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Refugees tortured by EU funded Libyan Coast Guard

LCG run by militia, active in human trafficking, slavery and extortion

EU policy constitutes illegal refoulement

EU must immediately stop LCG operations in the Mediterranean

EU must increase resettlement quotas

EU must be held to account under international law

Arab Organistaion for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) has found that EU policy designed to stem the flow of migration to Europe from Libya, across the Mediterranean, has led to the funding of militia groups that are active in people smuggling, torture and extortion of refugees and migrants.

AOHR UK notes that the UE, in attempts to stem the flow of migration from North Africa to Europe has funded the Libyan Coast Guard(LCG), who is tasked with intercepting vessels that leave the Libyan coast containing migrants, and return the displaced people to Libya. Formally European states ran rescue and return missions in the Med, since handing responsibility to the EU-funded and EU-trained LCG, fatalities have increased and there are many reports of LCG deliberately stalling rescues, and actively sinking vessels containing migrants. The EU funding the LCG was supposedly meant to limit people smuggling, but in reality the LGC are active in smuggling, extortion, torture and slavery.



AOHR UK notes that once vessels are intercepted by the LCG, those onboard are returned to land. Many migrants and refugees that have been returned after being intercepted at sea, report being victims to extortion, torture and human trafficking at the hands LCG. Furthermore refugees and migrants, who have been forcibly returned, are being indefinitely detained in undisclosed locations across Libya, reporting torture, rape and extortion.

AOHR UK also draws attention to previous attacks on migrant and refugee centers by Haftars forces. On 03.07. 2019 a strike launched by Haftars' forces hit a migrant detention centre in the outskirts of Tripoli, killing between 56-80 unarmed and contained migrants. Moreover in a separate attack by Haftars forces, on the 23.04.2019, militia opened fire on unarmed detained people in Southern Tripoli, killing 6 and injuring many more. These amount to heinous accounts of war crimes, and should be enough prove to the UE that it must immediately put a stop to its policy of returning migrants to Libya.

AOHR UK declares that regulations and international laws that govern maritime activities clearly state that that any individual rescued at sea must be taken to a safe port. In the Libyan case, there are no safe ports, as the country is affected by conflict between the UN recognised government, and forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar. As Libya cannot offer safety to those fleeing from war, it is against international and humanitarian law for displaced people to be returned to an area affected by conflict.

AOHR UK draws attention to the cornerstone of international refugee law, which is the principle of non-refoulement, which states that it is illegal for a state to return refugees to a state in which they are likely to face danger of persecution. The current policy of the EU in Libya constitutes refoulement, and is a serious breach of international law, designed to protect refugees from harm. The fact that the EU continues to fund the LCG to return people to Libya, with full knowledge of its illegalities, is telling of EU's immoral stance towards highly vulnerable people fleeing conflict and persecution.

AOHR UK states that, by the EU continuing to fund the LCG, the EU is complicit in the torture, extortion and human trafficking committed by the LCG. Furthermore



by the EU returning displaced people to Libya during a conflict; it is seriously violating the principle of non-refoulement. All of which amount to violations of international law.

AOHR UK highly condemns the EU handing over the responsibility of patrolling the Libyan Mediterranean to the LCG, whilst simultaneously bringing legal action against humanitarian sea patrols.

AOHR UK calls on the European Union to immediately cut funding to the LCG and to end its operations in the Mediterranean.

AOHR UK calls on the European Union to drastically increase numbers of resettlement quotas so that safe passage can be provided for those currently detained within dire conditions.

AOHR UK calls on the ICC to open an investigation into the European Union's policy that has outsourced responsibility to the LCG. The EU has violated international law by practicing refoulement, funding militia guilty of torture, extortion and human trafficking as well as funding the indefinite detention of refugees in inhumane and degrading conditions.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)