



Citizen journalism as a tool to bring stories from refugees

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Tafan Najat, artist and teacher in Kurdistan, followed a StoryMaker training in May 2016. She became very interested in using citizen journalism as a tool to bring out stories from Kurdistan. Tafan made her first story in a refugee camp in Erbil, about clothing inside the camp. The change in clothing turned out to be a cause of problems, especially for many girls and women.

Written by Tafan Najat & Nava Maria Verboom

My name is Tafan Najat, I am 28, an artist, and currently also a teacher in Kurdistan. I used to work for a magazine as a Fashion Editor. This is where I had the opportunity to explore [StoryMaker](#).



I did the StoryMaker training in May 2016. At first it was just a workshop for me, but as the course proceeded I became very interested as I understood how important the use of StoryMaker is these days. Especially in Kurdistan, we have a lot of stories that must become known.

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There was a girl in the training who lived in a refugee camp in Erbil. She made a story about harassment of people living in the camp. It was her story which made me wonder about what happened in these camps, and why this happened.

I decided to do a story about clothing inside the camp. Before living in the camp, how did they dress? What were their clothing habits? What had changed after they had become refugees? How had this been affected by a new culture? And what do they wear now?

The first step I had to take was to find someone who could make a connection between me and the camp. It would be my first time in a refugee camp. I asked my friend from the training who was living in a camp. We were set on going to Halsm camp.

When I decided to do the video it was late afternoon so getting permission to enter the camp seemed impossible. But we connected with my friend's relative in the Halsm camp and when we arrived there they were waiting for us at the gate.

At first, it was not easy to find someone who wanted to be interviewed. Their refusal was due to many having already been interviewed by others without result. I talked with a lot of the camp inhabitants to explain the subject I wanted to make a story on. This interested them as the change in clothing was a cause of problems for especially many girls and women.

I did not receive many reactions to the video. Unfortunately, it did not cause any change as people do not seem to care about the story when it is about how people dress, they do not see it as a big issue.

I still use StoryMaker though and I will continue using it. Since I found out about StoryMaker it made my work easier and made me more excited to create more videos.

I have worked with two of the girls who have escaped from the hand of ISIS. Unfortunately I could not make a video, because they did not agree to film the interview. But I did an interview with them and published their story in a special women magazine in Kurdistan called ZHin magazine. I also did an interview with the person who rescued the girls and returned them to their families. This story was also published.

Now I am teaching children art and culture in another way to let them be open minded and care. I hope I can teach them what I know about StoryMaker and they can start using it to tell stories.

Watch the video Tafaan made below or read more about [StoryMaker](#).



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