

# OPUS2

The Cranston Inquiry

Day 2

March 4, 2025

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Tuesday, 4 March 2025

(10.00 am)

SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, good morning, everyone in the room, and good morning, Issa. A. Good morning to you, sir. SIR ROSS CRANSTON: It's good to see you again and thank you for all the help you've given us.

Now, in a moment, Rory Phillips King's Counsel, who you know, is going to ask you some questions. And just to inform you, and you know this already, but your solicitor, Maria Thomas, and your counsel, Sonali Naik King's Counsel, is here in the room as well.

Now, Issa, there are just two more things from me. The first is, I think you asked for hourly breaks and that's absolutely fine. But if you want more, please just indicate. I know that Elizabeth Jennings is there with you in Paris, just tell her or just tell me directly.

Now, I think you have, as well, got a copy of the affirmation, and I'd like you to read that, please.

ISSA MOHAMED OMAR (affirmed) (Via video-link) (All questions and answers interpreted)

Well, look, thank you very much indeed. And now Mr Phillips is going to ask you some questions.

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Examination—in-chief by MR PHILLIPS

MR PHILLIPS: Good morning, Issa. A. Good morning to you, sir. Q. Thank you for preparing a detailed statement for the Inquiry, and thank you for participating in the Inquiry by agreeing to give evidence to us today. I know that the events of 23 and 24 November 2021 were deeply traumatic for you and that recalling them will be very difficult for you. I also know that your memory of certain events may be hazy. All that I expect is that you try to answer the questions as best you can.

As you know, we have interpreters working with us, so you and I will have to keep our questions and answers quite short and pause so that the interpreters can do their work.

A. (In English) Okay. Q. Now, I'm going to take you through your witness statement, which is {INQ010388/1}, and ask you questions about various paragraphs of it, and I'll let you know which paragraphs I'm focusing on as we make our way through.

A. (In English) Okay. Q. So I want to know, first, please, about your life in Somalia. You were born in Somalia in June 1993; is that right?

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A. Yes, that's correct. Q. And where did you live? A. I was born in Somalia, a place — a place about — I used to live in a place there 90 miles from the Mogadishu, or the capital. Q. And tell me about your family. A. My whole family used to live in that place and I left the country in 2006 due to — after my father was killed and this was due to the civil war. At that time, I was very young. Q. You were about 13, I think; is that right? A. That's correct, yes. Q. And you left Somalia with your mother and your siblings? A. That's correct. The whole family, we were together, except my father, who was killed. Q. Yes.

And in paragraph 8 of your statement {INQ010388/2}, you explain exactly why you left the country, but can you just tell us now, why was it?

A. Very much, yes, I can explain. Q. What would you like to tell us? A. Let's look at my statement. Q. It's paragraph 7. A. The reason why I — we left is because there was a fight broke out between the government and the people who were

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in control; they are called Al Shabab. We were — our family were personally targeted because we belong to a minority clan called the Madhiban. The reason why my father was targeted, it was because he was a governor of the town and he was working with the government and that's the reason why he was targeted. Therefore we couldn't remain after my father was killed and because we were pressured and they want to kill all of my family, and that's the reason why we fled. Therefore, we fled from Somalia and we went to Yemen, and that was in 2006. And we requested asylum in Yemen and therefore we were granted the status and also we were resettled in Yemen. We were there for quite a long time, while we were still young, we studied there and we had schooling, and the fact that we were there. Q. And I think it was in Yemen, wasn't it, that you learned to speak Arabic?

A. Yes, because the main language in Yemen is Arabic, so I am fluent in Arabic, as like Somali, same as Somali. Q. And I think it was also in Yemen, wasn't it, that you learnt to swim because you were living near a beach? A. Yes. Q. So in your statement you say — and this is now paragraph 9 — that, in 2014, a civil war broke out in Yemen and you were then 21; is that right?

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1 A. Yes.  
 2 Q. And I'm now looking at paragraph 9 of your statement.  
 3 What happened after the war broke out?  
 4 A. A fight broke out between the government and Houthi, and  
 5 the government were getting help from Saudi and  
 6 the Emirates, although the main -- the main leaders were  
 7 the Saudis, who were helping them. And it was quite  
 8 a big -- that fight was quite massive, because it was --  
 9 you could not belittle . It was indiscriminate. I mean,  
 10 they were targeting both males and females, and they  
 11 were killing people. Therefore, where I used to live ,  
 12 it was taken over by the Houthi, and they are more  
 13 powerful. Women and children were allowed to leave  
 14 the country, but everyone who's 17 to 18 years old, and  
 15 30 to 40 years old, they were not allowed to leave  
 16 the country and they were -- I was trying to hide from  
 17 them, and then eventually myself and the other  
 18 youngsters, we were hiding in a place and they -- they  
 19 attacked -- they targeted us and they were taken -- they  
 20 took us their prison .  
 21 So they took us -- when they took us to the prison,  
 22 they were teaching us how to use gun. I have never  
 23 touched one, I don't know how the gun operates. And  
 24 they were saying the government, they're extreme, and  
 25 they're against the religion . So the youngsters --

1 all left to join them, and it was -- it was -- called to  
 2 the host nation, the youngsters from the Yemen, and also  
 3 there were other youngsters like myself, other Somalis.  
 4 And because we were very stubborn and reluctant to work  
 5 with them, eventually they took us to prison when they  
 6 took over from the government. They were physically  
 7 beating us so we could fight with them. And because we  
 8 were there in the prison for quite a long time and then  
 9 the government, with their alliance, the Saudi, and  
 10 other countries, they attacked with the plane.  
 11 Q. Issa, can I just interrupt you there. Just to summarise  
 12 what you've said. I think what you tell us in your  
 13 statement is that your mother and your siblings left for  
 14 Ethiopia where they still live ; is that right?  
 15 A. Because I was in prison and I was not aware that my  
 16 family fled there, or they went to Ethiopia, but they  
 17 allowed women -- children and women to -- to use boat to  
 18 travel to Ethiopia.  
 19 Q. Right.  
 20 And you were sent to prison because you refused to  
 21 fight; is that right?  
 22 A. Yes.  
 23 Q. And how long do you think you were detained in prison?  
 24 A. I would say three to four months.  
 25 Q. And you tell us, in paragraph 12, that you came to leave

1 the prison because of a bomb attack. Could you explain  
 2 to the Inquiry what happened?  
 3 A. At 5 am --  
 4 MR PHILLIPS: I think we have lost the interpreter, sir .  
 5 THE INTERPRETER: This is one of the interpreters. I was  
 6 doing the English questions only, but my colleague  
 7 dropped off. I think, so do you want me to carry on  
 8 doing his part --  
 9 MR PHILLIPS: Please.  
 10 THE INTERPRETER: So what he said was ...  
 11 A. Because one morning around 5 am, we were attacked by  
 12 aeroplanes and many people were killed as a result, but  
 13 I was injured because a wall fell on me, so I was  
 14 left ...  
 15 THE INTERPRETER: So again he's asking me to repeat. What  
 16 he said was ...  
 17 A. Because the government and its allies knew that jail  
 18 was, you know, controlled -- or a front by Houthi,  
 19 that's why the planes dropped bombs on there and we were  
 20 killed , some were injured. So many people died, but  
 21 luckily I survived, because I was injured and I  
 22 protected by wall .  
 23 Q. And you were taken to hospital; is that right?  
 24 A. Yes, I sustained a lot of injuries . So then I managed  
 25 to go to an area which is under the control of

