



*To me Amnesty is the light at the end of the tunnel, when there was nothing but horror Amnesty saved my life and my dad's.*

## **Susy Shearer, administrator & activist**

Susy Shearer fled the regime of General Pinochet in Chile in 1974 when she was still just a child of 13.

I WORK FOR Orkney Ferries as a Clerical Officer and I am also involved in several local charities. I'm an Amnesty trainer and human rights speaker, regularly visiting schools, organisations and groups promoting the work of Amnesty International.

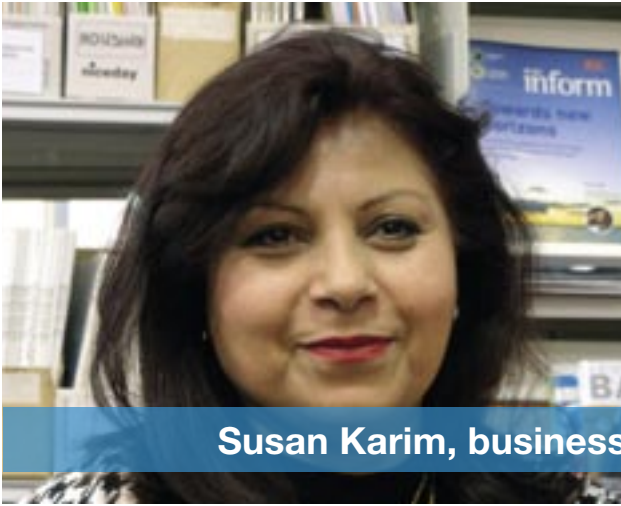
I first heard the name 'Amnesty International' as a child when we received a letter from an Amnesty member in Scotland. My father had disappeared and been tortured: I was at the point of giving in to despair. That letter deeply moved me: the thought and knowledge that other people knew and cared about what was happening to us. It is in part because of this experience that I devote most of my free time to a charity that gives others the help and hope that I received.

My father was a journalist when Augusto Pinochet staged a military coup. My dad was 'missing' for 6 months, imprisoned and tortured while mum desperately searched for him. I believe it was because of Amnesty's involvement that my father was 'found' and given a trial. When he was released, he secured asylum for himself and our family in Scotland. We were re-united on the plane that was to bring us to the UK.

For several days we stayed in the flat with no furniture, with nothing at all. At the time we did not mind as at least we were free and together. My father received hospital treatment for the injuries resulting from his torture. One day we were visited by a Chilean working as a miner in Lochegeley, who came with two of his colleagues. When they saw that the flat was empty they were shocked. The next day two double decker buses arrived full of furniture and clothes, donated by the mining families of Lochegeley.

I went to Holyrood High school where I obtained 6 Highers. After finishing High School, I went to college where I gained my diploma in Hotel and Institutional Management and where I met David, with whom I have woven my life and who brought me to Orkney. I have worked within the catering sector since arriving in Orkney in 1984, but I had to make a career change in 2002 after an injury to my foot.

Five years ago, I was instrumental in setting up the charity, 'Orkaid', an independent charity shop that raises money for charity. I've always felt welcomed and accepted by the Orcadian community. My husband, David, is a cheese-maker and we have a son, Paul. ■



*Visiting Iraq after 24 years away, I felt like other Iraqis: a refugee in my homeland.*

## Susan Karim, businesswoman

Susan Karim is from Iraq and sought safety in Scotland in 1980. She is a successful entrepreneur and is based in Kirkcaldy.

IN 1996, I established Scottish Catering Enterprise, a specialist catering company. Since then we have won major contracts in Fife. In 1997 we became one of six catering establishments in the area promoting healthy eating. In 1999, I was nominated for the Scottish Businesswoman of the Year Award and in 2000 I was a finalist in the Outstanding Scottish Businesswoman of the Year Award.

I am currently a full time student at Fife College as well as focusing on my charity work. The unprovoked attack on my beloved Iraq propelled me into action. I put my energies into raising £100,000 for the victims of the war. So far, I have raised nearly £20,000 by walking from Dundee through Fife to Edinburgh: walking 132 miles in 11 days. Six weeks later I spent Christmas and New Year walking from Ocean Terminal to the Clyde. Then I organised an Arabian Nights Event that bought a bit of Baghdad to Fife.

Since last year I have twice visited orphanages, day care centres, women's shelters and care homes for the elderly in Baghdad. I have organised one-to-one sponsorship of 15 orphans as well as rebuilding and furnishing a play room in one of the shelter homes run by Muslim Hands, a British based charity.

