

SITUATION REPORT SPECIAL - WALID HEARINGS

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[The summary of Day 1 of the hearing can be accessed on EEPA website.](#)

Walid hearing: Summary of Day 2 (per 4 November 2025)

- Day 2 of the substantive hearing in the case of the alleged Eritrean human trafficker Tewelde Goitom known as "Walid" took place in Zwolle, the Netherlands, today.
- Walid was present in the court room, represented by his lawyers, Jordi L'Homme and Simcha Plas.
- The presiding judge read out testimonies of victims of Walid that speak to multiple offenses of the indictment.
- The presiding judge stated that some of the witnesses experienced post-traumatic stress while reliving their testimonies for the investigative team. Some of the witnesses decided not to continue with subsequent interrogations.
- Witness testimonies have been collected by a special investigative team, and in some cases an investigative judge, in the past years. In most of the cases, several rounds of interviews were held with the witnesses.
- The prosecution stated that persons who gave testimony were very concerned when they learned that their names would be used in their witness reports. The names of the witnesses were abbreviated to first letter only in most cases by the judge to protect their identity.
- One witness did not want to testify further because she did not have any legal status even after four years in The Netherlands, and she stated that her children were in danger due to her name being openly mentioned in her earlier testimony.
- Witness testimonies that were read out today included the testimonies of refugees who arrived to Europe by boats in the city of Augusta in Sicily, Italy, on separate occasions in November and December 2017, May 2018, as well as in Pozzallo, Sicily, on 12 March 2018.
- Various witness testimonies today spoke about crimes related to Kidane and the collaboration between Kidane and Walid. One witness was directly raped by Kidane.
- Walid exercised his right to remain silent today whenever he was asked questions by the judges.
- "Mr Walid, I am asking you what does it do to you, as a human being, to hear these stories," asked the presiding judge, after reading a few witness testimonies during the morning session. Walid replied that he does not want to comment and any question can be addressed to his lawyers.

Witness testimonies (per 4 November 2025)

- All witnesses spoke about the brutality with which they or fellow prisoners were treated by their captors in Bani Walid in Libya. People were beaten with hoses or sticks, and often they were taken out of their warehouses in the middle of the night with cold water being thrown at them.
- One witness testimony talks about a young male Eritrean refugee who was about 15 years and 10 months old when he arrived in Augusta, Italy, weighing only about 30kg at a height of 170cm. The witness was held for about 6 months in Bani Walid in a warehouse controlled by Walid.

- He describes an incident of his fellow prisoner trying to escape after which this person was beaten to the point that their eye “almost came out of their skull”.
- The father of this witness collected money with the help of their family. The money was handed over to little children. The man explained that the persons collecting the money faced the anger of many people in the community over their role in the criminal network.
- All witnesses confirmed that ransoms were demanded for their release. They were made to stand in a queue and make calls every day, sometimes multiple times a day, often being beaten while talking to their relatives on the phone to make them scream.
- “You are beaten on your back but you feel it in your heart,” said one witness in their testimony.
- Some witnesses reported that they had to pay multiple ransoms. When confronted by one witness about a payment he already made to another smuggler, Walid replied “I bought you”, indicating that the witness needs to pay again.
- Witnesses described pests and diseases exacerbated by hunger, such as scabies and tuberculosis. Many of the witnesses saw people die of hunger, disease and mistreatment.
- Witnesses further described sexual abuse of women and young girls who were taken to the house of Walid, where they were most likely raped. After the abuse they returned back to the warehouse, where witnesses saw they were distressed and crying.
- When women resisted being taken to Walid’s house, they were harassed and told that they would never be allowed to leave the prison. Some women reportedly got pregnant following rape by Walid.
- Witnesses spoke about “kapos”, Walid’s henchmen, who were carrying out orders and often carrying out the abuses. Some of the kapos were identified as Eritrean, others as Ethiopian or Somali. Another witness described that there were two men working alongside Walid, called “Quatro” and “Rasha”.
- Kapos were often selected by Walid to work for him in order to “pay for” their passage to Europe.
- “They are not his employees, they are travellers like us,” said one witness, adding “sometimes you see that kapos are forced to hit us because if they refuse, they will be beaten as well”. Kapos would sometimes say to victims that they do not want to beat people but they are obliged to do it.
- Some witnesses were also abused directly by Walid and Kidane. One was beaten by Walid: “He got angry. He hit me with the branch of a tree which was not yet dried, until he had enough of it.”
- Witnesses described the collaboration between Walid and Kidane. Both men shared a warehouse separated by wall, and witnesses described them walking together, drinking together and playing football together. Groups of refugees belonging to one or the other were sent to the sea together.
- Witnesses described the dangerous journeys through the Mediterranean sea, with overcrowded rubber or wooden boats often without any lifejackets.
- “Did I pay this much money to disappear at sea?” stated one witness testimony, while another witness said “I had no life jacket, I had only my son on my back”.
- Witnesses were shown pictures of Walid, Kidane and the kapos and were described as positively identifying the men on many of the pictures shown.
- “I know him, he was with us every day. We were possessions of Walid, so he came every day to check on us,” stated one witness after identifying Walid in a picture.
- The Court also heard testimonies of family members who were forced to pay ransoms. One sister described how she felt when she received calls of her brother screaming: “I felt powerless, I was crying. That was the only thing I could do. If I had money, I would have paid it.”
- In a tapped phone call with a witness, the investigative team learned that the witness lied when she said that she did not transfer money from The Netherlands via the hawala network to protect the hawala agent. “I told them I did not send money.”
- The judge commented that this was understandable, as Eritreans are dependent on such hawala agents to transfer money to families in Eritrea.

Links of interest

[Dutch court tries an Eritrean man accused of brutal migrant smuggling](#)

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