

Le destin de Zaoua s'achève brutalement à Garissa



Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Hades, created using the Sculpt tool in Blender 2.43, by Giuseppe Canino. (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Réflexion

Cette année, Zaoua*, une jeune fille Kalenjin, devait se rendre à un stage d'enseignement. Elle n'y participera pas et ne pourra jamais aider ses parents vieillissants. Sa vie, ainsi que celle de 146 autres camarades étudiants, a été subitement écourtée par les balles des terroristes d'Al-Shabab, le 2 avril dernier, le jour de l'attaque de l'Université kenyane de Garissa.

Elle est née et a grandi dans un milieu modeste. Ses parents gardaient quelques animaux : des porcs, des chèvres et des vaches. C'est grâce à leur travail qu'ils ont pu envoyer leur fille aux études. L'école primaire la plus proche était à 10 km et elle avait pris l'habitude de courir cette distance quotidiennement. Malheureusement, ses parents étaient trop pauvres pour lui financer des études au lycée de Kabianga qui était à seulement 2 km de leur demeure. Cette école-là était réservée aux enfants dont les parents avaient des carrières florissantes. La jeune Zaoua est ainsi devenue forte mentalement et physiquement en raison des épreuves de la vie. Elle excellait dans tous les domaines sportifs et dans toutes les disciplines scolaires. Elle avait refusé les conseils d'amis qui lui disaient de quitter l'école pour se concentrer

sur la course longue distance, alors même qu'elle était championne de son école pendant plusieurs saisons sur plusieurs distances. Elle a décidé que sa vocation était d'être enseignante. Son rêve était de travailler au lycée Kabianga comme professeur d'éducation physique. Elle désirait donner à ses parents des moyens de subsistance décents, car ils devenaient vieux et frêles. Ils avaient vendu presque tous leurs animaux pour payer ses études. Elle était maintenant une étoile montante dans le village et, pour tous les enfants, elle était un exemple de progrès. Mais sa vie a été réduite à néant par les terroristes d'Al-Shabab le 2 avril dernier à l'Université kényane de Garissa.

Ces faits tragiques ne sont pas nouveaux en Afrique comme dans d'autres parties du monde. En 2014, deux cents jeunes étudiantes ont été enlevées par le tristement célèbre mouvement extrémiste Boko Haram. Beaucoup trop meurent encore tous les jours ou sont déplacés à l'intérieur du Nigeria.

Le massacre de Garissa a provoqué un choc de plus dans un monde émotionnellement fragile qui essaye de retrouver son équilibre après le tragique massacre de la rédaction de Charlie Hebdo, l'attaque meurtrière du musée du Bardo à Tunis ou le crash suicidaire de l'avion de Germanwings. Les images montrant le massacre perpétré à Garissa sont extrêmement difficiles à supporter, mais il est temps de faire face à la réalité.

La voix du silence

Dans de nombreuses cultures, les morts sont hautement respectés. Il n'est même pas souhaitable de diffuser les photos prises des dépouilles. Mais, dans ce cas, le monde a besoin de savoir ce que les fondamentalistes religieux peuvent faire. Ils sont des suceurs de sang insensés. Aucune rationalité chez eux, ils veulent que nous menions leur mode de vie, ils veulent instiller la peur en nous.

Comme Cerbère, le mythique chien à trois têtes qui garde la porte de l'enfer, le terrorisme s'acharne sur le monde moderne, l'éloigne du bonheur et le précipite dans les chambres obscures de la mort, de la peur et de l'incertitude.

Comme étrangers, nous avons pris l'option de garder le silence, parce que nous vivons dans un pays tranquille. Malheureusement, si nous choisissons la voie du silence, nous serons de bons candidats pour l'enfer de Dante Alighieri car les endroits les plus chauds de l'enfer sont réservées à ceux qui, en période de grande crise morale, maintiennent leur neutralité. »

Nous ne devons pas oublier que la Suisse a aussi dû trouver une manière de traiter la menace du fanatisme après les troubles du Sonderbund en 1847.

Un autre défi auquel nous devons faire face est la peur, car il y a tous ceux qui, frileux, ne parlent pas de ces défis. La peur n'empêchera pas nos restaurants, centres commerciaux et écoles de brûler à cause de ces personnes mal intentionnées. Cette manière de faire de la politique et de jongler avec les questions importantes de la réalité conduit à une perte massive de vies.

