

# Ehab's Story

by [Flora Roenneberg](#)



***“When I arrived as a refugee – I had no plan, Kiron helped me to shape my future – to study and to focus and to have a plan!”***

Ehab came to Germany in 2015. Today he studies Political Science with Kiron and lives with a German family in Bielefeld. After completing his studies in Mechanical Engineering in Syria, his journey took him to many different countries, working for the Red Cross, for UNICEF, leading his own humanitarian project in Turkey, working for the UN in Istanbul and Geneva and now studying with Kiron. His dream is to finish his Bachelor's at Kiron's Partner University of Bielefeld and work in the humanitarian field one day. Ehab is full of energy and always has a big smile on his face wherever he goes. “My smile says a lot about me. It says who I am. Someone who cares!” Ehab is a sunny, cheerful, and wise person who believes in his own words: “Do not let the life shape your future – shape your future yourself – you need to be serious and take it into your own hands”. Today he is part of our Kiron family and shares his incredible story with us:

I left Syria because I did not want to kill anyone! I did not want to go to army so I had to leave my home. You receive a letter from the government telling you that they want you for the army. You do not have a choice. The government will come to your house or catch you at some checkpoint. In every street, we had checkpoints because they were afraid of the revolution. There were so many controls. But I did not want to kill anyone and I did not want to be killed. So I tried to ask if it would be possible to study again, but I was not allowed to since I had already studied Mechanical Engineering at Homs University. Therefore, I decided to pretend to have been asked to take a course in Lebanon for my work with the Red Cross.

I had been working for the Red Cross since 2011 when it all began. I was working as a paramedic and ambulance driver. It was all very difficult and confusing. Who was fighting whom? I encountered many problems with the police and they stopped us several times: “*Why do you help the people who fight the government?*”, they asked. But I always felt that

one needs to help and do something! Whenever I helped, I forgot all about who the injured man was, I just cared that he needed help and had to go to hospital. I did not think about the political situation or whose side he was fighting on or not. When I worked in the ambulance, we moved from neighborhood to neighborhood – we had people dying in our car and still, the police blockaded us and let us wait for hours. I did not understand how the government could be against people helping people. My mother was always afraid when I went to work, that something would happen to me.

Then I received the letter from the government. I immediately knew that I had no choice, but to leave. I had to leave my whole family behind. It was the most difficult decision imaginable. My mother told me: *“Ehab, try to find a life! Here in Syria you will not find a life. We have war, and we don’t know when the war will finish. Go and find your future. Do not stay here and lose time!”*. So, my mother pushed me to leave. I had to leave quickly so they would not stop me at the checkpoint.

When I left, I thought a lot about how everything had started. How my country had changed so quickly and how it had become more and more difficult to trust someone, anyone – anymore. Everybody was suspicious, everybody was afraid. In our close family it was okay, but with friends, you had to be afraid. Maybe they worked for the government? Maybe they would provide them with information? I never wrote about the government on Facebook and I never spoke my mind. Because if one of my friends would tell the government what I wrote on Facebook, they would catch me at the checkpoint. A lot of people were taken at the checkpoints and at the university and put into prison.

But really it all started much earlier. The government was afraid that the youth could initiate a revolution and they were especially afraid of the students. In 2010 the atmosphere already started changing, and in 2011 with the Arabic spring in Egypt and ever since the Arab revolution, they were afraid. When the revolution started, we began to see some old people coming to the university. They came to “study” with us, they said, and attended our university classes. But in the end, they were there to find out things from the students. They were spying on us! My friends and family were afraid. The father of Assad had already killed many people. From the beginning, my family saw it coming. My family was discussing politics when the revolution began. In 2011 we thought it would only take a month for the regime to go down. Now we have seven years of bloodshed.

