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(Anti)Smuggling from a Migratory Perspective

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European Agenda on Migration

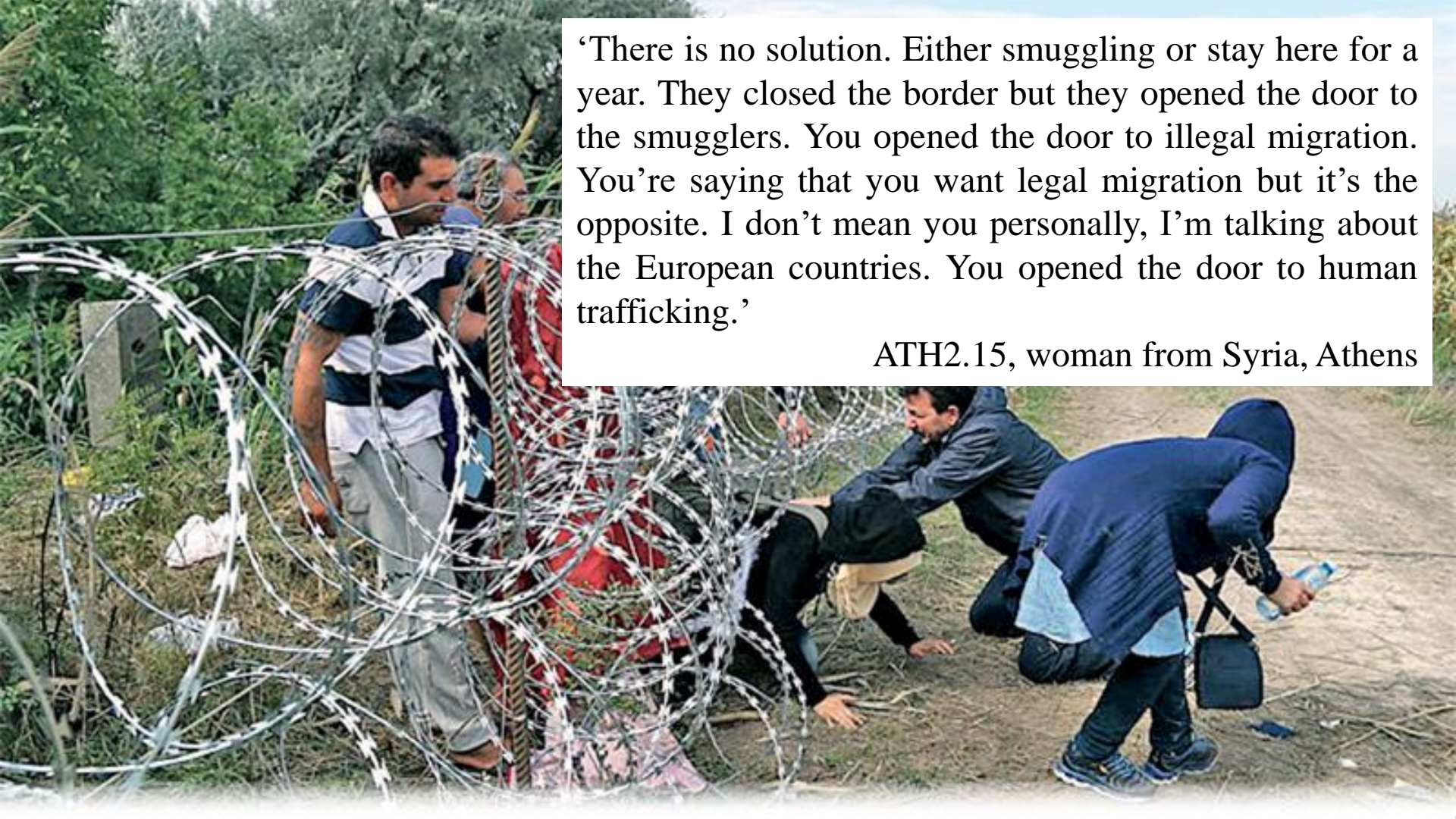


‘Action to fight criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers is first and foremost a way to prevent the exploitation of migrants by criminal networks’

2015 European Agenda on
Migration

‘There is no solution. Either smuggling or stay here for a year. They closed the border but they opened the door to the smugglers. You opened the door to illegal migration. You’re saying that you want legal migration but it’s the opposite. I don’t mean you personally, I’m talking about the European countries. You opened the door to human trafficking.’