1 the government, and that -- from there, I was taken to  
 2 hospital .  
 3 Q. Yes. And you describe in paragraph 13 {INQ010388/3},  
 4 your treatment in the hospital in Yemen. But then,  
 5 I think it's right, isn't it, that you were transferred  
 6 to another hospital in Iran for better treatment?  
 7 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, can I ask Issa to pause from time  
 8 to time?  
 9 MR PHILLIPS: Yes, Issa, I'm going to say something in  
 10 English now. If you remember, we have the interpreter  
 11 working very hard. If you try to keep your answers  
 12 quite short, it gives him a better chance to keep up  
 13 with you.  
 14 A. (In English) Okay.  
 15 Q. So in paragraph 13 of your statement, you say that when  
 16 you were well enough to come out of hospital in Iran,  
 17 you decided you would take your chance to escape; is  
 18 that right?  
 19 A. Yes, I got better and I was well enough, I was --  
 20 I decided to leave from that place.  
 21 Q. Why did you want to escape?  
 22 A. I was concerned that they were sending me back. They  
 23 were sending me back.  
 24 Q. To Yemen?  
 25 A. Yeah, to fight , to fight , yeah, Yemen.

1 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: I'm so sorry, I've got a request for  
 2 a short break. Shall we say, what, five minutes or  
 3 ten minutes? Elizabeth?  
 4 THE INQUIRY REPRESENTATIVE: Hello?  
 5 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Yes.  
 6 MS JENNINGS: Sorry, we just thought it would be good to  
 7 have a short break until the other interpreter can come  
 8 back. That's why.  
 9 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Okay. So what do you want, ten minutes  
 10 then? Let's come back at 10.35.  
 11 Thanks very much.  
 12 (10.25 am)  
 13 (A short break)  
 14 (10.35 am)  
 15 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Right, well, thanks very much, and  
 16 apologies for that.  
 17 Mr Phillips.  
 18 MR PHILLIPS: Issa, we --- you were telling us about ending  
 19 up in hospital in Iran, and from that point on in your  
 20 statement, which is paragraph 14 {INQ010398/3}, you tell  
 21 us how you went to Turkey and then Greece and then  
 22 Italy; that's right, isn't it?  
 23 A. That's correct.  
 24 Q. So that, eventually --- and this is now paragraph 26 of  
 25 your statement {INQ010388/5} --- you say that you left

1 Italy in November 2021; is that right?  
 2 A. That's correct.  
 3 Q. And you explain there that you had a group of friends  
 4 you were living with and you decided to travel with  
 5 them, first, to France; is that right?  
 6 A. That's correct.  
 7 Q. When did you arrive in Northern France?  
 8 A. Yes, we arrived there on 13 November 2021.  
 9 Q. Yes. You can see that the statement is wrong there,  
 10 because it gives a date in 2024. So it's 2021?  
 11 A. It was November in 2021.  
 12 Q. Great, thank you.  
 13 And you also say in that same paragraph, 27, that  
 14 your memory of the time you spent in Northern France is  
 15 hazy, but you moved from Calais --- between Calais and  
 16 Dunkirk; is that right?  
 17 A. Yes, that's correct.  
 18 Q. And in paragraph 29 {INQ010388/6}, you explain how you  
 19 met a smuggler in Calais who told you to go to Dunkirk  
 20 and there to find out when the crossing to the UK would  
 21 be?  
 22 A. That's correct.  
 23 Q. Now, in paragraphs 33 to 37 {INQ010388/7-8} of your  
 24 statement, you tell us about the arrangements made with  
 25 the smugglers, but I'm not going to ask you any

1 questions about that.  
 2 In the next paragraphs, 38 to 40 {INQ010388/8}, you  
 3 also tell us about two previous crossing attempts you  
 4 made before 23 November, and I'm not going to ask you  
 5 any more questions about that.  
 6 A. Okay.  
 7 Q. Instead, what I want to ask you about, please, is what  
 8 your reasons were for travelling to the UK.  
 9 A. The reason why I want to come to UK, in order to  
 10 establish my life, in order that I could be educated, in  
 11 order that I could help my family.  
 12 Q. And you tell us, in paragraph 25 {INQ010388/5}, that  
 13 Italy, where you had been, didn't have a good system, in  
 14 your view, to protect refugees; is that right?  
 15 A. Correct.  
 16 Q. And also that, as far as you understood, it wasn't  
 17 possible for people from Somalia to get asylum in  
 18 France?  
 19 A. Correct.  
 20 Q. Right, Issa, now I'd like to ask you about the events of  
 21 23 and 24 November, and I'm now looking at paragraph 65  
 22 of your witness statement {INQ010388/12}, and you tell  
 23 us there that a group of you set off from the camp in  
 24 Dunkirk at about 5 o'clock in the evening; is that  
 25 right?

1 A. That's correct.  
 2 Q. And we should note, in your statement you tell us, in  
 3 a footnote, that all the times you're giving here are  
 4 Central European Time, in other words UTC plus 1; is  
 5 that right?  
 6 A. French time.  
 7 Q. Exactly, yes.  
 8 And you describe, in paragraph 65, how you and  
 9 the group of you walked for about two hours to reach  
 10 the launch site?  
 11 A. That's correct.  
 12 Q. Who else was walking with you?  
 13 A. We were a group of people, some of them families who  
 14 lost their life in the boat, so there were quite a lot  
 15 of people, around 30 people, I would say.  
 16 Q. But you also tell us, don't you, that there were two  
 17 smugglers walking with you?  
 18 A. Yes, that's correct.  
 19 Q. And that there were women and children, and you remember  
 20 walking very slowly?  
 21 A. That's correct.  
 22 Q. So now moving to paragraph 66, what did you see when you  
 23 reached the beach?  
 24 A. We saw five people who got there before us, and also  
 25 the boat, they were inflating the boat. So when we got

1 there, this is what we saw.  
 2 Q. Thank you.  
 3 And you say, in paragraph 66, that you think they  
 4 had finished inflating the boat at around 9 o'clock in  
 5 the evening; is that right?  
 6 A. That's correct.  
 7 Q. Can I just ask you this, Issa, did you have a watch with  
 8 you or a phone to tell the time? How do you remember  
 9 the time clearly?  
 10 A. I had a telephone, so this is how I realised the time.  
 11 Q. Thank you.  
 12 Now can we — can I ask you some questions, please,  
 13 about the boat, and this is paragraph 74 of your  
 14 statement {INQ010388/13}. First of all, what colour was  
 15 the boat, as far as you can remember?  
 16 A. It was like coffee or white tea.  
 17 Q. And how long was it?  
 18 A. 8—metre.  
 19 Q. Did it have an engine?  
 20 A. Yes, it had an engine, yes.  
 21 Q. And you tell us in your statement that an Egyptian man,  
 22 who was travelling with his son, was put in charge of  
 23 steering the boat; is that right?  
 24 A. Yes.  
 25 Q. And there was also a third man you remember, who was

