



DEBATE PACK

CDP 2017-0259 | 13 December 2017

E-petition [205476](#) relating to the enslavement of black Africans in Libya

Petitions Committee Debate
Westminster Hall
Monday 18 December 2017
4.30pm – 5.30pm
Debate led by Paul Scully

The proceedings of this debate can be watched on Parliamentlive.tv

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Compiled by:

Julie Gill

Subject specialist:

Ben Smith

Contents

1.	Summary	2
1.1	Allegations of slavery in Libya	2
1.2	No effective Libyan government	2
1.3	UK Government response	3
2.	News and media	5
3.	PQs	8
4.	Early Day Motions	16
5.	Press releases	18
6.	Opinion pieces	28
7.	Further reading	32

1. Summary

1.1 Allegations of slavery in Libya

There has been increasing concern about allegations of open slave markets being held in Libya, particularly after the release on 15 November 2017 of a [report on CNN](#) news channel appearing to show live video of Africans being auctioned in Libya.

On 4 November, the International Organisation for Migration had [released a statement](#) that IOM employees had documented “shocking events” documenting “slave markets” of Africans migrating through Libya.

The EU’s policy has come in for some criticism: on 11 December Amnesty International [published a report](#) in which the organisation accused European governments of “complicity”. Amnesty accused the Italian Government of *refoulement*, returning migrants and refugees to face the prospect of torture, which Amnesty said breached both treaty obligations and customary international law. European governments are supporting the Libyan coastguard, but Amnesty alleges that the coastguard often collaborates with people smugglers.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [released a statement](#) after visiting DCIM detention centres in Libya:

Extra-judicial killings, slavery, torture, rape, human trafficking and starvation are only some of the abuses reportedly inflicted on migrants in both official and informal detention centres in the country.

The Libyan officials have denied that slavery is widespread. The Libyan Chargé d’Affaires in London [said](#) he had: “never seen or heard any signs of racism in Libya” adding that if any allegation of slavery were proved, it would be the “act of an individual, and not a systematic practice.”

1.2 No effective Libyan government

Libya’s lack of effective government is at the root of the trouble. At present, the UN- and EU-approved government is struggling to establish its authority: the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) is looking increasingly weak, while the rival House of Representatives HoR government is gaining ground. The military forces of General Khalifa Haftar, fighting for the HoR government, have had a series of successes and is now in control of about two thirds of Libyan territory, including most of the oil industry.

Foreign intervention

Libya has become the stage for important international rivalries. Turkey, Sudan and Qatar are supporting the GNA and have recognised it as the legitimate government. Meanwhile, Russia, Egypt, Chad, the UAE and,

to a certain extent, Saudi Arabia, have been supporting Haftar and the HoR.

The crisis that broke out in June 2017 between Qatar (and Turkey) on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt has sharpened the two sides' rivalry in Libya.¹

According to a June 2017 [UN report](#), a Belarus-manufactured helicopter was transferred by the UAE to Libya, in breach of the arms embargo, [earlier reports](#) suggest that fixed wing warplanes have followed the same route. Qatar is widely reported to be funding Islamist groups associated with Libya Dawn, although direct military intervention seems to be limited.

In July 2017, Egypt opened a large military base near the Libyan border in a ceremony attended by Haftar and UAE leader.

The UK Government "[remains committed](#) to the Government of National Accord and the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA)."

Humanitarian situation

The conflict is leading to atrocities. Human Rights Watch [says](#): "Forces engaged in the conflict are guilty of arbitrary detention, torture, unlawful killings, indiscriminate attacks, disappearances, and the forceful displacement of people."

Nearly a quarter of a million Libyans are [internally displaced](#).

Nearly 100,000 are in need of [food assistance](#).

In May 2017 there were 68 [civilian casualties](#), mainly caused by bombs and gunfire – it was the highest monthly figure so far in 2017.

More than half a million Libyan children are in need of some sort of [humanitarian assistance](#).