ATH2.15, woman from Syria, Athens



Lecture overview

- Provide a brief summary of EU anti-smuggling
- Consider anti-smuggling from a migratory perspective
 - Focus on first-hand narrations of experiences of smuggling
 - Reflect on the problems of anti-smuggling in relation to these narratives

EU anti-smuggling: An overview

- Council of the European Union passed a 'Facilitators Package' in 2002 (Directive 2002/90/EC and Framework Decision 2002/946/JHA)
- EU is a signatory of the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea (Council Decisions 2006/616/EC and 2006/617/EC)
- April 2015, Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos announced in Malta: 'Europe is declaring war on smugglers'
- May 2015 European Agenda on Migration:
 - 'transform smuggling networks from 'low risk, high return' operations into 'high risk, low return' ones'
 - Strengthening of cooperation between Europol and Frontex, and of border management operations within already existing Common Security and Defence Policy missions (Niger and Mali)

EU anti-smuggling: 2015-2016

- 27 May 2015, Commission EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling (2015-2020)
- July 2015, EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med (later Operation Sophia):
 - February 2016, NATO mission launched in the Aegean Sea to fight smuggling along the eastern Mediterranean route
 - June 2016, EUNAVFOR Med extended to train the Libyan Coast Guard and navy, and to enforce the UN arms embargo on the high seas
- November 2015, Valletta Summit on Migration focused on stemming irregular migration and fighting smuggling in Africa.
 - An 'emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa',
 - €900 million committed to fighting irregular migration and smuggling in the Sahel region during its first year alone

SHIFTING CONTROL



Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat Project

- Assessing the impact of the EU policy agenda on those that they affect most directly: people on the move themselves
- Focus on the central and eastern Mediterranean routes during so-called 'migration crisis'
- 257 in-depth qualitative interviews with 287 participants, at 7 sites, across 2 phases
 - September-November 2015: Kos, Malta and Sicily
 - May-July 2016: Athens, Berlin, Istanbul and Rome
- Freely accessible online report and interactive map:
www.warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed

‘The smugglers in Syria, they are saying “I buy the road,” which means I bribe the army or the police to clear the road for me. So this is my road for, let’s say, half an hour or one hour, and then there comes the next one. That’s what we mean by buying a road. I pay money to have the road clear for one hour maybe.’ (Berlin translator)

COMPLICITY OF AUTHORITIES I

‘They [Turkish border guards] sell the border for about 2 hours, \$50,000, they have a deal between them. This is why you can be sure that nothing is going to happen’ (ATH2.13, man from Syria, Athens).

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‘You’re the central authority, you can’t control your beaches? From which people are being smuggled? The smuggler takes \$700 from each person, the government takes \$200 and he keeps \$500’ (ATH2.29, man from Syria, Athens)

COMPLICITY OF AUTHORITIES II

‘Smugglers in Turkey are partners of the government. Because some people tried to buy their own boat and go on their own without using through the smuggler and they drowned them’ (BER2.26, man from Syria, Berlin).



COMPLICITY OF AUTHORITIES III



‘I know very well that also the government in Egypt, in Syria, Libya, Sudan, they earn behind those traffickers, I am very aware of that’ (ROM2.09, woman from Eritrea, Rome)

‘The smuggler was Iranian and I believe that they had paid off the Iranian police. So with the Iranian guards we didn’t really have any issues’ (ATH2.07, man from Afghanistan, Athens)

COMPLICITY OF AUTHORITIES IV

‘...the time that it his duty [he] can push you... Because when they push you, you can reach Italy. But when it’s not his duty and they push you, they can catch you back’ (ROM2.07, man from Ghana, Rome).

