

Handout 2

Case Study: “Ibrahim’s” Story*

“I’m from West Africa. Life there was not easy. My oldest brother made it to Europe in 2011, so my younger brother and I thought we should try to go. It took one year to get to Italy. The journey from Agadez [in Niger] to Libya was very hard, and so was the border of Niger and Libya. So many people died in the desert, like it was a river.

“We were a group of boys and girls traveling together. We spent 40 days in the desert. We saw a lot of abandoned cars with dead people inside. If you try to go alone, you die. There was so much hunger and suffering. You meet a lot of people who are about to die. The girls are stronger than the guys—they have to be, in order to make it through. We were lost for days in the desert. We were tired and hungry, and we ended up fighting. It makes you hate yourself. By the time we got to Libya, many of us had been kidnapped. A few of us were lucky because we had a good driver [smuggler]. You don’t know if they are good or wicked, but he told us everything beforehand about what to expect on the journey and he was honest.

“I was stuck for seven months in Libya. It was very bad. We saw our friend being violated. It was a bad, bad experience. We saw and heard a lot of terrible things—we saw torture and killings. The rebels kidnapped us because they want to make money off Africans [through extortion]. They tortured me a lot. I hid my money in a very far place [in anus]. I had too much torture so I couldn’t remove the money and I didn’t want to give all of it. They removed all my clothes and put cold water all over me. Then they tortured me. I am tall so if they beat me, the tall one, then it shows the others that they can beat the biggest one. So, they beat me a lot in front of the others.

“They put us in a truck, 30 people [stacked] together, and covered it up to hide us. We couldn’t breathe. Everyone was smelling so bad, I can’t even say how bad it was. The driver beat me because I am too tall, and my butt was sticking out of the truck. I ended up in Tripoli working with another boy, doing massage. One day the Asma Boys [local gangs] caught us. They took us to a house, and they beat the other boy more than me. You can’t imagine what they do to him, what they do to another person. My friend is very handsome. The women look at him. They [the gang] operated on him [on his genitals] so he can’t fuck any more. I saw the blood on his pants, it was everywhere. It’s a very bad story. His pain is forever. We are all Muslim. Why do they do this? Later, I was working in a supermarket and I was kidnapped again.

“I finally made it to Italy. My younger brother did not make it, but I can’t talk about this. I was in a bad camp [in southern Italy]. We worked like slaves—still we are slaves. It’s like another world. I didn’t understand that this is Italy. Now I have my documents, but I can’t rent a house. An Italian friend will set up a meeting with a landlord, but then I show up and they don’t want to rent to me. They don’t rent to Africans, so I can’t get a place to live. People are always thinking something bad about me. In the metro, I don’t move, I don’t touch anyone. Everyone thinks we are criminals. The police attack us in the camps. In one camp, the police arrived and started beating people—there were more than 100 people living there. It was very wrong. They pushed one boy out of the second floor, and he was very hurt. [He showed a video on his phone of the boy writhing in pain on the ground.] They were beating pregnant women, babies, so I tried to talk to the police to tell them, please don’t beat the women and bambinos. But they beat me, too, so now I have some health problems.



“My story is very painful. I seem to be OK. People think I am funny and happy, but I must smoke [marijuana] to sleep. I can’t sleep, I can’t be alone, I can’t stop thinking about things, especially my future in Italy.”

**Edited for length, coherence, and confidentiality purposes.*

Source: [“More Than One Million Pains”](#): Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy. 2019. Women’s Refugee Commission.