

The Five Mysteries
Of SIEV X

By: Ghassan Nakhoul

Duration: 33.58

Aired on: SBS Radio/Arabic program

Frequency: 97.7 FM

Date: Wednesday August 28, 2002, in the evening timeslot (7.00 – 8.00 pm).

PS:

- 1- *'The Five Mysteries Of SIEV X' was researched, prepared, written, presented and produced by Ghassan Nakhoul.***
- 2- *The segment is in the Arabic language with some voice grabs in English.***
- 3- *The following are pages of the full English transcript of the whole segment, including the English bits.***
- 4- *The English transcript has been prepared by the producer.***
- 5- *Musical inserts have been identified***
- 6- *Every voice and musical bit has been timed.***

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi: (00.00-00.13)

The Australian people love us. The government is against us. Why? They have their own political reasons. 260 boats had come. In their elections, they wanted to close the borders.

MUSIC:

*(From 00.13 to 00.24 then starts fading and is completely out at 00.28 under the Presenter's voice).
From CD: 'A Prayer for the Soul of Layla'- By Jamshied Sharifi-Track 5: 'Bid e-Majnun' -ALU 1005.*

Presenter: (00.24-01.12)

And they closed the borders. Tampa was the first victim. This week, the Norwegian ship that had saved more than 430 asylum seekers from certain death blew its first candle.

Tampa will remain forever in the consciousness of Australia's politics. It could be one of the most important landmarks in the contemporary history of the country. That chapter would be under the title: 'Building Walls Around The Kingdom'.

The fate of Tampa that launched the Pacific Solution, couldn't be considered, in fact, too bad if we compared it with what happened later.

The refugees didn't have other tricks. They had to deal with the devil so they could be reunited with their families. Their visas were not much better than a prisoner's ID.

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi: (01.12-01.27)

I want to ask John Howard. I want to ask the Minister for Immigration. I want to ask them: is that your humanity? Have your human qualities gone that low so you deprive a husband of his children and wife for three years?

Presenter: (01.27-01.43)

For this reason they came; or they tried to make it, rather. They were mainly women and children. The thugs of people smuggling were lurking there. They feasted on their innocent flesh before being swallowed by the beast of the Ocean.

The reason was deprivation... Deprivation of an appointment that would never happen.

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi: (01.43-01.50)

Does John Howard have a dog at home? If he doesn't see his dog just for one day what would happen?

Presenter: (01.50-02.08)

Three days before all his family drowned, Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi spoke from Sydney with his beloved ones in Jakarta; a wife and three daughters: Donia 14, Marwa 12 and Hajar 10. And that was the last time.

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi (very emotional and crying): (02.08-02.37)

They said to me ‘dad we are coming to you, meet us’. I swear...The little one kept saying ‘pray for us. I swear, daddy, we will come. It’s a matter of a short time’. I said to them ‘my heart is aching. I am very worried. How are you going to cross the sea?’ She said ‘what else can we do, daddy. How long do we have to remain that far apart. Let us come. God will either help us or take us.’ He took them.

MUSIC

(Starts at 02.16 under Ali’s voice and fades out completely at 02.55 under the Presenter’s voice. From 02.37 to 02.43 Music only). From Record: ‘The Music of Fairuz’- By Rahbani Brothers – Side 2 – Track 2: ‘Poeme D’amour’ – 02GVDL 303.

Presenter: (02.43-03.48)

This is how the story started. The story of a nameless boat that was later sunk with names.

For the Australian government, the boat is another statistic; a cursed one. It has been called SIEV X, for Suspected Illegal Entry Vehicle. And X for unknown, although every person has heard of its sad story.

For many people, however, it is the Titanic of the Poor or the Boat of Misery. And because of that, no one would care about its debris or the bodies of the miserable people who were on board.

But the Boat of Misery was rich...It was rich with mysteries. Not even one contemporary boat has been engulfed with so much obscurity.

At this stage, the mysteries of SIEV X can be summarised into five at least, although the list of secrets may grow since there are still so many questions without answers.

The first mystery is the sinking itself. Was the scene set up right from the beginning for a disaster?

Issam Mohamad Ismail: (03.48-04.09)

The sea turned rough all of a sudden. The waves became very high. It started raining heavily and it became dark. God, be praised, poured out all his wrath in that hour. The boat started swaying. The men tried to balance it by running from side to side. At the end we surrendered to death. We all recited the death prayer. It just took 15 minutes for the boat to sink.

