



KHADIJA

Khadija is from Somalia and she fled the war. She wanted to go directly to the UK because her children were already there, and she did not want to take the risk of travelling irregularly across two continents.

“My mind it was there because my children they was there, yeah, I never ask somewhere else.”

When her children left Somalia the journey was much easier and cheaper.

“That time it was easy, no, not like today. It was \$100 I think, the journey, but now \$2,000, \$3,000... everywhere is increasing... Before they didn't look very well and, you know, and every country now has, yeah, border guards... it's harder now. My children when they come to here, I pay one man, I give him money, they took them from Somalia to here, nothing problem.”

She applied for a visa to enter the UK while she was in Ethiopia but her application was repeatedly refused.

“In Ethiopia they told me you have to your child ask you... my son, he ask but they give negative... I don't know the reason, they give three times.”

The only option she felt remained was to travel on to Sudan where she crossed the Sahara desert overnight into Libya.

“It was so difficult but that is the Sahara, is so big, you can't imagine what is the difficulties there, it's so dry... how many people died... during my journey not one died but on the way, you saw, on the way the people died on the floor, there are bones, there are these things.”

From Libya she took a small boat to Italy with 15 other people, and then travelled up through Europe to The Netherlands, where she was able to get a boat to the UK. She was returned to The Netherlands by the UK authorities, but made another attempt to join her family, trapped in a lorry on a small, overcrowded boat. Bad weather made the crossing impossible and the boat was stuck in the dock for five days.

“It was Sunday night, they told me tomorrow morning you get to UK 8 o'clock but... because it was windy we stayed there. Sunday there, Monday, Tuesday... inside the lorry, we don't have water, we don't have anything inside and we feel scared that when you go out you can't come inside the lorry. And Thursday night about 9 o'clock and is come UK about 1 o'clock like this. I was really sick [...]. I go out, I say, no I can't stay inside anymore.”

It has taken Khadija two years and US\$2,000 to reach the UK.