

## My Story

## My Hopes My Live

**On 23 March 2012, I had left Togo** and travelled first across Benin and then for two days by bus through Niger until I arrived in Libya. In Benghazi, I got a job as a mechanic at a very big company that not only operated the oil production machinery but also fresh water supply and the drilling for waters wells.



We were very many workers there and lived in good houses which were owned by the company. I stayed there for five years and

**it was for the first time in my life that I had a good income from my work.** We were many black African and Arabic colleagues from all over. I also got an official residence permit for Libya.



But then the company was closed down and I no longer had a job, and my residence permit became invalid. Because of the civil war and the corruption, it became more and more dangerous for me. Once I was stabbed in my back with a big knife during a criminal armed robbery.

**For these reasons I decided to leave Libya and go to Europe.**

But first I had to go to Tripoli, which is about 2000 kilometres away from Benghazi. I had saved some of my earnings from my work as a mechanic. A friend from Egypt told me he could get me a ticket for the boat trip from Tripoli to Europe for 800 dollars. I gave him the money and took a private taxi to Sabratha.

There was no elbow room to the front and back, nor to the left or right. All the other 14 boats were crammed with people just the same as we were. It was unendurable.

**In the end we were incredibly fortunate** because at 4:00 in the afternoon on the same



(these pictures are taken from the internet)

On 20 May 2017, I got into a rubber boat at 6 a.m. in Sabratha. We were 75, but only two of us were black and most of the others were from Asian countries, Afghanistan and Syria. I find it strange that it seems to be better for the Afghans to come to Europe if they first fly to Egypt and then get into the boat in Libya. But we weren't just one boat, we actually were a whole group of 15 boats. The coyotes took us in their tow and pulled us out to sea. Then suddenly they stole our motors, turned back and we were left to the sea so that our boats drifted without any orientation. We had no compass and no telephone connection at all, not even to Alarmphone. On our little rubber boat we were all packed tight with 75 human beings. We all were men, only one young mother was on the boat with her child. I sat on the very rim, my left leg had no space left in the boat and was constantly in the water.

day we were spotted by two ships of the "Open Arms" and were pulled on board.

**The ship belonged to the NGO „Proactiva Open Arms“ from Spain.**



Just three days later, out of several hundred people who had set off from Libya, many drowned when the air pressure of their rubber boat broke down.

**Open Arms then took us to Sardinia**, where we were accommodated and fed in tents right on the beach in Cagliari.

I couldn't stay in Sardinia because, apart from one meal a day, nobody cared about us. So I took the ferry to the mainland to Genova and from there took the train to Torino, because I couldn't find a place to stay in Genova either, since the old town near the old port was full of unemployed black families.

After two days in Torino, I made my way by bus and train to the Italian-French border mountains, the „Sea Alps“. I knew I had to get to a meeting point somewhere in the mountains where an NGO was taking care of refugees who attempted to reach France. They had occupied an empty house in a small village as a meeting point and for our support. I stayed there for a few days. Then one evening we left at 6 pm with 25 people to cross the green border into France unnoticed by the police. The friends from the NGO had provided us with solid shoes, boots and jackets and some food. But still it was very hard, because it was getting colder and there was a lot of snow on our paths. Our walk across the border mountains took 12 hours until we were safe in France. From here I somehow got to Paris by train.

**Paris was terrible for me**, because there was nowhere to rest or get any information. Paris was hell - crammed with people on the move who desperately sought shelter and tried to survive here somehow. It was terribly irritating and disappointing for me. So I only stayed in France for a few days and took a Flixbus to Germany in May 2018.

**The very first thing I experienced in Germany was the German border police.** They didn't seem to have anything better to do than fingerprint me, take a picture of my

face and issue me an ID card indicating a container refugee camp in Karlsruhe as my German address. From there I was then relocated to a camp in Mannheim, and finally to Heidelberg in a former military base. This is where I filed my asylum application. The Federal Office for Migration should actually be called "Federal Office AGAINST Migration", because it immediately claimed **that my application was "inadmissible" because another EU state was legally responsible for me.**

I replied that I had to give my fingerprints in the camp in Sardinia, but had not applied for asylum nowhere in Italy, and that I had been homeless in Cagliari because they had kicked me out of the camp to have it closed down.

The BAMF also wanted to know everything about my health: I told them about my pains in my back and that I had been to the doctor in the camp and that I had to take pain killers. Despite everything, the BAMF was not interested in my health at all, but informed me that I had "indications for the Dublin procedure". And also because I had no family members in Germany, my "deportation to Italy and a residence ban for Germany were very likely".

After four weeks I received a provisional "residence permit" and only two months after I had crossed the border into Germany, **the BAMF ordered my return to Italy.**

A friend in my refugee camp told me of a specialized migration lawyer from Karlsruhe. I contacted and paid her from my small savings and the following month she claimed against the deportation decision. She argued that the conditions in Italy were "systematically poor and generally unacceptable", so that "the asylum seeker (...) is likely to be treated in an anti-human or anti-human degrading form", and that my medical treatment in a clinic to cure my pain in my lower back and leg was not yet finished, and that „Ärzte ohne Grenzen“ confirmed that I would have hardly any access to medical treatment in Italy.