I love art and fashion, my first job in Iraq was as a textile designer, which I enjoyed very much, and I became the very first woman foreman. In early 1980, I criticised the brutal murder of Imam Sadder at the hands of Saddam Hussein. My remarks were overheard by my boss via the intercom. I was accused of being a member of the outlawed Al Da'wa Party and consequentially I was taught a painful lesson that I will never forget for the rest of my life. Apart from my father and an ex-colleague who helped me to escape Iraq, I had not until recently even shared my ordeal with my family.

I arrived in this country 29 days after my husband who had come to the UK on a scholarship as a post-graduate medical student. Although we brought the maximum allowable amount of money, plus jewellery, I was forced to leave behind the rest in my bank account.

After settling in Glasgow for a few years, we moved to Fife. It is through hard work, perseverance and sheer determination that I have been able to re-establish my career in order to support our three children on my own, by mobilising my ability and great passion for cooking. ■



*We come here with our knowledge and our experience. We want to work and to contribute something.*

## Rose Tibi, health visitor

Rose Tibi is from Southern Sudan. She was forced to leave her country in 1990 during the civil war.

I AM A HEALTH visitor and at the moment I am the only health visitor from an ethnic minority working in Lothian. I speak English, Madi, Toposa and Arabic and having been an asylum seeker myself, I can relate more easily to what people have been through. In my work I try to employ a mix of the best of African and European practices for example by supporting breast feeding and baby massage. I also volunteer for the Edinburgh Refugee Centre providing help and information to asylum seekers on the British Health System and participating in a women's support group for refugees and asylum seekers. I am a mum with three children.

In 1980s the second civil war broke out in Southern Sudan. In the north the people are mainly Muslim and identify themselves as being of Arab descent; while in the South the people are mainly Christian and identify themselves as African. I was working as a nursing sister in a hospital in Southern Sudan. We had a good life in Sudan; all of my family had a university education as my father put a great deal of emphasis on education for both his daughters and his sons. Because of the situation in Sudan, most of my family have been forced to flee the country and claim asylum elsewhere. In the late 1980s,

I was in Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan. After the shelling of Juba, I fled to Khartoum with my two children. The situation got worse and anyone who was educated was a particular target. I fled the country and came to Scotland to claim asylum.

When I came to Scotland I was keen to re-start my life and start working again. For three years we waited for the outcome of our asylum claim. Life is very difficult when you don't know where you are going or what's going to happen to you. Eventually we received Indefinite Leave to Remain which meant we could stay in Scotland. I worked to get my nursing qualifications recognised by the British Health Service in order to be able to working in this country. But getting my qualifications recognised was a hard and difficult process. Many barriers seemed to be in place to prevent me from doing the job I was trained to do. I'm an optimist, however, and I got through all of these barriers and now I have my own home. My three children are all in full time education either at school or university. I consider that Scotland is my home now and my children identify themselves as Scottish. ■



*It was paradise.  
We'd been  
through hell,  
when we came  
to Glasgow we  
knew we were  
safe and secure.*

## Remzije & Artan Sherifi, development worker & interior designer

Remzije and Artan Sherifi, her son, come from Kosovo. The British Relief Effort airlifted them to Scotland in 1999.

### Remzije

I AM A DEVELOPMENT worker working with refugees and asylum seekers at the Maryhill Integration project in Glasgow. Currently I concentrate on the integration and settlement of asylum seekers and refugees. I also work as translator of Kosovan, Turkish and Croatian. From the age of 16, I've worked as radio journalist in Kosovo. At first it was difficult to get a job in Scotland because of the language barrier. But working was important to me as it is a way of meeting people and make new friends. I started working voluntarily.

Since 1981 the situation in Kosovo became steadily worse for the ethnic Albanians who made up 90% of the population. I lost my job with the radio station. Then in 1992 my sons were forced to leave their school and had to study for three hours a day in a makeshift school. Later, I taught my sons at home and did some work for a radio station based in Switzerland. The break up of Yugoslavia reached Kosovo in 1999. My husband, three sons and I were forced to leave our home and live in a refugee camp. Before the war started, I had been ill and was treated for cancer. While I was in the camp I saw

a doctor who told me that my cancer was in remission. My family and I were brought to Scotland ten days later. The Kosovan Programme organised events and activities that were designed to ease our integration into Scottish society. We and about 364 others came to Glasgow. Soon after we arrived in the city, we were both able to start English classes.