1 filling up the petrol?  
 2 A. Yes.  
 3 Q. Now, in paragraph 67 of your statement {INQ010388/12},  
 4 you say that the smugglers spent about half an hour  
 5 speaking to the Egyptian father in Arabic on the beach.  
 6 A. Yes.  
 7 Q. And you think they were teaching him how to use the GPS  
 8 on the device he had been given; is that right?  
 9 A. Yes.  
 10 Q. Can you describe the device for us?  
 11 A. I only saw when we got to the boat. It was like  
 12 the mobile. It was a little bit bigger than mobile.  
 13 Q. Okay.  
 14 In your — one of your interviews with the MAIB, if  
 15 you remember, you said you saw the man being given  
 16 instructions in the camps, in the jungle; is that right?  
 17 A. Yes, before, since there were children and women, and we  
 18 were told this guy had the training and also he had  
 19 two—day training and he know how to operate the boat.  
 20 Q. So you were told, were you, that he had been trained to  
 21 operate the boat, presumably in the camps?  
 22 A. I'm not sure about that, but I'm aware that  
 23 the smugglers, normally they train the people, and also  
 24 they test them, they test the person.  
 25 Q. Right, so you're not sure about this particular person,

1 but you're aware that in general that's the way  
 2 the smugglers go about things?  
 3 A. They tried to convince people, but really it was he  
 4 could operate the boat, this particular person.  
 5 Q. Yes, thank you.  
 6 And the device you've talked about was — just so  
 7 I'm clear on this, it was like an Apple phone, was it,  
 8 like a GPS phone?  
 9 A. It's similar to Google Maps, but it's used for the sea.  
 10 Q. I understand.  
 11 Did you hear any of the conversation between  
 12 the smugglers and the man they were talking to about  
 13 the phone?  
 14 A. You mean while we were on the boat, on the sea?  
 15 Q. No, I mean — sorry. I mean before.  
 16 A. Yes, before we got to the boat, they were explaining to  
 17 him a lot.  
 18 Q. And you could hear that?  
 19 A. Yes, I was present. I could hear what they were saying.  
 20 Q. Can you remember now what they were saying to him?  
 21 A. From what I could hear from the smugglers to  
 22 the Egyptian man was that — how the boat operates in  
 23 relation to the petrol, and also there was three Turkish  
 24 [sic] men who could pump the boat in three different  
 25 places.

1 Q. So —  
 2 A. So they could pump it, in case there was an issue.  
 3 Q. So in other words, there were three Turkish men who  
 4 could keep the boat inflated?  
 5 A. They were not Turkish, they were Kurdish.  
 6 Q. Thank you.  
 7 Just going back to the GPS device, in your  
 8 statement, in paragraph 67, you say, "It was a large,  
 9 dark device which had a GPS on it".  
 10 A. Yes, everybody had their mobile.  
 11 Q. So did it look like a phone?  
 12 A. Yes, it looked like telephone, but it was larger than  
 13 phone.  
 14 Q. Yes. And it had a screen, did it, on it?  
 15 A. Yes, it had a screen.  
 16 Q. But bigger than a smartphone?  
 17 A. Yes, it was larger than a normal phone.  
 18 Q. And before you got on the boat, did you see anybody  
 19 using it?  
 20 A. No.  
 21 Q. But while you were on the boat, did you see the Egyptian  
 22 man or his son or anybody else using the device?  
 23 A. So the Egyptian man and also his son was in control of  
 24 the petrol, and there was another person also.  
 25 Q. And could you, from where you were sitting in the boat,

1 could you see how the device was operating?  
 2 A. Very much, because I was close to it.  
 3 Q. And what did you see on the screen?  
 4 A. I could see an arrow, because we were directing to  
 5 Dover.  
 6 Q. Had you ever seen a device like that being used before?  
 7 A. No, I have never seen it.  
 8 Q. So moving on to other things that the smugglers said to  
 9 the Egyptian man. You tell us in your statement that  
 10 you think the smugglers were telling him how to get to  
 11 Dover and you've explained how that was on the device;  
 12 that's correct, isn't it?  
 13 A. Yes.  
 14 Q. And at the beginning of the next paragraph, 68, you  
 15 explain how the Egyptian man was given instructions  
 16 about what to do if something bad happened and the fact  
 17 that he was given emergency numbers to call?  
 18 A. Yes. Even the people on the boat, they had that kind of  
 19 information.  
 20 Q. How had they got that information?  
 21 A. The smugglers. They obtained from the smugglers. So  
 22 everyone had talked, including the driver, the other  
 23 people.  
 24 Q. And can I just ---  
 25 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, can I ask him to repeat, please,

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1 one more time?  
 2 A. The smugglers were always on the phone and they were  
 3 giving information to the guy.  
 4 MR PHILLIPS: Do you mean during the journey?  
 5 A. Yes, correct, during the journey.  
 6 Q. And you've told us now a good deal about what  
 7 the smugglers said to the Egyptian man. What language  
 8 were they speaking?  
 9 A. In Arabic, because the Egyptian, their main language is  
 10 Arabic.  
 11 Q. And you could understand it?  
 12 A. Very well.  
 13 Q. Okay. I'd like now to ask you some questions about  
 14 the people who were on board the boat.  
 15 A. Okay.  
 16 Q. And Issa, I'm now going back in your statement to  
 17 paragraph 44 {INQ010388/9}.  
 18 A. (In English) Okay.  
 19 Q. Because the question arises of how many people were on  
 20 the boat; do you understand?  
 21 A. Before we left, we were divided into three lines.  
 22 THE INTERPRETER: Okay, so what he said was:  
 23 "We were told to get into three different groups,  
 24 ten each, and another three, so we would be 33 in  
 25 total."

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1 A. We were told that we will be 33 on the boat, but I'm  
 2 100% sure that we were more than 33 people were on  
 3 the boat. So they were just telling us we're going to  
 4 be 33 to convince us for --- especially for  
 5 the turbulence, so that they don't worry about,  
 6 you know, hazards and problems that may occur. But  
 7 after we boarded the boat, they added more people.  
 8 MR PHILLIPS: And that --- sorry. That's one of the reasons,  
 9 isn't it, you give in your statement for why you think  
 10 there were more than 33 people on board?  
 11 A. Yes.  
 12 Q. You also say --- and this is 49 of your statement --- that  
 13 there were children, more children, who weren't counted  
 14 in the 33; is that right?  
 15 A. Yes, mostly they don't count the children.  
 16 Q. And also that the Egyptian man and his son were already  
 17 on the boat when the counting was going on on the beach?  
 18 A. Yes, they were already on board, yes.  
 19 Q. And you say, at 52 of your statement {INQ010388/10},  
 20 that you think, for example, there were two  
 21 Ethiopian men on board rather than one?  
 22 A. The Ethiopians were two males and two females. One went  
 23 missing.  
 24 Q. Yes.  
 25 Now, of course, as you were waiting on the beach and