Nous sommes des barbares

Pourtant, notre génération a beaucoup progressé dans différents domaines. Nous avons été en mesure de faire atterrir à distance un véhicule téléguidé sur Mars. Nous pouvons commander et contrôler des ordinateurs et d'autres appareils qui sont à des milliards de kilomètres d'ici. Nous pouvons parfaitement battre la gravité à son propre jeu alors que nous flottons dans le ciel. Il y a tout juste un demi-siècle, l'homme devait se rendre dans une bibliothèque pour accéder aux informations, alors que nous avons maintenant toutes les bibliothèques du monde dans nos appareils. L'information circule en millisecondes sur des millions de

kilomètres.

Médicalement, il y a tellement de progrès que les maladies qui étaient autrefois mortelles sont maintenant traitables. Des greffes du cœur, des reins et même du pénis sont possibles.

Sans une analyse plus approfondie, on pourrait conclure que nous faisons beaucoup mieux que les Vikings ou les Zoulous et que toutes les civilisations anciennes. Mais, quand nous regardons plus profondément ce qui se passe, nous remarquons que nous sommes en réalité des barbares. Nous avons utilisé nos inventions scientifiques pour exterminer nos semblables. Hitler a trouvé qu'il était facile de se lancer dans l'élimination de toute une ethnie avec la science moderne. Plus de 7 millions de tonnes de bombes ont détruits toute vie dans un petit pays appelé Vietnam. En seulement 3 mois, les Tutsis rwandais ont presque complètement disparu de la surface de la Terre en raison de l'absurdité et la haine qui a fomenté ce génocide. Maintenant, c'est grâce aux différents canaux d'information que se répand la haine comme un feu sauvage. Haine à cause de la race, de l'orientation sexuelle, de la religion. De la haine partout. L'éternelle et inquiétante question est: qu'est-ce qui a mal tourné? Si les gens nobles et honorables des forêts Amazoniennes venaient à apprendre ce qui se passe dans le monde moderne, seraient-ils attirés par nos manières de vivre?

* Nom d'emprunt

Marcus

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Waiting to be accepted or not into Swiss society



Switzerland, Thoune. Photo :
T@H!R (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

A couple of weeks ago, during a long chat, a friend asked me: «How easy is it to integrate into Swiss society?» She happens to be a native of this country. My answer was, «It's not easy but if you really want to, you can».

My mind then quickly reflected on the words of a well known South American revolutionist, Che Guevara, who said «Revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall». Integrating into the Swiss society needs a gradual change of both mind and body. You might say it is just like that everywhere but the Swiss community is particular. With strict time keeping of the public transport, extreme cleanliness and several languages, one has to put in lots of effort to fit into this unique society.

I remember the first day I saw snow. I spent some extra minutes in the window admiring the wonders of God, to a person who comes from an equatorial climate; you can imagine how I felt. This though made me miss a train that eventually led to arriving late to work. At that time, I was attending an occupation program at Botza in Valais. My supervisor was not happy and I was sent to explain to the overall Supervisor. On that day, I learnt that in Switzerland, be it snow or sunshine, work is work and time is time. In my country, the day seems slower and more relaxed.

Some months ago, as it's an arrangement in our commune to have dinner each month with all the people from the commune, one of

the people, a retired doctor asked us how we were finding the commune. We complained of people being so reserved. He told us something that I will never forget: He said «Here no one needs to look for friends, many people have their families and friends with whom they share with the same culture. It's up to you as new comers to try to make friends. I am sure we are welcoming; inviting you to such dinners is an indication that we love you and we want to be with you. Those of you who are Christians, try to go to church, you will meet people there, talk to people and always be good...». The old retired doctor, I take him as one of the most sincere people I have ever talked too. I highly value his advice.

Being in the asylum process, waiting to be accepted or not into Swiss society as reminds me of the road to Jericho. This oldest inhabited city in the whole world is depicted as a unique city below sea level surrounded by mountains. For those of you who read the bible, you will know the popular story of The Good Samaritan. I will not bore you with the whole story but what we know is that the road to Jericho is a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing. As the process of the asylum application meanders, you get ambushed by stress, mistrust...

