



The crucial work of refugees during quarantine

Spanish Commission for Refugees recognizes the essential role that refugees are taking during COVID-19 quarantine

The Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR), coinciding with the celebration of International Workers' Day in Spain on 1 May 2020, claimed the "essential" work being done by refugees during the coronavirus pandemic.

Four refugees shared their experience regarding their work in these times of quarantine. None of them have been able to stay at home these days, as they work in a supermarket, in a pharmacy, on the streets or in gardening. They now live far from their homes in one of the worst pandemics in memory, each with their own stories, but with the common goal of overcoming this new adversity and live in peace.

These are Maria, Robert, Alphonse and Anna, who, even during these troubling times, face their working days in a positive way despite this exceptional situation.

Maria is only 19 years old, and she arrived from Armenia only a year and a half ago. She started her first job in Spain in a supermarket chain just when the coronavirus epidemic started, like other refugees. In spite of that she says she feels "very happy" in her job, since for her it is also a way to "help Spain". The young woman admits being sad for all the sick people and for all those who have died these days, so what she wants is to "give good emotions" to those she comes across during her working day. Pending her request for asylum, Maria says she wants to continue studying: "My big dream is to be a doctor," she says.

Robert, a 24-year-old born in Guinea Conakry, works in a gardening and cleaning company, after arriving to Gran Canaria in a pawl from Morocco in 2016. Robert thinks he has been lucky compared to others who have been through the same thing. He is grateful to have been able to study, which has helped him to find a job. "My work at the moment is very complicated because there is a situation of extreme caution", he says, while complaining that at some point he has felt discriminated these days because he is a migrant and therefore "seems suspicious of breaking the confinement rules" when he has to go to his workplace.

Alphonse, 32, from Cameroon, arrived in Spain by boat in June 2016. A "hard journey", he says, but motivated by the hope of having a better life, being able to study and work. A job as a gardener that these days has changed a lot. "Measures have been taken in order to work and avoid contagion, we have the masks, gloves, gel..." It is the reality "with which we have to learn to live", he accepts. "Since Spain has been the country of my new beginning, I feel happy and I try to do well what I have to do," he says by way of being thankful.

Anna, for her part, had to leave Georgia because of gender-based violence. Two months ago, she started working as a pharmacy assistant in Madrid. Now she admits to "be afraid" of working in these difficult days and having contact with many people every day. "We work with gloves and masks, we have disinfectants, we keep our distance, so we do



everything possible to protect ourselves, but we also have stress because people are scared, they are nervous and all this affects us," she says. However, her last words are positive. "I am passionate about my work, so despite the difficulties I am very grateful".

References:

- (1) <https://www.cear.es/sections-post/el-imprescindible-trabajo-de-personas-refugiadas/>
- (2) <https://www.europapress.es/epsocial/migracion/noticia-imprescindible-trabajo-personas-refugiadas-pandemia-coronavirus-20200501110239.html>