

**Testimony of Syrian Youth at World Youth Day 2016  
Kraków, Poland – 30 July 2016**

“My name is Rand Mittri. I am 26 years old, and I am from Aleppo, from Syria. As you may know, our city has been destroyed, ruined, and broken. The meaning in our lives has been cancelled. We are the forgotten city.

It may be hard for many of you to know and understand the full breadth of what is happening in my beloved country, Syria. It will be very hard for me to impart a life of pain to you in a few sentences, but I will try to share a few aspects of our reality with you.

Every day we live lives that are surrounded by death. But like you, we close our doors behind us as each morning as we leave for work or school. It is in that moment that we are gripped by fear that we will not return to find our homes and our families as we left them. Perhaps we will be killed that day. Or perhaps our families will. It is a hard and painful feeling to know that you are surrounded by death and killing, and there is no way to escape; no one to help.

Is it possible that this is the end, and that we were born to die in pain? Or are we born to live, and to live life to the fullest? My experience in this war has been a harsh and difficult one. But it has caused me to mature and grow up before my time, and to see things in a different perspective.

I serve at the Don Bosco Center in Aleppo. Our center receives more than 700 young men and women who come hoping to see a smile and hear a word of encouragement. They are also seeking something that is otherwise lacking in their lives: genuine humanitarian treatment. But it is very difficult for me to give joy and faith to others while I myself am bankrupt of these things in my life.

Through my meager life experience, I have learned that my faith in Christ supersedes the circumstances of life. This truth is not conditioned on living a life of peace that is free of hardship. More and more, I believe that God exists despite all of our pain. I believe that sometimes through our pain, He teaches us the true meaning of love. My faith in Christ is the reason for my joy and hope. No one will ever be able to steal this true joy from me.

I thank you all and I earnestly ask you to pray for my beloved country, Syria”.