



BORDER STORIES

It is estimated that there are currently 35 million men, women and children who have been forced to leave their homelands to take the road to exile in search of safety. Though we often see stories of the global homeless on the evening news, the record of their plight is kept at a distance and their identity remains unknown, even when they arrive in our own country

Border Stories is an exhibition developed by Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), which allows some of these displaced people from Chechnya, Sierra Leone, Colombia and elsewhere to have a name and tell their individual stories. Their treasured objects and personal stories provide testimony to the horror of having their world, as they once knew it, destroyed. The exhibition provides a poignant record of what they have lost and what they still hope for.

Zara, 37, an internally displaced Chechen woman in Ingushetia, Russia

'I have three children: an 18-year-old daughter and two sons. Before arriving in this 'tent-city' called Aki-Yourti, we lived in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. When the houses were bombed I was very scared. The children, despite their young age, were already experiencing a second war. I chose the village of Aki-Yourti to take refuge, in Ingushetia, because I had heard that there were already many Chechens there and it was the closest place to Chechnya. But I never thought that the war would last so long. My daughter Milana suffered a nervous breakdown during the first war, when we fled the bombing. She has lost her physical coordination, but I have not lost hope that she will regain it one day.

When I returned to Grozny to see my house, I only saw ruins. I thought about my children, who were in Aki-Yourti, and I said to myself, thanks to Allah, they are alive. The only thing that was still standing was our wardrobe. I opened it and I saw my sons' books and Milana's doll. I was so happy to have found something! Milana loved her doll so! She'd received the doll from her father for her 5th birthday. Ever since we fled, she had often expressed her regret at not having had time to take it. When I returned to Aki-Yourti and I showed the children what I had found among the ruins, she began to cry, and she examined her doll. She read its thoughts. She gave it a bath and washed its clothes. It was she who insisted that I give it for the exhibition.'

↖ Milana's doll rescued from the ruins of Chechnya

→ 'During the day, I spend my time making baskets and cars like this one. I try to sell them' Gilberto, 14, an internally displaced Angolan youth

