



2023 Year in Review



Hannah Kummer - Italy

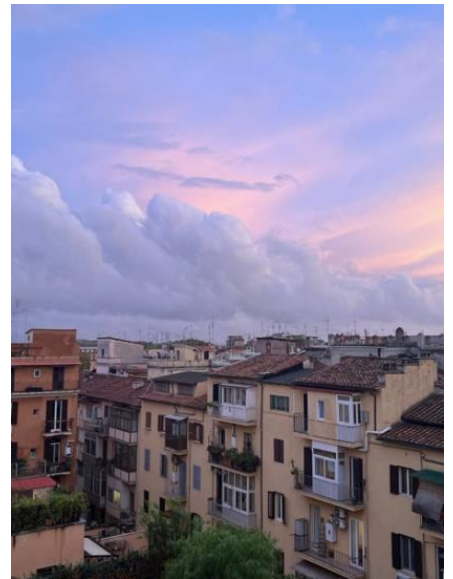
Dear Friends,

I've been finding it difficult to stop and reflect on the year concluded, as 2024 feels like it has arrived and launched into motion without warning! In many ways, 2023 was a year of ongoing movement, of activities layered one onto the next, like carefully placed terracotta tiles on Italian rooftops—each tile significant for building the whole functional structure. However, only by zooming out can you see the aerial view of the whole roof and the purpose it serves. Only by zooming in can you see the cracks and the detailed repairs needed to contain and protect the building beneath. In refugee services and ministries, I have found that this work has a particular flow of moving back and forth between zooming in and zooming out—it requires going with the flow, or else you get motion sickness. Trust is essential—trusting that each effort to lay a few more tiles, or to patch up only a small part of a large crack, is worthwhile.

Thankfully, when it comes to noticing progress though, it is something that can be observed both on a broader scale as well as up close if I stop to look for it. I've witnessed it in refugees' individual lives, moving forward toward becoming better integrated into Italian society and achieving their personal goals. I've been moved by the intense moments at the airport, witnessing a father and son reunited—grown men, weeping as they embrace. I've witnessed the growth and development of a network of Afghans here in Rome, being embraced and supported as they organize and advocate for the needs of fellow Afghans. I've experienced growth as Ben and I have become better able to manage the challenges and hurdles to obtain our legal residence status, which ultimately resulted in both of us receiving our legal residence permits, but not until October!

Areas for prayer:

Zooming-in > This is Arifa (pictured right). In Afghanistan, she was a successful female athlete; a soccer player, and a cyclist from a small town, breaking stereotypes and norms of what was acceptable activities for a girl. With the Taliban takeover in 2021, her life was instantly in danger as her public status as a female athlete became illegal. She fled along with her female cycling team, left her family behind, crossed the border into Pakistan, and,



thanks to a sponsoring cycling association, she eventually came to Italy through the Humanitarian Corridors of Mediterranean Hope in July of 2022. Arifa was one of the first Afghans I met when I joined the case management team here in Rome. Arifa has since advanced in her Italian language skills, is participating in local soccer and cycling clubs, and has successfully been admitted and enrolled into university to study engineering science in English with a full-ride scholarship.



Please pray for Arifa and all the girls who arrived in the cycling group, that they will have ongoing strength for the uphill journey of adjusting to their new lives in Italy as they will soon be exiting the reception program to independent living.

Zooming-out <

Arifa's family is one of the many families on the ever-growing waiting list for future evacuations of Afghans through the Mediterranean Hope Humanitarian Corridors program. This waiting list has several hundred names of people listed. People who have fled to Iran, to Pakistan, and who are internally displaced and in hiding in Afghanistan. The government has yet to sign the 2023 agreement to allow any Afghan entrances, a long and agonizing extended year of waiting without a clear finish line on the horizon. Families need to be together.



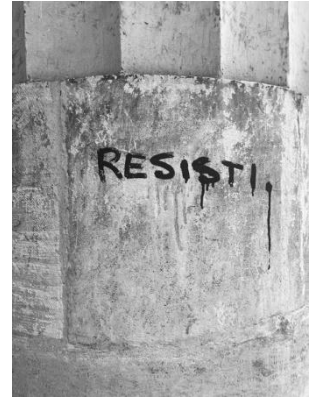
Please pray for an increase in reception capacity as Mediterranean Hope continues to develop the community sponsorship model and recruits new communities to be trained in welcoming and accompanying new arrivals. This also includes the possibility for US churches/communities to be matched with Italian communities as partner sponsors! Please reach out to find out more about this if you or your community is interested in sponsoring an Italian reception & welcome team!



Zooming- further- out <

It is helpful to note that Mediterranean Hope continues to operate the Humanitarian Corridor of Syrians through Lebanon, as well as Sub-Saharan Africans through Libya. This is in addition to the Mediterranean Hope program sites in other parts of Italy: fighting for the human rights of migrant workers in Calabria, the residential program for refugees in Sicily, the humanitarian aid team on the island of Lampedusa, and the Drop-in Center for migrants in Bosnia along the Balkan migration route.

Please pray for the MH staff in each of these sites that they might reap a harvest from their efforts and labor of love.



Zooming-in >

Please pray for Ben and I as we discern what is ahead. If we will remain living here in Italy for another term, I will need to return to the U.S. for a time to raise the remaining support.



Zooming-out <

Ben and I are really grateful for the church family we have found here in Rome and are excited about being a part of this community. We feel challenged and supported and sense the Holy Spirit at work in our lives in fresh ways.

In persistent hope,
-Hannah