



## Mousa Kouri

Going to Tunisia to apply for my visa to South Africa was difficult because in order to apply I had to leave Libya to travel to Tunisia for 10-days as we have no South African Embassy. During this process, I struggled with my work as a human rights defender but that did not discourage me because I knew that I was going to Nelson Mandela's country.

I documented my journey through pictures which helped me tell a story. My journey through work and life can be likened to sunrise – for me sunrise signifies renewed hope. It is a new day filled with new opportunities, new chances, meeting new people and new experiences. The fellowship to me was a sunrise not only on a personal level but to my work as a human rights defender during these 3 months.

I have experienced many new things such as the food which I would like to thank my fellow colleagues who cooked and shared their meals with me. Through these meals I explored new cultures and for that I am grateful. Something new for me is that I cooked! I have never done it before. Yes, it was a salad but it was done out of love by myself and shared with my colleagues.

I appreciated the opportunity to attend the retreat. It made me realise the importance of acknowledging the human aspect of being a defender not only for myself but other defenders. I was not open or empathetic to this side of myself and for that I am grateful to the team for organising this retreat. The cactus I made referenced that even if we live in the desert, it is very important to be patient, to fight for what is right such as the cactus in the desert.

Exploring the beautiful City of Cape Town was one of the many highlights I will cherish. We visited a number of museums such as District Six and Iziko where I learnt of South Africa's history and struggles of fighting against racism and discrimination of the apartheid regime.

Meeting South African activists and advocates that are working to defend the rights of the people, enhance human rights, social justice and continue Nelson Mandela and other leaders work as seen in the visit to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).

The fellowship also presented me with an opportunity to show my culture in how I dressed and to show my ethnicity. To show how we speak, how we dress and what we eat. Showing people that Libya has indigenous black people which was very important for me to showcase.

Getting to know the PUG team and everyone who worked behind the scenes was great. Meeting Prof Fiona, Mmeli and Nheo, thank you for your effort and making the experience great. Visiting Parliament and Reclaim the City was a great experience.

What comes after the fellowship for me is a sunrise, to continue my human rights work and focusing on education especially amongst the marginalised people in Libya and my community. Thank you to the team for this experience.

### **About Mousa Kouri**

Mousa Kouri, a Libyan human rights activist and a minority rights advocate, particularly Toubou. His work in civil society focuses on promoting equality, social justice, and educational rights. Currently Mousa works as the Monitoring and Documentation Officer at Aman Against Discrimination, where he documents violations based on discrimination, racism and hate speech, especially those perpetrated by official authorities, institutions and Libyan media outlets.

