
Poor Refugees Are Being Sold and Killed for Their Organs

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The migrant crisis has revealed another harrowing occurrence in its midst: organ trafficking.

Migrants who are not able to pay smugglers for the treacherous journey from Africa to Europe are killed for their organs, a former smuggler revealed, The Independent reported Tuesday.

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Nuredein Wehabrebi Atta, sentenced to five years in prison in 2014 for his involvement in trafficking migrants, told Italian police under a witness protection program that migrants unable to pay for journeys across the Mediterranean, mostly poor Egyptians, were sold to groups that harvest organs.

His testimony led police to break open a transnational migrant trafficking network, with 38 suspects detained, including 25 Eritreans, 12 Ethiopians and one Italian. Authorities also seized a large amount of cash from the group.

Atta, the first foreigner to be granted witness protection in Italy, said the extraordinarily high number of migrant deaths in crossing the sea is what led him to confess. It was specifically the death of 360 people due to a boat sinking in Lampedusa, though he was not involved in the incident himself, that convinced him.

"The deaths that we were aware of were a small part of it," Atta told police, as reported by The Independent. "In Eritrea alone there have been victims in eight out of 10 families."

A recently released report from Amnesty International confirms Atta's testimony. Detailing how migrants are being killed by people smugglers and crime syndicates in Libya, the report is based on the accounts of more than 90 refugees at Italian reception and processing centers.