand phones.

4. **Look out for discounts yourself**: cinema tickets, clothing stores, cafes and sandwich shops – there are many places around The Hague that will give you 10% discount or more on your spending if you show that magic blue student card. If it's not clearly advertised, it never hurts to ask!

# STUDENT LIFE AT ITS CHEAPEST



But  
have  
you been  
there  
yet?

## STUDYING IN LEIDEN

By Natalie Manders

There's a sizable number of students from International Studies who live not in The Hague, but Leiden itself. Whether you are meeting up with a friend, meeting a tutor, or having to do some admin at Plexus, here are the top three places to make your visit to Leiden worthwhile!

**Van der Werf park**: act like a local and chill with your friends during a study break at the famous park in front of the law faculty!

**De Kroeg**: meaning 'the bar' in Dutch, the name for a local bar that turns into a club on the weekend, always an easy go-to place for a fun time!

**Einsteins**: a beautiful restaurant/cafe/bar located on one of the most beautiful canals around! Tip: Wednesday nights they have "international night" and starting at 10 Einsteins turns into a big party! Don't miss out! Den Haag: stay tuned for next edition



# LIFE AFTER DESTRUCTION

By Hugo Chadima

After half a million deaths, and 13 million individuals displaced, it is inevitable that eventually, the years of misery in Syria will end.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is about to be pushed out, as ar-Raqqah and Deir ez-Zor have been encircled and partially conquered by government and Kurdish forces. The United States pulled out their support for the Syrian opposition, while the Russian Federation still aides Syrian Armed Forces logistically and militarily. The opposition has been reduced to ruling only a few scattered territories across Syria, with its last significant stronghold being in Idlib and President Bashar al-Assad has clung on to power long enough to once again have control over most of the important cities and infrastructure. However, even he must compromise on autonomy or even independence with the Kurds, or else he holds onto a state with a serious separatist issue. So, with the outcome of the war almost certain at this point, one question remains: how will Syria rebuild?

International Organisation for Migration reported that 600 000 displaced Syrians returned home in the first 7 months of 2017. These numbers, small in comparison to the total number of displaced Syrians, nonetheless mark a future trend as the country slowly becomes safer to inhabit. Many are motivated, aside home-sickness and patriotism, to return and protect their property, or to take advantage of the improving stability and economic situation in the area they called home. If a sizeable proportion of the 13 million Syrian refugees scattered around the world managed to return home, would they have the means to rebuild the destroyed cities and restart the civilian economy? The latest UN reports on Syria's HDI from 2015, a year in which the war was arguably at its worst, puts Syria's Human Development Index score at .536. This is comparable to Syria's 1985 score of .538. From that, we can deduce building back up to Syria's pre-war HDI of .646 will take decades. However, the road towards recovery won't necessarily be endless.

If we look at historical precedents, the indication is that Syria can make a full recovery. Take the post-WW2 era in Poland and East Germany as an example. Cities like Dresden and Warsaw were levelled, resources were drained by the USSR, and the communist command economy also hindered civilian recovery. Yet in the end, both countries repaired the material damage within a few decades. If we want an example of a third world developing country which recovered after a bloody conflict, we can look no further than Rwanda, which experienced an outright genocide and a refugee crisis during the 90s, yet today it is far wealthier and better off than ever before. In comparison with Rwanda however, Syria possesses an advantage in its modest, yet still impressive oil reserve of estimated 2.5 billion barrels. With foreign investment, this could provide job opportunities for many returning Syrians. Having refugees return home with a promise of continuous aid also benefits European governments, since helping an individual in Syria costs ten times less than hosting that person as a refugee in Europe. The combination of all these potential recovery methods gives Syrian refugees many reasons to return to their homes and rebuild a post-war Syria, which will hopefully close this dark chapter in Syrian history.