### Artan

WHEN WE ARRIVED, I had intensive English classes every day that summer. In August, I started High School and that year I sat my Highers. We had nothing when we came here, we saw everything as a challenge so we just got on with things. I decided to go to college to do an HNC in printing. Then, I applied to study interior design at Glasgow School of Art. I'm now in my fourth year at the Art School. Last summer I was chosen to go and exhibit my work in China. In January this year, I opened a shop selling the work of my fellow students. I have also set up an interior design company and with my family we plan to open a café in the near future. ■

Amnesty International Scotland



# CELEBRATING SANCTUARY CELEBRATING SUCCESS...

This collection of individuals' stories celebrates the success of people who have fled persecution and made their homes in Scotland. They are contributing to their communities and to diverse fields of Scottish society including law, business and the arts.

The stories trace over 100 years of people finding sanctuary in Scotland and they highlight the root causes of asylum: the conflicts and human rights abuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have forced so many to flee their homes, unable to return.



**PROTECT THE HUMAN**



*I never really considered myself as anything other than Scottish.*

## Lord Philip Caplan, law lord & photographer

Lord Philip Caplan is a descendent of Jewish refugees who fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

MY GRANDPARENTS fled the pogroms that took place throughout Eastern Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Jewish community was forced to live in specially designated localities. My father was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, and my mother in Odessa, where her father designed and made scenery for the theatre. Members of both families fled to Scotland to escape the violence. My mother was born in Scotland and my father came here as a baby. They lived all their lives in Glasgow and my father, a British citizen, served in the British Army in 1918.

The arrival of the Jews in Britain was not without controversy. The Aliens Act 1935 was specifically designed to limit the number of Jewish immigrants.

I was born and grew up in Glasgow. I believe we are all made up of complex identities; in my case being Scottish and having Jewish origins. Life was difficult for my grandparents as they had large families to support and didn't speak much English. Things were different for my parents; when I grew up we always spoke English at home, although my parents would have understood Yiddish.

I began my career in Law in 1946 when I went to Glasgow University where I gained an M.A. and LLB. Afterwards, I worked as a

solicitor for several years and was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1957. Having built up a successful practice I was made a Queen's Counsel in 1970. In 1979 I became Sheriff in Edinburgh and in 1984 the Sheriff Principal of North Strathclyde. In 1989 I was appointed to the High Court and was in the Inner House when I retired in 2000. I was given an honorary Doctorate from Glasgow University in 1999.

Apart from my professional work I have always been involved in amateur photography at a serious level. I am a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and my photography has been shown in the Royal Photographic Society International Exhibition.

I am married and have four children, three from my first marriage and a daughter by my second wife, Joyce.

My involvement in this project is to illustrate that refugees, far from being a burden on the community, have contributed considerably to it. Many of my own family were refugees and despite initial difficulties they all managed to maintain themselves. Many contributed with distinction to the professional and commercial life of the nation. ■



*I got out on one of the last Kindertransports leaving Berlin.*

## Leo Metzstein, executive director

Leo Metzstein arrived in Scotland in July 1939 at the age of seven, fleeing Nazi Germany.

I AM RETIRED but still continue to work. Since my retirement, I run a small taxi company in Hamilton and also work for South Lanarkshire Council as a courier. I enjoy public speaking and regularly give talks about the Holocaust and the Kindertransports: the trains that permitted 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children to leave Germany and come to Britain.

I have participated in television programmes for Newsnight Scotland and the television series Ec:s. My close working relationship with South Lanarkshire Council has helped the Council to develop a broad programme of remembrance for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Holocaust and I opened an exhibition about the Holocaust at New Lanark. For most of my career, I worked as a warehouse manager and Executive Director for a knitwear company in Glasgow. I live with my partner, Margaret, and have three children, two of whom live in Scotland.

I was born in 1932 in Berlin to a Jewish family. My family were persecuted by the Nazis. My father went into hiding from the authorities. After that my family and I only saw him occasionally. He died a few months

later of exposure. My mother supported me and my four brothers and sisters by working in a factory. By 1939, the situation had become unbearable, each time I left the house my mother insisted that I run everywhere and keep as small as possible to avoid attracting attention. We attempted to find families abroad willing to sponsor us so we could escape. Only with a letter of support could we, and others like us, get permission to leave Germany.

My family were relatively fortunate, although we left at different times, my mother and brothers and sisters all managed to get the necessary letters and documents to leave Germany and come to Britain. At first, I lived with a Quaker family and then in a hostel for Jewish children at Castle Douglas with my brothers while my mother and sister worked in England. We were re-united after the war in Scotland, and settled in Glasgow. My mother found work in a restaurant in the city's Jewish quarter. I continued my education until I was 15 when I left school to become an apprentice in a shipyard and then later I trained as an upholsterer. ■



*I arrived on my bicycle and all my riches were in a trunk on a luggage holder.*

## Zigi, artist & teacher

Zigi Sapietis moved to Scotland in 1952 after fleeing the Soviet occupation of Latvia.

