The Apprentice star Mergim Butaja takes on charity running event to support refugees

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Penny Appeal's Run For Their Lives Coventry challenge helps those fleeing conflict

Former refugee Mergim Butaja, whose emotional farewell speech on The Apprentice highlighted the importance of remaining strong and determined in the face of adversity, is taking on a charity challenge to support families fleeing ongoing conflict.

The 23-year-old has joined with other volunteer fundraisers from international humanitarian charity Penny Appeal to run Coventry's Half Marathon at the end of February.

Members of #TeamOrange, the name given to Penny Appeal's volunteer family, will hit the city's streets for a 13.1mile race. They'll be calling on friends, family and colleagues to sponsor their efforts, with all money raised going to the charity's Refugee Emergency campaign.

Mergim, whose family fled from war-torn Kosovo to the UK when he was just seven years old, said: “I came to the UK in the back of a lorry. That difficult journey made me who I am today, giving me the strength and determination I carry now.

“I'm so thankful that I was able to make it to the UK and be able to call this my home, and it's important to give back to help others.

“The Run For Their Lives challenge will bring people together to help refugees who are in similar situations to mine – their homes are being destroyed and there's no hope for the future. We'll be able to provide some of the necessities they need on their journeys, such as food, warm clothes and medical support, and also help them find strength and determination.”

Penny Appeal's #TeamOrange runners are sponsored by MesmerEyez and will be lining up alongside thousands of other participants for Coventry's Half Marathon on Sunday 28th February.

The charity's participation in the event is being organised by Haroon Mota, Midlands Fundraising Manager at Penny Appeal, who is a keen runner with many miles under his belt.

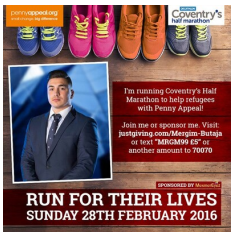
“A physical challenge such as a half marathon is a great way of giving fundraisers a feel for the hardships that refugees face,” said Haroon.

“Penny Appeal teams are on the ground in countries such as Greece, Turkey, Syria and Iraq, providing essential aid to refugee families, and we'll continue that support over the difficult cold months through our Winter Emergency campaign. Waterproof clothes, hygiene items, sleeping bags and tents can make a world of difference and even save lives, so we're delighted that so many people are taking on this challenge to help refugees.”

Penny Appeal still has places available for Coventry's Half Marathon, with each participant asked to pay a £25 registration fee and then raise a minimum of £100 in sponsorship. Places can be booked online at: www.pennyappeal.org/appeal/run-for-their-lives or by calling 03000 11 11 11.

Donations can be made to the #TeamOrange runners via their JustGiving team page: www.justgiving.com/Teams/CovHalf16.

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