Q & A

# Dating Internationals

By India Stotesbury & Yara Sewalt  
Illustrations by Jiacheng J & Victor Rosa Molewijk

So, the new year has begun. And that means fresh meat! New friendships, new enemies, new crushes and new couples. But a lot of us are quite shy when it comes to the question of love... Instead of plucking up the courage to go and confront our newly acquired target, we keep quiet and steal a glance across 2.01, stalk their Facebook profile, or hope we'll stumble into them one day accidentally (on purpose). Since we know this is all very daunting, we've thought of a way to make you feel a tad more comfortable when trying to approach your flame!\*

As there are so many different nationalities among us and we certainly don't want you to be the victim of disrespecting cultural differences. We've put together an extremely handy guide to dating the various foreigners you may encounter here at BAIS! Sounds good, dunnit? All you have to do is find out where your crush comes from and you're sorted. We matchmakers will see you at the wedding!

\*Disclaimer – since we only interviewed one person from a selected group of countries, the results are by no means representative, so use this advice at your own risk.

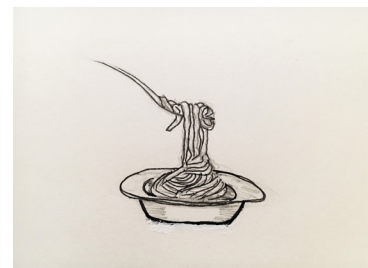
## What would be the perfect pick-up line in your language?

- French: *T'aurais pas un 06?* (Do you have an 06?)  
Polish: *Masz mapę? Zgubilem sie w twoich oczach.* (Do you have a map? I'm lost in your eyes.)  
Italian: *Sei una ladra? Perché mi hai rubato il cuore.* (Are you a thief? Because you've stolen my heart)  
Hungarian: *Szia cica, van gazdád?* (Hey cat, do you have an owner?)  
American: On a scale of one to America, how free are you tonight?  
British: You're like a prize trophy... I don't know whether to eat you or mount you!  
Turkish: No special Turkish pick up line in particular – you'll have to be extra creative for this one!  
Dutch: *Als jij een frikandel was, was je een frikandel speciaal.* (If you were a frikandel, you would be a frikandel special.)



## What would you call the perfect date?

- French: Red wine and croissants.  
Polish: Share a vodka and a *sledzik* (herring).  
Italian: Sex.  
Hungarian: Out for a walk and a drink and maybe something after that... and if you've been together for a long time then go on a trip and definitely something after that!  
American: Out for dinner or a picnic.  
British: Netflix and Chill, followed by a Cheeky Nandos (a chicken fast food restaurant).  
Turkish: Romantic dinner  
Dutch: *Midget golf!* (That's mini golf, for anyone confused).





### What are the classical beauty characteristics in your country amongst your peers?

French: A fringe and a snobby attitude.  
Polish: A fringe, shorter height than you'd see in The Netherlands, and short hair.  
Italian: Typically, large boobs and butt.  
Hungarian: Beautiful eyes.  
American: Clear skin and big eyes.  
British: Short skirts.  
Turkish: Guys that are masculine, beard currently in, brunette and semi-formal style. Brunette girls are usually liked, not too tall and long hair. Most Turkish guys probably also have admiration for Adriana Lima.  
Dutch: Tall and blonde.

### How would you greet your date for the first time?

French: A kiss on each cheek.  
Polish: A kiss on one cheek.  
Italian: A kiss on each cheek.  
Hungarian: If you've known them long enough, then a kiss.  
American: Hug.  
British: "Oi oi!" (This has to be shouted for full effect).  
Turkish: Depends on how close you are, and what your personality is. Whether you give a nice hug or an awkward and shy hi.  
Dutch: One kiss and a hug.

