

Italy: Syrian Twin Brothers' Mediterranean Ordeal

As the seas get warmer, more boats carrying migrants and refugees make the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean into Europe. In the past week, more than 8 500 people were rescued at sea and taken to different parts of Italy. Nine have been confirmed dead. Mohammed and Iyla are twins from Syria; they are 25 years old. They fled Aleppo in 2013 after their home and restaurants were bombed. After a four-month wait in Libya and over 3 000 dollars paid to smugglers, the twin brothers started to lose hope.

'They took so much money from us. They locked us in a room for a long time, feeding us a bit of cheese and bread once a day. It was torture. We were verbally abused and insulted. Every day a different person would come in. We couldn't keep track. New people came in with their weapons all the time.'

But going back to Syria was not an option.

'If we had stayed, we would have been dead in the Middle East. You only die once in your life. We decided to risk dying trying to reach here.' On April 14, the order came to get on the boat.

'The journey was very difficult. First we were out at sea for a long time. We were in the sea for 15 hours. The motor was starting to die. God protected us. We were thinking we were going to die any minute. Every time it shook we felt it was going to capsize. We had children on board. We were very scared and didn't move to protect them.' Mohammed and Iyla feel relieved to be alive. They are part of a lost generation that leaves a dark past and faces an uncertain future ahead.