MUSIC

(From 04.09 to 04.16 then fades out completely at 04.24 under the Presenter’s voice). From CD: ‘Ashek Elnay’ – By Charbel Nakhoul – Track 8: ‘Kord’ – G&A 014.

Presenter: (04.16–05.12)

SIEV X sailed from a port in South Sumatra on the 18th of October, 2001. The boat travelled for just one day before the catastrophe occurred. Around 3.00pm of the next day, the 19th of October, the boat sank and the sea swallowed 353 human beings, among them a large number of women and children. Only 44 people survived.

Issam Mohamad Ismail was one the survivors. His wife Rajaa and their son Hossam, 9, survived the incident as well, but the couple lost their other son, 19-year-old Ammar.

When our program spoke with Issam ten days after the incident, he was still in Indonesia. Today, Issam and his family live in Sweden, as refugees.

There is an important question. Why would the sinking be so fast?

Sadek Razzak: (05.12-05.32)

There was a hole in the boat. I don't know how it started. We just saw a hole. It was a small one. There were two pumps. We said to the Captain 'the boat is taking water'. He said 'no problem. Even if the water pours into the boat, the pumps will be able to empty it.'

Presenter: (05.32-05.49)

Sadek Razzak is another survivor. He lost his wife in the incident while miraculously managing to save his two-year-old daughter, Kawthar.

Rajaa Ismail, Issam's wife, said something had broken in the bottom of the boat before it sank.

Rajaa Ismail: (05.49-06.06)

It was in the cellar. I was there because, sorry for the word, I was dizzy and vomiting. A small hole opened first and the water started pouring in. The boat lost its balance and started swaying from side to side before it flopped. It broke from the bottom, from the cellar.

Presenter: (06.06-06.16)

Issam went further than his wife to say that the boat was so worn out, even before it had sailed. He likened it to the structure of carton.

Issam Mohamad Ismail: (06.16-06.32)

The part that was above the water was only half a metre. The boat was not seaworthy. Not even for fishing let alone for carrying people. It was like a carton. Do you know how the carton is?

Presenter: (06.32-06.42)

When the refugees realised that their trip would be fraught with danger, some of them protested and tried to get off the boat. But the smugglers were quick to act.

Issam Mohamad Ismail: (06.42-07.02)

He (the smuggler) pulled out a revolver and said 'I'll kill you.' He (the refugee) replied 'kill me'. He said 'I will not let you off'. There were policemen with the smuggler. They had automatic guns. The 21 people who got off the boat on an island before the incident didn't manage to leave the ship before we had sailed for about 20 hours.

Presenter: (07.02-07.43)

These words warrant a reasonable question: why had about 400 people been forcibly crammed onto a boat in such dreadful condition. Some would say the smugglers had been expecting another boat but it broke down. That is an excuse worse than guilt. If the vehicle broke even before it had started the trip, what kind of boat could it be? Wasn't it worse than the one that sank with its load of souls? Was the scenario, therefore, made up originally to write a tragedy of such a magnitude?

While digging for the mysteries of this tragedy, our worst discovery was to learn that at least one death had occurred amongst the refugees, before the person involved actually drowned.

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi: (07.43-08.00)

Before she drowned, my daughter was killed on the boat with a nail. Nails were popping out of the boat's planks. One of them penetrated her heart and killed her instantly. I think it was a deliberate act to make nails come out of the bottom of the ship and make all those people drown.

Presenter: (08.00-08.15)

The girl was Donia; Ali's eldest child. It seems the story has some truth in it, although it isn't entirely accurate. The girl was in fact killed with a nail, but not on the boat. It happened on a plank from the debris.

Rajaa Ismail: (08.15-08.32)

When the incident happened, we all had life jackets. And everyone grabbed a piece of wood. Donia was opposite to me. She was grabbing a plank. At night, I couldn't spot her. I later asked some survivors 'where's Donia? Wasn't she with you?' They said 'a nail from the board penetrated her chest.'

MUSIC

(Starts at 08.28 under Rajaa's voice and fades out completely at 08.56 under the Presenter's voice. From 08.32 to 08.44 Music only). From CD: 'A Prayer for the Soul of Layla'- By Jamshied Sharifi – Track 2: 'Anahita Will Sustain You' – ALU 1005.

