

News

Amnesty International says Europe is complicit in abuse of refugees in Libya



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A mother and her son looking for a better future. Photo: CAFOD Photo Library, Flickr.

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Refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea aiming to reach European lands. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Loads of refugees and migrants are being held in prisons. Photo: Pixabay.

The international human rights organisation denounces European governments as supportive of exploitation and smuggling of refugees in Libya.

On 12th December 2017 [Amnesty International](#) published a report criticising European governments for being complicit in the **abuse of refugees and migrants**. In a document titled '[Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses Against Europe-Bound Refugees and Migrants](#)', the international human rights organisation warns that refugees and migrants are being kidnapped, subjected to physical abuse and auctioned off as slaves, as evidenced by [CNN footage](#) aired last month. Amnesty International accuses European governments of actively supporting a system of abuse and exploitation of refugees and migrants by the Libyan Coast Guard.

Amnesty International's Europe Director [John Dalhuisen](#) claimed in a statement that many people arriving in Libya who intend to cross into Europe via the Mediterranean are being intercepted by Libyan authorities, militias, armed groups and **smugglers**. "They took us to Zawiya, an official centre, I stayed three months there, then I paid 500 Libyan dinars and they let me go. In the centre they didn't give me food. They beat me with a rubber hose," explained "Bakary", a Gambian man who was intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard in 2016.

The International [Organization for Migration](#) has identified **416,556 migrants** in Libya at the end of September 2017, 60% of whom are from sub-Saharan Africa and 32% from other North African countries. Dalhuisen also said that European governments are complicit in the horrible abuse of refugees by supporting the Libyan authorities in stopping sea crossings and containing people in Libya. The report claims that migrants in Libya are experiencing worsening conditions as a result of this policy of containment.

Since 2016, Italy has implemented a series of measures aimed at closing off the migratory routes through Libya and across the central Mediterranean. Amnesty International explained that some EU Member States are providing technical support and assistance to the Libyan Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM), which operates the detention centres where migrants and refugees are being held and exposed to serious **human rights violations**.

Moreover, Amnesty International points out that certain EU Member States have enabled the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept people at sea by providing them with training, equipment and technical support. "They have struck deals with Libyan local authorities and the leaders of tribes and armed groups, to encourage them to stop the smuggling of people," a statement says.

According to Amnesty International, up to 20,000 people remain contained in detention centres, where they are being subjected to **torture, forced labour, extortion or unlawful killings**. The international human rights organisation has called on the Libyan authorities to recognise [UNHCR](#)'s mandate and sign the Refugee Convention. "The Libyan Coast Guard operates in collusion with smuggling networks and have used threats and violence against refugees and migrants on board boats in distress."

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