As you meander around waiting for the answer from the authorities about your asylum application, you hardly sleep well during the week as police can easily pick you up any morning. I did not know that people can stay in prison for months without a crime!! I can tell you that I get my good sleep only on Saturday and Sunday mornings. To those who make it Jericho, miracles happen there!

Allow me to also continue to paint the relationship between some people here and the refugees. To some, every refugee is a Samaritan. As you all know, the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was not so good. That is why when a Samaritan helped the Jew who had been beaten on the way to Jericho, he came to be known as The Good Samaritan. I would

love to tell you, not every refugee is a criminal. A few times, some young people end up asking you for drugs just because they think everyone your color is a dealer.

Many of us have families, children, young brothers and sisters so we cannot allow the young generation to waste in the lovely country that is hosting us.

I totally appreciate the care given to refugees here. In Africa, refugee camps are made of tents. Many of you have seen such images in television and fellow Africans know what I am talking about. I am so happy that here one gets a chance to sleep like a human being with some dignity. Where else can you find such care? The willingness to teach you a new language to fit into the society is also something special.

I have come to learn so many things in the period I have been around. One of the most important things is endurance just the way good soldiers do. It's also important to think positively, to concentrate your thoughts on things you can change and leave those that you cannot change.

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Crossing death



A young man from Kurdistan

is crossing the
Mediterranean sea in 2009.
Exclusive photo: Voix
d'Exils.

I was a little bit lonely during the summer holidays, and maybe that's why I was able to follow the London Olympics Games, from the opening ceremony up to the closing. The London Games were going to remain perfect in my mind, if not for the fact that a few days after the closure, I learned that the dream of a Somali athlete, Samia Yusuf Omar, had ended in the Mediterranean sea.

I must confess that I only came to know Samia through the report of her death, when she died in the sea trying to make her way to Europe, and London in particular to represent her country in the Olympic Games. I wonder if she would have been able to participate, or if she would have even struggled with immigration issues? The courage of Samia from Somalia, a country torn by war, is not only explained by sport's ambitions but also her sense of survival!

Since the Arab spring erupted in early 2011 in North Africa, the world carries more interest in crossing accidents in the Mediterranean sea. As the Italians and the French were arguing on how they should share the refugee burden, to me, the major interest was the way people, in their quest for survival, undertake hazardous journeys, board over crowded boats, with great risks of drowning and most end up losing their lives, drowningt in the dark waters of the sea. The more I tried to read about the sea deaths, the more I was surprised as I learned that on average of 1500 people drown per year as they try to cross from Africa to Europe. This makes these waters, the worst of the world, with the biggest number of dead people annually. Some media suspect that the number might even be doubled since there are many boats that disappear with no recorded number of people on board.

When I reached Switzerland, in August 2011, I met a young man called Abu, who gave me more details about the dangers of crossing the Mediterranean sea. Abu was 25 years old, single, and is originated from Nigeria where he was working in Printing and Press before facing problems that forced him to leave his country. He told me horrific details of his journey, from Nigeria to Morocco, and then later crossing to Europe. Abu's journey started with the crossing of the hot Sahara desert. He told me how the group of eight people he was part of kept reducing with deaths due to sand and dehydration. They had started off by hiring the services of a gang who had a speedy Land Rover Defender vehicle, which enabled them to cross the Sahara. They had water and other necessities and the initial destination was Morocco, where they could find the boat connection services to Europe.

Lost in the middle of the Sahara desert



The Sahara desert.
Photo: Dan.be. (CC
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After driving for several hundred kilometers, possibly a quarter of the desert, the car broke down. After several manoeuvres to repair the engine, the refugees were told to get out to see if the car could be pushed to start again with less load. The pushing succeeded and the car started. But yes, it was the beginning of the horror, as the two transporters just sped back leaving the refugees stranded more than a hundreds of kilometres inside the desert. They had been robbed of thousands of dollars, which they had paid to be transported to Morocco. Well, food and water had also been removed to reduce the weight in the car. The poor 6 men and 2 girls just realised that they had been conned to their death as they were to later die one by one.