19

1 then getting on to the boat, it was dark, wasn't it?  
 2 A. It was dark and raining.  
 3 Q. And you and the other passengers were all wearing heavy  
 4 dark clothing; is that right?  
 5 A. That's correct. Mostly we were wearing black jackets,  
 6 but some had different, yes.  
 7 Q. Yes.  
 8 And you've also explained in your statement, very  
 9 fairly, that your memory of the people, not  
 10 surprisingly, is rather hazy?  
 11 A. Yes, because these people are not people I knew already.  
 12 I didn't know them before.  
 13 Q. Exactly. Yes, they were not people you'd met before.  
 14 A. No, no.  
 15 Q. No.  
 16 And when you got on to the boat --- this is  
 17 paragraph 75 of your statement {INQ010388/14}, the first  
 18 sentence --- you say that the boat was very crowded and  
 19 you were all squeezed together?  
 20 A. Yes.  
 21 Q. And I assume that, as you were sitting on the boat, you  
 22 didn't count all the number of the people around you?  
 23 A. No, I didn't count them, no.  
 24 Q. No.  
 25 So the question really, I think, Issa, is this: how

20

1 confident are you now, three years later , that there  
 2 were more than 33 people on board?  
 3 A. I am sure there were more than 33, because 27 dead ---  
 4 confirmed dead, four were found later, and many people  
 5 are missing who --- I have seen the photos of the people  
 6 missing.  
 7 Q. Thank you.  
 8 Can I now, Issa, ask you some questions about the  
 9 people who were on board the boat, where they were from  
 10 and which languages they spoke.  
 11 A. There were many people from around the world, but mostly  
 12 from Kurdistan.  
 13 Q. Exactly. That's what you say in paragraphs 56 to 58  
 14 {INQ010388/10}, there were Kurdish men, women and  
 15 children . In paragraph 59 {INQ010388/11}, you mention  
 16 the Egyptians we've already talked about, and another  
 17 Arabic speaker. Then in paragraph 60, you talk about  
 18 the people you think were Afghans.  
 19 A. Yes.  
 20 Q. And then a Vietnamese man, you mention at 61?  
 21 A. Yes, one male, yes.  
 22 Q. The Ethiopians we've already talked about at 62.  
 23 And finally, you and Halima, who were from Somalia?  
 24 A. Yes.  
 25 Q. Thank you.

1 Issa, I'd now like to ask you some questions about  
 2 how the people on the boat were dressed.  
 3 Starting with you, how were you dressed that  
 4 evening?  
 5 A. I was wearing a black jacket and jeans trousers .  
 6 Q. And you've mentioned a phone. Were you carrying a phone  
 7 at this point on the beach?  
 8 A. Yes, I have phone with me, yes, in a plastic --- in a bag  
 9 in my pocket.  
 10 Q. Okay.  
 11 And did you keep it with you throughout the journey?  
 12 A. Yes, I had it on me, yes.  
 13 Q. Were you also wearing a watch?  
 14 A. No.  
 15 Q. And in your statement at 63 {INQ010388/11}, you mention  
 16 what Halima, who was sitting next to you, was wearing,  
 17 a long dress, like traditional Somali women, with a big  
 18 jacket over the top?  
 19 A. (In English) Exactly.  
 20 Q. And what about the other people on the boat? In  
 21 general, how were they dressed?  
 22 A. Most of them were wearing black jackets, but some of  
 23 them, particularly the women, had different coloured  
 24 jackets.  
 25 Q. Yes.

1 Can I ask you now about life jackets, and this is  
 2 paragraph 71 of your statement {INQ010388/13}.  
 3 Issa, can you describe the life jackets to us?  
 4 A. They were like orange or red, like , colour, and they had  
 5 cotton on two on front and one at the back.  
 6 Q. And were you wearing one?  
 7 A. Yes. All of us. All of us. Everyone had.  
 8 Q. Everyone on the boat was wearing one?  
 9 A. (In English) Exactly.  
 10 Q. Now, a little earlier , you told me about  
 11 the instructions the smugglers gave to the Egyptian man  
 12 about what to do in the case of an emergency.  
 13 A. (In English) Yes.  
 14 Q. Did they give anybody else on the boat instructions  
 15 about what to do in an emergency?  
 16 A. Some of them had or been explained or given  
 17 instructions . Because these people were brought  
 18 together by different smugglers, so some of  
 19 the smugglers have already explained to the people what  
 20 to do, some did not, so some people already had  
 21 explanation, yes.  
 22 Q. And were you given any instructions about what to do in  
 23 an emergency?  
 24 A. No, I was not told. I didn't know.  
 25 Q. And you say in your statement --- and this is

1 paragraph 70 {INQ010388/13} --- that the English speakers  
 2 on the boat were told what numbers to ring if the boat  
 3 got into trouble.  
 4 A. (In English) Yeah.  
 5 Q. Do you know whether the Egyptian man in charge of  
 6 the boat, or anyone else, was given instructions about  
 7 what to say when ringing the emergency numbers?  
 8 A. They already had information about what to do in case of  
 9 an emergency, what number to call, what to say,  
 10 including the Egyptian, so they knew what to do.  
 11 Q. So as far as you're aware then, the Egyptian man was  
 12 told what to say when ringing an emergency number?  
 13 A. He was already told, yes.  
 14 Q. And were you given any instructions like that?  
 15 A. Because I was not one of those who were --- knew that  
 16 they were going to travel, so like , last minute, I was  
 17 told, "This boat is going, are you willing to travel",  
 18 so that's how I came to the boat.  
 19 Q. So you were a last-minute joiner?  
 20 A. I mean, from the jungle. Last few minutes, I was told  
 21 good, from the jungle. I was told if I want to travel.  
 22 Q. What did the smugglers tell you, if anything, about what  
 23 would happen to you when you reached UK waters?  
 24 A. First, I never expected the boat to sink. If I was  
 25 expecting something like this, I would have made

1 the recording, or there would have been some more  
 2 evidence I would be able to give today, but I wasn't  
 3 expecting this. And because the other people were told  
 4 what to do in case of emergency, I was relying on them  
 5 and I was not expecting to do anything.  
 6 Q. At the start of paragraph 70 of your statement, you say  
 7 that:  
 8 " ... the smugglers told us ... we would be accepted  
 9 as asylum seekers once we entered British waters."  
 10 Is that right?  
 11 A. Yes.  
 12 Q. And that, you explain, was always your understanding and  
 13 your intention, namely to claim asylum in the UK?  
 14 A. Exactly.  
 15 Q. Now, Issa, one other question about the equipment on  
 16 the boat.  
 17 A. (In English) Okay.  
 18 Q. You tell us in your statement, and I think you've  
 19 mentioned it this morning, that I think you said two of  
 20 the Kurdish men were given pumps to keep the boat  
 21 inflated; is that right?  
 22 A. (In English) Yes.  
 23 Q. And can you remember any other equipment in the boat?  
 24 A. No, other than the petrol and the pumps, and those  
 25 people were responsible for.