Presenter: (08.44-09.13)

Over the debris of the boat, the miserable people were clutching at the edges of life. But the jaws of death were wider. They devoured most of them as they had been waiting for so long to be saved. The waiting time seemed to be as long as eternity. They floated for eighteen hours before an Indonesian fishing boat started saving whoever was still breathing.

In the midst of the smell of death emanating from the depth of the ocean, there was an act of heroism. The little child Kawthar managed to survive. How did that happen?

Sadek Razzak: (09.13-09.39)

I carried her and kept her head up. We clung to a piece of wood and her life jacket helped me. And God gave this child another life. I never expected her to survive. I was hearing her breathing in and out. Whenever she fell asleep I would give her a little smack to keep her awake so she wouldn't swallow water. I closed her mouth, and every time the wave got over the plank, I would wipe her nose to get out the salty water.

Presenter: (09.39-09.58)

The story of this father, Sadek Razzak, could serve as a good lesson to politicians who, dazzled by their seats, had spread a lie that made the refugees look like beasts throwing their children onto the ocean.

In fact, there are question marks on who is the real beast? And here is the second mystery; another big mystery.

Haidar Ata: (09.58-10.05)

At night, around 7.00 or 8.00, there were three lights. Not just lights, there were three boats.

Rajaa Ismail: (10.05-10.26)

The three of them were turning around us. We didn't know how to swim. When I saw the boats' lights, I said to my husband 'relief is coming. They will save us. They will help us', and we started shouting. They couldn't hear us of course because the boats' engine noise. Even if we had a loudspeaker, they wouldn't.

Issam Ismail: (10.26-10.36)

When we saw them we suffered more. They reached us. I swear to God, trust in the Almighty God, they got very close. One of them was just next to us.

Amal Nasri: (10.36-11.05)

We had whistles in the life jackets that we had been wearing. People started whistling in a way that the boats heard us. And the proof was that one of them started moving. I thought that they were coming our way as their lights were directed at us. It was exactly like you would do while holding a floodlight in the dark to see in front of you.

Haidar Ata: (11.05-11.08)

They turned around us two or three times.

Rajaa Ismail: (11.08-11.22)

We found that when we moved our legs we would almost reach them. I said to my husband 'Issam, Issam, we will reach them. Yes they have arrived.' But every time we moved our legs and we wanted to reach them, they would take their lights away from us.

Akil Jazzany: (11.22-11.38)

Even the lights were directed to us. They were like the lights of a car as they reached you. Like the car's lights. Exactly the same.

Amal Nasri: (11.38-11.51)

I tried as much as I could to swim to those boats but the waves were pulling me back. Sometimes I would get close and the lights would be focussed on me.

Akil Jazzany: (11.51-11.58)

We felt the boats were coming towards us. They got close and we could hear the sound of the engines.

Amal Nasri: (11.58-12.09)

Imagine that I could hear their voices. I heard people speaking. It was a foreign language that I couldn't distinguish. I heard voices, just voices.

Akil Jazzany: (12.09-12.17)

We kept on shouting 'Allah the Great...People over there save us.' In English, in Arabic, but they never saved us.

MUSIC

(Starts at 12.09 under Akil's voice and fades out completely at 12.34 under the Presenter's voice. From 12.17 to 12.29 Music only). From CD: 'A Prayer for the Soul of Layla' – By Jamshied Sharifi – Track 8: 'The Salt Road' – ALU 1005.

Presenter: (12.29-13.11)

To whom did those boats belong? What kind of boats would sail in groups? Did some bad Samaritans reach that spot? Had some eyes been watching the tragedy and ignored it? And what if the refugees were lying? Was it possible for all these people to make up such a lie?

When we spoke to the survivors about this mystery, they were scattered over many countries. Some of them were in Sweden, like Issam Mohamad Ismail and his wife Rajaa. Others were in Finland; Haidar Ata. And some were still in Indonesia like Akil Dawood Salman Jazzany and Amal Hassan Nasri.

In their turn, the survivors asked their saviours about the mystery of the lights.

Amal Nasri: (13.11-13.35)

Those on the Indonesian boat told us that they would never come to that spot. Only Australian or foreign boats would sail there. They said 'it's not Indonesian waters. But we have seen luggage floating so we thought people had drowned. We dared to proceed and we spotted you in the morning. We saw luggage and bodies floating'. I had been myself clinging to the body of a woman so I could remain afloat.

Akil Jazzany: (13.35-13.45)

After they rescued us the next day, people on the Indonesian boat told us that they hadn't been there. They said 'there were Australian ships'.

