

Libya: Allegations of Torture and Grave violations at the Detention Centers of the "Anti-Illegal Immigration Authority"

Human Rights Solidarity Organization (HRS) is following with great concern the international reports on allegations of grave violations of international human rights law against migrants and asylum seekers detained in inhumane conditions in the "shelter centers" of the "Anti-Illegal Immigration Authority". HRS calls on the Government of National Unity to do its duty and put an end to these violations and end the suffering of stranded migrants.

In recent years, international reports documented in detail the grave violations against irregular migrants, among them asylum seekers, in detention centers in Libya. However, none of the successive governments made any serious efforts to correct the situation, which led to an increase in violations.

Last June, following repeated incidents of violence towards refugees and migrants held in two detention centres in Tripoli, Libya, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) ¹ announced that "we feel obliged to temporarily suspend our activities in Mabani and Abu Salim detention centres". The head of the MSF mission in Libya said "*This is not an easy decision to make, as it means we won't be present in detention centres where we know people are suffering on a daily basis. However, the persistent pattern of violent incidents and serious harm to refugees and migrants, as well as the risk to the safety of our staff, has reached a level that we are no longer able to accept*". She added "*until the violence stops, and conditions improve, MSF can no longer provide humanitarian and medical care in these facilities*". To date, MSF has not resumed its work at the said detention centers.

Last July, Amnesty International published² a report titled "[Libya: 'No One will look for You': Forcibly Returned from Sea to Abusive Detention in Libya](#)", in which it documented that "*since late 2020 Libya's Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM), a department of the interior ministry, had legitimized abuse by integrating two new detention centres under its structure where hundreds of refugees and migrants had been forcibly disappeared in previous years by militias. At one recently rebranded centre, survivors said guards raped women and subjected them to sexual violence including by coercing them into sex in exchange for food or their freedom*".

This week, dozens of families in Morocco held demonstrations ³ calling on the King and the Government of Morocco to intervene to return their "sons detained in Libyan prisons". One Moroccan media platform reported that "*there are 5,000 young Moroccans in detention centers in Libya*" ⁴, which is not true. The information available to HRS indicates that there are about 50 Moroccans being held in detention centers run by the "Anti-Illegal Immigration Authority" (AIIA). Detainees who want to return voluntarily to Morocco, cannot return because the Moroccan Embassy representative in Libya⁵ is not responding to the migrants' pleas to provide them with travel documents and facilitate their travel arrangements. Last April, HRS wrote⁶ to the Moroccan Embassy in Tunisia and the Moroccan Foreign Ministry regarding 3 Moroccan migrants stranded in Libya and wishing to return. Until today, neither the migrants nor HRS have received any response from the embassy or from the Moroccan Foreign Ministry.

Human Rights Solidarity, while recalling the right of the Libyan state to regulate and control the residence of expats in Libya, and stressing the need to respect and protect the rights of migrants and refugees, calls on the Libyan authorities to:

- Stop denying or ignoring the reports about the violations of migrants and refugees in Libya and stop falsifying facts⁷. If the Libyan authorities insist on the lack of credibility of the said international reports, they must invite the media and international organizations to visit detention centers to find out the reality of the situation, otherwise they must investigate allegations of violations and hold accountable those are found to be involved in any violations of international human rights law,
- Stop returning migrants who are intercepted at sea. The forcible return of migrants from the sea to Libya has led to an increase in the number of migrants and refugees in detention centers, which in turn led to an increase in violations and a deterioration of conditions in those centers due to overcrowding. Combating smuggling and human trafficking networks is by targeting the criminal networks themselves, not the migrants,
- Contact the governments of countries that have nationals stranded in Libya and ask them to assume their responsibilities towards their citizens. Escalation diplomatically, in international forums, with countries that refuse to cooperate in the return of their citizens. The Moroccan media talks about detained Moroccan citizens and does not talk about the Moroccan government's failure to perform its duties in cooperating with the Libyan authorities to facilitate the return of its stranded citizens, and
- Cease cooperation with European Union countries regarding illegal migration via Libya until these countries agree to work within an international and regional

framework that brings together countries of origin, transit and destination to address illegal migration. Libya is a transit country. It is not responsible for migrants leaving their countries to reach countries of destination in search of safety or opportunities for a decent life.

Human Rights Solidarity Tripoli – Libya

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¹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF): "[Ongoing violence against detained migrants forces MSF to suspend Tripoli detention centre activities](#)", June 22, 2021.

² Amnesty International: "[Libya: Horrific violations in detention highlight Europe's shameful role in forced returns](#)", July 15, 2021.

³ Alhayat Alyaoumia (Electronic News Platform): "[Horrific video.. Moroccan immigrants detained in Libya: 'we eat onions and bread.. free us'](#)" and "[Families of Moroccans detained in Libya in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Our children are abandoned in Libya and Bourita \[Foreign Minister\] is partying'](#)", August 9, 2021.

⁴ Hadatcom (Moroccan Electronic News Platform): "[Protest against the concerned ministry to intervene in order to release 5000 young Moroccans who are in Libyan prisons](#)", August 9, 2021.

⁵ Since 2014, many diplomatic missions to Libya relocated from Tripoli to Tunisia, including the Moroccan Embassy. A representative from the Moroccan Embassy used to come to bring travel documents to Moroccan nationals in detention centers, and there was a location at the Libyan-Tunisia Ras Ajdir border crossing to provide Moroccan national with consular services. However, since April 2019, when Haftar launched the attack on Tripoli, these services have stopped. According to sources, there are dozens of Moroccan families, who need renewal of passports or register newborns, are in limbo.

⁶ HRS sent the letter on April 25, 2021, addressed to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Tunisia, and a copy to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations in Geneva. The letter included the names and contact details of the three immigrants stranded in Libya. HRS also wrote to the Moroccan embassy about the suffering of dozens of Moroccan families in Libya as a result of the Moroccan embassy's failure to renew their passports and provide them other consular services.

⁷ Libyan Foreign Ministry: "[The Minister of Foreign Affairs discusses with the Attorney General combating illegal immigration, and ways to confront international networks involved in human trafficking](#)", August 11, 2021. Not just transnational criminal networks are involved in smuggling via Libya. These networks have local Libyan partners, gangs, and armed militias. Some of these militias were legitimized by successive Libyan governments by "integrating" them in the "Anti-Illegal Immigration Authority" (AIIA). The Libyan Government is responsible for violations which are committed at AIIA's detention centers. Smartphone cameras document and record grave violations, and dozens of migrants and refugees, who crossed Libyan territory and reached third countries, testified, and provided evidence of the violations they were subjected to.