

## **Trans-European search for safety**

**Abdo is a teenager who was born in Saudi Arabia. Tragically, his Sudanese parents were killed in a car accident.** His grandmother, who ran a small business in Saudi Arabia, then looked after him, but on his way home from school he was stopped by the police. They checked his status and discovered that he no longer had a right to live in Saudi Arabia, so he was detained for two days and put on a plane to Khartoum in Sudan, a country he had never visited before.

His grandmother contacted his aunt, who lived in Khartoum, and she eventually found him in detention at the airport. The police had arrested him on suspicion of bringing money into the country to assist Darfurian rebels. While he was in detention, he had his chest burned with a cigarette and was made to stand on one leg for extended periods of time. The police took all his money and his phone, and these were not returned. His aunt arranged for him to be released into her care, but several days later the police raided his aunt's home and threatened him, saying that if he should meet his cousin, he must tell them. He had already met his cousin who had told him he must join the Darfur freedom fighters and if he went to the police he would be killed.

His aunt collected money, drove him to Egypt and supplied him with a passport and tickets to fly to England via Italy. On arrival at Heathrow, he applied for asylum. His application was repeatedly rejected by the Home Office because officials maintained that there was no evidence to support his story. At this point he found himself destitute and had no access to legal support. Letters from his aunt and grandmother had been rejected as evidence as they had not been written in the presence of a lawyer. Further documents sent by his aunt from Khartoum and his birth certificate from his grandmother in Saudi Arabia were also rejected because the Home Office said there was no proof that they were genuine.

He was fearful about being sent back to Sudan, and after many attempts managed to stow away on a lorry to Germany where he again applied for asylum. Here he was treated kindly by the Germany authorities. He was provided with hostel accommodation, access to German language lessons and a solicitor, but after three months he was told that he had to be sent back to the UK, where he had originally applied for asylum. Since then, he has managed to get to Ireland, where he once more applied for asylum. Again, he was treated well, allowed to study and work and was provided with accommodation.

He has now been told that because the UK has left the European Union and is no longer part of the Schengen countries (26 nations which have officially abolished all passport and all other types of border control at their mutual borders) he will not be returned to the UK and instead the Irish authorities will reconsider his case for asylum.

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