1.3 UK Government response

In December 2017 the Middle East Minister Alistair Burt set out the [Government's response](#) to the allegations:

The UK is determined to eliminate the scourge of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. The UK regularly raises with the Libyan Government the need for wider respect for human rights and accountability across the country. During his visit to Libya in August the Foreign Secretary raised with Prime Minister Serraj the importance of offering humanitarian support to migrants and the need to respect human rights. I also raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Libya, including the issue of slavery, with the Libyan Deputy Prime Minister at the Mediterranean Dialogues in Rome on 1 December and welcomed the investigation into this issue. The British Embassy to Libya has further underlined our concerns about these reports in our recent discussions with the Libyan Government, and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

¹ For more, see the briefing paper [Qatar crisis](#), June 2017

The UK Government says that ending slavery is a policy priority:

The Prime Minister has made tackling modern slavery a foreign policy priority, and in September this year launched a [Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#), committing to doubling UK aid spend in support of this objective to £150 million. We are determined to work with our international partners to hold to account those acting with impunity in Libya, including through sanctions against those who are complicit in serious human rights abuses and violations. The Prime Minister has already committed to increasing efforts to tackle smuggling and trafficking in Libya through building the capacity of Libyan law enforcement agencies, and supporting efforts to sanction people smugglers at the UN. We also support the Declaration from the EU-Africa Summit on this issue. UK programming has enabled the assisted voluntary return of over 1,400 migrants from Libya this year, and we support further efforts in this area, including by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

2. News and media

The following is a small selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for the views expressed in, nor the accuracy of, external content.

[**Amnesty accuses EU of being complicit in Libya migrant abuse**](#)

Financial Times
Heba Saleh and Michael Peel
12 December 2017

[**Federica Mogherini: 'Europe is already fighting slavery in Libya'**](#)

Euronews
Gardenia Trezzini
03 December 2017

[**The rest of the world has woken up, but migrants are still sleepwalking into Libya slave markets**](#)

Independent
Bethan McKernan
03 December 2017

[**Emmanuel Macron announces EU plan to launch 'concrete military action' to rescue African migrants enslaved in Libya**](#)

Telegraph
Henry Samuel and Nick Squires
30 November 2017

[**Blackwater founder pitches plan to quell Libya migrant crisis with private police**](#)

Guardian
Stephanie Kirchgaessner
30 November 2017

[**Voluntary evacuation planned for migrants as Libya battles slavery claims**](#)

Guardian
Patrick Wintour and Angelique Chrisafis
30 November 2017

[**EU partly at fault for 'deplorable conditions' for migrants in Libya, says NGO**](#)

Politico
Ginger Hervey
30 November 2017

[A 'slave auction' puts the global spotlight back on Libya](#)

Washington Post
Ishaan Tharoor
29 November 2017

[African migrants being sold as slaves by Libyan human traffickers 'have their organs harvested, bodies mutilated and roasted like kebabs' claims Nigerian ex-minister](#)

Mail Online
Bill Bond and Sarah Malm
29 November 2017

['Fake news': Libya seizes on Trump tweet to discredit CNN slavery report](#)

Guardian
Patrick Wintour
28 November 2017

['They sell Africans over there': Libya's slave trade](#)

Al Jazeera
Bernard Smith
28 November 2017

[Juncker calls for migrants to have 'legal ways' to reach Europe](#)

Politico
Judith Mischke
28 November 2017

[Macron visits Africa amid anger over human trafficking and slavery](#)

Guardian
Patrick Wintour
26 November 2017

[U.N. chief 'horrified' by report of Libya slave auction](#)

New York Times
Rick Gladstone
20 November 2017

[UN accuses Britain of 'turning a blind eye to horrors suffered by refugees'](#)

Independent
Lizzie Dearden
15 November 2017

[People for sale: where lives are auctioned for \\$400](#)

CNN

Nima Elbagir, Raja Razek, Alex Platt and Bryony Jones

14 November 2017

[EU sticks to Libya strategy on migrants, despite human rights concerns](#)

Reuters

Gabriela Baczynska

14 September 2017

[Emmanuel Macron's Africa refugee plan condemned as 'racist and inhumane'](#)

Independent

Jon Stone

30 August 2017

[EU leaders offer support to Libyan coastguards, Chad and Niger to stem migrant flow at Paris summit](#)