25

1 Q. Yes. So the petrol cans and the pumps?  
 2 A. Yes.  
 3 Q. Now, Issa, turning to another topic, the Inquiry has  
 4 received evidence which suggests that people travelling  
 5 on small boats are told by the smugglers to throw their  
 6 phones into the sea before they are rescued. Was that  
 7 an instruction given to you by the smugglers that  
 8 evening?  
 9 A. No, I was not told that.  
 10 Q. And just asking you about your two earlier attempts to  
 11 cross the Channel, was that instruction given to you  
 12 before either of those attempts?  
 13 A. No.  
 14 Q. And one final question on this. During your time in  
 15 France waiting to cross, did anyone tell you about this  
 16 habit of throwing phones into the sea, or that smugglers  
 17 told people to do that?  
 18 A. No.  
 19 Q. Thank you.  
 20 So now can I ask you to think about the moment when  
 21 people got on to the boat. And Issa, this is  
 22 paragraph 74 of your statement {INQ010388/13}. You tell  
 23 us there that the adults sat on the inflated sides and  
 24 the families with small children were in the middle of  
 25 the boat; is that right?

26

1 A. Yes.  
 2 Q. And there were about 14 adults on each side?  
 3 A. Yeah.  
 4 Q. So describe for us, please, where you were sitting on  
 5 the boat.  
 6 A. Left side, close to the driver, but there were two  
 7 people between me and the driver.  
 8 Q. And who else was around you in that part of the boat?  
 9 A. The right side was two Kurdish, and the other side was  
 10 two Ethiopians.  
 11 Q. And how far away, in terms of people, were you from  
 12 the driver?  
 13 A. Two people.  
 14 Q. And you explained to us that the boat was very crowded?  
 15 A. Very much, yes.  
 16 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: I'm just wondering if it's appropriate  
 17 to break there?  
 18 MR PHILLIPS: Yes.  
 19 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: So shall we come back at 11.35.  
 20 So thanks very much, Issa, we'll come back in  
 21 ten minutes.  
 22 A. Okay.  
 23 (11.23 am)  
 24 (A short break)  
 25 (11.39 am)

27

1 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, Issa, thank you for the evidence  
 2 so far. We're going to try to finish by 1 o'clock our  
 3 time, which would be 2 o'clock your time, but let's see  
 4 how we go, and obviously if you need a break, we'll have  
 5 a break.  
 6 So Mr Phillips.  
 7 MR PHILLIPS: Issa ---  
 8 A. (In English) Okay.  
 9 Q. --- if you could look at paragraph 77 of your statement  
 10 {INQ010388/14}. At the beginning of the paragraph, you  
 11 describe the weather as the boat left the beach. It was  
 12 fine, but it was cold, and it had been raining. Can you  
 13 tell us what you remember of the weather during  
 14 the remainder of the journey?  
 15 A. Initially, the weather was fine, as I explain in my  
 16 statement, and normally, when the weather is fine,  
 17 that's when they allow people to use the boat.  
 18 Q. And you also say that the water was quite calm at  
 19 the beginning?  
 20 A. That's correct, yes.  
 21 Q. And you tell us that you think the boat left --- this is  
 22 paragraph 78, Issa --- the beach at about 10 o'clock; is  
 23 that right?  
 24 A. Yes.  
 25 Q. And again, is this right, Issa, for these times, you

28

1 were relying on your phone? Is that right?  
 2 A. It was around 9:30 when I checked my phone, and then  
 3 I put in a bag and then we got on the boat.  
 4 Q. Okay, thank you.  
 5 Now, you say in your statement, at 78 and 79, that  
 6 after about an hour of travelling, you saw a boat with  
 7 a French flag?  
 8 A. Yes, we saw a boat. It came from the direction of  
 9 Calais.  
 10 Q. And can you describe it for us and tell us what it did?  
 11 THE INTERPRETER: The witness is giving so much information.  
 12 Can I ask him to do it bit by bit, please?  
 13 MR PHILLIPS: Yes.  
 14 Issa, could you try to keep your answers a little  
 15 shorter so the interpreter can keep up with you?  
 16 A. (In English) Okay. Okay.  
 17 A. After about an hour, while we were on the boat, this  
 18 boat came from the direction of Calais, in France. And  
 19 then the driver said we should not be worried, they're  
 20 only there for our safety, until we leave French water.  
 21 He was saying in a loud voice so that people would not  
 22 become terrorised, and this boat was following us about  
 23 an hour to an hour and a half. Also they were giving us  
 24 light, so we could see where we were going to.  
 25 Q. Because there was a light on the boat, yes?

1 A. A strong light.  
 2 Q. Can I just ask you this, what made you sure that it was  
 3 a French boat?  
 4 A. Because it came from the direction of France, the ---  
 5 Calais. And previously, while we were in the Channel,  
 6 we were told, as soon as we start, or we got on  
 7 the boat, the boat belonging to the French would follow  
 8 us, so we were told not to worry.  
 9 Q. So that was something you were told before the journey  
 10 in the camp; is that right?  
 11 A. Yes, that's correct. We found people in the camp who  
 12 told us they attempted to go to the boat previously and  
 13 they had problem with the pump and then the boat was  
 14 following them, so we were told while we were in  
 15 the Channel(?).  
 16 Q. So that was what you were told by other people, but as  
 17 I understand it, what you're telling the Inquiry is that  
 18 this also happened during your journey; is that right?  
 19 A. Yes.  
 20 Q. So you're telling us what actually happened rather than  
 21 something that you'd heard about?  
 22 A. Yes, that --- yes, that's correct. This boat was  
 23 following us about an hour to an hour and a half.  
 24 Q. So just focusing again on the boat, you tell us in  
 25 paragraph 79 of your statement that you saw a French

1 flag on it; is that right?  
 2 A. That's correct.  
 3 Q. Of course, it was very dark on the water, but you were  
 4 able to see the flag; is that correct?  
 5 A. Yes, because the boat was following us, and I was  
 6 looking back to see, so I saw the flag with a white  
 7 colour, because I had the opportunity or the chance to  
 8 look at the flag, because it was following us for quite  
 9 a while.  
 10 Q. And as for the colours on the flag, were there any other  
 11 colours apart from white?  
 12 A. It had blue and the Coastal sign all over.  
 13 Q. Can you remember what colour the boat was?  
 14 A. It was white.  
 15 Q. And compared to the boat you were in, how much bigger  
 16 was the boat you saw?  
 17 A. It wasn't like a ship and it wasn't a small boat, so  
 18 I would say it was in the middle. And it was not those  
 19 boats for holidays or for tourists.  
 20 Q. Well, later, you've told us in your statement you  
 21 encountered a fishing boat. Was it bigger than that  
 22 boat?  
 23 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, can I ask him to repeat?  
 24 A. No, they were not the same. The second one was people  
 25 --- people who were tourists, so they were not similar.