Presenter: (13.45-15.11)

We have contacted the Australian Ministry of Defense to inquire about the issue. A spokeswoman for that department has told us the following:

The closest Australian Navy ship to the incident was some 150 nautical miles away. It was about a few hours sailing.

The Australian Navy did not send a ship because they hadn't had any information about the sinking.

And the third answer was: had the Navy learned of the incident, they would have certainly sent out boats to check.

The Defence spokeswoman has also explained that the Navy doesn't need permission from Canberra or from the politicians to interfere when people's lives are in danger.

In addition to what the spokeswoman for the Ministry of Defence has told us, an inquiry into the sinking of SIEV X - held on the side of the investigation into the Overboard affair - has so far shown that the Australian Navy and the spy-planes involved in the border protection Operation Relex, have failed to spot any sign of the boat or the survivors.

Returning to our previous question, has the story of lights been fabricated? The survivors have said that they couldn't distinguish the colour of the ships as it was too dark and the lights were directed to them. However, they have insisted on the credibility of their story.

Rajaa Ismail: (15.11-15.16)

Three; I swear to God. We saw the three of them turning around us.

MUSIC

(From 15.16 to 15.33 then starts fading and is completely out at 15.35 under Ali Hamid's voice). From CD: 'Ashek Elnay' – By Charbel Nakhoul – Track 7: 'Nahawand' – G&A CD 014.

Ali Hamid: (15.33-15.42)

The photograph...I saw it myself along with Abu Ahmad. Abu Ahmad is now in Finland. We sat down and they showed us the photo. An official from Jakarta's IOM was present.

Presenter: (15.42-16.33)

A photograph? What photograph? What photo or photos is Ali Hamid, another survivor, talking about? Here is the third mystery.

Ali Hamid was delegated, along with the person he mentioned – Abu Ahmad ; whose full name was Karim Jaber Hossein – to represent the survivors as they were showered with questions, from everywhere, once they had been returned to Indonesia. They had been totally destroyed as they had faced death for long hours. It had been a battle from which they returned without most of their beloved ones.

The photo mentioned by Ali, currently living in Finland – like Abu Ahmad – was that of their boat. The photo was taken before the boat had embarked on its ominous trip.

That photo was among twenty other photographs in which many boats appeared. The photographs seemed as an aerial survey of the Indonesian coast. Who showed them the photos?

Ali Hamid: (16.33-16.51)

Two Australians. They came to question us about the people smugglers. We gave them the names of all the smugglers. It was an investigation. When we finished, they pulled out photographs and said 'which one was your boat?' We pointed to our boat and said 'this one.'

Presenter: (16.51-20.13)

The two Australians, as Ali Hamid told us, were from an official security organisation he wasn't able to identify. He explained that the Australians were most of the time silent as an Indonesian official was asking most of the questions. This happened two or three days after the rescue operation, although he couldn't remember where exactly the questioning took place. However, Ali did remember that a female staff from the International Organisation for Migration in Jakarta, known as IOM, was present. She was interpreting for them as the questioning was in English.

Ali remembered the first name of the woman; Maha. She was originally from Sudan, with a Swedish citizenship.

When we contacted Jakarta's IOM we were told that Maha didn't wish to speak with the media. As we pressed for information, it was related to us that Maha remembered that Australian police officers, probably from the Federal Police, had taken part in the investigation that followed the incident. However, she didn't remember that photos had been shown.

An IOM official in Jakarta mentioned to us that the involvement of Australian security officers in investigations that had been taking place with refugees on the movements of people smugglers, were considered as a 'routine'.

A spokeswoman for the Federal Police described as 'not unusual' the participation of officers from her department in such investigations. But she declined to reveal the nature of that participation or its frequency or regularity.

When we inquired about the nature of the memorandum of understanding signed between Indonesia and Australia in June to combat transnational crime including people smuggling, the Federal Police spokeswoman told us that the agreement was to facilitate the exchange of information.

As for showing a photo or photos to the survivors, the AFP spokeswoman declined to comment. She said that the Federal Police were currently investigating the SIEV X incident and that any comment on the issue might affect the investigation. She also added that a comment was 'not appropriate'.

Thus, the AFP spokeswoman hasn't denied or confirmed the story of the photographs.

The AFP spokeswoman reminded us that her boss, AFP Commissioner Michael Keelty, had declined to reveal everything when he had appeared before the Senate committee inquiring into the Children Overboard affair.

