

Mehran Karimi Nasseri

Mehran Karimi Nasseri (Persian: مهران کریمی ناصری pronounced [mehˈɾɒn kæɾiˈmi nɒseˈɾi]; born 1946), also known as **Sir Alfred Mehran**,^[1] is an Iranian refugee who lived in the departure lounge of Terminal One in Charles de Gaulle Airport from 26 August 1988 until July 2006, when he was hospitalized. His autobiography was published as a book, *The Terminal Man*, in 2004. Nasseri's story inspired the 2004 film *The Terminal*.

Contents
Early life
Life in Terminal 1
Autobiographical book <i>The Terminal Man</i>
Documentaries and fictionalizations
<i>Flight</i>
<i>Sir Alfred of Charles De Gaulle Airport</i>
<i>The Terminal</i>
See also
References
External links

Mehran Karimi Nasseri

مهران کریمی ناصری



Nasseri in 2005

Born	1946 (age 74–75) <div>Masjed Soleiman, Iran</div>
Citizenship	<div><div> Iranian (1946–1977)</div><div> Stateless (1977–present)</div></div>

Early life

Nasseri was born in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company settlement located in Masjed Soleiman, Iran. His father was an Iranian doctor working for the company. Nasseri stated that his mother was a nurse from Scotland working in the same place.^[2] He arrived in the United Kingdom in September 1973, to take a three-year course in Yugoslav studies at the University of Bradford.

Life in Terminal 1

Nasseri alleges that he was expelled from Iran in 1977 for protests against the Shah and after a long battle, involving applications in several countries, was awarded refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Belgium. This allegedly permitted residence in many other European countries. However, this claim has been disputed, with investigations showing that Nasseri was never expelled from Iran.^[2]

Having one British parent, he decided in 1986 to settle in the UK, but en route there in 1988, his papers were lost when his briefcase was allegedly stolen.^[3] (Others indicate that Nasseri actually mailed his documents to Brussels while onboard a ferry to Britain, lying about them being stolen.)^[4] Despite this setback, he boarded the plane for London but was promptly returned to France when he failed to present a passport to British immigration officials. He was initially arrested by the French, but then released as his entry to the airport was legal and he had no country of origin to be returned to; thus began his residence

at Terminal 1.

His case was later taken on by French human rights lawyer Christian Bourget. In 1992, a French court ruled that, having entered the country legally, he could not be expelled from the airport, but it could not grant him permission to enter France.

Attempts were then made to have new documents issued from Belgium, but the authorities there would do so only if Nasseri presented himself in person. In 1995, the Belgian authorities granted permission for him to travel to Belgium, but only if he agreed to live there under supervision of a social worker. Nasseri refused this on the grounds of wanting to enter the UK as originally intended.^[3]



Nasseri's residency site in Terminal 1 of Charles de Gaulle Airport.

Both France and Belgium offered Nasseri residency, but Nasseri refused to sign the papers as they listed him as being Iranian (rather than British) and did not show his preferred name, "Sir Alfred Mehran".^[1] His refusal to sign the documents was much to the frustration of his lawyer, Bourget.^[4] When contacted about Nasseri's situation, his family stated that they believed he was living the life he wanted.^[2]

In 2003, Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks production company paid US\$250,000 to Nasseri for the rights to his story, but ultimately did not use his story in the subsequent film, The Terminal.

Nasseri's stay at the airport ended in July 2006 when he was hospitalized and his sitting place dismantled. Towards the end of January 2007, he left the hospital and was looked after by the airport's branch of the French Red Cross; he was lodged for a few weeks in a hotel close to the airport. On 6 March 2007, he was transferred to an Emmaus charity reception-centre in Paris's 20th arrondissement. Since 2008, he has continued to live in a Paris shelter.^[3]

During his 18-year-long stay at Terminal 1 in the Charles de Gaulle Airport, Nasseri had his luggage at his side and spent his time reading, writing in his diary or studying economics.^[5] He received food and newspapers from employees of the airport, visits from journalists eager to hear his story and letters of support.