1 MR PHILLIPS: Okay.  
 2 A. The one --- the boat that was following us was much  
 3 bigger.  
 4 Q. Thank you.  
 5 And you've already mentioned the very bright light  
 6 on this boat. Was the light, as far as you could see,  
 7 carried by a person, or was it fixed to the boat?  
 8 A. I believe fixed to the boat.  
 9 Q. And, again, can you tell us roughly how close the big  
 10 boat got to your boat?  
 11 A. About 50 to 70 to 100 metres, I would say, roughly.  
 12 Q. Yes.  
 13 A. Approximately.  
 14 Q. Thank you.  
 15 A. Because if it comes very close, the wave would have an  
 16 effect on us.  
 17 Q. And was there any contact between your boat and  
 18 the other boat? Were there voices, were messages being  
 19 broadcast across the sea?  
 20 A. No, never.  
 21 Q. Thank you.  
 22 So just thinking about the timing of all this now.  
 23 In your statement, you say that you left the beach at  
 24 around 10, that about an hour after that, this big boat  
 25 appeared, and about an hour after that, the boat turned

1 away. Is that roughly right?  
 2 A. Yes. Yes, it just left us.  
 3 Q. Because I think you've said, by this time, you'd put  
 4 your phone away, so presumably these timings are  
 5 approximate?  
 6 A. Yes, it 's approximate.  
 7 Q. So, for example, might it have been that the boat  
 8 followed your boat for longer than an hour, maybe an  
 9 hour and a half or two hours?  
 10 A. Yes, I believe around an hour and a half, approximately,  
 11 it was following us.  
 12 Q. And during the time the boat was following you,  
 13 the engine of your boat was working, yes?  
 14 A. Yes, very much.  
 15 Q. And during the time, you've described how the other boat  
 16 kept 50/70 metres away from you, so it was literally  
 17 following you as your boat moved along; is that right?  
 18 A. Yes.  
 19 Q. Now, Issa, I think you've been given a copy of a witness  
 20 statement provided by Mr Leat of the Coastguard. Have  
 21 you had a chance to look at that with your lawyers?  
 22 A. Yes.  
 23 Q. The reason I mention it is because you'll see that  
 24 the Coastguard has done some analysis and their  
 25 conclusion is that the Flamant, the French vessel, was

1 moving too fast that night to have been following your  
 2 boat in the way that you have described. Do you  
 3 understand that's what the statement says?  
 4 A. No, it was --- it wasn't riding very fast, but I was one  
 5 of the people who were on the boat and can confirm.  
 6 Q. So as far as you can tell now, you have described to  
 7 the Inquiry what happened with this other boat?  
 8 A. Yes, as I've been present, and to tell you the truth  
 9 about it.  
 10 Q. Thank you.  
 11 Now, going back to your statement and paragraph 84  
 12 {INQ010388/15}, you say there that when the other boat  
 13 had turned away, the driver said to you that you were in  
 14 English waters now.  
 15 A. Yes.  
 16 Q. Do you know why the Egyptian man believed that you had  
 17 reached English waters at that point?  
 18 A. Yes, he already had the information and he was  
 19 communicating with the smugglers, and since the boat,  
 20 the French boat, left, that means we were in the English  
 21 waters.  
 22 Q. So you think it was the smugglers who gave him that  
 23 information?  
 24 A. Yes, it was the smugglers who give them this  
 25 information, and also they were communicating with

1 the driver, I could hear.  
 2 Q. Okay.  
 3 And then, in paragraph 85 of your statement, you  
 4 start to describe the problems that occurred, and you  
 5 say that you think they occurred at around 2 o'clock in  
 6 the morning.  
 7 And again, Issa, can I just ask you, what makes you  
 8 confident about the timing of that, ie the timing of  
 9 when the problems began?  
 10 A. It's approximate. Approximate.  
 11 Q. Okay, thank you.  
 12 So in paragraph 85, you describe how water started  
 13 to enter the boat, and I think I'm right that it came  
 14 from what you describe as the back of the boat; is that  
 15 right?  
 16 A. So the water was entering the boat slowly, but it was in  
 17 the middle.  
 18 Q. In the middle. Thank you.  
 19 And what were the people on the boat doing in  
 20 reaction to the water coming in?  
 21 A. The driver was telling, was giving us instruction saying  
 22 that --- some of the people had plastic, and they were  
 23 taking the water out of the boat, and they told us we  
 24 are close to Dover, it would take us about an hour. So  
 25 everyone was told to get the water out of the boat, and

1 that's what --- that was what we were doing.  
 2 Q. And in paragraph 87, you describe how the water was  
 3 coming in faster in the bottom of the boat and faster  
 4 than it could be scooped out?  
 5 A. That's correct. The water was coming very fast, and  
 6 because there were a lot of people on the boat, and  
 7 while we were scooping the water, the boat was on the ---  
 8 was still on the road --- on the boat --- on the sea.  
 9 Q. Yes.  
 10 And you describe how some of the Turkish men were  
 11 using the air pumps --- this is paragraph 89  
 12 {INQ010388/16} --- to keep the pressure up?  
 13 A. Yes, some of them were pumping and the others were  
 14 scooping the water, and still the water --- the boat was  
 15 on, continuing riding --- the driver was still riding.  
 16 Q. Yes, because the engine was still working, wasn't it, at  
 17 this point?  
 18 A. Yes.  
 19 Q. Now, given what was going on on the boat, did you or  
 20 anyone else start calling for help?  
 21 A. The driver was telling us to scoop out the water, and he  
 22 was telling us we are in the English water, and then we  
 23 started calling for help. The people were in  
 24 a desperate situation and they were trying to make phone  
 25 calls, but because my SIM was from Italy, I had no

1 internet connection. Therefore everyone was trying to  
 2 make call for help.  
 3 Q. And in your statement, at paragraph 90, you say that you  
 4 heard people making calls to the authorities in English;  
 5 is that right?  
 6 A. Yes, yes.  
 7 Q. Do you know who they were ringing?  
 8 A. We were calling the English authority.  
 9 Q. But you yourself didn't make any calls, did you?  
 10 A. No.  
 11 Q. Because your phone had been wrapped up, as you explain  
 12 in your statement?  
 13 A. Yes, I had no internet. I had no internet.  
 14 Q. Did you hear anyone making a call in French?  
 15 A. No. When the driver was communicating with  
 16 the smugglers and the smugglers were saying, "You must  
 17 make phone calls because you are in the English water".  
 18 Q. Okay.  
 19 In your statement, if you look at 88, you say that:  
 20 "... initially calls were being made ..."  
 21 Second line:  
 22 "... to both the French and the English."  
 23 A. Yes.  
 24 Q. But as far as you were concerned -- again, this is  
 25 paragraph 90 now -- you heard calls that were being made

1 in English; is that right?  
 2 A. Yeah, most of them were speaking in English.  
 3 Q. Yes. But it's possible, presumably, that other calls  
 4 were being made in a different part of the boat that you  
 5 didn't hear?  
 6 A. Yes, people were making calls. Some of them were  
 7 calling their families. They were saying to help us.  
 8 Q. And in paragraphs 92 and 93, you explain why it was that  
 9 the people on the boat thought that you had reached  
 10 English waters.  
 11 A. Yes.  
 12 Q. And then at the beginning of 93, you say:  
 13 "I believe ... the man who had been filling up  
 14 the petrol sent our location to the smuggler and told  
 15 him about the problems on the boat."  
 16 Why did you believe that?  
 17 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, he's going fast. He's going too  
 18 fast. Please, can I ask him to do it bit by bit.  
 19 Could you repeat the question, please?  
 20 MR PHILLIPS: In your statement at paragraph 93, Issa  
 21 the beginning, you say:  
 22 "I believe ... the man who had been filling up  
 23 the petrol sent our location to the smuggler ..."  
 24 And what I was asking you is, why do you think that  
 25 happened?

