

**Bret Windhauser**  
**August 15, 2016**

I worked for a nonprofit organization called Care4Calais this summer. The organization's goal is to provide services and much-needed aid to the near 7000 refugees in "the Jungle" refugee camp. As an intern, my responsibilities aligned with the other long-term volunteers which entails being a team leader, running the warehouse, organizing volunteers, and managing the projects in camp, as well as some other tasks. The general layout of the day was working in the warehouse from 9-noon. The warehouse manager is in charge of making sure all the short-term volunteers have jobs to do and that there is a long-term volunteer briefing them, making sure lunch is ready on time, and handling donations and new volunteers who come through the the day. After lunch, we go into camp and the team leaders manage our projects in camp. These include a distribution system out of a fixed shipping container in the center of camp; informal art, English, and French classes; going from shelter to shelter to distribute tickets to later be collected at distribution; construction projects; targeted distributions to vulnerable populations; and mass food deliveries. All team leaders are trained to do all of these tasks, and there is a rotation system to decide who is doing which task each day. My specific responsibilities not shared by other interns were working on Tuesdays in the coordination center as an information center for new arrivals, Arabic-French-English translation, working as an Arabic translator in the legal office on asylum claims, and balancing the cash box in the warehouse office.

Over my ten weeks of performing these jobs I developed a new skill set specific and necessary to the humanitarian work field. One of the most important skills I learned was how to manage a large group of people. As the warehouse manager, I would be responsible for between

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30 and 80 volunteers, making sure they had jobs and that they were doing the jobs correctly. Managing volunteers was also an important skill in camp because, although the groups were smaller at between 10-20, camp is a very unpredictable and at sometimes hostile environment. Because of this, it is important to keep your volunteers calm but vigilant and know the emergency protocol and be ready to change plans and continue working. I also greatly improved my Arabic skills that I began to develop at Sewanee because I was always placed on translation jobs. I also learned how to step up and make my voice heard in order to make helpful changes. One such change that I think is very beneficial for the organization occurred about 6 weeks into my time when we changed the container distribution from an open line to a ticketed distribution. This means that instead of people lining up every day for three items we began to go shelter by shelter and ask each person which items they need the most and then they can collect those items the next day. The hard decision to change the container came about because every day at the container we only saw the same people but Calais is drastically low on donations so this way we can help a wider range of people and use donations more effectively. I helped spearhead the change and I wrote the policy for the new system to train the other volunteers. I am very proud of this and at the weekly community leaders meeting Care4Calais was formally thanked for the change by the community representatives which is the first thank you they have unanimously agreed on in over a year. Another huge success which I am proud of helping with was our mass food deliveries before Eid. As the camp is approximately 94% Muslim, it was an amazing experience to be there for Ramadan. Many camp residents expressed concern that they would not have enough food for Eid, the last day of Ramadan where the Islamic world celebrates the end of

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the fasting period with large parties and banquets. To accommodate this, Care4Calais dedicated five days to only delivering food parcels. Such a commitment was difficult because it was only myself and one other intern. On a normal day of food deliveries, we usually deliver between 125-200 food parcels. For the five days before Eid the other intern and I along with our short term volunteers assembled and deliver approximately 600 food parcels per day. At the end we delivered a total of 2,434 food parcels with each parcel containing enough for 3 people for 3 days. This was an extraordinary accomplishment which ended with an amazing Eid celebration provided by our friends in camp.

With all of these incredible, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, I learned so much. I learned about cultures, languages, and histories of people from at least 16 countries between Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. I greatly improved my Arabic skills and knowledge about Middle Eastern culture, which will help me next semester because I will be abroad in Amman, Jordan. In addition, I learned about the state of the refugee crisis, treatment of people, the amount of racism still present in society, discrimination, the politics of the area, and so many countless more tidbits of information that I can use to continue forward. Working with people in a refugee camp also carries unique lessons such as what to do when you are being tear gassed, how to charge an iPhone with a generator, or how make Sudanese coffee. Such an experience cannot be summarized in a three-page paper. But the lasting effect of this internship will be seen in my focus in the future. I was able to network extensively and learned about the other organizations working with refugees and displaced peoples all over the world. I want to continue in this type of field-based humanitarian work. In terms of career change, I saw myself this

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summer become more political in how I critiqued and responded to policies. Because of this, I would like to continue to work in more politically-charged environments because I can then gather information to be given to organizations and governments in the hopes of creating lasting change. Being in Northern France during the controversial Brexit vote made me want to search for more jobs relating to advocacy, ideally where I could work in the field and then be able to teach others about the experiences and problems that I saw. I have already begun to email and look into organizations for next summer where I can focus more on this work.