### Explain what the perfect first meal would be to cook together with your new flame.

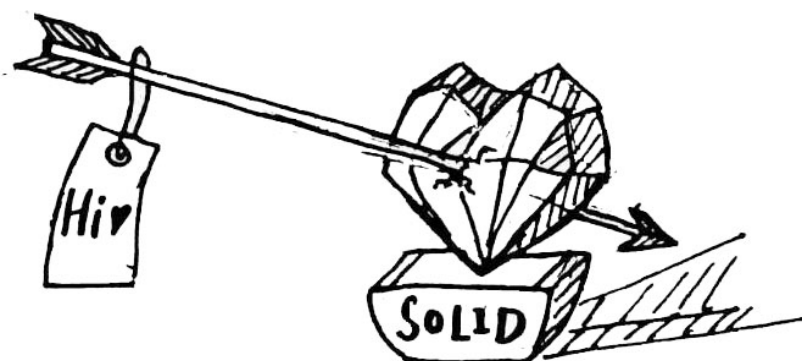
French: *Escargots*.  
Polish: *Pierogi* (Polish dumplings).  
Italian: Pasta.  
Hungarian: Pasta.  
American: Breakfast for dinner.  
British: Battered sausages and chips  
Turkish: Turkey has a broad culture of food, some fish and raki could be a good choice, or otherwise just stick to a nice pasta with wine or steak with wine.  
Dutch: *Pannekoeken* or *poffertjes* (pancakes or mini Dutch pancakes)

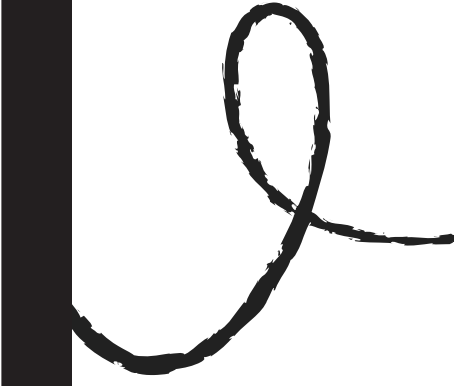
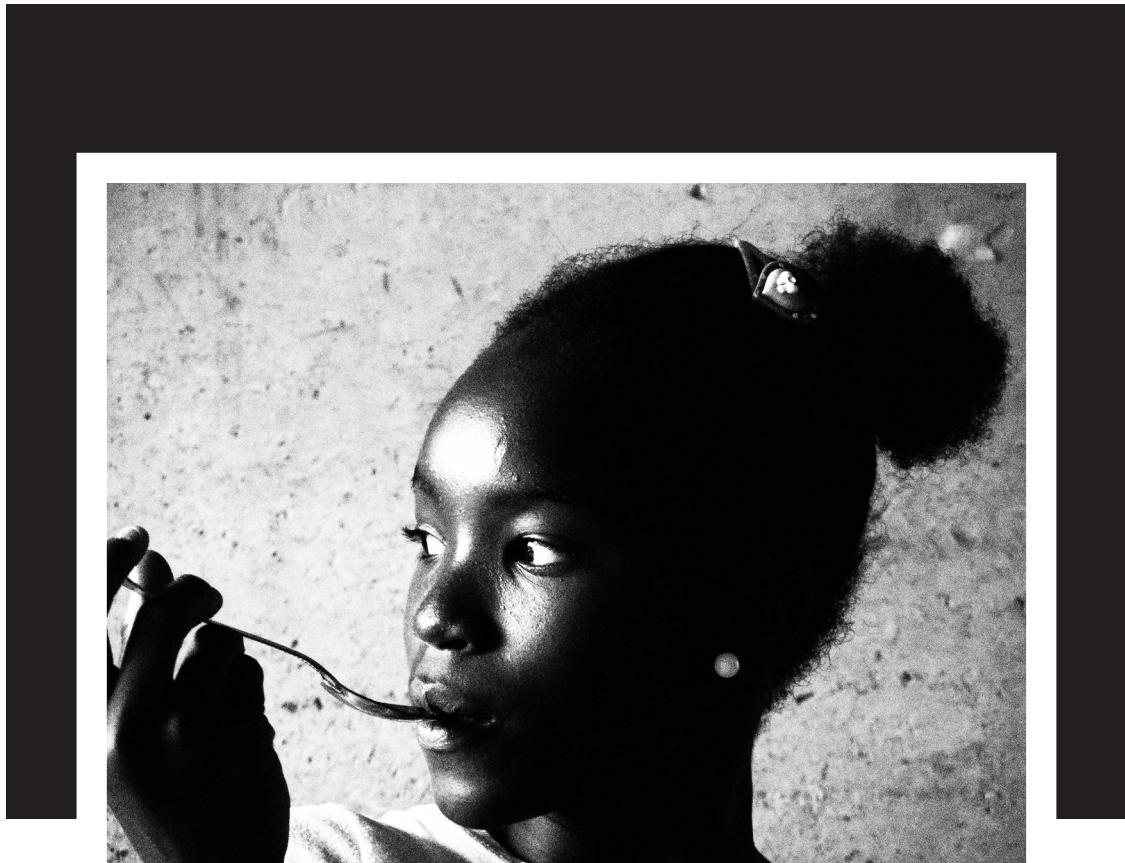
### What would you bring or like to receive as a present on the first date?