1 A. Yes, he had -- he was communicating with the smugglers.  
 2 Q. And you've explained to us that you could understand  
 3 what he was saying?  
 4 A. Yeah, they were communicating in Arabic, and also he was  
 5 close to me.  
 6 Q. Yes.  
 7 And you also say:  
 8 "The smuggler told him to call the UK authorities to  
 9 ask for help ..."  
 10 And again, how do you know what the smuggler said?  
 11 A. The driver -- the driver was announcing in a loud voice  
 12 that we are in the English water and we should -- we  
 13 should contact the authority, and he was telling  
 14 the people not to make a lot of noises so we can make  
 15 phone call to the authority, because the condition we  
 16 were in, it was difficult for people to be quiet and  
 17 there were a lot of ladies or women and also children  
 18 who were screaming.  
 19 Q. Yes.  
 20 When you say in your statement that the man sent  
 21 the location -- your location to the smuggler, do you  
 22 think that was because he was still using the GPS?  
 23 A. Yes, he was using the GP, and I even remember he said we  
 24 have 2 km to go.  
 25 Q. 2 km?

1 A. Just over 2 km, but there could be a little bit more,  
 2 that's what the driver told us.  
 3 Q. Yes. In your statement you say:  
 4 "The smuggler told him that 'go 2-3 km and you'll be  
 5 in Dover'.  
 6 A. Yes.  
 7 Q. Now, you have already told us that the Egyptian driver  
 8 was given instructions as to what to do in an emergency.  
 9 A. Yes.  
 10 Q. Did you see or hear him make a call to the emergency  
 11 services at this point?  
 12 A. You mean the driver?  
 13 Q. Yes.  
 14 A. No, he was telling the guy with the GP to make phone  
 15 call, and also the smugglers were sending different  
 16 numbers.  
 17 Q. I see.  
 18 A. To call for emergency, the English authority. And also  
 19 the Iranian gentleman was very experienced and he was  
 20 calling, and also the Ethiopians, they were calling  
 21 their families. Also the other Kurdish who were also on  
 22 the boat, they were calling, including the young  
 23 16 years old Kurdish boy, he was also calling. And even  
 24 some of the ladies, they were calling their families, as  
 25 there was a lot of water entering the boat, and we

1 thought -- everyone thought that we would not survive.  
 2 Although I couldn't understand the language they were  
 3 shouting or talking and screaming, which -- I don't  
 4 understand the Kurdish language, but I remember  
 5 the Iranian gentleman, he was speaking to the authority  
 6 and they were saying, "We're going to send you a number  
 7 to WhatsApp -- for WhatsApp". But most of the time  
 8 the calls, they were not answered.  
 9 Q. So you say --  
 10 A. This is what I recall .  
 11 Q. Yes.  
 12 You say in your statement that you didn't understand  
 13 everything that was being said around you?  
 14 A. I did understand those who spoke Arabic and English, but  
 15 not the Kurdish.  
 16 Q. Yes.  
 17 And of the calls that you could understand, what  
 18 were the passengers on the boat saying that you can now  
 19 remember?  
 20 A. They were saying the water is entering our boat, has  
 21 already entered our boat, we have a lot of ladies and  
 22 children, and we need help, because we are in  
 23 the English water. This is what they were  
 24 communicating. They were saying, "We need help, we need  
 25 assistance".

1 Q. And in your statement, at 99 {INQ010388/17}, Issa, you  
 2 describe the last emergency call that you were aware of,  
 3 and that was placed by the man sitting opposite you.  
 4 Can you remember what nationality he was?  
 5 A. He was from Iran, and he was speaking in Kurdish.  
 6 A. (In English) Afghanistan.  
 7 THE INTERPRETER: Oh, "He was speaking Afghani".  
 8 MR PHILLIPS: But you tell us in this paragraph that  
 9 the operator, the person he spoke to, gave him a number  
 10 to send your location to by WhatsApp; is that correct?  
 11 A. This is -- this was the last thing I've heard.  
 12 Q. Yes.  
 13 And you -- sorry.  
 14 A. (In English) Go ahead.  
 15 Q. You describe how some people were using torches to  
 16 attract attention? That's paragraph 98.  
 17 A. Yes, we were hoping others -- other ships or other  
 18 boats, to see us, and during this -- at this point,  
 19 everyone switched off their mobile and there were --  
 20 there were light on their mobiles, so people could see  
 21 us, or -- either planes or other boats, but no one come  
 22 to our rescue.  
 23 Q. So to be clear then, Issa, apart from the big boat you  
 24 talked about earlier, no other boat came towards your  
 25 boat?

1 A. No.  
 2 Q. And in your statement, you describe what was going on on  
 3 the boat, people shouting, crying, and what must have  
 4 been an atmosphere of panic?  
 5 A. It was difficult, because we were in a difficult  
 6 situation, which is difficult to express.  
 7 MR PHILLIPS: Of course.  
 8 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: I'm just wondering if we should not have  
 9 another break.  
 10 Issa, would you like a break now?  
 11 A. Yes, because what I went through was -- it had an impact  
 12 on my life and it's very difficult for me to remember.  
 13 Yes, I would like a break, please.  
 14 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, shall we come back about half  
 15 past, so ten minutes. If we can all be back by then.  
 16 Thank you very much, Issa.  
 17 A. You're welcome, sir.  
 18 (12.21 pm)  
 19 (A short break)  
 20 (12.33 pm)  
 21 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, Issa, we do hope to be finished by  
 22 1 o'clock our time, 2 o'clock your time.  
 23 Mr Phillips.  
 24 MR PHILLIPS: Issa, I'm now going to be looking at  
 25 paragraphs 100 and following of your statement

1 {INQ010388/18}, and there, first of all, in  
 2 paragraph 100, you explain to us how the boat came to  
 3 capsize. There were more people on your side of  
 4 the boat than the other and your side was deflating  
 5 quickly.  
 6 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, I missed the first part of  
 7 the question, please. Could you ...  
 8 MR PHILLIPS: In paragraph 100, Issa, you say at the start  
 9 your side of the boat was deflating quickly; is that  
 10 right?  
 11 A. Yes, very quickly.  
 12 Q. And unsurprisingly, people were crying and hysterical  
 13 and your side of the boat eventually tipped over?  
 14 A. That's correct, yes, it capsized and I was under  
 15 the boat.  
 16 Q. Yes.  
 17 And you explain at the end of the paragraph how you  
 18 had to swim out from under it?  
 19 A. It was a surprise when the boat capsized and the water  
 20 was very cold.  
 21 Q. Yes.  
 22 You describe the screaming of the people and  
 23 the darkness all around you?  
 24 A. Everyone fell into the sea and we all thought we were  
 25 dying.

