

Weergeven

Bewerken

Publiceren

Kavien (22): 'A helping hand makes a world of difference

This page:

Kavien Suleiman (22) was only a toddler when he fled to the Netherlands with his parents. Yet he feels involved with the current refugees, partly because of his emotionally charged Kurdish history and fond childhood memories in the Netherlands. That is why Kavien will run the Amsterdam Marathon for the Netherlands Council for Refugees on 15 October.



Refugee kinship

"Like thousands of other Kurds, my parents and I fled the violent regime of Saddam Hussein twenty years ago. I was two years old when the three of us arrived in the Netherlands. So young, that I would 'just' grow up here as a Dutch boy. But while I don't feel like a refugee, my history makes me feel related to them."

Collective trauma

"My mother told me how I cried for days as a baby after a mortar hit our neighbors. Almost every Kurdish family has suffered losses: relatives who were murdered or died while fleeing Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish community shares a collective trauma, which I certainly notice in the older generation. It hurts when people get the feeling they shouldn't be there or have no right to exist. I grew up in that knowledge."



A new start

"Nevertheless, peace came for our family in the Netherlands and we made a new start on Ameland. The islanders felt very involved with us and the other refugee families living there. One man came to visit us regularly and helped my parents learn the Dutch language. He and his wife would become my Dutch "grandma Else and grandpa Herman". I cherish the memories of them; their wise stories, the hot chocolate by the fireplace and my grandmother's kale."