French: Cigarettes  
Polish: Flowers.  
Italian: A bottle of wine.  
Hungarian: Flowers.  
American: Flowers.  
British: [this answer wasn't printable but use your imagination].  
Turkish: Gift doesn't matter too much, if it has meaning or comes from the heart. Not something too extra on the first date, in Turkey there isn't really a first date gift giving tradition.  
Dutch: Chocolates or stroopwafels.

### What's the perfect love song for a serenade?

French: *La vie en rose*  
Polish: *Ona tancy dla mnie*.  
Italian: *Abbracciamme* by Andrea Sannino  
Hungarian: *Eternal Flame*.  
American: Can't help falling in love.  
British: Wonderwall.  
Turkish: *Meleklerin Sozu Var* or Tears in Heaven  
Dutch: One kiss and a hug.





photos by Paula Weiss



# FIRST IMPRESSIONS



photos by Paula Weiss

# Shawarma Karma

## MISGUIDED MAGNANIMITY IN MOSCOW

By Francis Farrell

***How should one feel when they get mistaken for the poor, the homeless, or the begging? What does it say about us and our society when this occurs? I sure as hell haven't figured out the answer, but a recent couple of incidents in Moscow, exactly one week apart, where the universe seemed to align and yin met yang (or should I say, sour cream met pelmeni), made me begin to really contemplate the issue.***

One sleepy September afternoon, I was heading briskly to an Armenian restaurant in a nondescript area of deepest darkest Moscow. On either side of the street were those typical, bleak Soviet apartment blocks that immediately come to mind when you imagine a Russian city's suburbs. Taking a shortcut through a yard behind such a block, I saw what can only be described as a babushka (grandmother) shuffling towards me, her small eyes staring directly at me from her scrunched-up face, and holding in her hand a small yellow plastic bowl out in front of her. Processing the image that lay before me, I immediately thought this was my time to do good – pensioners in this part of the world are not having the easiest time at present, their Soviet-era pension rarely stretching beyond the bare necessities. I took out my wallet, fumbling around for some spare change. Her gaze did not leave me. As I approached, my rubles held firmly in my hand, I began to greet her with a smile – only to look inside the bowl and see nothing but dog food. I had mistaken a woman dutifully feeding her hound for a destitute pensioner. Embarrassed out of my mind, I do the only thing that made any sense at the time: I ran out of there as fast as my little legs could take me.





Exactly one week later, I was returning to my dorm when that familiar feeling hit me: my body needs шайрма (Russian-style kebab). I picked up an attractive little wrap from my local Uzbek, but since I'd rather not take it inside my building, I wandered around the outside of the building while I devoured it, aimlessly coming to a stop next to some large garbage containers as I was lost in my thoughts and my шайрма-induced bliss. Suddenly, yet another babushka shuffled over to me, and this time offered me a 100-ruble note, saying "Young man, please get something nice for yourself to eat!". Gobsmacked, I struggled to find the words to explain in Russian that I had plenty of money for food, and that I was an exchange student. That I was eating a messy-looking item out of a plastic bag while standing next to a dumpster was pure coincidence. Now, it was her turn to be extremely embarrassed, but instead of taking flight like a startled emu as I had done, she engaged me in conversation and told me to make sure that I stay in Moscow, which has the friendliest inhabitants in the world (she later expressed gratitude that I wasn't one of these "ungrateful, angry, dark-skinned people", but that is another story entirely).