‘the police themselves participate in smuggling people, but when they do this, they don’t wear police uniform – they put on civilian clothes’ (MAL1.15, woman from Ethiopia, Malta)





VIOLENCE EN ROUTE

‘while we were trying to get on the ship they [the Greek Coastguard] hit me... They slapped me twice. They hit me! This was the rescue’ (KOS1.26, man from Syria, Kos)

Violence *en route*

- Testimonies of beatings, shootings, or attempts to sink boats while crossing from Iran to Turkey, Syria to Turkey, Turkey to Greece, Sudan to Ethiopia, Eritrea to Sudan, Morocco to Spain, Greece to Macedonia, and inside Libya and Burkina Faso
- Libya: Testimonies of being 'sold' from one group to another, kidnapped/imprisoned for extortion, forced labour, exposed to beatings, rape, and torture, witnessing fellow travelers being killed.
- Within the EU: Testimonies of violence by the Greek coastguard, in Maltese detention centres, Italian hotspots, and along the Balkan route

COMPLEXITY OF SMUGGLING I

‘They [the smugglers] are not the same. Some of them they are very brutal, some they are good people’ (ROM.02.03, man from Chad, Rome)

‘Some [smugglers] were more human and understanding and some were very inhuman looking at human beings like goods and services’ (MAL.02.09, trans woman from Somalia, Malta).



‘The smuggler we used, as I told you, was a relative, so there wasn’t any difficulty’ (ATH.2.32, male from Syria, Athens)

COMPLEXITY OF SMUGGLING II

‘If the smuggler is good he won’t force people to leave. If he’s not good, or mean, sometimes people are scared to get on the balam and he starts shooting in the air and screaming at them. [...] Our smuggler was half and half. He wasn’t very bad but he wasn’t very good. There are others that are worse’ (ATH2.23, man from Syria, Athens)

