

Learning by Ear 2009  
Migration - Lampedusa  
Author: Sandra Petersmann

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**Author:** Sandra Petersmann

**Editors:** Katrin Ogunsade/Jan-Philipp Scholz

**Translator:** Tony Dunham/Jan-Philipp Scholz

**Presenters:**

1 announcer, male or female (intro, outro, connection)

1 narrator, female (text)

**Sound Bites:**

(total: 4 female voices, 2 male voices)

- Barbara Molinario, female (middle-aged)
- Carlotta Santarossa, female (middle-aged)
- Bernadino de Rubeis, male (middle-aged)
- Giusi Nicolini, female (middle-aged)
- Dagwami Yimer, male (around 30)
- Paola la Rosa, female (middle-aged)

## **Intro:**

Hello and welcome to another episode of our Learning by Ear series about migration. In this episode we are going to take you to Lampedusa, Italy's most southern island. This tiny isle is located in the Mediterranean Ocean between Tunisia and Sicily. It is the gateway to Europe for ten thousands of refugees coming from Africa ever year. But the migrants are far from welcome. Instead, the Italian government is attempting to enforce stricter laws in order to put a stop to the immigration. The people of Lampedusa are confronted with the effects of this policy on a daily basis, as our correspondent Sandra Petersmann reports.

### **1. SFX waves, seagulls**

The waves of the Mediterranean break at a small bay between two cliffs. The water is crystal clear and shimmers in the sunlight.

### **2. SFX waves, seagulls**

The 70 boat people though are not interested in looking at the sparse beauty of Lampedusa. The exhausted refugees have risked the perilous crossing from Libya in a rubber dinghy. Barbara Molinaro from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that each one of them has payed at least 1500 dollars to professional people smugglers.

### **3. Sound bite Molinaro (engl.):**

„Sometimes it takes a Somali refugee or an Eritrean refugee sometimes even two years because they have to stop and work in various countries to make the money to pay for the trip which is very expensive. And the sea is really only the last part of all the terrible things that they go through. The worst part what they say is always the crossing of the Saharan desert which they do in very crowded conditions in small cars with very little water. And this is where most of them in fact die.

#### **4. SFX waves, seagull**

The Italian officials divide the newcomers into two groups. The sub-Saharan Africans are classified as probable asylum seekers and will be sent on to the island of Sicily or to the Italian mainland. North Africans from the Maghreb region are considered illegal immigrants and they will have to stay on the island, as Carlotta Santarossa from the International Organization for Migration explains:

#### **5. Sound bite Santarossa (engl.):**

„At the moment the center is overcrowded. The standard conditions are really poor and it is difficult to keep so a big number of people for a long period. I mean there are no other identification centers in Italy with such a number of migrants.

#### **6. SFX waves, seagull**

The reception center also serves for the time being as a deportation centre, while the building of the real one is completed. The refugees used to only stay on the island for a few days, but now they can be detained for up to six months.

### **7. Sound bite de Rubeis (ital.):**

„We told Italy, Europe, in fact the entire world that we don't want to become a prison-island with a large deportation camp. All of us here are dependent on tourism. We are hoping for round table negotiations.“

Lampedusa's mayor Bernardino de Rubeis is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He is perfectly happy with the stricter immigration and deportation policies of the Italian government – just as long as they do not take place on his island.

### **8. SFX conversation Isole Pelagie**

These angry hoteliers and restaurant owners are even threatening the government in distant Rome with war because the tourists are staying away. The only guests on the island these days are more than 1000 policemen and soldiers who are stationed here.

### **9. SFX conversation women after mess/ fade under**

After early morning mass some elderly women stand around together in the church square. They talk about the poor refugees who came by boat and now need help. But they also talk about rape, prostitution and drug dealing.

#### **10. SFX church bells and conversations/ fade under**

The tiny isle of Lampedusa has less than 6,000 inhabitants. The fear of foreign infiltration and criminality is deep. Even though the imprisoned refugees are all but invisible in the day-to-day life of the island.

#### **11. SFX church bells and conversations/ fade under**

Giusi Nicolini manages the nature reserve on Lampedusa and is part of a small group of human rights activists who are organizing a petition against the center for deportation. This petition will be sent to Rome and Brussels.