The most curious inquiry before that committee, was in fact the position of the head of Operation Relex, Admiral Geoffrey Smith. The man retracted his original testimony made under oath and in which he had denied receiving any information on SIEV X before the sinking. Admiral Smith withdrew his original statement after warnings that Coastwatch might contradict his evidence.

Thus, Admiral Smith admitted receiving information on SIEV X on the 18th of October, the day it had sailed for Christmas Island. Were the photos that Ali Hamid revealed to us a part of that information?

Ali Hamid: (20.13-20.34)

It was still anchored on the Indonesian shore. The photo was taken by satellite. It was from above, by satellite. It looked somehow dark or so. I cannot describe it properly. Before it had sailed. It was still anchored on the Indonesian shore. They had taken photos before we boarded and before we moved.

MUSIC

(From 20.34 to 20.49 then starts fading under the Presenter's voice and is completely out at 20.58).
From CD: 'The Wake' – By Labib Jammal – Track 9: 'Bedouins' – Al Shark Arts.

Presenter: (20.49-21.16)

The smuggler behind the Boat of Death, is known now. His nickname is Abu Quossey. His real name is Mumtaz Atia Mohammad. It is believed that he holds a dual Egyptian and Turkish citizenship. We will return later to the man and his own mystery.

What is not really known is that the man had two main assistants. They used to look after all the details. Some of the refugees didn't even meet Abu Quossey, but rarely. With these two people lies the fourth mystery.

Rami Akram: (21.16-21.40)

All the people on the boat had been dealing with Maysam and Khaled. They were the ones who introduced us to Abu Quossey. They were the ones who had been promoting his trade. They were in charge of all his business. He (Abu Quossey) had only to take out the boat. No one knew Abu Quossey, the Egyptian. Only a few people did. The rest didn't. All the dealings and money payments were to Maysam and Khaled.

Presenter: (21.40-22.30)

Rami Abbas Akram is another survivor of SIEV X. When we spoke with him, Rami was still in Jakarta. He is now in Melbourne where he has joined - along with another survivor his mother Amal Hassan Nasri - his father Abbas.

All the survivors with whom we have spoken have named the two men as the 'Executive Smugglers'. The first one is called Khaled Ishnak Dawud. The second is Maysam. His surname is not known. Maysam's brother, Maysar assisted them as well.

Rami said that he had paid Khaled and Maysam \$1,100 as a first installment for a place on the boat for himself and his mother. He made that payment three months before the trip. On the sailing day, he paid them the rest of the balance; another \$1,100. Who took the amounts from him.

Rami Akram: (22.30-22.39)

Maysam was in charge of the money and Khaled was the man responsible of making the deals. So, it was Khaled who negotiated with people while Maysam would take the money and record them in the book.

Presenter: (22.39-22.45)

Khaled and Maysam were as greedy as thugs.

Najah Doayer (emotional then crying): (22.45-23.09)

They took \$5,000 and about half a kilo of jewellery, like bracelets, medals and necklaces... We were three girls. My little brother was so young to deal with them. He just wanted to get out. They took everything we had.

Presenter: (23.09-23.40)

Najah Doayer is another survivor of the incident. Today she is in Adelaide. In the ocean, she lost a baby aged 18 months, a brother, 23 and a sister, 20. A second sister managed to survive.

The two smugglers justified the \$5,000 they had taken from her as fees to cover the travel of her whole group including her little child. They were unable, however, to justify why they robbed the women of their jewelry. Najah will never forget their appearance.

Najah Doayer: (23.40-23.43)

If I see them I can recognise them very well.

Presenter: (23.43-23.45)

Where were Khaled and Maysam on the departure day?

Rami Akram: (23.45-24.03)

Maysam and Khaled were there. Maysam was on the boat that was transporting the passengers to the big ship. I mean, a small boat was taking people to the big boat. Maysam, and his brother Maysar, were on that small boat. They were taking the passengers to the big boat.

Presenter: (24.03-24.04)

And where was Abu Quossey?

Najah Doayer: (24.04-24.13)

We saw him at the end on the day we were taken to the shore in Sumatra to board the ship. We hadn't known him before. He was wearing glasses and looking from afar.

Presenter: (24.13-24.51)

The survivors gave this information to the Indonesian police. A few months after the incident, the police arrested Khaled and Maysam. However, a few weeks later, they were released. Why?