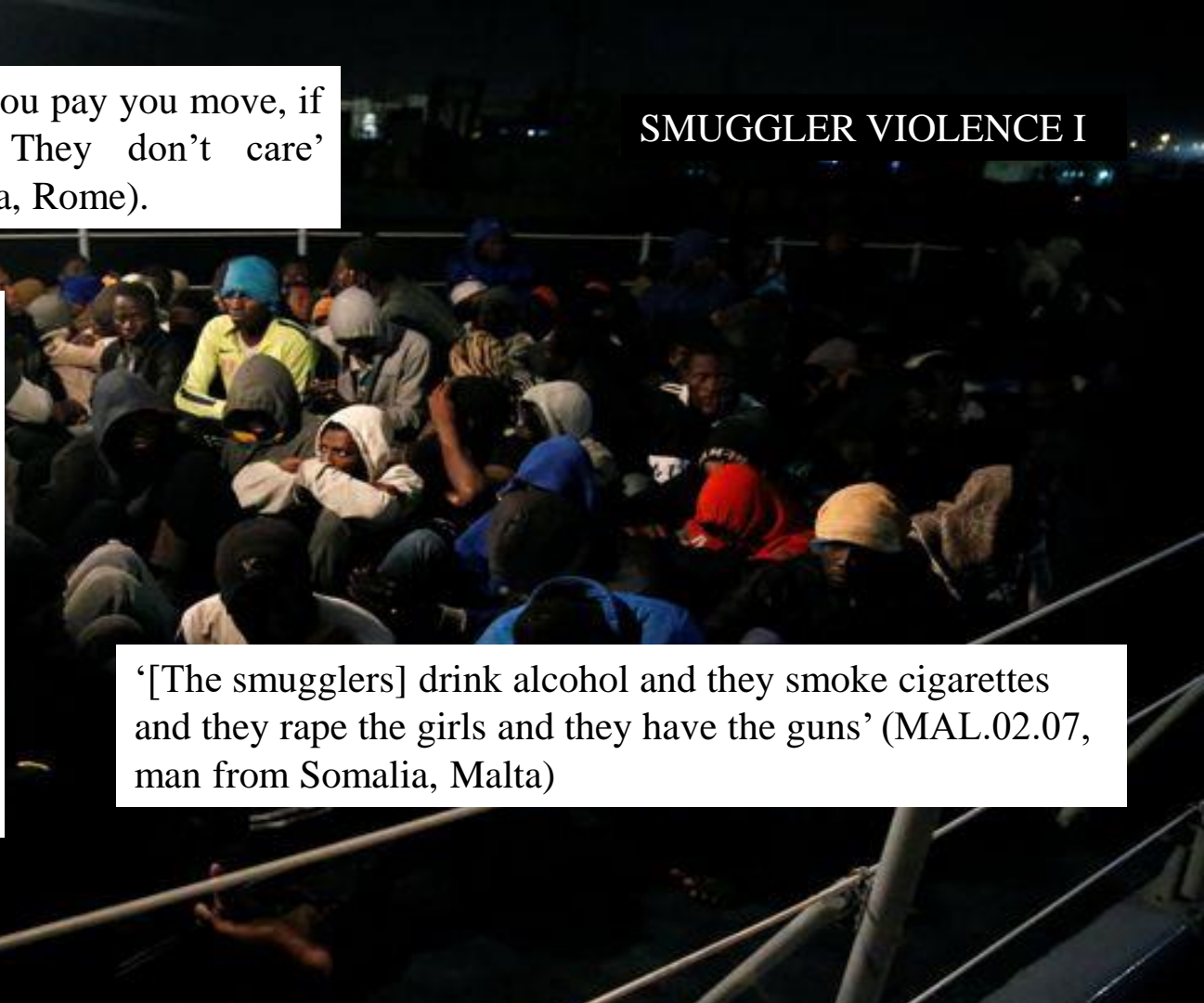


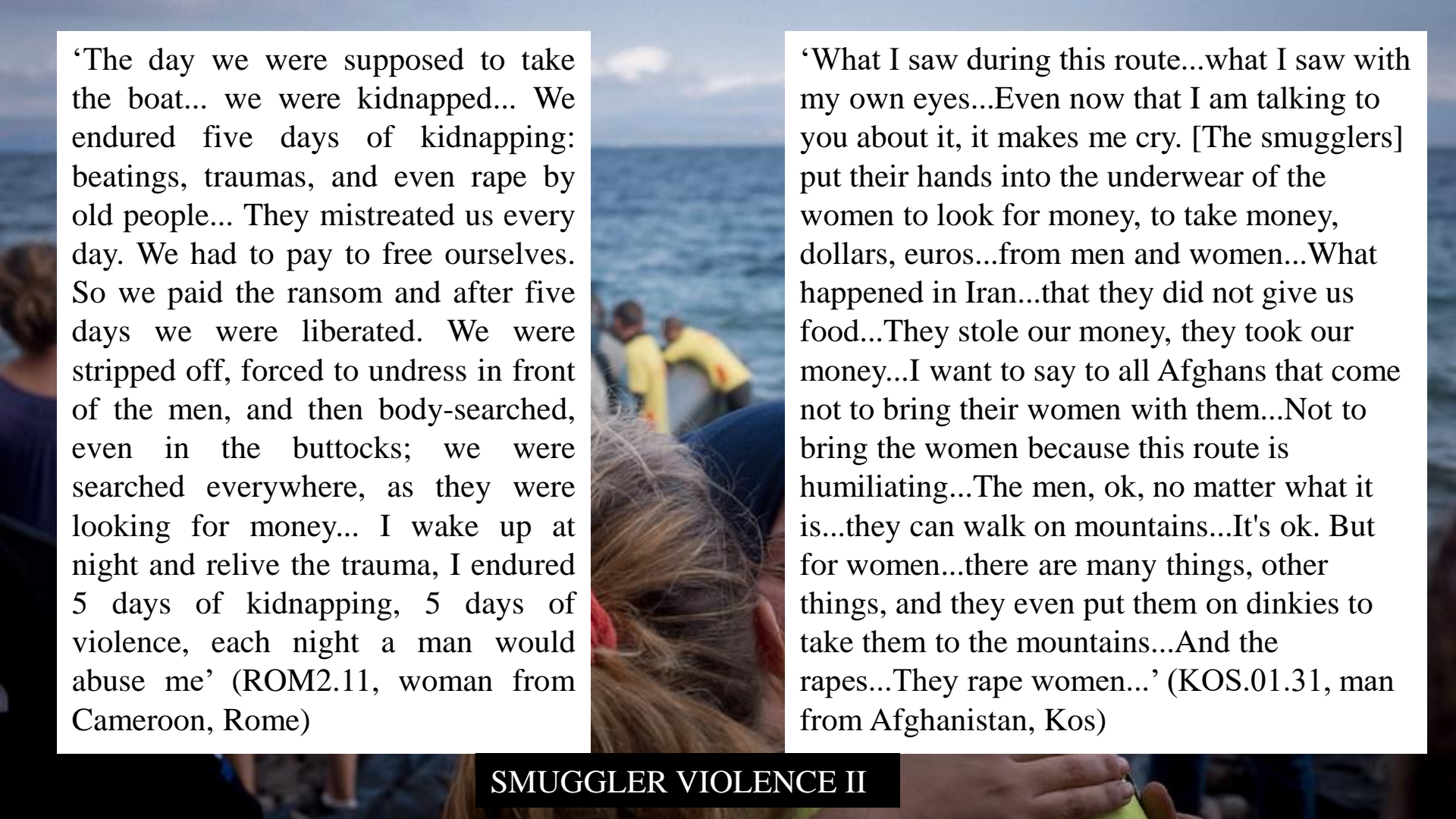
‘Their language is money, if you pay you move, if you don’t pay you die. They don’t care’ (ROM.02.14, man from Eritrea, Rome).

