

ART FROM NEA KAVALA (A REFUGEE CAMP IN NORTHERN GREECE)

THE ORGANIZER

Karya Martinez is pleased to present this display of paintings by immigrants (mostly children) living in the Nea Kavala refugee camp in northern Greece.*

Kayra Martinez is the founder of *Love Without Borders*, and has for many years been involved in the ongoing crisis of immigrants fleeing violence in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq and seeking safe harbor in Europe. Ms. Martinez, who is an American, began her efforts to alleviate the situation by assisting immigrants huddled at a German train station where she handed out food and clothes, translated, sorted donations, and otherwise helped them meet their basic needs.

When the first waves of immigrants had landed in Greece, they found a ready reception in several European countries; but then the welcome abruptly ended as the latter closed their borders to the influx. Over 60,000 immigrants thus found themselves “stuck” in Greece which set up refugee camps where they are required to stay until granted asylum elsewhere. The camps are rudimentary, dilapidated and extremely crowded.

Ms. Martinez’s focus has been on one camp in particular, Nea Kavala. There, she teaches English and German to the camp’s children and, at her nearby home, conducts art classes for them and some immigrant adults. This provides a safe space, especially for the children, to express themselves and escape the harshness of the camp’s everyday reality – expression and escape which often have therapeutic benefits. And, of course, the painting activities restore some of the fun that should be part of childhood.

Tireless in her initiative and efforts to make life more bearable and humane for the immigrants, Ms. Martinez has also established a program called *Tent to Home*, through which she helps to transfer especially vulnerable families from refugee camps to private apartments in Greece.

* There are many such camps now located in northern Greece. The red dots on the exhibition map provide a sense of the geography of the crisis within Greece. Camp Nea Kavala is high-lighted with a green dot.

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