1 Q. Yes.  
 2 You describe the temperature of the sea as being  
 3 very cold?  
 4 A. Very much.  
 5 Q. You were wearing a life jacket, Issa. Was it giving you  
 6 any support?  
 7 A. If you don't now how to swim or how to stand,  
 8 the life jacket would not help you.  
 9 Q. Yes.  
 10 But, as you say at the end of paragraph 101, Issa:  
 11 "Even if you were a good swimmer, it was very  
 12 difficult to carry on in these conditions."  
 13 A. You cannot escape from it.  
 14 Q. Yes.  
 15 And in 104, you explain what you think happened to  
 16 a number of the people on the boat.  
 17 A. This is when people start dying and there was a lot  
 18 of --- people were screaming. It's very painful when  
 19 someone is dying inside the water.  
 20 Q. Yes.  
 21 A. The way the person is dying and they cannot breathe,  
 22 it's very difficult situation to be in. And at that  
 23 point, we were all shocked and I never thought I would  
 24 experience such a thing.  
 25 Q. Well, let us move then to the moment when the sun came

1 up --- this is paragraph 106, Issa --- and you were still  
 2 clinging on to what remained of the boat.  
 3 A. Yes.  
 4 Q. And you decided you needed to keep moving --- this is 107  
 5 of your statement {INQ010388/19} --- to survive?  
 6 A. Yes, if I stood --- if I stayed still stood --- if  
 7 I stand still, I will die by the cold; the water is very  
 8 cold. And in the morning, I would say around ten people  
 9 were still alive.  
 10 Q. But ---  
 11 A. It was a harrowing experience and I just don't want to  
 12 remember.  
 13 Q. I can understand that. If you don't want to carry on,  
 14 you must say.  
 15 A. All night I was holding into the --- what remain of  
 16 the boat, and in the morning, and I could hear  
 17 the people were screaming and everything. It's  
 18 something I cannot forget in my mind.  
 19 I believe it would be --- if rescue would come  
 20 quickly, I believe half of those people would be still  
 21 alive today. Because we have been seen as refugee and  
 22 that's the reason why I believe the rescue, they did not  
 23 come at all. And we feel like we were like an animal.  
 24 Treated like animal.  
 25 Q. Well, you describe in paragraph 111 how you started

1 swimming away from the boat, and event ---  
 2 Sorry, please carry on.  
 3 And after many hours, you were rescued by a French  
 4 fishing boat; is that right?  
 5 A. It's not hours, it's almost sunset. When the boat  
 6 capsized and when I was rescued, there were a lot of  
 7 hours in between.  
 8 Q. Yes.  
 9 A. I've lost my legs and I've paid the --- I've suffered  
 10 a lot of pain.  
 11 Q. Yes, you describe your injuries in paragraph 114  
 12 {INQ010388/20}. And I think you were eventually taken  
 13 up and woke up in hospital; is that right?  
 14 A. Yes, I realised I was in hospital.  
 15 Q. And you'd sustained a number of injuries, hadn't you?  
 16 A. I regained consciousness when I was in hospital and  
 17 I believe I had sustained a lot of injuries.  
 18 Q. Yes. Well, you describe those to us in your statement  
 19 and I don't need to take you through any of that again.  
 20 And you describe there discovering that another man  
 21 {INQ010388/21}, who you called Mohammed, had also  
 22 survived the crossing?  
 23 A. Yes, Mohammed. We met in the hospital. Yes, he told me  
 24 they thought he was dead and they put him where  
 25 the other dead body was, but they realised he was still

1 alive. This is what he told me.  
 2 Q. Yes.  
 3 And you tell us about the various hospitals you had  
 4 to go to for your treatment and for physiotherapy to  
 5 learn how to walk again. How long were you in hospital  
 6 and in physiotherapy in all?  
 7 A. Four months.  
 8 Q. And after that, you explain --- this is paragraph 128  
 9 {INQ010388/22}, Issa --- that you went to a sort of  
 10 halfway house in Paris and stayed there for just under  
 11 a year?  
 12 A. Yeah.  
 13 Q. Issa, can you explain to the Inquiry what the impact on  
 14 you of the events you've described has been.  
 15 A. It had a tremendous impact on my life, it affected my  
 16 memory in relation to dates, which I cannot remember.  
 17 I suffered diabetes, because it affected my eyesight.  
 18 Before the incident I was fine. It also affected my  
 19 sleeping pattern and I have flashbacks of the incident  
 20 remembering the other people, even if I try to take away  
 21 from my mind. And also different conditions and illness  
 22 that it's difficult to say how many. It's affected my  
 23 mental health, especially my memory. So those are ---  
 24 that's some of the impacts in relation to the incident.  
 25 And I will never forget and I would like to thank

1 the solicitors , Duncan Lewis, who's doing this  
 2 tremendous work for me. And I want to thank especially  
 3 Maria, she had a lot of contact with me, either with  
 4 coming face—to—face, by telephone contact or by Zoom.  
 5 Also Elizabeth, the reason — why we are here today is  
 6 because of those two people and I would like to thank  
 7 them. We just want justice.

8 And I would like to give my condolence to all  
 9 the family whose loved ones passed away during this  
 10 incident.

11 I also want to thank the Chair, the barristers and  
 12 all other participants. I want to say to every and each  
 13 one of you thank you very much. In particular,  
 14 the person who made this a reality is Maria, and I would  
 15 like to thank her very much.

16 I believe if it was not those two people, we would  
 17 not be here today, and in order to overcome my problem,  
 18 this is the two people who I appreciate and am thankful  
 19 to. And all those who work at Duncan Lewis firm.

20 I want to thank every and each one of you.

21 A. (In English) Thank you so much also.

22 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Issa, I know it's been very difficult  
 23 for you to give this evidence. I'm extremely grateful  
 24 to you. I want to thank you. What you've said today  
 25 has been enormously helpful to the Inquiry and all I can

1 say is renewed thanks, and thanks very much.  
 2 A. It is compulsory for me to thank everyone, because I'm  
 3 a voice for those people who passed away, because I'm  
 4 the only survivor in this incident and I want to  
 5 participate in the Inquiry, and I want to thank  
 6 the Chair of the Inquiry.

7 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, thank you very much.

8 So Issa, that's all we've got today, all we've got  
 9 to ask you today, so at this point we'll adjourn, but as  
 10 I say, renewed thanks for all you've told us. Thank you  
 11 very much.

12 A. If you could give me the opportunity to ask one question  
 13 to Rory?

14 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Yes, Mr Phillips.

15 MR PHILLIPS: Yes, please, Issa.

16 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Yes, please ask the question.

17 A. When the rescue — people who rescue said there was  
 18 a mistake with another boat, have they asked themselves  
 19 — the person who was contacting us, Mubin, was he on —  
 20 the 16 years old Turkish youngster who was 16 years old,  
 21 so I need an answer from the rescue team of the British.  
 22 I could hear what the young boy was saying, but  
 23 the response, I did not hear what they were saying. So  
 24 those who ...

25 THE INTERPRETER: He's dropped off again.

1 What he said was ...

2 A. I would like the coastal guards to forward or submit  
 3 the voice recording between the young boy and them,  
 4 please, because I could hear what the 16—year—old was  
 5 saying, but I did not hear what they were saying,  
 6 the Coastal, so I want them to exhibit or send the voice  
 7 recording of that conversation.

8 This is all I want to say. Thank you very much.

9 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Well, thanks very much indeed. Issa,  
 10 eventually, I'll produce a report, but your evidence has  
 11 been extremely helpful in preparing that report.

12 A. (In English) You're welcome.

13 SIR ROSS CRANSTON: Thank you very much.

14 A. (In English) Thank you. Thank you. You're welcome.  
 15 (12.55 pm)

16 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am on Wednesday,  
 17 4 March 2025)

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