



Samira, female, 32 years old, Côte d'Ivoire.

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I am 32 years old and I come from Ivory Coast. I lived there with my husband and my three kids. My kids are here with me, I have a boy who is ten years old, and two twins, a boy and a girl, aged 5 years old. We lived in Abobo [a suburb of Abidjan, the capital]. I used to sell children's clothes there.

I started thinking about leaving when the community started to insist that my little girl should be subject to female genital mutilation (FGM). My sister has three girls, the three of them had FGM, and one girl died because of it. After the death of my niece, I was so scared. I did not want my girl to have it. Then we started thinking about leaving. We decided that my husband should stay there, so he could work and send money in case we would face any problem along the route. You need to have someone to help you in case you have problems along the route.

I started collecting money. I sold all the children's clothes I had and saved money. I left with a lot of money on me, I thought it could help protecting my children. I prepared the bags. Three big bags. I did not put clothes in it. Only food, different types of food, and water.

I contacted a friend. She used to sell shoes next to me in the market. I knew she was in Libya and could help me get to Europe. She gave me the number of a man. I called him and he sent a taxi.

We left from Abidjan, travelled through Niger, and then arrived in Sabha, Libya.

I paid cash in advance. Everybody does so, because the driver does not care if you survive the road or not, he does not want to take the risk. He wants his money in advance so that if something happens he does not lose his money.

Once in Sabha, we were brought to a camp. There they organised the first sea crossing. We left on an inflatable boat with more than 130 people on it. It was a very bad boat, we were too many people. The sea crossing failed, after two days at the sea, were stopped by the Libyan Coast Guard. We got arrested and brought to a prison. It was really bad. There was the war outside. One day a bomb hit the prison, so we escaped.

We spent three days on road. After three days we met an Arab [Libyan] man who was working in a garden. He saw we were not wearing any shoes, so he stopped us and offered help. The man gave us his shoes and some bread. They were big shoes, too big for me and the kids, but at least we had shoes. So we went back to the road and started walking again, towards Tripoli, my friend was still there.

I needed more money to continue the journey, so we stayed in Tripoli with my friend. I worked as domestic worker with her for four months, and I got paid 4,000 Libyan dinars a month. Then my husband sent me some more money, so we could continue the journey.

I called back the man who had helped me before, and he organised the sea crossing. We left again on an inflatable boat, it was a smaller boat this time, we were around 30 people. Again, after two days at sea, we were arrested by the Libyan Coast Guard and brought to another detention centre. The prison there was even worse. I spent three months there, then we managed to escape.

Once we went out I called the man who had helped me before, but the taxi did not come. At that point, the friend with whom I had escaped convinced me to go with her man. I realized he was cheaper than my man. This last man was honest. We paid him and left shortly after on a boat. We spent so much time on the sea before we got rescued. It was three days at least.