After four days of walking (usually during the nights, to avoid the unbearable sun in the desert), only 3 people were still alive. They had been surviving by drinking their urine and strictly rationed food. Among them was one girl, Abu and another boy. It was during the night of the fourth day that they were rescued by patrolling Moroccan border guards who were barely tired, dehydrated, with now skeletal bodies. They were immediately rushed to the Red Cross facility for intensive medical attention to recover from hard beatings in the Sahara. The girl was to later lose her mind, as among those who had died on the way was her brother and her boy friend.

Lost in no man's water sea

Abu did recover from the desert trauma, and spent two years of hard life: sleeping on the streets of a Moroccan port, begging money to survive, and doing odd jobs on the black market; hoping one day he would get enough money to pay the boat to Spain illegally organised by gangs in Morocco.



A young man from Kurdistan
is crossing the
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Exclusive photo: Voix
d'Exils

After being rejected several times by the gangs which organise clandestine journeys to Spain, for lack of sufficient money, a gang leader he had approached fifteen times during his two years in Morocco, finally felt sorry for him. The gang leader told him, "I am taking you on my boat because I feel pity for you. You should have tried to go back to your country, but I know you cannot cross the desert again. Let's agree on one thing: in case of trouble in the sea and if we need to throw things off the boat, you will be the one to be thrown out first, because you have paid the least". Abu promised the man

that he would jump into the water voluntarily before being thrown out in the case of trouble.

The journey was expected to take 15 hours if all factors remained constant. First, the boat raised with Abu's fear as it was fully packed. They started off in the afternoon with 70 people on board. Among the refugees was a pastor, who started to pray and assured the trembling travellers of God's protection and then each one started to pray in his or her own language. They all knew that thousands had died in that sea in their attempt to cross to Europe.

The journey started with hours of quietness but for the sobbing of children also present and the constant roar of the boat engine. The majority of women had children, and some had conceived as a result of rape in Morocco or other places where they had passed on their way to Europe. There are gangs who use the desperate girls as sex slaves forcing them into prostitution and some end up getting pregnant.

It was late at night, the sea was dark as hell, in sight of stars in the sky, then fear erupted because suddenly the engine stopped ! After several attempts to re-start the engine in vain, Abu thought that his time of voluntary plunge into the Mediterranean had arrived. The captain ordered all the luggage to be thrown into the water but, in the meantime, he attempted to fix his engine with cries filling the air from the boat's occupants as they waited for their death.

These transporters always rely on 2 things, the compass and the spanish coastal patrol. There is a point in the ocean where the telephone network is cut out. The transporters usually have two phones, one for Moroccan network and another for Spanish connection.

The engine died unfortunately where neither Morocco nor Spain could be reached via telephone. The option for Spain is always the best, because if they can call the Spanish rescue services, it means that they are already in Spanish waters,

thus Spanish territory. Unfortunately, this time, they belonged to no man's waters.

They had been spotted by the patrol chopper after 3 hours of floating waiting for their final minutes of drowning. The chopper called the vessel and they were officially registered in Spain as refugees. 5 months in economic stricken Spain turned Abu into a beggar again, like he had been in Morocco.

The unpleasant surprise of Europe

While Abu was narrating this story, he was no longer in Spain but in Switzerland. A young intelligent man now getting depressed, because Europe had given him an unpleasant surprise, like many other African immigrants who were living in Spain : living in very inhumane condition in deserted houses, and so on.



The Alps. Photo: f-l-e-x (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

As he concluded his tale and no more sure of his fate in the Alpine country where he had moved from the suffering of Spain, he asked me: "Marcus, do you think it is worthy for all the fellow Africans to go through these difficulties to make it way to Europe?" I answered him: " Some have no choice, but to run wherever they can". He then broke down and cried, murmuring how he has wasted 3 years of his youth.

Abu was later arrested and deported to Spain, because of the Dublin Regulation, as he had already applied for asylum in Spain. When I was told of his arrest, tears came down my cheeks. The question that came to my mind was: who is to blame of all this? The wars? Poverty? The gross abuse of human rights that lead to thousands of refugees? But then, I stopped thinking because I recalled the biblical quote of Luke, that

goes: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven”.

La traduction française de ce témoignage paraîtra prochainement sur Voix d'Exils

Marcus

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