A high-ranking officer with the Indonesian National Police revealed to us, on condition of anonymity, that Khaled and Maysam were released on the strength of a letter the police had received from the UNHCR in Jakarta.

The UNHCR in Jakarta didn't deny the story of the letter. However, they had their own justification.

Kemala Ahwil (In English): (24.51-25.19)

We wrote the letter to the police just inquiring why the questioning took some time and why these people were detained in the police headquarters for questioning, and whether the police can make quick decisions on their status, etc....So it was not interfering, and the letter was not on behalf of these refugees. Nothing like that.

Presenter: (25.19-25.43)

Kemala Ahwil is the Media Officer with UNHCR in Jakarta. Her office had granted Khaled and Maysam refugee status before the sinking of SIEV X. That was why the commission considered the men to be under its care.

Ms Ahwil believed that the Indonesian police weren't able to find enough evidence to charge the two men. But some people had a different opinion.

Kemala Ahwil (In English): (25.43-25.47)

In the end, the police couldn't find any evidence and they were returned to us.

Rami Akram: (25.47-25.56)

They robbed 420 people of their money. They killed 387 people. What other evidence is needed to make it enough? There were 45 witnesses.

Presenter: (25.56-26.02)

Kemala Ahwil asked why none of the survivors had lodged a complaint with her office against the two men.

Kemala Ahwil (In English): (26.02-26.19)

We haven't heard at all about other refugees kind of feeling...disappointed or whether they are not happy with these people. No, we haven't heard about that.

Najah Doayer (emotional and crying): (26.19-26.37)

No. I didn't go with my sister to complain. My sister was psychologically ill and she had a heart disease...I didn't have anyone else...You know...A woman alone...Lost in a foreign land. We just sat down and shut up.

Presenter: (26.37-26.50)

When we asked the UNHCR's Media Officer in Jakarta if her office was ready to review the refugee status granted to Khaled and Maysam, she was adamant with her answer.

Kemala Ahwil (In English): (26.50-26.52)

We are working based on our mandate. That's it.

Presenter: (26.52-27.16)

There are news about Khaled and Maysam being accepted as refugees in a European country. It has been difficult to confirm them. However, Kemala Ahwil told us, when we spoke with her two months ago, that the two men had been waiting to be accepted by a European country she declined to identify.

When we conveyed this news to Najah Doayer, she barely managed to talk.

Najah Doayer (very emotional, crying and choking): (27.16-27.28)

It cannot be...It cannot be...That's impossible. I swear to God it's a sin...There is no law...No justice...

MUSIC

(Starts at 27.25 under Najah's cries and fades out completely at 27.54 under the Presenter's voice. From 27.28 to 27.46 Music only). From CD: 'The Wake' - By Labib Jammal - Track 1: 'Dawn' - Al Shark Arts.

Presenter: (27.46-28.09)

There is a simple question regarding the way the Indonesian authorities have been dealing with this issue. If Abu Quossey himself wasn't charged with people smuggling, how about his accomplices then?

In fact, it seems that Abu Quossey is not isolated from the outside world while in the police custody. It appears that his hand can reach who ever he wants.

Rami Akram: (28.09-28.23)

When we returned we were sitting in villa Raygan. After he was arrested, Abu Quossey called us from prison and said 'don't think that I am in jail. For me the prison is a kind of rest. When I am out, I will kill you all.' He threatened us.

Presenter: (28.23-29.24)

There is no need for an observer to hear the witnesses to be able to conclude how lightly the Indonesian authorities are dealing with a tragedy of that magnitude.

Abu Quossey has recently appeared on a TV current affairs program. He seemed to be comfortable while in the police custody. He didn't even forget to smile.

Indonesian officials with whom we made contact declined to comment on his case. However, one official spoke with us on condition of anonymity to tell us that Abu

Quossey would never be brought to justice in Indonesia for his involvement in the SIEV X massacre or even for people smuggling. There was just one thing against him; being in the country illegally.

Indeed, Abu Quossey appeared in a Jakarta court a few days ago. He was only accused of visa violations.

If Abu Quossey is convicted for being in Indonesia illegally, he may be jailed for six years. However, it's a sentence that can be swapped with money.

Rami Akram: (29.24-29.40)

That means their sentences can be bought. If someone was jailed for six years and was told that the price of each year was six millions or \$1,200, he could buy his way out. So it's a country where the laws are worked out by money. Thus, a person can kill, enter the prison, give some money away and get out.

