

Dearest ISG and ISG students

My name is Kinan and I am a former ISG student from the class of 2016. I will write a little bit about what I'm up to in quarantine and why things aren't so bad after all. First of all, a huge thanks to people in the healthcare system who consciously committed the future of their lives to the wellbeing of other people, ever since they were young students like us.

For me, quarantine was a long time coming. Our university (Leiden) was slow to take the decision to close our campus and I had already, as a safety precaution, stopped coming to classes before the campus was closed. Since then I've been up to a lot more than I thought I would be considering I tried to stay inside as much as possible.

Here's some things I've been up to:

- 1) Writing, writing, and more writing. I'm a poet and published author and one thing I'd always been riled about during my bachelors is the lack of time I had for writing. Now, with no more physical classes and commuting, I had plenty more time to write. I've been writing a lot and I am currently working on 3 books simultaneously, as well as writing some political articles on the side which I hope to include in a political magazine that I will set up in my campus once this disaster is over. It's a slow process for sure but very liberating and relieving. Poetry isn't everyone's cup of tea but it's my ikigai and I hope you find more time for your ikigai in all this mess.
  
- 2) Taking walks. I would go insane if I really had to be indoors 24/7. I am 100% an outdoors person so I tried to get as much fresh air as possible whilst following government guidelines of course (2m distance, groups no bigger than 3, preferably in places which aren't usually busy). I walked a lot and got to discover some parks I had never been too. No matter how long you live in a city, you definitely don't know it all and there's always something around the corner to discover. So, if you can, stretch your legs and walk somewhere you've never been before. Here's two pictures of beautiful Dutch canal and the gorgeous Scheveningen beach of the Hague.



- 3) Of course, I can't ignore university work forever, even when it may feel that my motivation is non-existent. I am currently working on writing my thesis which is the last thing you do in uni before you graduate. It's essentially a massive *extended essay* which you write about a given subject. I chose to write about the impact of foreign intervention on actors within the Syrian Civil War. I am from Syria and I've always been passionate about expressing my views but also discovering other views and researching the gathered data and facts about the conflict. IB essay-writing curriculum definitely came in handy!
  
- 4) Besides taking a walk and writing, I find time to unwind in other ways. I've been hooked, recently, on a Netflix Series called *El Chapo* – named after the infamous Mexican druglord, which is what the series is about. It's very thrilling, with a lot of action, but also drama, detailing how the modern world of deceit, betrayal and

interests works. I'll include a list of series and movies which I recommend:

- El Chapo (Netflix)
- Rick and Morty, Season 4, Episode 6 (Netflix)
- The Irishman (Netflix)
- Our Planet (Netflix)
- WWII in Colour (Netflix)
- Black Sails (Netflix)
- The Departed (Netflix)
- The Hateful Eight (Netflix)
- The Photographer of Mauthausen (Netflix)
- Holmes and Watson (Netflix)
- Elizabeth (Netflix)
- Look Who's Back (Netflix)
- Fauda (Netflix)
- Caliphate (Netflix)
- Literally any Daniel Day Lewis film

5) Finally, the only work I really look forward to: my job at ESN The Hague. ESN – the Erasmus Student Network – is an organization founded by the EU in 1989 (then called the EC, European Community) in Utrecht in order to facilitate inter-European student exchanges and in doing so, promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. ESN has over 530 local sections (usually 1 per town, sometimes more than 1 per city) in over 43 countries (the project has since expanded outside of EU member states and even countries like Turkey and Russia have ESN sections). My position on the Board is Integration Coordinator which means I try to facilitate clubs, activities and networks that can make students feel like home and are generally of benefit to students. For example, last year I secured two partnerships with a US and Australian firm. The US firm will start shipping reusable and foldable mugs in order to lower consumption of one-time cardboard coffee/tea cups at our university campus. The Australian firm will start shipping notebooks whose paper is made out of stone (instead of paper!). Shipments have been delayed because of corona of course but it's always fulfilling to be able to secure a partnership like this for the good of students. Despite lockdown, the Board and I have found time to interact and plan the growth of this organization. I will include the links of the two firms so that students, or perhaps

even the ISG, can reach out to them and commit to more sustainable practices. (For reusable mugs: <https://stojo.co/>). (For paper notebooks: <https://karststonepaper.com/>)

That's all from me, I hope all students continue to stay safe and healthy – both physically and mentally – despite the semi-craziness of this situation. It's a matter of patience and soon enough restrictions will roll back, and you'll be able to return to the one place you thought you'd never miss – school.

Best wishes to the ISG family, Kinan AL Daioub.

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