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Failed Asylum Seeker Dies During Docks Escape Attempt

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A tragic incident at Southampton docks has led to the death of Walid Gomaa, a failed asylum seeker from Egypt. The 36-year-old drowned after attempting to board a vehicle transporter ship heading to Canada. The incident occurred on 28 April this year and has sparked an inquest, shedding light on the circumstances surrounding his death.

Walid Gomaa arrived in the UK in 2021, seeking asylum, but his claim was denied. After the rejection, he lived illegally in the country for four years. According to a friend, Gomaa had set his sights on escaping to Canada. On the day of the incident, he attempted to board a ship

at Southampton's Empress Dock to travel across the Atlantic. His tragic attempt to escape ended in disaster.

The inquest, held at Winchester, heard that Gomaa was spotted trying to grab hold of the ramp as it was being raised by the crew of a vehicle transporter ship. The ship was preparing to leave for Halifax, Canada. The ship's operator initially paused the raising of the ramp when they noticed Gomaa on the dock, but as they began raising it once more, Gomaa made a run for it and jumped towards the ramp. Despite a crew member shouting at him to stop, Gomaa continued with his ill-fated leap.

In a tragic turn, Gomaa missed the ramp, struck his head, and fell into the sea between the ship and the dock. Despite the crew's quick response and the dispatch of a rescue boat, Gomaa tragically drowned before he could be pulled from the water.

The coroner for the inquest, Jason Pegg, confirmed the cause of death as drowning, resulting from the head injury Gomaa sustained when he fell into the water. Coroner Pegg described the moment of the accident, saying, "Mr Gomaa jumped off the jetty towards the vessel. On this occasion, Mr Gomaa was not able to grab hold of anything and fell towards the water between the jetty and the vessel itself."

The coroner further noted that Gomaa had arrived in the UK in 2021, where he initially claimed asylum, but this claim was denied. After his asylum application was rejected, he disappeared from the authorities' radar, only resurfacing briefly in 2025.

Gomaa's tragic death brings attention to the plight of asylum seekers, particularly those who find themselves in precarious and illegal situations after their claims have been denied. The situation also highlights the risks some individuals are willing to take in an attempt to escape their circumstances, even when faced with significant dangers.

While the incident is an unfortunate reminder of the perilous journeys many asylum seekers face, it also underscores the complex challenges the authorities face in managing immigration and asylum claims. The response to this tragedy has been mixed, with some calling for more support for asylum seekers, while others argue that stricter controls are needed to prevent such dangerous attempts.

In a message to Gomaa's family in Egypt, Coroner Pegg expressed his condolences, offering his best wishes to the grieving relatives. Despite the tragic circumstances, the case

highlights the risks that individuals are willing to endure in pursuit of a new life and the tragic consequences of desperate decisions.

As the investigation continues, the focus will likely shift to understanding how the system can better support individuals in Gomaa's situation, providing safer and more humane pathways for asylum seekers while preventing further tragedies.