

# When you are imprisoned while avoiding drug dealing



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**Just like me, there are so many cases where by many immigrants who are not dealers find or have found themselves in prisons and even found guilty of drugs dealings. This is because of their friends who are dealers or because of the miscalculation of police investigations.**

In August 2007, while at the Centre d'enregistrement et de Procédure de Vallorbe (CEP) for my asylum procedure, I was residing in a room of eight persons. During an afternoon, I was approached by one of my roommate who offered to show me how it is like making real money without hustling. I listened to him carefully, but he never told me what the real job was. He told me that if I was interested, I had to follow him to Lausanne that day for a night, and that's when he will show me to the people who will give me what to do. And this is what brought me hesitations because I was not allowed to sleep even

a single night outside CEP – Vallorbe without the permission of the authority. I therefore decided to go and talk over it with my friend who is a person that I had started having a little trust in and he is also a devoted Christian. He advised me not to go and that person has no job for me other than recruiting me into drugs business. I took his advice and I never went to Lausanne and that was that.

### **My transfer from Vallorbe to EVAM foyer at Crissier**

I was later given a transfer after being in Vallorbe for two months but with a negative response my asylum procedure. And I was sent to the EVAM Centre at St-Croix where I stayed for two months and later transferred to EVAM centre in Crissier. But while in Crissier, I decided to go for a Sunday Church service and once again, I met this same former Vallorbe roommate and he asked me what I was doing with my life in Switzerland. I told him that I am always at the EVAM centre in Crissier doing nothing apart from eating and sleeping but can't even go for French lessons because Bern sent me a second negative response on my case. And therefore I have no right on anything in this country. And this time, he really talked to me seriously on how it is like living in a country where they no longer want you anymore and worst of all sitting there doing nothing. "What if they send you back home today, what will you show for yourself as a benefit from Switzerland?" He asked, and I just remained silent thinking about it. In fact I was even hungry at that time because I had no money to buy even bread because EVAM had two weeks earlier stopped giving me financial support. And then, he continued telling all kinds of encouraging things that when I started thinking about it all. I was indeed a poor neglected person who needed serious spiritual and financial help. As he was leaving, he gave me CHF 50 and told me to buy some food for myself and for me CHF 50 was just like CHF 500. And he also gave me his telephone number and we then departed in different directions. But deep inside me, I felt he indeed had a generous heart more than

even EVAM and ODM. I later went to the centre and as I was lying on my bed, I began thinking of all my friend talked to me and even started crying wondering if really Switzerland wanted me to have a good life. I believed him in some areas of what he talked to me and even started having positive thinking on joining drugs business. But as usual, I knelt down and turned to my Lord for guidance and as I pray something told me that drugs are not meant for me, and I promised my Lord never to indulge myself in drugs or related stuff.

### **The time for prison**

I was later transferred from Crissier to the Foyer d'aide d'urgence de Venes believed by immigrants who reside there as "the swiss Guantanamo" regarding it to the Guantanamo prison in Cuba. I lived in this centre in a room of two persons for one year and eight months but with serious health problems. So on Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, I went to my friend's place for a weekend and stayed there until Monday the 31<sup>st</sup>. I left there at around 22hrs, and by the time I reached Venes, it was coming to midnight. When I arrived at the Foyer d'aide d'urgence de Venes, the Security personnel at the entrance told me that I have been transferred to Bex, and I wondered how I could get a transfer without a letter of transfer notice. But I argued with him for a while and he told me to wait from one of the rooms opposite their office which I obediently did. As I was barely 10 minutes in that room, three police officers swung in and handcuffed me immediately and told me not to say anything. I was taken to the police cells at Hotel de Police in Lausanne. But I defied that after reaching at Hotel de Police and I asked them why I was being held, "we are not allowed to tell you anything therefore the inspector will explain to you why you are here when you meet him tomorrow", one of them responded. I spent the entire night in the a room and on leather mattress, ooh men it was damn cold in there, and I never even thought of sleeping wondering what I might have done wrong to face all what I was going

through at the time.

### **The next morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010**

Now its 10h17 the next morning and two traffic police officers come in to open the door of my cell and they ask me to follow them of which I did. They put me in a lift and we went to another floor where I was put into another cell for another one hour. And later the inspector came in to take me to his office. Reaching his office, he asked me if I knew why I was at the Hotel den Police and I responded with a big "NO". Then he showed me one photo and asked me if I knew the person it represents, "Yes, he is my roommate at the centre", I replied. "And what's his name?" He asked. I gave him his name. He kept quiet for a few seconds and then opened a cabinet and brought out a bunch of white stuffs and asked me if I knew what it was and of which I replied with a "no". He then became mad and banged the table, "this is cocaine!", he said. I couldn't imagine myself before police because of drugs something I have refused to deal in. I told him I have never seen cocaine before in that form and the one I usually see on televisions are not like that. He then told me that I was just a witness who had to cooperate with them if not I will as well be considered a suspect. I assured him of my cooperation on everything I know. He later called in a female judge who appreciated my cooperation but asked me if I was mistreated at the time of my arrest and detention. "Yes Madame!" I replied, "I was handcuffed and am still wondering why they had to handcuff an innocent person like me and above all why I had to be detained through a ruthless cold night". She forwarded the question to the inspector who replied by saying that "anyone can be handcuffed if they try to resist arrest". But I told them that "I never resisted arrest and the whole process of my arrest was done without my resistance". All in all, I was later released at 2pm after they had taken a photo of me and finger prints. It's one of the days I will never forget in my life.

## **The police's perspectives on african Immigrants and what the swiss police has to do**

My case is far to be an isolated one! The swiss police has come under serenity for the way they look at african immigrants in the name of fighting drug trafficking. I myself remember one story from the then free news paper called le Matin Bleu, one UDC politician was quoted saying that when police officers pass a black man without controlling him, they are bypassing drugs. And I believe the police have responded well to this. It's really very rare that a black immigrant can pass police officers without asking him to stop and they control to extent that one has to remove all his clothes to prove to them he is clean. And this has brought anger within the majority of african immigrants towards the police and most of them have vowed not to cooperate with the police in fighting drugs trafficking even when they know the drug dealers. The police has to create a better image before the immigrants to show that they are indeed not fighting immigrants but rather fighting drugs if they need help from the immigrants on fighting drugs trafficking. The police has to put it in mind that not everyone who talks to a drugs trafficker is a trafficker. There are so many innocent immigrants who innocently associate with traffickers when they don't know who they are. This is not easy to know who is who, but with the help of more intelligence, this can be over come and fewer innocent people will suffer in the process. When you are given a place to sleep after the transfer from the Centre d'enregistrement et de Procédure (CEP), one can never know who they are going to share a room with. And this makes it so hard to avoid sharing a room or associating with a trafficker.

### **Conclusion**

Drugs trafficking are not only done by african immigrants, but also a lot of Swiss and European people are in this business. Yes, it's true there are many africans on the street hocking drugs but who are the suppliers?

**Shawn WAKIDA**