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Fahad began his irregular journey at the age of 13.

"It was never my intention to embark on a journey to Europe," says Fahad, a young Somalian man in his twenties who was born and raised in Mogadishu.

When Fahad was 13 years old, Al-Shabaab forcefully tried to recruit him. It was then that he made the decision to run away to Ethiopia. He ran away without his family's knowledge, in fear that they would be forcefully asked to reveal his whereabouts.

"At this time my only purpose was to run for my life, to run away from Mogadishu, as far as possible," Fahad says.

**Watch Fahad explain his reasons for fleeing Somalia and talk about how his journey began.**

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[az\_column\_text]During his time in Addis Ababa, Fahad mingled with other Somalis who were hatching plans to go to Europe. He got in touch with his parents, telling them of his plans to move on. He received mixed reactions from them— his father wanted him to come back immediately, while his mother, who was more understanding, wired him all the money she had to enable him to

undertake the journey.

With some money in his pockets, Fahad obtained a Sudanese visa, which placed in his Somali passport, and travelled on to Khartoum. He stayed there for four days before embarking on the treacherous and difficult trip through the desert. On the morning of the journey, Fahad left with a group of Somalis, Sudanese, and Eritreans in a semi-truck headed for the Libyan border. At the border, they got onto other trucks. This time the drivers were armed with weapons and knives. Fahad had to pay 500 USD for the ride through Libya. The journey would last five days.

While on the road, the armed drivers started asking the group for more money. They threatened to leave behind those who didn't pay. Fahad and the other Somalis insisted they didn't have any more money. They argued back and forth with the drivers, until their quarrel was interrupted by a Libyan military jeep that had started to pursue them and fire shots at them. Two people were shot in their shoulders and backs. Eventually, the truck carrying Fahad sped up and they were able to escape the military jeep. The injured were taken to a hospital in Kufra, and the group resumed their journey at night.

The truck that Fahad and the 74 other Somalis were put in was covered in plastic sheets. This made it uncomfortably hot, and extremely difficult to breathe. During the journey, a pregnant woman choked and died. As if the journey wasn't bad enough, suddenly, out of nowhere, the trucks were surrounded by armed Libyan men who took the travelers to a prison in Kufra. Fahad ended up spending 2 months in prison— which to him felt like 200 years. In the following six months he would be moved to two other prisons in Ijdabiya and Benghazi.

### **Watch Fahad describe his eight month experience in**

**prison.**  
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After his release from the Zlitan prison, Fahad moved on to Tripoli where he lived with an uncle for four months while working at a garage. This was a welcome development in his life, since he was able to save up some money to continue his journey. "By that time, I was willing to risk it all just to reach Europe," he says.

On the day of his departure by sea, Fahad, together with 28 other people, boarded a boat. It turned out that the man put in charge of steering had falsely claimed he knew how to maneuver a boat, just to get a free ride. At sea, arguments culminated when it became obvious the man didn't know how to drive the boat. Luckily, in the end, the boat docked safely in Malta. This was in August 2008.

Once in Malta, Fahad and the others were placed in detention where they were kept for six months. He soon came face to face with a reality that was very different from what he had imagined. "When I was released, I thought they were going to take me to some better place, offer me a job— but no, they took me to a tented camp," he says.

Fahad ended up being granted a residence permit in Malta. He found an informal job but could not continue his education, which he craved so much. Fahad then made the decision to continue his journey further north. This decision would kick-start three very difficult and tumultuous years in Europe. It wasn't until May 2015 that he would be able to regularize his status as a resident.

### **Watch Fahad recount his experience in**

**Europe.**[/az\_column\_text][vc\_column][vc\_row][vc\_row][vc\_column][az\_video\_player video\_player\_type="others\_video\_mode" download\_enabled="yes" download\_sm\_enabled="yes" download\_lg\_enabled="yes" download\_xl\_enabled="yes"]

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