

“My dad told me to hide. When the soldiers came in they shot my mum and my dad before my eyes. I stayed hidden but the soldiers found me and raped me. They were many.” Aurélie (not her real name) from the Democratic Republic of Congo was 10 years old when her village was attacked by an armed group in 2002. She still suffers intense pains and long periods of depression.

“This is a terrible place for a man

The Government of Malta arbitrarily detains most people who seek protection from similar situations for up to one and a half years.

an hour is like a day

“Look at how we have become - like animals in a cage.”
Comment of detainee.

a day is like a month

Detainees say that the worst thing about detention is that it is for such a long period of time. The conditions inside detention centers are not adequate especially when it comes to sanitary conditions and individual space. In some cases, prolonged detention causes irreparable psychological harm to people who have already suffered so much. In fact, a significant number of asylum seekers have had to receive medical treatment for mental health problems. One detainee actually committed suicide while awaiting deportation in detention.

a month is like a year”

When compared to alternative reception methods, like the open centers we have in Malta, detention proves to be the most costly, both in human dignity and financially. This is why most countries do not resort to long term detention, but adopt a community-based alternative.