

EL HIBLU 3 FACE TERRORISM CHARGES – AFTER ALMOST FIVE YEARS OF LEGAL AND EMOTIONAL LIMBO.

After almost five years of uncertainty, Malta's Attorney General filed a harsh and ill-thought indictment against the El Hiblu 3 on 8 of November 2023. Abdalla, Amara and Kader have been charged with terrorist activities, hijacking a ship, threatening a crew and several other offences. At least four of in total nine charges carry life sentences.

On 28 March 2019, Abdalla, Amara and Kader first set foot in Malta. They could have never imagined that over four years later, they would still be stuck in a legal nightmare. The nine preliminary charges that were hanging over their heads during that time, have now been confirmed by the Attorney General Victoria Buttigieg.

The Background Story

The three teenagers were rescued from a rubber boat in distress on 26 of March 2019. The boat had departed from Libyan shores trying to reach Europe. Co-ordinated by an aeroplane of the EUNAVFOR Med operation, the people in distress were found and rescued by the merchant vessel ElHiblu1. After the rescue operation, the captain of the ElHiblu1 reassured the rescued that they would be brought to a port of safety in Europe. Yet, following the order of European authorities, the crew tried to return them to Libya – from which they had just escaped.

When the rescued passengers realised they were being returned to Libya, they began to protest the attempted push-back. Amara, Abdalla and Kader calmed down the situation and translated between a scared crew and scared passengers. The ship re-directed its course and steered north towards Malta. Upon arrival, Abdalla, Amara and Kader were arrested and accused of a multiplicity of crimes, including acts of terrorism. The three teenagers, known as the ElHiblu3, were 15, 16 and 19 years old when they reached Malta and were immediately detained in a high security wing in prison before being transferred to age appropriate facilities. The three were imprisoned for almost eight months before being released on bail in November 2019.

"When we finally had the opportunity to escape the inhumane treatments in Libya, we couldn't afford to be returned to a place where our freedoms and safety were not guaranteed anymore and coming to Malta was the only option we had to save our lives. In defence of our lives, we resisted by protesting and I, along with two others, served as translators because we had some basic knowledge in English. We did not do this with any bad intentions and we have no plans to pose threats or danger to the people of Malta." remembers Amara, the youngest of the three accused.

Since then, they've been on parole in Malta hoping for the charges against them to be dropped. For over two years in the preliminary hearings none of the survivors were heard in court while the police and the crew of the ship testified promptly after the ship's arrival. It remains intransparent to us why it took the prosecution two years to invite the persons that had escaped torture, rape and slavery in Libya to testify.

We Are Calling For The Charges to be Dropped

According to the legal defence of Abdalla, Amara and Kader no evidence to show that any crime was committed on Malta's territory, none of the charges may subsist.

"The Attorney General stretches the interpretation of certain criminal charges to an extent that the defence believes such charges are null and void. The defence believes that such an interpretation weaponises the law against asylum seekers", says Neil Falzon. "We also underline that all evidence points to our clients being mediators between the crew and the group of rescue people. That they did their utmost to calm a difficult situation and that, ultimately, their intentions were to save the lives of the men, women and children who had recently fled the horror of Libya."

To us it is clear that the Maltese state is trying to make an example of the three accused in order to deter others from similarly and righteously resisting push-backs to Libya. On board the merchant vessel, the ElHiblu3 had acted as translators when the rescued started to collectively protest their push-back to Libya. Their imprisonment and prosecution constitutes a deep injustice. Instead of being prosecuted, the ElHiblu3 should be celebrated for their actions in preventing the return of 100 precarious lives to Libya.

Help us demand justice and end the trial before it starts. Sign the petition to the Attorney General demanding to **Drop the Charges** once and for all: <https://chng.it/SYT8wvNTMp>

Resisting illegal push-backs to Libya is not a crime.

Free the El Hiblu 3. We demand now more than ever: Drop the charges !

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