Presenter: (29.40-30.20)

According to Rami, a very powerful smuggler who is married to the daughter of an Indonesian politician, is working on Abu Quossey's release. We had to suppress the name of that smuggler, at this stage, upon a legal advice.

And the weirdest thing is yet to come. When Abu Quossey is released, he will be able to apply for a refugee status to any country in the world, through the United Nations itself.

The Media Officer with the UNHCR in Jakarta, Kemala Ahwil, refused to commit herself to the principle of immediately ruling out an application from such a person, as we put the following question directly to her: would you accept an application for a refugee status from Abu Quossey?

Kemala Ahwil (In English): (30.20-30.26)

Sorry, we have our own procedure, and we can't tell just anyone how we deal with it.

Presenter: (30.26-30.47)

The survivors insist that some Indonesian police officers are deeply involved in people smuggling. What Issam Ismail remembers of the fateful sailing day gives a clear idea about the calibre of that mysterious man, Abu Quossey, with whom rests the mystery of mysteries, the fifth one.

Issam Ismail: (30.47-31.06)

The Indonesian police were there. They were carrying automatic guns. They were so comfortable. They were the ones who gave the signals with their torches. Turning on the torch was a signal to send out people. Turning off the torch meant stop. That was how it was done darling. We saw them with our own eyes. They had weapons we had never seen before. The latest brands.

Presenter: (31.06-31.14)

Even after the tragedy, the Indonesian security bodies were reluctant to act against people smuggling networks.

Rami Akram: (31.14-31.27)

There were so many smugglers around. There were right in front of us. We reported them to the Interpol so many times. We would tell them ‘these people are harassing us and they want to humiliate us’. But they wouldn’t arrest them. They would say to us: ‘what are we going to do with them? On what basis can we arrest them?’

Presenter: (31.27-31.36)

It seems that not only Police officers are involved in people smuggling in Indonesia. The business sector appears to be thriving on the trade as well.

Issam Ismail: (31.36-31.48)

Even the hotels in which we were kept were involved. The smuggler would say that he had information on what time to move us in or out, or to send us to one place or another. It was to that degree.

Rami Akram: (31.48-31.50)

The hotel owner was a General. A high-ranking officer.

MUSIC

*(From 31.50 to 32.05 then starts fading and keeps playing under the Presenter’s voice).
From CD: ‘A Prayer for the Soul of Layla’ – By Jamshied Sharifi – Track 10: ‘Karaj’ – ALU 1005.*

Presenter: (32.05-32.25)

With a tragedy like the Titanic Of The Poor or the government’s statistics SIEV X, it is difficult to spot a glimpse of hope, or something positive. No doubt, the survival of 44 human beings is something good. But their wounds have yet to heal. They cannot forgive or forget.

MUSIC

(The previous music is brought up from underneath the Presenter’s voice at 32.25. It starts fading at 32.30 under Issam’s voice and is completely out at 32.40).

Issam Ismail: (32.30-32.51)

They have no sense of humanity. They are money worshippers. They don’t worship God. They don’t even have the slightest part of a conscience. We are all poor people. I have never been on a boat before, not even my father, or my companions to know what to do.

Rajaa Ismail: (32.51-33.04)

The incident is always in our mind, 24 hours. We think, we cry and we ask how did all that happen. It’s like a dream. We cannot believe what has happened and how all these people have gone and died. I don’t know.

MUSIC

(The same music is back. It starts at 33.02 under Rajaa’s voice and fades out completely under the Presenter’s voice at 32.25. From 33.04 to 33.10 Music only).

Presenter: (33.10-33.28)

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi who lost his dreams, doesn't know what to do. The father who has been deprived by the fate of a family reunion with his wife and their three daughters is always melancholic. As soon as he finds a job, he would lose it. The most worrying sign is his total despair.

Ali Mahdi Al-Sobbi: (33.28-33.44)

The photo of the children is right in front of me. I wake up at 2.00 am and I cannot sleep until 6.00 in the morning. I just have 4 hours sleep everyday. My nerves are getting worse day by day. I may end up doing something bad, I am afraid. I mean...To kill myself.

MUSIC

(Starts at 33.37 under Ali's voice. From: 33.44-33.58 Music only). From CD: 'A Prayer for the Soul of Layla' - By Jamshied Sharifi – Track 12: 'A Prayer for the Soul of Layla' – ALU 1005.

THE END