

SITUATION REPORT SPECIAL - WALID HEARINGS

No. 674 - 3 November 2025

Europe External Programme with Africa is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peacebuilding, refugee protection, and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to the movement and/or human trafficking of refugees in the Horn of Africa and on the Central Mediterranean Route. It cooperates with a wide network of universities, research organisations, civil society, and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and across Africa. The Situation Reports can be found [here](#). To receive the situation report in your e-mail, [click here](#). You can unsubscribe at any moment through the link at the bottom of each e-mail.

Announcement: This month, we will bring you special Situation Reports on the substantive hearings in the 'Walid case' concerning Human Trafficking for Ransom from Eritrea through Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, held in The Netherlands

Walid hearing background (per 3 November 2025)

- Substantive hearings have started today, 3 November 2025, in the case against the alleged Eritrean human trafficker known as 'Walid' or 'Tewelde Goitom'. The first day of hearings took place in Zwolle.
- Walid is accused of leading a criminal network that detained, tortured, raped and extorted refugees in Libya as part of a criminal organisation. It is one of the biggest cases of its kind ever tried in The Netherlands. The trial dossier has 25.000 pages.
- Walid and alleged fellow trafficker Kidane Zekarias Habtemariam were arrested in Ethiopia in 2020. Walid was extradited to The Netherlands in 2023. Kidane is in the United Arab Emirates, where he was tried for money-laundering.
- The prosecution has asked whether Kidane can be extradited from the United Arab Emirates before 17 November, the date reserved for the hearing of Kidane as a witness in Walid's trial.
- Walid was present at the hearings and used the right to remain silent. He made one statement to underline that his identity was mistaken.

Preliminary Defence (per 3 November 2025)

- The substantive hearings started with a preliminary defence by Walid's lawyers. The defence asked the Court to declare it incompetent and void the indictment on three grounds: ne bis in idem, breach of specialty, and lack of jurisdiction.
 - The ne bis in idem principle states that a person cannot be prosecuted for the same crime twice. The defence argued that the defendant was already sentenced for the same crimes in Ethiopia. The prosecutor argued the Ethiopian ruling concerns different victims and does not bar Dutch prosecution.
 - The Court rejected the ne bis in idem claim, finding the case was based on different victims.
 - Specialty (extradition scope): the defence noted that money-laundering was not part of the extradition request by The Netherlands to Ethiopia. On this point, the Court agreed with Walid's defence and declared the money-laundering charges non-admissible.
 - Jurisdiction/territoriality: the defence argued most offences occurred in Libya with no sufficient link to the Netherlands. The prosecution pointed to specific facts in the indictment that have links to the Netherlands, including persons who gave testimonies and were extorted.
 - The Court deemed jurisdiction arguments to be complex and premature and it will assess jurisdiction per fact during the substantive hearing; it therefore rejects the timing of the jurisdiction challenge.
 - The Court also ruled on several formal defects in the indictment, which included some unclear phrasing which voided a limited part of the indictment.
 - The Court ruled that the case proceeds to substantive trial where the remaining issues will be litigated.
-

Walid's identity (per 3 November 2025)

- The defendant rejects he is the "Walid" accused of being active in Bani Walid in Libya. The first substantive part of the hearings covered the facts related to the identity of the suspect. The name the defendant claims he is, was abbreviated to 'DKY' in Court.
- The judge covered several elements in the case of the prosecution that point to the defendant being the person known as "Walid," active as a leader in the Bani Walid criminal network. This included social media ties, pictures, phone taps and a false passport.
- Facebook profiles ('Walid Boss', 'Ali Boss') of the defendant showed activity near Bani Walid.
- The social media profiles also contain interactions with a Facebook profile linked to Kidane, including Kidane sending him a picture of a false passport that Walid was later arrested with. The passport contained a visa to Libya, which the defendant claims he never went to.
- The defendant had admitted previously to recognising himself in several images described in the Court, including a picture of himself with an ammo belt and a semi-automatic gun and a passport picture on a false passport he used.
- Various witnesses positively identified the man in those pictures as the person they knew as 'Walid', active as the leader of the criminal network in Bani Walid.
- Calls intercepted showed that people repeatedly called the defendant by different names.
- The prosecution also intercepted a request for a false Eritrean driver's license, to be arranged in Uganda, under the name 'DKY', the name that the defendant claims is his.
- The Court established that due to the many names given to Walid by different investigations and sources, the defendant's true name cannot be established. The Court decided that the defendant was identified as "Walid", and his (false) passport name, Amanuel Gebreyesus Negash.

Witnesses (per 3 November 2025)

- The Court heard testimonies of three witnesses who arrived on a boat in Messina in 2018. This included testimonies of a 15-year old girl who was held for seven months by Walid in Bani Walid.
- The girl described being beaten and mishandled by persons (referred as 'kapos') acting under the leadership of Walid, and she witnessed girls and women taken away on instruction of Walid.
- Testimonies of two other witnesses described Walid as "the worst" and was accused of mistreatment, beatings, extortion and sexual violence.

Demonstration (per 3 November 2025)

- The Eritrean community, particularly Eritrean women, staged a peaceful protest in front of the Court in Zwolle today calling to end the criminal network that trafficks Eritrean refugees.
- Most of the women had relatives detained against ransom in Libya at this time. They shared videos of cruelties they received.
- The demonstration called for an end to transnational repression perpetrated by the Eritrean regime.
- Protesters say that Eritreans, even in The Netherlands, are afraid to speak out against Walid due to the transnational repression they face.

Links of interest

[Nederland speelt sleutelrol in zaak tegen beruchte mensensmokkelaar Walid D.](#)

[Eritrea extortion](#)

[Verweer aan de kant geschoven: OM mag verdachte mensensmokkelaar Walid uit Eritrea vervolgen](#)

[Eritrean Trafficker Faces Dutch Court in Landmark Human Smuggling Trial](#)

[Massive people smuggling trial starts in NL; Victims tortured, raped & families extorted](#)

[Eritrean man on trial for running major people smuggling gang](#)

['Betaal of je familielid sterft': proces tegen beruchte mensensmokkelaar van start in Zwolle](#)

[Dit is Walid, de uiterst wrede baas van martelkampen: 'Verkrachtte ieder mooi meisje'](#)

[Gruwelijk misbruik op vlucht naar Nederland: verdacht kopstuk mensensmokkel voor de rechter](#)

[Lammii Fertiraa Itoophiyaan dabarsitee Nezerlaandiif kennite mana murtiitti dhiyaate](#)

[Suspect tells Dutch court he's not alleged key figure in Eritrea-Libya trafficking ring](#)

[Verdachte van grootschalige mensensmokkel staat terecht voor Nederlandse rechtbank](#)

Disclaimer: All information in this Situation Report is presented as a fluid update report, as to the best knowledge and understanding of the authors at the moment of publication. EEPA does not claim that the information is correct but verifies to the best of ability within the circumstances. Publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand potential impacts of events (or perceptions of these) on the situation. Check all information against updates and other media. EEPA does not take responsibility for the use of the information or impact thereof. All information reported originates from third parties and the content of all reported and linked information remains the sole responsibility of these third parties. Report to info@eepea.be any additional information and corrections.