What should I think of all this? Being halfway to an 'expert' on Russian politics, culture, and language doesn't save you from a social faux pas. Nor does it prevent you from being mistaken for an urchin rather than an Australian exchange student from one of the most prestigious universities in the Netherlands. To be perfectly honest, I haven't yet come up with a deep revelation about the human condition that goes further than "there's more to someone than meets the eye". However, it did bring to light the complete loss of human dignity while poor or begging. While for me, these two incidents were nothing more than embarrassing, the people who have to lower themselves to that point on a daily basis just to have enough to eat, can surely not come out of experience with their self-worth fully intact. In any case, these episodes have reminded me to look before I act, and that babushkas will always make sure you have enough food – whether you're a hound or a hungry student.





# BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD STATE:

## GROWING UP AS A POLITICAL PRISONER

By Gemma La Guardia

Dheisheh Refugee Camp is a refugee camp near Bethlehem in Palestine, established after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Subsequent waves of Palestinian refugees have arrived there as the years, and wars, drag on. Since 1948, it has grown in population, but hardly in size, and now houses around 16,000 people in an area of 1.5 square kilometres. The tall towers and narrow alleyways are coloured by the relentless splashes of colour from graffiti of popular satire cartoons, chants and murals portraying the fresh faces of young men that have been killed by the Israeli Defence Forces.

On my campus in Bethlehem I was lucky enough to become friends with Saieed, from Dheisheh, who in turn introduced me to his friends, a couple of whom I was able to interview. Here, I have transcribed only a snippet of one of the interviews. Bilal, 29, is a refugee from al-Walaja village near Jerusalem, and has spent in total seven years and four months in imprisonment, since the age of fourteen and a half. He is an activist in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a revolutionary socialist party founded by George Habbash and described as a terrorist organisation by the US and the EU. Bilal has recently enrolled to become a law student.

Over the course of an afternoon in his house in Dheisheh, between rounds of Coca Cola, Fanta and ice cream, he recounted to me his stories of life in and out of jail, hunger strikes, and his hopes from the future. Thanks go to Saieed who kindly helped me translate from Arabic on the spot.

I asked Saieed why Bilal had spent so long in prison:

*“He grew up with the culture of the resisting occupation. And this is related to the fact that his father was one of the first fighters of the First Intifada, he fought in Jordan and also his mother was in the jail and injured in the first intifada, and so he is walking in these footsteps.”*





### Bilal's Youth

#### **What was it like to grow up in imprisonment?**

*"For my entire youth I was in jail, and a lot of life has changed around me and has developed while I was in and out of jail. The first impression you get when you enter is that it is a patriarchal community - all males - and it is not something still, it is a community that moves. I first came to jail when I was 14 and a half, and spent three and a half years there. It was difficult for someone of my age, and I was obliged to learn things that were not for my age. I learned things earlier than I should have. In prison, I lived with the Leftist Party - there are different parties, like the Leftists, the Right, the Islamists - I am a communist so I lived with the communists. So I was encouraged to learn the basic things that communism teaches. And you learn the basic things about how to be a revolutionary and how to be a fighter. Prison is the most torturing thing to a human, or any creature, can face, I believe even for a bird."*

### Ramallah

*"The third time I was arrested and went to jail, I went into administrative detention for almost 20 months, for no reason. When I came out, the Israeli side collaborated with the Palestinian Authority and said I must not live in Bethlehem because I was dangerous, so they sent me to Ramallah. And I stayed there for some months and when I went back to Bethlehem they arrested me."*

#### **Who arrested you? The Palestinians?**

*"No, the Israelis."*

#### **How did they find out?**

*"Through the Palestinian Authority. I was in Ramallah and had to go every week to give my signature at an office to show I was there. And when I moved back to Bethlehem I stopped going to give the signatures and they realised that I was absent, they informed the Israelis that I had moved back to Bethlehem."*

#### **What happened the fourth time you were arrested?**

*"When they arrested me the fourth time, the last, they sent me straight to administrative detention, with a secret file and no charge, just that I was part of the PFLP and was an activist and I broke the rules of security, and that I had to stay in jail. After they gave me 6 months of administrative detention, they kept me inside the cells, the individual cells [solitary confinement]. It was then that I started the hunger strike."*

***Part two of Bilal's story, detailing this hunger strike, will be published in the next issue.***

# dear no one

By Warsha Autar

Do you ever have those moments, when you're having a great time, but then life decides to knock you down, causing your perfect day to burst like a bright pink colored piñata filled with anxiety, fear, and confusion?

