

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2169

Osmani, Gyzele

(1970 -)

Born 12 May, 1970, Ternovc East Kosovo Serbia

Occupation Refugee Advocate, Student

Summary

Gyzele Osmani fled Kosovo in 1999 with her husband and five small children. Accepting temporary refuge in Australia she was housed in the Bandiana Safe Haven where her youngest daughter received medical treatment for a dislocated hip. Refusing repatriation in March 2000 because the situation in the Presevo Valley was unsafe and her daughter needed further medical treatment, the family was interned for seven months in the Port Hedland Detention Centre before being released to settle in Canberra. Now an Australian citizen, Gyzele is studying Business Administration and her story is the subject of a prize-winning essay and radio program.

Details

Gyzele Osmani was born on 15 May 1970 in East Kosovo, Serbia, in the village of Ternovc , Bujanovc community , in the Presevo Valley, to Albanian Muslim parents. Her father was a farmer and she had three sisters and two brothers. She left school in Year 8 when she was 14, as the local high school was converted into a military barracks. She was helped by a tutor who lent her books and taught her Serbian and a little English. She then trained as a dressmaker. In 1991, when she was 21, she married Qenan Osmani a local carpenter and upholsterer, and by 1997 had five children, the last of whom were twins born in July 1997.

In May 1999 the Serbian soldiers blockaded the village, conducted a house-to house search and ordered the people to leave. Gyzele and her family walked for eight hours to Macedonia. When she finally reached a UN camp she discovered the hip of her baby daughter, Albinota, had been dislocated from being carried so long. She wanted medical help for her as soon as possible so accepted Australia's offer of asylum, not realising it was only intended to be temporary. She arrived in Australia on 15 July 1999 and after five days in a camp in East Hills, Sydney, was taken to the Bandiana Safe Haven in the Albury-Wodonga area. Albinota had three unsuccessful operations on her hip over the next ten months.

On 3 March 2000 the Albanian refugees in Bandiana were told they would be repatriated as the United Nations had restored order in Kosovo. The thirty Albanians who, like Gyzele were from the Presevo region in Serbia where the UN had not intervened, knew it was not safe to return and refused to return. On 15 April 2000 twenty-one Albanians were sent from Bandiana to the Port Hedland Detention Centre. After seven months there, she and her family were released on the decision the Minister for Immigration, Philip Ruddock, following intervention from Canberra migration agent Marion Le and other Canberra-based refugee supporters, who also helped her family rebuild their lives in Canberra. She and her family were granted permanent residence in Australia on 15 May 2001 and are now Australian citizens.

Gyzele is studying Business Administration at the Canberra Institute of Technology and takes every opportunity to tell her story of life in detention in the hope of helping other detainees, particularly children. Her story has the subject of a prize-winning essay by Melanie Poole, and an Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio Eye program, which won the 2003 Human Rights Radio Award.

Published resources

Article

The Place Where God Died. Gyzele's story., Poole, Melanie, 2002c,
<http://www.refugeeaction.org/stories/gyzele.htm>

Resource

The Place You Cannot Imagine, Redfern, Lea, 2004,
http://soundprint.org/radio/display_show/ID/216/name/The+Place+You+Cannot+Imagine

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Gyzele Osmani interviewed by Ann-Mari Jordens \[sound recording\]](#)

Author Details

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Created 25 August 2006

Last modified 1 September 2006