

# SITUATION REPORT SPECIAL - WALID HEARINGS

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[The summary of the first 4 hearing days can be accessed on the EEPA website.](#)

### Walid hearing: Summary of Day 5 (per 19 November 2025)

- Day 5 of the court hearing in the case of alleged human trafficker Tewelde Goitom “Walid” covered the indictment by the public prosecutor, establishing the identity of Walid, arguing jurisdiction grounds, and substantiating the allegation that Walid led a criminal organization, perpetrated human smuggling cases and crimes against persons on the Central Mediterranean Route, selling and reselling persons.
- The public prosecutor has demanded the maximum of a 20-year prison sentence, with damage compensations to victims.
- The sentence is the maximum under Dutch law. The prosecutor found that a heavier sentence would have been more appropriate for this exceptional case with far-reaching consequences for the victims, people seeking protection in the Netherlands and for Dutch society.
- The damages amount to over EUR 115.000 for the injured parties and around EUR 2 million for the confiscation claim. The amounts calculated for the confiscation claim constitute a minimum, as refugees often had to pay a greater amount or paid more than once.
- Walid was “at the center of a well-oiled organization that controlled migrants and the associated flow of funds,” stated the prosecution. It treated people as goods for the purpose of financial gain.
- Besides Walid and Kidane, the prosecution stated that five persons have been charged in The Netherlands, for their role in collecting, bundling and transferring ransoms from Dutch citizens, with the case scheduled for April 2026.
- The next hearing will cover the plea by the defense on Monday, 24 November, at 9.30am CET.

### The indictment (per 19 November 2025)

- The public prosecution stressed that most persons crossing the sea have fled prosecution, war and other human rights abuses in Eritrea. Border closures force refugees in the hands of smugglers.
- To the question of why this case is tried in the Netherlands, the prosecution stated: “because it is so serious that no country can afford to do nothing, and the Netherlands is implicated in the acts committed. Impunity is looming if we do nothing.”
- As part of the Schengen area, Dutch jurisdiction also includes arrivals in for instance Italy, it argued.
- It said “migrants have accrued debts and are therefore vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in the Netherlands, especially unaccompanied minors.” Public funds from the Netherlands are transferred to the human smuggling networks with “wide-ranging social consequences for Dutch society”.
- The prosecutor showed shocking videos of refugees being tortured in Libya, the living conditions in detention in Libya, and the circumstances under which they are transported through the desert in overcrowded trucks and across the sea in unseaworthy boats.
- The prosecutor stated that the land route from Eritrea to Libya via Sudan is seen as part of the route controlled by the criminal network led by Walid, Kidane, and others. Witnesses often already knew in Sudan that Walid, Kidane or others were the smugglers, to whom they belonged, prosecution stated.

- The public prosecutor has gone through the details of all charges that pertain to the allegations committed against victims in the period between 2015 and 2018.
- Evidence and witness testimonies point towards the close collaboration between Walid and Kidane.
- Kidane's brother, Henok, is allegedly also involved in the smuggling network.
- The prosecutor argued that Walid conducted part of the crimes in the Netherlands, reasoning that there is no smuggling without payment (from family members in the Netherlands), no payment without extortion, and no extortion without torture.
- It was emphasized that people working for Walid in the Netherlands collected this money, and that Walid ordered the extortion, and knew or could know about the calls to the Netherlands to extort.
- The prosecution explained that Walid tried to influence witnesses from prison. In a phone call, he named four witnesses by name, and stated that those witnesses should be forced to change their testimonies to be favourable to Walid. This action seemed to confirm his identity.
- On the identity of the suspect, the prosecutors presented different sets of pictures that were used during the investigation and were identified by the witnesses. Expert investigators also concluded that the pictures were 'likely' to 'very likely' the same person. Walid recognised himself in several photos.
- A pigment spot under an eye of the suspect was seen as a strong identifier that concluded that multiple pictures relate to the same person.
- Recorded calls showed that Walid tried to arrange a fake Eritrean truck driving licence through contacts in Uganda. "I told them that I was trained by the military, and that I was a chauffeur there".
- Walid had very specific instructions for the driver's license, including that it should look like it was extended every two years. The driver's license was found by the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee to be false.
- The prosecution showed satellite images of the locations identified in Libya where refugees were held conformed to the descriptions and drawings given by witnesses.
- Walid made an asylum application to The Netherlands which was rejected under article 1F of the refugee convention, specifying that asylum will not be granted if there is suspicion of a serious crime. This decision has been appealed.
- The prosecutor argued that Walid is part of a global criminal organisation with only one goal: to extract as much money as possible from refugees, enabled by underground banking ('hawala'), collaborating with Libyan transport and security partners, guards, and other employees.
- The prosecutors concluded that the three conditions constituting a criminal organisation - structure, intent and participation - are legally proven, with Walid leading a criminal organisation.
- Smugglers with the same violent modus operandi cooperate together and exchange refugees, who are then re-extorted. Walid, Kidane and Aziz were particularly mentioned in this context.
- The public prosecutor assumed Walid had full accountability for the criminal offenses based on psychological examination and what is known about his background.
- Walid allegedly cooperated with the three Diab brothers in Libya, who maintained connections with high ranking Libyan army officials. They controlled the transportation, security and warehouses, and decided which traffickers they wanted to work with.
- The actions of the criminal organisation "are not isolated incidents but a pattern," said the prosecutor.
- "Walid needs to pay for his actions until the end of his days," said a witness statement.
- The prosecutor understood the legal right of Walid to remain silent, but stated that witnesses had experienced this as very painful.
- The prosecutor thanked the investigation team and Dutch Marechaussee for its extensive work.

## Links of interest

[Eis: 20 jaar cel tegen Eritrese mensensmokkelaar](#)

[OM eist 20 jaar cel tegen Eritreër W., de wrede spil in een smokkelnetwerk voor mensen](#)

[20 jaar gevangenisstraf geëist tegen gewelddadige mensensmokkelaar Walid](#)

[20 jaar gevangenisstraf geëist tegen 'Walid' wegens grootschalige mensensmokkel vanuit Libië naar Europa via de Middellandse Zee](#)

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