Recently I had one of these moments. On the bus, I ran into an old classmate of mine, who became the bat of my perfect day-piñata. During our conversation they kept telling me how amazing their time at uni was, how wonderful their course was, and all I could think of was how important this all sounded. This person is smart and hardworking, but the more they went on about their courses, the more terrible I felt. It seemed like for my friend, they had everything figured out.

I felt unfinished, unsatisfied. I have been told I am a young and powerful woman, a motivated student, a leader of tomorrow. Instead, at that moment I didn't feel nearly as smart as my fellow students, and didn't have an entire plan set up for my future. Great! Then, the questioning begins. Did I really pick the right course for me? Would I be able to learn a foreign language, even though I failed nearly all of them in high school? Could I ever catch up with my fellow students? Would I be able to thrive over all evil, and sprout a horn to become the beautiful unicorn I've always wanted to be? (That last one was a joke.)

Yet after hours of these questions going around in my head, a fresh wave of realisation hit me. My lack of achievements, knowledge, and ambitions would actually allow me to achieve more! Now before you wonder whether my sanity has abandoned me or not, hear me out. I am already aware of all of my flaws. This wonderful realisation enables me to take action. Rather than having an existential crisis, I could use that time to try to achieve something. Like writing a column for the student magazine. There is an entire building full of people who will definitely know something I don't know or understand. Listening and talking to them allows me to grow as a person and as a student. I can try out different things at BASIS and at University, that might be out of my comfort zone, to try to figure out what it is I want to do with my career.

In other words, because I know I am flawed, I will be able to do something about it. Now don't get me wrong: people who have their act together and know who they want to be in the future are awesome. They will undoubtedly achieve their goal one way or another, and conquer the university hallways like the badasses they are. But to those who are like me, to the people who don't really know what they're doing, or what they want their future to look like: it's okay. We will all be okay. Just take a few deep breaths, realise that you can't do everything at once, do your best at whatever it is you're doing right now, and realise that in the end, things will always work themselves out.

Love, Warsha



# **THE VEGETARIAN**

BY HAN KANG

*(Winner of the 2016 Man Booker Prize)*

Having recently developed a healthy obsession for East-Asian literature, I can safely affirm that this is my favourite so far. This book is essentially an extended metaphor for mental illness, which follows the demise of a Korean woman trapped in an unhappy marriage. The text explores art, madness and pain in the fascinatingly detached manner of writing that thus far, in my experience, has only been achieved by Murakami (whose masterpieces I also heartily recommend). Vegetarianism and veganism have both become quite the trend in recent years, and the use of it as a metaphor in this book is particularly insightful, as the protagonist's insanity is considered by those around her as a passing fancy, a temporary inconvenience. For all those interested in the struggles of womanhood, mental illness and existence as a whole, in the setting of modern Seoul, this is the book for you.



By: Siân Griffiths

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

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photos by Christian Colijn



TRANSNOSTALGIA: PHOTOS  
FROM THE UNRECOGNIZED SOVIET  
STATE OF TRANSNISTRIA



photos by Christian Colijn





Photo by: Carla Hariga



PUBLISHING  
DETAILS:

**BAISMAG**

TURFMARKT 99  
2511 DP, THE HAGUE  
BAISMAG@BASISTHEHAGUE..NL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

LAYOUT:

SECRETARY:

TREASURER:

HEAD OF ONLINE:

COVER:

ELSA COURT

NATASYA TUNGGADEWI

KIRILL CLIMIN

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GEMMA LA GUARDIA

ALL ARTICLES WERE WRITTEN BY STUDENTS OF BA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, LEIDEN UNIVERSITY. THE ONLINE VERSION OF THIS MAGAZINE CAN BE FOUND ON:

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