#### **12. Sound bite Nicolini (ital.):**

„In questions of environment protection, the European Union always emphasises the fact that the affected people are taken into account. I always have to consider the consequences of my conservation projects for the local population. But as far as immigration is concerned, nobody worries about it. The Italian government has plenty of free rope there. The EU cares neither about the refugees' human rights nor about the rights of the island's inhabitants. “

Music

**Connection /Narrator:**

Dagwami Yimer is one of many thousands of young Africans who have risked their lives to reach Europe. The law student was 27 when he left his home country in the winter of 2005. He fought his way through Sudan to Libya. He fell into the trap of people smugglers, was arrested and deported by the Libyan police. They left him in the desert without any water. He struggled back to the Libyan coast and risked the perilous boat trip across the Mediterranean. In the summer of 2006 – after many months of suffering – he arrived on Lampedusa. Recently, Dagwami Yimer came back to the island for the first time, to show the local population a film documentary about the continual exodus from Africa.

13. O-Ton Atmo (Film)

You can hear a pin drop in the church hall. The audience stare riveted at the screen. Around 50 inhabitants of the island have turned up to see the documentary, “Like a human being on the Earth” In this film young migrants like Dagmawi Yimer describe their flight. It takes most of them 6 months to even a year.

14. O-Ton Atmo (Film)

Young men and women describe how they’ve been hit, robbed arrested, raped and stranded in the desert. They tearfully tell how they were subjected to the arbitrary whims of the officials and the people smugglers.

### 15. O-Ton Atmo (Film)

Dagmawi Yimer from Ethiopia made the documentary together with two Italian directors who he became friends with. He now lives in Rome. But he has never forgotten the few days he spent in summer 2006 on Lampedusa after his successful flight.

### 16. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):

„I came here on boat without shoes. Now I return with some shoes with the airplane. So I don't know how to explain my emotions. I have presented my film all around Italy but this time when I came back to Lampedusa this is the first time that I have felt more emotions, more sentiments.“

Dagmawi, whom everyone simply calls Dug, was 27 when he decided to leave Ethiopia.

### 17. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):

„I left because I lost hope in living in that kind of country where there is no democracy. So I lost hope in proceeding my studies in university. So that is my main reason to protest against the government. I looked to go out in such a travel.“

The film is also part of the protest. Above all it accuses Libya. And also the European countries that want to make Libya the destination of the people fleeing.

### 18. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):

„I worst part is the container. The government sends you back in a container towards the desert, in the Libyan desert, in the Sahara, without any condition to respect your dignity – like a beast.“

Dag managed to survive the container, the desert, and the Mediterranean. It is unknown how many people paid with their lives for the Odyssey. Experts estimate that only one in four of the refugees survives.

**19. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):**

„Those who are planning to go, I cannot say do not go out, do not travel. At least I am liberated from moral demands that I have to give testimony. Because many will say if he has done it they can do it also. “

Italy, Europe. The dream of the Promised Land. The reality is very different.

**20. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):**

„You know you have to work hard to be considered. You have to start from zero to be considered as a person. Unless you do such things you are always a number, or an immigrant, or a nigger. This is what I found when I arrived in Italy, in Europe. You are not welcome. “

Now Dagmawi from Ethiopia is 31. In Rome he helps other migrants and makes films about their fate. He has fallen in love with Elena.

**21. O-Ton Dagmawi (engl.):**

„Life is not easy. Even for the Europeans it is complicated. So I am happy to be with the girl I love. When somebody asks me „Is she Italian?“ I don't answer. Because I met a girl, not an Italian. “



## 22. O-Ton Atmo (Applaus nach Film)

Like a human being on Earth – the documentary has moved the audience on Lampedusa. The performance in the church hall was organized by the lawyer Paola La Rosa. Paola was born in Palermo and has lived on the tiny Mediterranean island for 10 years. Alone the last year around 32,000 migrants arrived here.

### **23. O-Ton Paola (engl.):**

„For ten years I have seen these faces. Black faces passed near me in the bus or landing from the boats. But I have never had the possibility to speak with one of these men.“

## 24. O-Ton Atmo (Gespräche nach Film)

Lampedusa has around 6,000 inhabitants. Very few of them will have any contact with the migrants who live in the concentration camps before they are got off the island. When Paola heard about the film project, she grabbed for the telephone.

### **25. O-Ton Paola (engl.):**

„I desired to meet Dag and to touch him, to see his face and his eyes and to speak with him and to hear from his voice. Because he is a man and not a number.“

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**Outro:**

And that was the story of Dagwami Yimer from Ethiopia who got stranded as a refugee on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa. He converted his experiences into a documentary film. And with that we come to the end of today's episode in our Learning by Ear series about migration. If you'd like to learn more, then have a look at our website at:

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Bye for now and we hope you'll visit us again soon