SMUGGLER VIOLENCE I

‘Actually it was one smuggler in the boat. And he had to point a gun at me, to get on the boat, because I was trying to get back. It was very, very crowded in the boat. I thought it was going to drown. But I was forced to get on boat. Either I get killed or... Yeah’ (Ber.02.29, man from Syria, Berlin).

‘[The smugglers] drink alcohol and they smoke cigarettes and they rape the girls and they have the guns’ (MAL.02.07, man from Somalia, Malta)





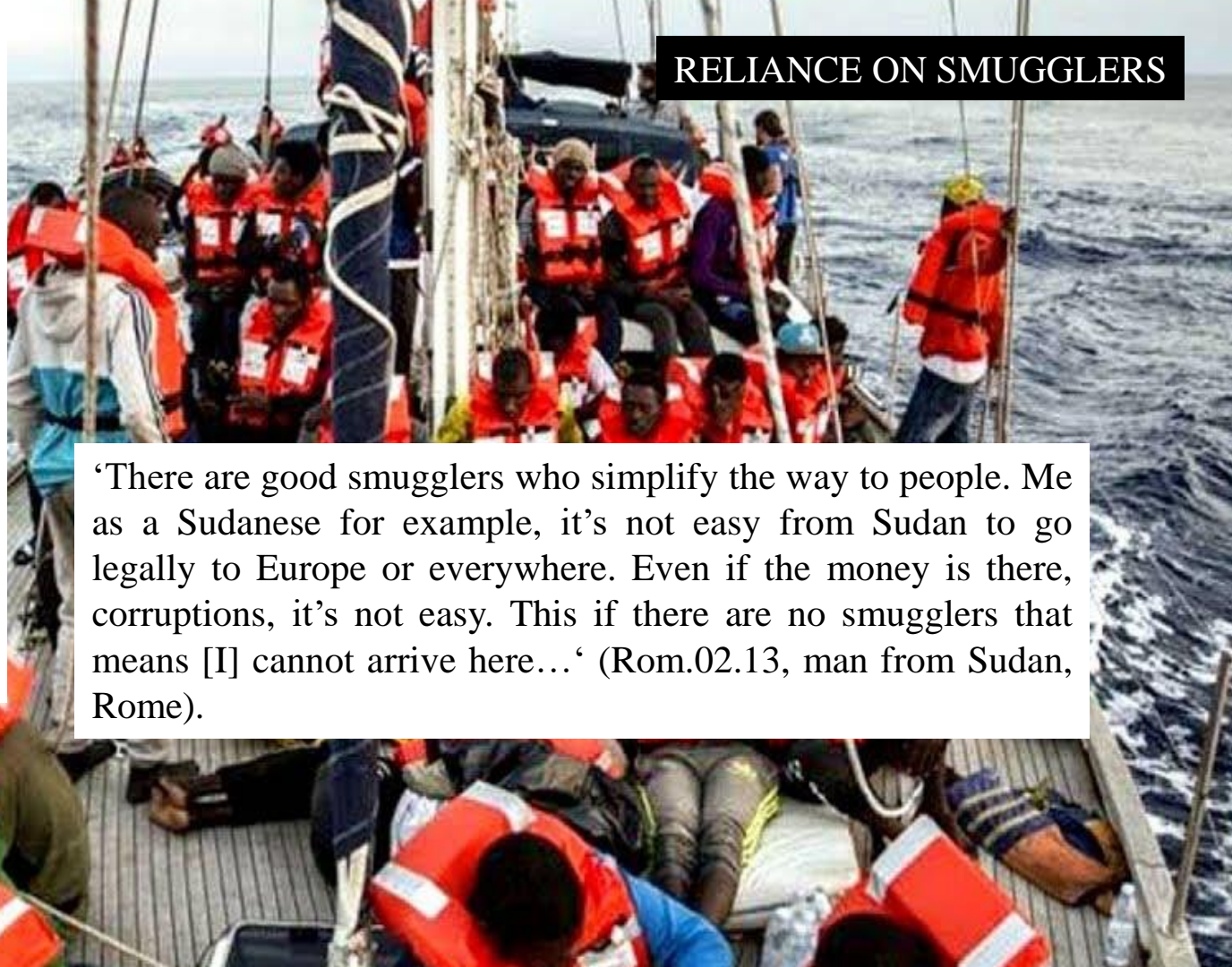
‘The day we were supposed to take the boat... we were kidnapped... We endured five days of kidnapping: beatings, traumas, and even rape by old people... They mistreated us every day. We had to pay to free ourselves. So we paid the ransom and after five days we were liberated. We were stripped off, forced to undress in front of the men, and then body-searched, even in the buttocks; we were searched everywhere, as they were looking for money... I wake up at night and relive the trauma, I endured 5 days of kidnapping, 5 days of violence, each night a man would abuse me’ (ROM2.11, woman from Cameroon, Rome)

‘What I saw during this route...what I saw with my own eyes...Even now that I am talking to you about it, it makes me cry. [The smugglers] put their hands into the underwear of the women to look for money, to take money, dollars, euros...from men and women...What happened in Iran...that they did not give us food...They stole our money, they took our money...I want to say to all Afghans that come not to bring their women with them...Not to bring the women because this route is humiliating...The men, ok, no matter what it is...they can walk on mountains...It's ok. But for women...there are many things, other things, and they even put them on dinkies to take them to the mountains...And the rapes...They rape women...’ (KOS.01.31, man from Afghanistan, Kos)

‘When you are in danger every day and you do not have another option you just say “I will do it, I will try it”. When you are living in Syria, you are not afraid of these things. When you see your brothers dying in front of your own eyes, when your house is being bombed then you do not care. You are not afraid of the sea’ (KOS.01.06, man from Syria, Kos)

