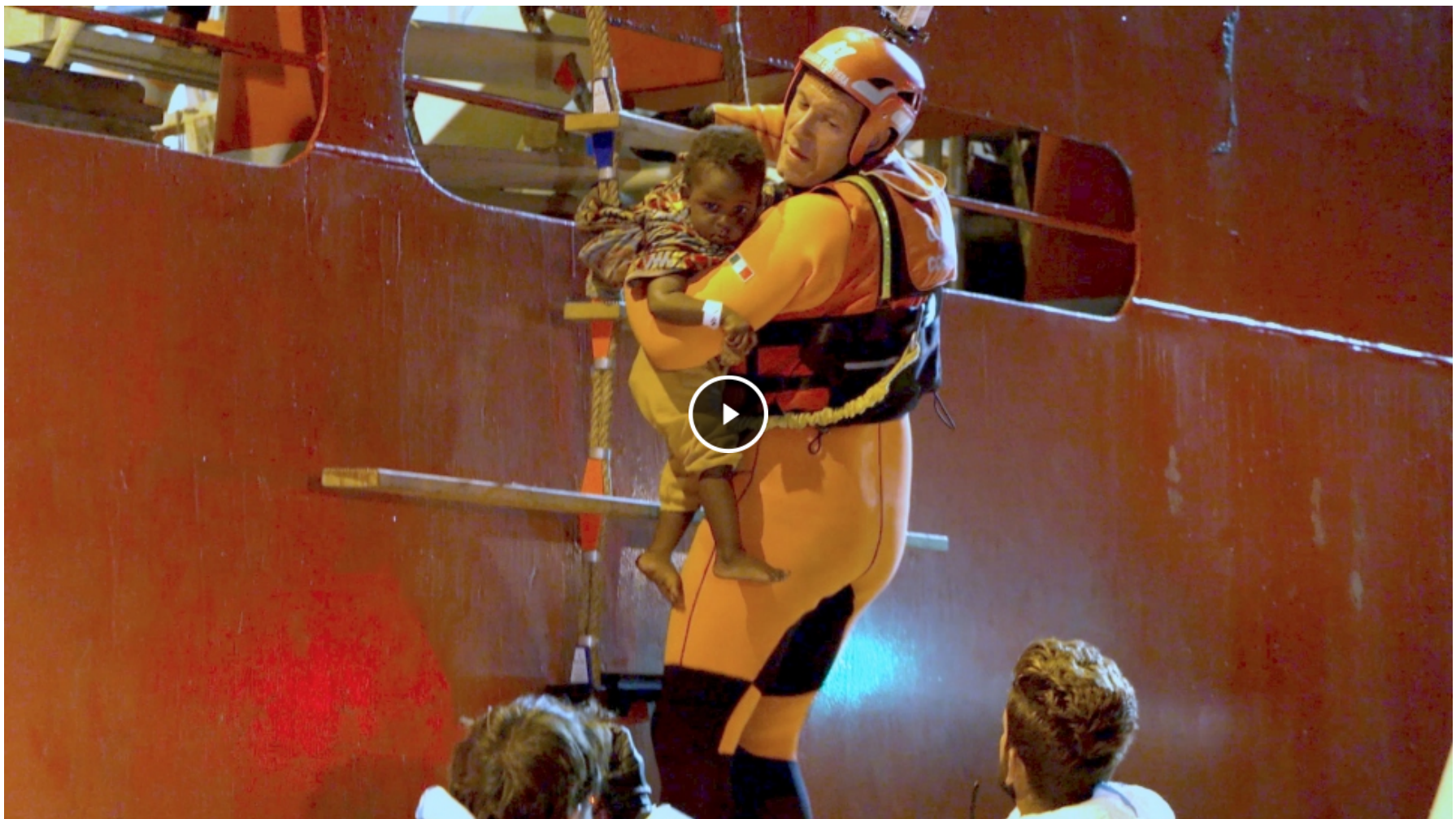





Survivors tell of kidnap and torture along route to Europe

Plucked from the Mediterranean by the Italian Coast Guard, refugees and migrants warn of forced labour and slavery.

By Vania Turner and Béla Szandelszky | 27 September 2017



 Crossing the Mediterranean Sea, haunted by abuse in Libya (Vania Turner, producer / Béla Szandelszky, camera)

ITALIAN COAST GUARD VESSEL DATILO, Mediterranean Sea – Mamoudou Oba from Guinea, who was rescued after days in a drifting vessel, has warned others trying to flee poverty and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa of the dangers of the land and sea routes to Europe.

“I cannot advise anybody to enter in Libya. You will die for nothing,” he told rescuers.

Sitting on the deck of the Italian Coast Guard patrol vessel Dattilo, some 50 miles off the coast of North Africa, shortly after being rescued, he added he was kidnapped, starved and beaten for three weeks before leaving Libya.

“One day, one day, one day, they will kill you.”

Almost 100,000 refugees and migrants like Mamoudou have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Italy since the beginning of the year, according to reports by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

Sitting among a group of 99 people rescued by the Dattilo, he says people are being bought and sold for as little as US\$300. “If you stay, every day they are coming to do bad things to you. One day, one day, one day, they will kill you.”

UNHCR estimates that over 1.3 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance in Libya. It is calling for [an end to detention for migrants, refugees and other vulnerable people](#) there, and unrestricted humanitarian access inside the country to ensure that international protection is given to them.



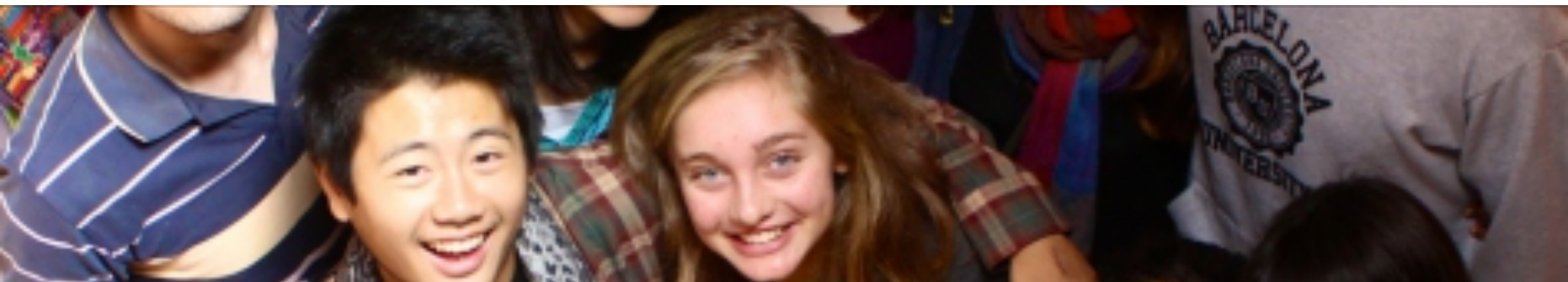


Mamoudou’s testimony of abuse is borne out by Lucia Guidolin, a medical doctor volunteering with the Italian Coast Guard. She says most refugees and migrants she examined after they are saved from the Mediterranean Sea have endured severe physical and psychological abuse.

Guidolin encountered one such case among the passengers on the Dattilo. Ivorian Abdullah Touré told her he was kidnapped and tortured by street gangs for months on end.

“They threatened us so we would give them money. If not they would kill us. They took a gun and fired next to my ears. Poom! Poom! Poom! Now I can’t hear. I’m here like this.”

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