Telegraph

Henry Samuel

28 August 2017

[85 percent of migrants tortured in Libya - Doctors for Human Rights](#)

InfoMigrants

09 August 2017

[African migrants sold in Libya 'slave markets', IOM says](#)

BBC News Online

11 April 2017

[Living in limbo: a journalist reveals the challenges of reporting from inhumane migrant detention camps in Libya](#)

Index on Censorship

Marco Salustro

06 February 2017

3. PQs

[Libya: Slavery](#)

11 December 2017 | 117651

Asked by: Helen Jones

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many times and on what dates the Government has raised the issue of slavery in Libya in discussion with the Libyan Government or has otherwise made representations to that government on that subject.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is determined to eliminate the scourge of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. The UK regularly raises with the Libyan Government the need for wider respect for human rights and accountability across the country. During his visit to Libya in August the Foreign Secretary raised with Prime Minister Serraj the importance of offering humanitarian support to migrants and the need to respect human rights. I also raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Libya, including the issue of slavery, with the Libyan Deputy Prime Minister at the Mediterranean Dialogues in Rome on 1 December and welcomed the investigation into this issue. The British Embassy to Libya has further underlined our concerns about these reports in our recent discussions with the Libyan Government, and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

[Libya: Human Rights](#)

07 December 2017 | 116390

Asked by: David Lammy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Libyan counterpart on reports of gross human rights abuses, human trafficking and slavery involving migrants in that country.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Tackling forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking is a domestic and foreign policy priority for the British Government. We share others' disgust and grave concern at the recent news footage, reportedly showing slave markets in Libya. We have raised our concerns about these reports with the Libyan Government, and welcome their commitment to immediately investigate this and to ensure those involved are brought to justice.

We also support the announcement in Abidjan last week of a joint EU-AU-UN Task Force to address this dire situation, and efforts to sanction people smugglers at the UN. Our new £75m migration programme will also specifically target migrants travelling from West Africa via the Sahel to Libya, and get humanitarian support to those in desperate need. We are clear that a sustainable improvement in the human rights situation in Libya can only be achieved under the stability of a united and

representative government, and continue to work with our international partners to support UN efforts towards this goal.

[Africa: Slavery](#)

06 December 2017 | 117082

Asked by: Lyn Brown

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of (a) UN sanctions targeted at individuals or organisations who are identified as being responsible for modern slavery and human trafficking of African refugees and migrants in Libya and other African states, and (b) an EU-funded scheme enabling greater voluntary repatriation of migrants currently held in detention camps in Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Prime Minister has made tackling modern slavery a foreign policy priority, and in September this year launched a Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, committing to doubling UK aid spend in support of this objective to £150 million. We are determined to work with our international partners to hold to account those acting with impunity in Libya, including through sanctions against those who are complicit in serious human rights abuses and violations. The Prime Minister has already committed to increasing efforts to tackle smuggling and trafficking in Libya through building the capacity of Libyan law enforcement agencies, and supporting efforts to sanction people smugglers at the UN. We also support the Declaration from the EU-Africa Summit on this issue. UK programming has enabled the assisted voluntary return of over 1,400 migrants from Libya this year, and we support further efforts in this area, including by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

[Libya: Human Rights](#)

06 December 2017 | 117078

Asked by: Lyn Brown

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the extent of (a) modern slavery, (b) human trafficking and (c) associated violations of human rights and equalities in Libya.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Prime Minister has made tackling modern slavery a foreign policy priority – it is a crime which generates around USD\$150 billion a year in illegal profit, and a global problem which requires a global response. In September this year, the Prime Minister launched a Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. The UK has committed to doubling UK aid spend in support of this objective to £150 million. Libya is a Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Human Rights Priority Country. We are following closely, and remain

deeply concerned by, reports on the poor overall human rights situation in Libya, including abuses and violations against migrants in the form of modern slavery and human trafficking. At the 34th Human Rights Council in March we supported a resolution on Libya that calls on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to monitor and report on human rights violations and abuses across Libya with a view to ensuring accountability. A sustainable improvement in the human rights situation in Libya can only be achieved under the stability of a united and representative government, and we continue to work with our international partners to support UN efforts towards this goal.

