

Mehmet Kubaşık

“Elif Kubaşık, wife of Mehmet Kubaşık, recounts:

We were 17 years old when my husband Mehmet and I fell in love with each other. It happened in his home village in the south-east of Turkey. He was a handsome man, big, strong, with black hair, dark eyes and thick eyebrows. On the outside, he looked tough, but he was a softie on the inside. I always said, ‘You have a heart made of cotton.’ It was true young love. [...].

At the age of 19, I had my daughter Gamze. When Gamze was a year old, my husband was called for military service. I waited for him for 18 months. We lived in my husband’s village first, but then the political situation there became intolerable for us Kurds and Alevis. There were violent riots, attacks and persecution. Our families gave us advice to leave for Europe. In 1991, we moved to Germany – and following a detour through Switzerland – were ultimately granted asylum.

I was initially afraid of this foreign country called Germany. We had no idea how life would be there and what would be waiting for us. [...].

But the fear of persecution in Turkey was even greater. First, we lived in a home for asylum seekers. However, once our asylum application was approved, we began to have a really good life. We had a nice life here – until it happened.

Today, I say I’ve lived two lives in Germany. A nice life, until April 4th 2006 – and a terrible one. Our nice life was simply an ordinary life of a family in Dortmund. My daughter Gamze grew up here and went to school. My two sons Ergün and Mert were born here. In 2004, we even opened our own kiosk on Mallinckrodtstraße in Dortmund, just a few streets over from where we lived. The shop was leased and involved a lot of work, so we often took turns working. Sometimes Gamze stepped in for my husband at the kiosk, and sometimes I did. We worked together as a complete family. We had lots of contact with the people here – Germans as well as non-Germans. Life was full of joy. We gained German citizenship back in 2003. That was a conscious decision by my husband and me. Germany felt like home. My husband spent 12 years here before going back to Turkey for the first time.

Today, I can still say that Germany is my home. But it’s now a home with pain, not the joy we had before. My relationship with it is fractured, and I feel this fracture inside of me. Germany is my home and my children’s home. But Germany is also the country in which my husband was murdered.”