



Searching for Justice, Six Years On

28 March 2025

Press Statement

Coalition for the El Hiblu 3

<https://elhiblu3coalition.org/>

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Today, the 28th of March 2025, marks the sixth anniversary of the arrival of the El Hiblu 3 in Malta. Abdalla, Amara, and Kader arrived in Malta in 2019 when they were only 15, 16 and 19 years old. Their journeys had already been long and arduous. Strangers to each other, they had travelled separately over many months from Guinea and the Ivory Coast. In Libya, they witnessed and endured unspeakable violence that propelled them north in the hope of finding peace and new opportunities to make a life and find safety.

Yet when they arrived in Malta on 28 March 2019, they were met with further violence. Maltese authorities charged them with ‘terrorism’ and hijacking a ship and incarcerated them in Corradino, Malta’s adult prison. Facing such extreme charges, these three young men have steadfastly maintained that they are neither terrorists nor hijackers. Rescued by an oil tanker in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, they acted as translators and mediators between frightened passengers and crew members.

Since then, they have endured a seemingly endless legal process riddled with failures. At the same time, many have supported them in their struggle to clear their names. Last year, the Coalition for the El Hiblu 3 joined with numerous other groups and individuals to celebrate them as Human Rights Defenders for helping to avert an illegal pushback to Libya and for saving lives. President Emeritus Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca presented the young men with their awards, stating “Their bravery and courage have been an inspiration to all Human Rights Defenders across the globe.”

These three young men have endured 2,192 days of unjust criminalisation. When they arrived, they were 15, 16 and 19 years old, now they are 21, 22 and 25. Their youths have been stolen but they still have lives to live. After six years, it is high time to set Abdalla, Amara, and Kader free.

QUOTES from select Coalition members

“For six years now, we have witnessed both the courage of the Three and the cruel injustice they are forced to experience in Malta. When we started to call for their freedom in 2019, we could not have imagined that we would still be here, six years on, repeating the same demands, again and again, like a broken record: End this injustice, drop the charges, free the El Hiblu 3!” Maurice Stierl, Coalition for the El Hiblu 3

“Justice has proven elusive for the Three. They have been punished before even standing for trial: six years in limbo for teenagers has marked them for life. The charges should be dropped, immediately!” Daniela DeBono, Coalition for the El Hiblu 3



"The treatment of minors, who have now become young adults is nothing short of the exemplification of justice delayed is justice denied. If you were to consider seeing these young people as your own children, you may find yourself fighting for the El Hiblu 3 too."
Joanna Jebaili, KOPIN Malta and Coalition for the El Hiblu 3

"The El Hiblu 3 are not criminals and yet they have been thrown in limbo for six years. We are insisting that charges be dropped because they have withstood a politically-motivated travesty of justice. Let us not forget that these three young men saved lives and prevented an illegal pushback to Libya. They are human rights defenders and should not be punished."
William Grech, KOPIN Malta and Coalition for the El Hiblu 3

"Amara, Abdalla and Kader are three young men whose bravery and strength should be celebrated. During six long years of criminalisation by the Maltese state and the violent theft of their youth, they have remained steadfast in their commitment to justice and to human rights. They are a guiding light to us all." Ċetta Mainwaring, Coalition for the El Hiblu 3.

For more information, you can reach us on eh3coalition@gmail.com or call 99855490.