Autobiographical book *The Terminal Man*

In 2004 Nasseri's autobiography, *The Terminal Man*,^[4] was published. It was co-written by Nasseri with British author Andrew Donkin and was reviewed in The Sunday Times as being "profoundly disturbing and brilliant".^[6]

Documentaries and fictionalizations

Nasseri's story provided the inspiration for the 1994 French film Tombés du ciel, starring Jean Rochefort, internationally released under the title *Lost in Transit*. The short story "The Fifteen-Year Layover", written by Michael Paterniti and published in GQ and *The Best American Non-Required Reading*, chronicles Nasseri's life. Alexis Kouros made a documentary about him, *Waiting for Godot at De Gaulle* (2000).

Flight

Nasseri's story was the inspiration for the contemporary opera *Flight* by British composer Jonathan Dove, and was premiered at the Glyndebourne Opera House in 1998. *Flight* would go on to win the Helpmann Awards at the Adelaide Festival Theatre in March 2006.^[7]

Sir Alfred of Charles De Gaulle Airport

Glen Luchford and Paul Berczeller made the *Here to Where* mockumentary (2001), also featuring Nasseri. Hamid Rahmanian and Melissa Hibbard made a documentary called *Sir Alfred of Charles De Gaulle Airport* (2001).^[8]

The Terminal

Nasseri was reportedly the inspiration behind the character Viktor Navorski (Tom Hanks), from the 2004 Steven Spielberg film *The Terminal*.^[9] however, neither publicity materials, nor the DVD "special features" nor the film's website mentions Nasseri's situation as an inspiration for the film. Despite this, in September 2003, *The New York Times* noted that Steven Spielberg had bought the rights to his life story as the basis for *The Terminal*.^[10] *The Guardian* indicates that Spielberg's DreamWorks production company paid US\$250,000 to Nasseri for rights to his story and report that, as of 2004, he carried a poster advertising Spielberg's film draping his suitcase next to his bench. Nasseri was reportedly excited about *The Terminal*, but it was unlikely that he would ever have had a chance to see it in cinemas.^[2]

See also

- List of people who have lived in airports
- Statelessness

References

1. "Stranded at the Airport" (<http://www.snopes.com/travel/airline/airport.asp>). *Snopes*. 2 July 2008. Retrieved 2 September 2009.
2. Berczeller, Paul (6 September 2004). "The man who lost his past" (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2004/sep/06/features.features11>). *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved 1 August 2008.
3. "Mehran Karimi Nasseri - In Transit" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A33471100>). *h2g2*. BBC. 28 May 2008. Retrieved 20 August 2008.
4. Merhan, Alfred (2004). *The Terminal Man*. Corgi Adult. ISBN 9780552152747. OL 7815505M (<https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7815505M>). 0552152749.
5. Adams, Cecil (20 August 1999). "Has a guy been stuck in the Paris airport since 1988 for lack of the right papers?" (<http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/1347/has-a-guy-been-stuck-in-the-paris-airport-since-1988-for-lack-of-the-right-papers>). *The Straight Dope*.
6. Wavell, Stuart. "Memoir: The Terminal Man by Sir Alfred Mehran" (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/memoir-the-terminal-man-by-sir-alfred-mehran-sxhvrht3wzt>). *The Sunday Times*. London.(subscription required)
7. Schweitzer, Vivien & Westphal, Matthew (2 August 2006). "Australia's Helpmann Awards Name Winners" (<http://www.playbillarts.com/news/article/4995.html>). *Playbill Arts*.
8. "Fictionville Studio promo website" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20141106223419/http://fictionvillestudio.com/films/alfred/sir-alfred.html>). Archived from the original (<http://www.fictionvillestudio.com/films/alfred/sir-alfred.html>) on 6 November 2014.
9. Gilsdorf, Ethan (21 June 2004). "Behind *The Terminal*, a true story" (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0621/p11s02-almo.html>). *The Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved 17 November 2015.
10. Rose, Matthew (21 September 2003). "Waiting For Spielberg" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/21/magazine/magazinespecial/MFMERHANT.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5007&en=360b6f8f6>

[3635c6a&ex=1379476800](#)). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 12 June 2008.

External links

- [Le naufragé du terminal 1 \(https://web.archive.org/web/20071017091441/http://www.lexpress.fr/info/societe/dossier/immigration/dossier.asp?ida=428703\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20071017091441/http://www.lexpress.fr/info/societe/dossier/immigration/dossier.asp?ida=428703) at the [Wayback Machine](#) (archived 17 October 2007), 26 July 2004, (in French)
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mehran_Karimi_Nasseri&oldid=1035021486"

This page was last edited on 23 July 2021, at 06:02 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.