Five months later the Stuttgart Verwaltungsgericht (Administrative Court) rejected my claim and stated that 'Italy is responsible for examining my asylum application' because of the Dublin III Regulation of the EU of 26 June 2013. The BAMF had already asked Italy to allow my "application for return", which Italy would have to agree to within two weeks. After another 6 months the Federal Republic of Germany would be in charge of my deportation back to Italy. **The BAMF also claimed "that Italy has a carefully planned and detailed asylum system** which suffers from certain problems, but not from systemic weaknesses which "as a rule imply inhumane or degrading treatment of asylum seekers transferred to Italy within the meaning of Art. 4 of the GR Charter".

At my hearing at the BAMF and in the complaint before the Administrative Court, I had proved that I was seriously ill and was getting medical therapies. But according to the Stuttgart Verwaltungsgericht "asylum seekers in Italy would have a judicially enforceable right to free access to the health system" if they "register with the Italian National Health Service" and "then have the same rights and obligations regarding medical care as Italian citizens." With this cynical justification, it ruled, "The decision is unappealable." **Consequently I was informed of having to leave the country.**

After another four months I was notified by the state government of Baden-Württemberg of the day and time of my upcoming deportation. I was instructed to stay in my refugee camp for this purpose and that I would be arrested if I were absent.

To my great surprise, right before that day had come, I was given a "suspension of deportation" (Duldung) which said: "The toleration expires as soon as the foreigner is informed of the deportation with the start of the mandatory deportation (...)."

Luckily for me, this could only mean that the foreigners authority had just not had time to deport me on the scheduled day and that they would do it at some later time.

During this whole procedure of several months, I badly suffered from the uncertainty of what the German state would do with me.

**It was an unbelievably perverted game played by the bureaucracy that they call "Rechtsstaat", "the rule of law".**

During all this time a machinery is operating, its mechanism has to be served so that it wouldn't stumble and would produce the result that had long been intended. On the other side, I myself was the material that this machinery had to process. In my processing I was repeatedly made believe that I might have a chance to stay in Germany because my lawyer had given the machine new good arguments to process that were humanly insightful and convincing. Thus my hope for a good outcome and for my right to stay was fed again and again. But the mechanism of the machine is so cynically constructed that my chances were only a fata morgana, to maintain the impression of the „Rechtsstaat“, the rule of law, works authoritative here. In fact, the appointments of the EU countries and their bureaucracies are so well coordinated that **the rejection of my asylum application was a predictable outcome** from the very beginning of this long procedure. My lawyer tried her best although she was well experienced to know it would make no sense, **and my savings were spent for nothing.**

**To this day, not a single authority in Europe ever has asked for my personal distress and hardship, the reason for my refuge from Togo via Libya to Europe.**

In any case, I couldn't wait for the new date of my deportation.

A friend showed me on a Facebook page that it would be better in Hamburg because they had the „**Group Lampedusa**“ there.

So I took the Flix bus to Hamburg overnight on 20 February 2020. There I arrived at the ZOB the next morning at 10:00 am. I asked a few black people who were passing by about the Group Lampedusa and one of them



showed me their permanent tent at Steindamm. It was full of people and the first thing they did, they welcomed me with bread and tea.

Unfortunately, they couldn't help me find accommodation because most of them didn't have any themselves. So every night I slept somewhere else, sometimes in the underground, sometimes in a doorway.

**For several weeks, the tent of Group Lampedusa was my only shelter.**

I could go there every day, stay in company with my African brothers and sisters there, felt safe, got information where I would find something to eat and made friends with many of them.

Then suddenly the lock-down came because of the Covid 19 pandemic. The police used it as an alibi to tear down and destroy the tent some night with a crane and loaded it up. Anyone who resisted was beaten and locked up by the police.

I witnessed very early in the morning, together with Abu, Ali and Escobar, the large police squad and a truck that demolished the tent.



Even the lawyers who came to help could not stop it. **Suddenly the authorities had destroyed our most important place of survival and we had to look for orientation and support anywhere else in the city.**

I was very lucky that the activists of Group Lampedusa were able to organize a place to stay for me and four other friends in Harburg. **Very kind and solidary people** who lived here allowed us to use their flat and they themselves came to stay with friends. We were even enabled to stay here for a whole year during the pandemic.

**We will never forget their selfless solidarity.**

Then Inge and Christian joined us and we all looked together for new housing for us, which we found after a long search on the Veddel. We have been living here for more than a year now and are very happy about it. **But our perspectives are very bad in Germany because they don't give us papers and don't allow us to work.**

That's why we live every day in the uncertainty of whether the police will arrest us at racist controls and write us off to Italy. It has become almost impossible to find jobs to get food and send at least a little money to our families in Ghana and Togo. That was practically impossible during the pandemic.

**How our lives will go on now is a big, open question.**



**Even to this moment, not a single authority in Europe, Germany or Hamburg ever has asked for my personal distress and hardship, the reason for my refuge from Togo via Libya to Europe.**

