

Mehmet Turgut

“Mustafa Turgut, brother of Mehmet Turgut, recounts:

Memo – he'll always be Memo to me. 'Memo' was what we called my big brother Mehmet. I was 12 years old when he was murdered in Germany. When I think of my memories of him, the same scenes always come to mind. In one of them, Memo and I are walking to the forest to collect firewood. It's summer. It's very hot and collecting the wood is hard work. Mehmet is exhausted, but he doesn't let me help him because I'm still so young. Then we realise that we forgot to bring water with us. That's my fault and my big brother isn't happy with me at all.

Fortunately, there's a small stream nearby. The only problem is we don't have a container with us to collect the water. That's when Mehmet removes his shoe and says, 'Take this, wash it out well and bring back the water in it.' And then we drank together from the shoe and made up.

I'm the youngest of five siblings; Mehmet was 14 years older than me. So, we didn't spend much time together as Memo was frequently in Germany. I often only heard his voice over the phone. He had a lot of trouble in Germany. He didn't have a work permit or residence permit there. He was deported and kept going back. I think he wasn't doing too well over there. But I think Germany represented hope for him.

My dad always said, 'Don't go back to Germany any more. What do you want there? Stay here. Get married here.' There was also a girl in our village who he was in love with. But Mehmet would answer: 'Father, what should we live from here? You take care of us, but we can't always live off your work. I want to be independent. I want to go to Germany.' In the end, our father gave up. He gave him permission; he even took on debt so he could get a passport and travel.

Even when Mehmet was shot in Germany a few months later, my father said: 'We couldn't have stopped him, whatever we would have done. It was fate. You could have put a mountain in front of him and he would have climbed over it.'

In February 2004, it was clear that he would not come back alive from the distant country behind the mountain.”