I AM VERY INTERESTED in ancient art, craft and folklore: a passion that began in Latvia when I was a child in a homestead surrounded by forest, developed in Denmark, and continued in Scotland. My art makes use of ceramic, stone and wood-carving. The forms are individual and my sculptures have won awards.

I live in Edinburgh where I taught art for 22 years, most of it at Portobello High School. I still give lectures on folklore and craft and I, a Latvian, have even given lectures on Scottish folklore through the Scottish Arts Council. I have a studio attached to my home where I continue to teach and work. My garden bears witness to my life, my exile and my love of planting. Sculptures remember those who died in the Gulags and the life I left behind in Latvia. The garden is open to the public as part of the Scottish Garden Scheme for two days each summer.

At the start of the Second World War, I was at agricultural college in Latvia. The Soviets occupied Latvia and then the Germans came, changing the course of my life. When I was 16, I protested against the occupation by making Latvian flags and tying them to stones which we threw onto the telegraph wires. Only the intervention of my school principal

prevented me from being deported to the Gulags. In 1941, I went into hiding in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and continued my nationalist activities. That got me into trouble with the German Gestapo. I was sent to a prison and then a concentration camp but my aunt persuaded the Gestapo to let me out. I was then 'voluntarily' mobilised to fight against the Russians on the Eastern Front.

At the end of the war, I was in hospital because of a severe injury. Despite this, I was able to escape to Denmark on a submarine full of Latvians fleeing the Russians. The Soviet re-occupation of Latvia meant I could not go back to my country. I knew I would be sent to the Gulags. While living in a refugee camp, I had to learn Danish, having already learnt German at school. I worked during the day painting porcelain and studied fine art at night at the Royal Academy for Fine Art. I was also awarded my Danish teacher training certificate and started to learn English. I moved to Scotland in 1952 to join my cousin and uncle who had already settled in Scotland. Over a period of time, I taught myself to speak English and studied sculpture full time at the Edinburgh College of Art. After a full year of study, I received my Scottish Teachers Diploma. ■





*I work, just like any other person in Glasgow.*

## Mohammad Asif, student advisor

Asif fled from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in 2000. He now works as a student advisor at Anniesland College in Glasgow.

I WENT TO University in Malaysia where I read for a degree in communications. Before going to university I had learned English in Afghanistan and in Malaysia English was the language of instruction. I am a Shia Muslim, a minority group in Afghanistan. We were not given our rights in Afghanistan: we were oppressed. My father was an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist and so was my mother. They always put an emphasis on education and I've always believed that education is the best thing in life. It teaches you to differentiate between good and bad.

When I graduated from university I went back to Afghanistan and worked as a journalist, unfortunately this was during the Taliban time. I then started teaching in a primary school that my family had helped to set up. But the school was closed and we were branded as anti-Taliban and life became unbearable in Afghanistan. I lost my father in 1997. He was killed by the Taliban for campaigning against them. He was a target because he was an educated man who was active in politics.

The government at the time thought that education was a threat to them. This put the whole family in a difficult position. In 2000, I fled and claimed asylum in London. I knew if I stayed I would be killed, I discussed it with my mother and my brothers and we felt it

would be better if I left and went somewhere else. After two weeks in London I was dispersed to Glasgow.

The first few months were really, really difficult. I didn't know anyone, I was not allowed to work or do anything. We were forced to live on welfare which was embarrassing for someone who had always had a job. Things got better when I was allowed to work. I worked as a freelance interpreter translating in six languages. I love languages and I'm good with them. Once I knew my way in Glasgow, I became involved in the issue of asylum rights in Scotland: campaigning on their behalf against the voucher system and the negative press in the media. In 2001, I founded and chaired the Glasgow Refugee Action Group. Then in 2002 I started the Scottish Afghan Society.

My biggest advantage was that I spoke English and that helped me a lot as did my background in journalism. I now work in one of the local colleges advising students on different issues like childcare and funding. Much of my work is with asylum seekers and refugees. My involvement in the community has been recognised by the Scottish Parliament and by the Police. ■

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S WORK ON REFUGEES



Amnesty International monitors UK Government asylum policy and practice and we lobby for a fair and humane asylum system.

We aim to:

- improve Home Office initial decision making, to ensure all asylum seekers have access to fair and satisfactory asylum procedures and are permitted to stay in the UK until the outcome of their appeal.
- improve the provision of protection for asylum seekers in the UK.
- improve the UK government policy and practice on detention of asylum seekers.
- provide accurate, up-to-date country information on UK asylum cases.

**Thank you** to all the participants for having the courage to share their stories. Please contact us for more copies and use them to improve the situation for other refugees and asylum seekers.



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