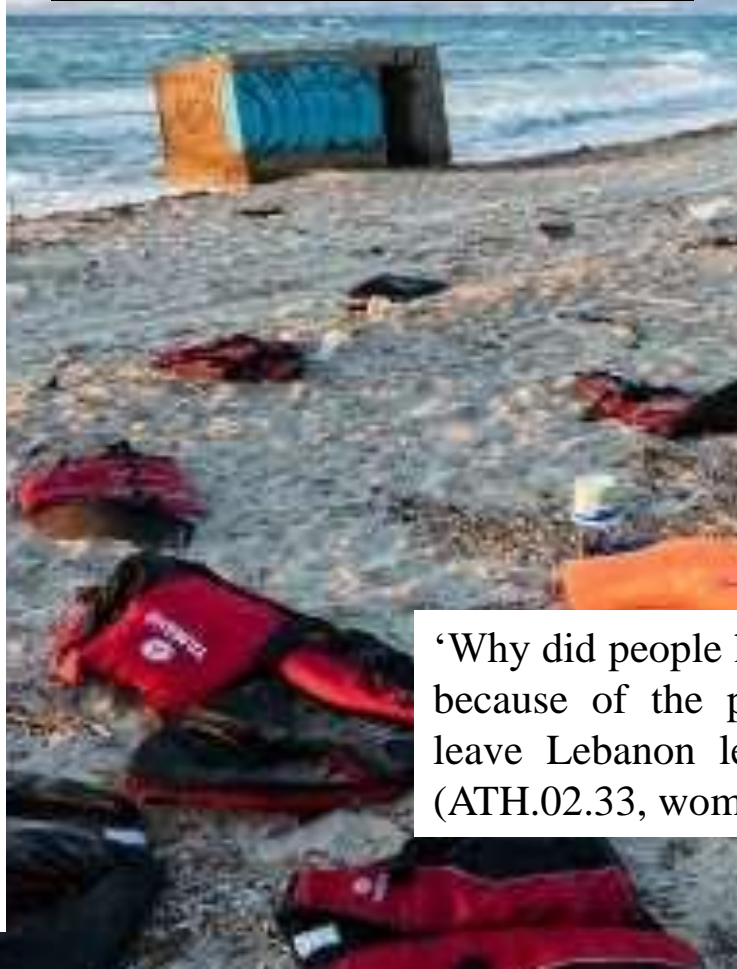
RELIANCE ON SMUGGLERS

‘There are good smugglers who simplify the way to people. Me as a Sudanese for example, it’s not easy from Sudan to go legally to Europe or everywhere. Even if the money is there, corruptions, it’s not easy. This if there are no smugglers that means [I] cannot arrive here...’ (Rom.02.13, man from Sudan, Rome).



‘I was aware of [the EU’s fight against smuggling], because all these smugglers were saying that if something happens, they would go to jail, they would lose their lives in jail or 20 or 30 years. Because I asked one the smugglers why they were treating us like that, why they were hitting us, why we should not speak at all. And he said “Do you know that if we get caught our lives will be in danger? We will get locked in jail for 30 years” ’ (KOS.01.09, man from Afghanistan, Kos)