My family did not allow me to take part in the demonstrations. I believed in the ideals of the revolution. We are Syrian, we need this new mind for our country, we need the feeling of life, like the people in Europe, we need to be able to speak our mind, we need freedom! We need this for our future, for us, for our children. We are the people, and we need to change our country. But the government started to arrest people and then the revolution turned into war! A lot of guns, a lot of killing and so many different sides and groups fighting each other, and supporting the army from the outside with Iran and Russia being involved. So many young Syrians leaving to go to Turkey, most of them, because they did not want to go to army, did not want to fight. Just like me – if it had not been for the war, I would have stayed and helped saving more lives and souls in Syria.

Instead, I left Syria in 2013 and found the chance to work with UNICEF in Africa. My project was to build schools for the community on the Ivory Coast. I did research on what was needed in the area and helped children to get education. Everything was so different from Syria, so colorful and cheerful. It was total cultural immersion and I was the only white amongst blacks, being confronted with cultural identity for the first time. Then I became very sick and got malaria twice. When Ebola started, I wanted to leave. The situation in the country had changed. People were afraid, everything was difficult, people were preparing themselves for crisis. Again, it felt like such a similar situation to Syria. But I could not go back to Syria, even though I missed my family so much.

The situation in Lebanon was very hard, in Jordan as well, with just too many people being there. The best situation was in Turkey, and I had to decide to leave, all by myself – again. This was hard! I was only 20 years old and it was such a big decision. I had to grow up quickly and again take responsibility for my life and future. After I had lived for a month in Turkey, I slowly began to understand the situation there. I had a friend, Mohammed, who helped me, but it was a challenge since I barely spoke Turkish and it was hard to find a job. First, I started working with an export company. However, seeing the Syrian children in the streets, who did not speak Turkish but only Arabic, made me decide to help out at the shelter and I created a project for the children, called “Roh”, which means “soul”. Since I believe that children are our soul! If we do not educate our children, we will not have a future for our country. We started in small schools, teaching the children and I was organizing the teachers from the refugee group. But again, the situation in Turkey became really difficult, everyone was leaving and I did not want to go to Europe by boat, but a lot of my friends took off, and I found myself alone again.

But I got lucky, I was invited to a conference in Geneva. This gave me the unique opportunity to come to Europe. I was so happy, I could not believe it! When I arrived in Geneva, I felt strange. I had taken all my baggage, everything I had, to go to an event of the Humanitarian Summit. At the airport, they asked me: “*Why do you have so much baggage if you will only stay for a visit?*” Everything felt unreal. I was in Geneva for one week, and then I should have gone back to Istanbul. But instead, I bought a ticket to Germany, and I took all my belongings and went to Munich, and then to Bielefeld, to start a new life.

It is hard to feel at home when you miss your family and do not know when you can see them again! This is the biggest challenge for me, after four years of being alone, of moving from country to country, always starting from scratch, four countries, cultures, languages. You start focusing on tomorrow and just taking one step at a time. Again, I was alone, but again I was lucky. I arrived at the camp and got to know a friendly civil servant called Nadine at the social welfare office, who helped to find a family I could live with. Again, I got to know a new culture, society, and language. The people here eat a lot of Kartoffeln and are in love with bureaucracy. I believe the Greek god of bureaucracy must have had a German name. But the people here are so great and I have a lot of friends in Bielefeld and with Kiron.

I heard about Kiron when I was still living in Istanbul and I wanted to support this great idea, so I contacted Vincent and did a presentation about Kiron at the UN Summit in Istanbul. This is how everything started. When I came to Germany, I joined Kiron and met the team. I even had the opportunity to join the first team weekend and I remember that I was so proud to meet all these Kiron heroes fighting for us to have equal opportunities. Studying Political Science with Kiron means so much to me since I feel that I have a lot of political, but no academic experience. I had the political experience in my own real life. Therefore, I hope to be able to transfer to Kiron’s Partner University of Bielefeld in order to finish my Bachelor’s and one day help shaping international politics. Currently, I am the president and co- founder of the UN Syrian Youth Assembly. I dream to one day become a UN Humanitarian Ambassador promoting peace and helping to rebuild my country.

Source: <https://kiron.ngo/2017/10/04/e-habs-story/>  
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