

THE PALACE OF SHAME 1:30 - 7:20

This **Sept. 15, 2012** report investigates a squat in Rome occupied by (legal) refugees.

Source: BBC Radio's *From our own correspondent*

Before listening

Think about what you know based on your reading about the situation of refugees and migrants that come to Italy? Where do they come from? How do they get here? What happens when they're brought to the mainland? What rights do they have? What future can they expect?

Listen once and take notes

1. What does the report say about the questions above?
2. What has changed since then? Refer to your reading from last week.

Listen again for more information, and...

1. What does Johnston suggest with the final image of the "man in the red t-shirt"?
2. Is this a story of hope? Or despair?

Collocations and language chunks

Complete the excerpts from the report with 1-3 words (try to remember or guess). Then listen again to check.

1. *Thousands of others have been more successful, arriving in Italy hoping to **build** _____ in Europe.*
2. *They'll be hoping for something greener to emerge from the sea, the hills of Sicily perhaps, **the promised** _____ of Europe and a chance to change _____.*
3. *The day after leaving Libya the boat's **fuel** _____.*
4. *But eventually the army posted him near the Sudanese border, and one day Baraket **took** _____. He slipped away and **crossed** _____.*
5. *And after it had drifted for fourteen hours Baraket's **prayers** _____.*
6. *They're from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia and they've been pretty much left there to **fend** _____.*
7. *Many are **bitterly** _____ with what they've found in Europe.*
8. *The Council of Europe recently criticized Italy for failing to give these **officially recognized** _____ the help they need to integrate with Italian*

society.

9. Beraket, the Eritrean soldier, managed to get an operation on his paralyzed arm here in Rome, and he **scraped** _____ to set himself up as a shoemaker. Now he turns out sandals that he sells to other refugees in the building and **out** _____.

10. But the lives they hoped for here in Europe haven't yet begun. And **as the years** _____ you wonder if they ever will.

Finally, listen again with the transcript (below). Highlight useful language related to:

- Refugees/migrants/asylum seekers
- The sea
- Bureaucracy

TRANSCRIPT

Kate Adey:

The Tunisian Foreign Minister's been having talks in Italy about the problems of illegal migration across the Mediterranean. He's been to the island of Lampedusa, a favored destination for refugees and migrants trying to reach Europe. His visit comes less than a week after a boat loaded with migrants sank 12 miles off the island. Some 50 people were rescued; another 50 are still missing. In recent years thousands of Africans have died trying to cross the Mediterranean, often in overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels.

Thousands of others have been more successful, arriving in Italy hoping to build new lives in Europe. But as Alan Johnston's been learning in Rome, for many the Dolce Vita's proved elusive.

Alan Johnston:

As you listen to this it's quite possible that there's one of those boats out there, right now, rising and falling in the swell. And if there is then the men and women on board will have watched North Africa's desert coast disappear behind them. They'll be hoping for something greener to emerge from the sea, the hills of Sicily perhaps, the promised land of Europe and a chance to change their lives. They know that many migrants die attempting this crossing, their old and overcrowded boats sinking in rough seas. And if everyone is lost, how would your family back, say, in a village in Sudan, ever be sure what had happened? They might only know that you were planning to make the journey but that you just never seemed to arrive.

Recently I met a small, softly-spoken, smiling man called Baraket who told me about the time he crossed the sea. The day after leaving Libya the boat's fuel ran out. The water was finished, too. And as Baraket put it, it was "time to pray". His journey had begun back in the horn of Africa, in Eritrea, where he had been a soldier. He'd been wounded during the war with Ethiopia and one of his arms had been left paralyzed. But eventually the army posted him near the Sudanese border, and one day Baraket took his chance. He slipped away and crossed the frontier. Much, much later he found himself on the Libyan coast clambering into that boat. And after it had drifted for fourteen hours Baraket's prayers were answered: an Italian naval vessel appeared on the horizon. Baraket had survived the war and the dangers of the sea and the Italians recognized his need for asylum. He was given political refugee status and allowed to stay in Italy.

But trying to live his European dream has been hard. I met him in a run-down, desperate sort of building on the outskirts of Rome. It's eight stories high and home to 800 refugees. They're from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia and they've been pretty much left there to fend for themselves.

They're crowded into bare, makeshift rooms where they live for years on the edge of destitution. They are some of the poorest and most marginalized people in Italy. Because they're illegally occupying—squatting—in this building they can't get local residency permits. That means they can't get easy access to a doctor, say, or register a child at

school. They're lost in the labyrinth of Italy's bureaucracy.

But what most of them want most of all, like so many people in Italy, is a job. A very tall, thin man called Gaddo, a refugee from Darfur, said that on his floor there were around 150 people, but he reckoned that only seven of them had work. Gaddo said that he himself hardly had enough money for a metro ticket to go and look for a job. So in this place you have a large number of people far from their homes and their families. Many are bitterly disappointed with what they've found in Europe. Some are traumatized by what they endured in Somalia or Sudan. Some have even been tortured. Inevitably there can be tensions. One of the refugees told me quietly that sometimes there were fights, and sometimes he was afraid.

The Council of Europe recently criticized Italy for failing to give these officially recognized political refugees the help they need to integrate with Italian society. The council's Human Rights Commissioner described conditions in the place I visited as "unacceptable in a developed country like Italy", and some have called this building the "Palace of Shame", Italy's shame.

But the stories that emerge from it are not all bad. Beraket, the Eritrean soldier, managed to get an operation on his paralyzed arm here in Rome, and he scraped together enough money to set himself up as a shoemaker. Now he turns out sandals that he sells to other refugees in the building and out on the streets.

Mostly, though, the Palace of Shame is filled with an overwhelming sense of frustration. Its residents are safe now. They've escaped the conflict and oppression they knew back home. But the lives they hoped for here in Europe haven't yet begun. And as the years go by you wonder if they ever will.

As I left, a man in a red t-shirt was pacing along the railings at the front of the building, up and down, up and down. He was swinging a length of rope and every few strides he lashed it at the bars.