

The monthly Starfish newsletter..

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Whether it's fun or filled with meaning,
I wish you the best **EASTER** you can have

Oh, For a Pair of Clean Dry Warm Socks



Stories about refugees in the island of Lesbos (where I live) are no longer front-page news. Yet according the United Nations Refugee Agency, 12,795 refugees arrived here in 2017. This number is equivalent to 15% of the year-around population of the

estimated to be stranded in the island waiting for their applications for asylum to be processed. The government-controlled reception centre has a capacity of 1,800, but up to three times that number are being housed there at any one time, in conditions that must be described as inhumane.

Recently I have begun to work with the Starfish Foundation, a local non-profit helping refugees on the island, using my skills as a writer to help with outreach. Today I share a blog I wrote to contextualise the desperation of the situation the refugees find themselves in.

Think about it. Before you go out walking in town or countryside, you put on a pair of clean socks and then a pair of athletic shoes or boots. Your socks, which you take for granted - except when they get wet - protect your feet from blisters, callouses, and foot infections. Now imagine yourself as a refugee or migrant who has come across the wine dark sea, fleeing war. Your socks and shoes are soaking wet when you arrive. If you are lucky you will be given new shoes and socks, but then what happens?

You are taken to a refugee camp to wait for your asylum papers to be processed. While you are waiting, and it could be months or even a year, what happens to your socks? For sure they will get dirty, for you often have to walk on muddy and even sewage infected paths in the camp. The toilets are filthy and when you have to use them, you try not to step in the muck, but sometimes you do.

You keep on wearing your socks, because you do not have a second pair. One day you decide to wash them and on that day blisters appear on your feet and become infected. You have always been a clean person, washing socks and underwear and all sorts of clothing for yourself and your family every day. But now you are facing the unknown, without even a clean pair of socks to put on your feet. You bind up your wounds and pray that your one pair of socks will not be stolen from the wire fence where you hung them out to dry.

There is an urgent need for socks in the refugee camps of Lesbos where thousands of refugees wait to learn if they will be granted asylum. It is hard for us who take our socks for granted to understand the difference a pair of clean dry socks could make in the life of a refugee. A pair of clean dry socks could make all the difference in the world.

A plea for 300 pairs of socks for men and women from Euro Relief was one of the first postings on Starfish Foundation's web page [NeedsHub](#), established to connect organisations helping refugees on the island of Lesbos with donors. That initial request for 300 pairs of socks may have been answered, but the need for socks in the refugee camps is on-going and immense. And socks are only one of the many things - from baby strollers and wheelchairs to shampoo and toothpaste - that the refugees need. Your gift, whether large or small, really could make all the difference in the world to a vulnerable person who needs your help.

Please visit Starfish's [NeedsHub](#) to learn what you can do, or [Donate to Starfish Foundation here](#).

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