

Amina & Sahra's story



TELLING
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STORY



This book was made possible by Telling the Real Story, a community-based platform that documents and shares the stories of Eritrean and Somali refugees and asylum-seekers and the journeys they take in search of protection. This book aims to give young people an accurate picture of what these dangerous journeys are like for those who embark on them.

We hope the information you find here will help you make a more informed decision, should you ever consider taking the journey yourself.

www.tellingtherealstory.org

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My name is Amina. This is my story, but also my best friend Sahra's.

Life in the village was not always easy. Since my father was injured, I had to work in order to provide for my family in addition to helping around the house.



I dreamt about being a doctor when I grew up.
I had to sacrifice my education in order to support my family.



My best friend Sahra was very unhappy. Ever since her mother remarried, she felt like she did not belong at home. Her stepfather did not show her any affection unlike her half-siblings who were loved. Sahra longed to be loved again and she was always daydreaming about a hopeful future elsewhere far from home.



She tried to convince me to go with her on this journey. She showed me many examples of people who shared images and stories of their new life on social media.



They look so happy! They migrated to Europe and now they drive motorbikes and live in a big house.



But I did not want to leave my home and my family.

Especially not my beloved mother.

But all that changed one day.

Because of our financial situation, my father only saw one way to give us the money we needed to survive.



He arranged for me to marry an old man.
My mum tried to stop him but he was determined.



I didn't see any way out.
I had to get away.



So I ran to Sahra.



We left on a crowded bus in the middle of the night.



We tried to reach the border but we got stuck
and had to stay in a rundown house guarded
by smugglers.



One night they put us all in a small boat.

But the weather was stormy,
the waves were so high rocking
the boat until it broke and
I fell off into the water.



I was struggling to stay afloat and I remember thinking:

”Mum, I forgive you. Please forgive me.”

While I felt myself pulled down into the dark cold water.





Like a miracle Sahra and I survived
and were washed ashore.

Smugglers found us and separated us.
I was screaming and tried to hold on to Sahra's
hand but the smugglers dragged me away.



That was the last time I saw her.

I was suddenly all alone, in a land I did not know,
amongst strangers. What have I done? Why did I make
this journey? Why did I break my mothers heart?

The smugglers were harsh and threw me in a truck with a lot of other people. We drove through the desert, in the scorching sun. I had never felt such thirst, the hunger was unbearable. I used my hijab to cover my nose. So much dust and sand all around us.


I was so far from home, I did not even know where I was. How would I ever get back? Would I ever see my family again?



Suddenly, the car crashed and started to burn.

I feared for my life but this turned out to be my salvation.





The police found us and I got to make a phone call. I called my mum. I missed her desperately.

She was so happy to hear I was alive. She had been so worried about me and said that smugglers had called Sahra's mother asking for money to release Sahra.

Poor Sahra was being passed on from one trafficker to another. Those greedy people have no heart. They will show no mercy. Money is the only language they know.



My mum had heard that the traffickers make children drink water mixed with petrol to make them feel full. Because they cannot feed everyone.



Since going back home was not an option, my mother told me I can live with my Aunt.

I am sad to be away from my family and friends. I am, however, grateful that I can continue my life as a young girl and go back to school.

I've seen videos on social media of young people being held by traffickers who demand incredible amounts of money. I hope none of them include Sahra. I hope to see her again one day.

