

Ali, 16.5 years old

Ali is 16.5 years old and comes from Syria. His father was abducted and his mother abandoned him, after travelling on a pilgrimage to another country. While she is still alive, she has chosen to live there separated from her family.

Ali came to Greece after March 20th, the day the EU- Turkey agreement on refugees went into effect, so it is possible that he could be relocated to Turkey. An uncle lives in another European country, but Ali does not want to go and live with him. Therefore, he has decided to apply for asylum in Greece.

He arrived in our structure 6 months ago, after an involuntary hospitalisation in a public child psychiatric clinic. The child lived in the improvised Idomeni camp at the Macedonian border, before being transferred to a regular refugee camp, where ARSIS provided the children with the protection they needed.

The minor started to self-harm after arriving in this camp. A medical intervention was needed and Ali was transported by ambulance to a child psychiatric clinic. Before he inflicted his self-injury, he had requested to be transferred to a residential institution and he was consequently placed in our structure. After being discharged from the clinic Ali had to continue taking medication. The doctor advised to give him a larger than regular doses for his pharmaceutical treatment to subdue the risk of sudden crisis outbursts. During a moment of free speech, Ali mentioned to a member of staff that he has used alcohol and marijuana.

While living in our care, Ali proved to be a social child, loved by his peers, he is clever, nimble and very capable. He was also very liked by the members of staff. Additionally, we must say that Ali made contact with several of the inhabitants of island from which he went to mainland Greece, in particular with Anna, a Greek volunteer. Ali was still in contact with her during his stay and therefore, the hostel continued to have contact with her too.

Ali had an excellent relationship with all the caregivers and support staff, but a tumultuous relationship with the all-female staff of the local social service. He was found to be creating problems, unless a member of the staff of the Social Service was present.

On several occasions, he entered the staff's office and demanded several things, using shouts and threats. When staff tried to explain why they could not comply with his requests, he reacted very violently (beating, breaking windows, threatening the employee, inflicting self-injury, hiding in the mountains, etc.).

In case his behaviour warranted an intervention, one of the colleagues of the Social Service would stay with Ali despite his threats towards this member of staff, his swearing and his threats to conduct more self-harm.

The motives for these attacks would usually be very trivial. It could be obtaining an additional pair of socks, a demand for more pills, requesting changes to his

unchangeable legal status, etc. In principle, Ali was monitored by a colleague from the Social Service, the interpreter and a caregiver. They started to suspect that his behaviour was a kind of manipulation. After an internal discussion, the intervention pattern has been changed. Since then, the staff of the social service would no longer submit to Ali's threats anymore.

However, this caused Ali to raise the intensity of his treats. He announced that it's time for the staff to see him hang before running off and disappearing into the woods. On another occasion, Ali threatened members of staff with a razor. The translator and a colleague from the Social Service were rushed to the scene so they could defuse the situation.

Ali initially continued to be tense. The colleague from the Social Service and the interpreter finally left because they realised that Ali, when he became aware of their presence got even more agitated. About 10-15 minutes after of their departure, Ali calmed down, but he continued to provoke staff on several occasions after this incident.

Throughout this intervention pattern another problem arose. The interpreter, who seems to have identified himself a lot with Ali, due to some common points in their history, stopped following the instructions of the coordinator. Without having been granted permission, he tried to provide "counselling" to the minor but provided advice contrary to the given instructions.

Ali created so much tension, initiated so many fights, broke hostel regulations so frequently that it affected the working of the structure. The tolerance shown by the shelter towards him led other children to adopt similar behaviour. So after he initiated his most recent crisis we informed him that we cannot help him anymore and we informed him that the staff came to the conclusion that another structure would be more suitable to address his needs. And that a transfer procedure had been initiated.

After having received this information, Ali's behaviour has completely changed. For the past two weeks he has behaved very well and he has not caused any problems.