ANTI-SMUGGLING AS HARM

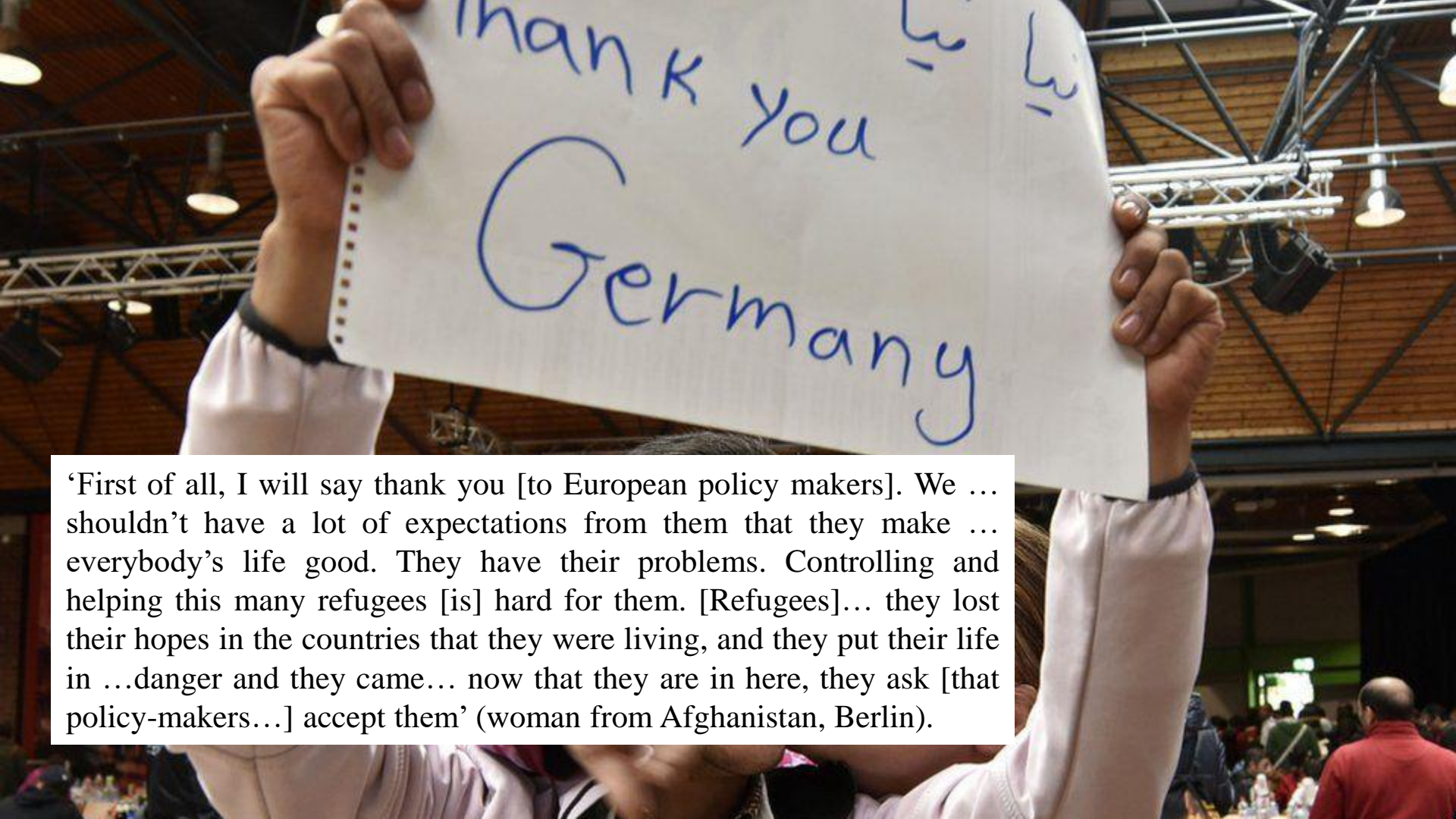


‘We know that the smuggler is committing a murder...it’s criminal [what he is doing]...and when he arranges an appointment, you know you are putting yourself in danger. But of course, we will get involved in the smuggling because there is no other way...’ (KOS.01.12, man from Syria, Kos)

‘Why did people have to resort to smugglers? Isn’t it because of the politicians themselves? If I could leave Lebanon legally, wouldn’t I have done so? (ATH.02.33, woman from Syria, Athens).

A migratory perspective on anti-smuggling

- Predominance of drivers of migration (anti-smuggling works against forces that are independent of smuggling itself)
- Smuggling and anti-smuggling industries overlap (anti-smuggling not diametrically opposed to smuggling)
- Smuggling not always a clear-cut 'bad' (and anti-smuggling not a clear-cut 'good')
- Anti-smuggling perpetuates harm (rendering smuggling necessary as well as risky)



‘First of all, I will say thank you [to European policy makers]. We ... shouldn’t have a lot of expectations from them that they make ... everybody’s life good. They have their problems. Controlling and helping this many refugees [is] hard for them. [Refugees]... they lost their hopes in the countries that they were living, and they put their life in ...danger and they came... now that they are in here, they ask [that policy-makers...] accept them’ (woman from Afghanistan, Berlin).

Thank you

Please see:

www.warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed

www.warwick.ac.uk/crossing-the-med-map