

UNHCR TURKEY

HUMAN STORIES

DAFI scholarship programme helps refugee students at university to pursue their career dreams for a better future.



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“This semester at the university has gone by so fast and I am learning a lot from this dynamic environment” says Linas, a 22-year-old Syrian university student who currently studies architecture at a university in Ankara. She is one of the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund) scholarship students, a scholarship programme implemented in partnership with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), under the Türkiye Bursları Programme.

Since childhood, Linas has always felt the need to prioritize her education. When she fled to Turkey from Syria in 2015 with her family, she was determined to continue with her studies. **“I was one of the first girls to get an education in my family. Therefore, education means a lot to me and my parents”** she says. With the support of her father, she registered at a local school in Şanlıurfa within five months of her arrival. Even though she was not able to understand Turkish at the beginning, she did not give up.

Linas attended language courses provided by different organizations and NGOs including those supported by UNHCR such as International Organization for Migration, Danish Refugee Council and Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality. “In my spare time, I read books in Turkish to improve my language skills. My classmates and teachers have been very supportive of me and this has significantly contributed to my success in school.” For the university exam, Linas saved money to buy textbooks and prepared for the exams all by herself. She wanted to study architecture because she thought **architecture is a great way to boost development in countries both in economic and social terms.**

Linas’ dedication and hard work paid off to fulfill her dream to continue with her studies at university. After finishing high school, she successfully passed the proficiency exams for Turkish language, a prerequisite to study a bachelor’s degree in Turkey. She then scored high enough at the university entrance exam to begin her academic career. While she was waiting to receive her high school diploma, she heard about the DAFI scholarship programme funded by Germany. She learnt that DAFI was providing support to successful refugee students through scholarships at university level and she made an application with her exam results accordingly. Surprising for her, following her application, she was invited to an interview with the DAFI committee. Shortly after the interview, Linas received a phone call from the DAFI committee saying that she had been accepted into the Architecture Faculty of Gazi University in Ankara with a full DAFI scholarship. “It was one of the best moments of my life” says Linas. **“Not only was I accepted by a university to start my degree but I was also granted a full DAFI scholarship which meant that I wouldn’t be a burden to my family. It was truly magical and made possible with the support from DAFI”.**

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Currently, Linas ranks among the top students in her faculty. Thanks to the DAFI scholarship, she also receives a monthly stipend that covers her dormitory and book fees. **“With the support of the DAFI scholarship, I am able to fully concentrate on my studies. This is very important as I am economically independent and do not rely on my parents’ financial support”.** The remaining portion of her stipend allows her to attend courses of personal interest and to follow new trends on architectural robotics, high-tech architecture and the most updated software programs for architectural design. She hopes to build a career in technological architecture. By using her spare time and resources to focus on different areas of architecture, she hopes to be able to pursue her future dreams. Linas concludes by giving the following message to everyone;

“Education is crucial for a bright future and this requires one to dream and work hard. Everyone should have a dream and should work for it. I would not have been where I am now if I hadn’t worked hard to become an architect. **Thanks to the DAFI scholarship, I am able to continue my studies and pursue my dreams.** My message to anyone who is in the same position as I was is not to give up on their dreams and commit to what you want in the future!”

Thanks to the support of Germany, refugees like Linas participate in higher education and pursue their dreams for a better future. In line with the 1951 Refugee Convention, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New York Declaration for Refugees as well as the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR will continue working with Germany and other donors so that refugees like Linas have access to inclusive and equitable quality education together with lifelong learning opportunities.