Libya: Slavery

06 December 2017 | 116727

Asked by: Steve Reed

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Libyan Government regarding recent reports of African migrants being sold at slave auctions.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Tackling forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking is a domestic and foreign policy priority for the British Government. We share others' disgust and concern at the recent news footage reportedly showing slave markets in Libya. We have raised our concerns about these reports with the Libyan Government, and welcome their commitment to immediately investigate these reports and to ensure those involved are brought to justice. We also support the announcement in Abidjan this week of a joint EU-AU-UN Task Force to address this dire situation, and efforts to sanction people smugglers at the UN. Our new £75m migration programme will also specifically target migrants travelling from West Africa via the Sahel to Libya, and get humanitarian support to those in desperate need. We are clear that a sustainable improvement in the human rights situation in Libya can only be achieved under the stability of a united and representative government, and continue to work with our international partners to support UN efforts towards this goal.

Libya: Sexual Offences

20 November 2017 | HL2915

Asked by: Baroness Helic

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are providing to efforts (1) to document allegations of systematic rape and sexual violence carried out against prisoners and detainees in Libya, and (2) to share documented evidence with the International Criminal Court.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

(1) More progress needs to be made on improving respect for the human rights of prisoners and detainees in Libya, although the political and security context in Libya remains very challenging. The

UK Government does not document individual allegations of rape and sexual violence in Libya but does engage regularly with human rights organisations and the UN on these issues. The 2016 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights report outlines UK activity in further detail. Through our programming we have worked with the Libyan authorities to improve conditions in detention centres in Libya. For example, so far this year, the Department for International Development has supported more than 20,000 emergency interventions in areas which include healthcare, psychosocial support, hygiene kits and safe shelter. We also provide specific support to women and girls, to protect them from the heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence.

- (2) The United Kingdom has a legal obligation to cooperate with the International Criminal Court. We have a centralised system for responding to all requests from the Office of the Prosecutor and we have established guidelines and set standard procedures to ensure we share information with the International Criminal Court where appropriate.

[Libya: Refugees](#)

23 October 2017 | HL1897

Asked by: Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the report produced by Oxfam and Doctors for Human Rights on the experience of refugees, not least women, fleeing war, persecution and poverty while they are in or transiting Libya; and what action they are taking to ensure that their policies are designed to meet the humanitarian needs of such people, and to ensure rights of safe passage.

Answered by: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development

DFID are aware of Oxfam's recent report and share their concerns. The UK provides humanitarian aid to migrants and refugees in Libya and specific support to women and girls at risk of sexual and gender based violence and trafficking. So far this year, DFID has supported more than 20,000 emergency interventions such as healthcare, psychosocial support, hygiene kits and safe shelter. The UK Government has also helped more than 1,400 vulnerable migrants to return home from Libya.

Our resettlement schemes provide refugees with a safe and legal route to the UK, rather than risking hazardous journeys towards Europe. We also support the principle of family reunification.

[Libya](#)

17 October 2017 | Vol 629 c695

Asked by: Philip Hollobone

The power vacuum in Libya is sucking in economic migration from the rest of Africa, causing deaths in the Mediterranean as migrants try to flee to the European Union. What can the Foreign Secretary do to make

sure that the international community recognises the scale of the problem that it faces in this benighted part of the world?

Answered by: Boris Johnson | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As I have been saying, the key thing is to bring together all the sides in Libya — the two halves of the country, Mr Swehli, Mr Saleh, Prime Minister al-Sarraj and of course General Haftar — to change the Skhirat agreement of 2014 to get a new political settlement and then to have elections, and through those elections to produce a unified Government that we believe offer the prospect of peace and security in Libya.

My hon. Friend also raises the problem of illegal immigration, which the UK is of course doing a great deal to combat.

[Libya: Refugees](#)

10 October 2017 | HL1511

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, during his recent visit to Libya, the Foreign Secretary addressed conditions inside Libyan detention centres; and what assessment they have made of criticisms by Médecins Sans Frontières regarding the impact of UK policies on detainees in that country.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign Secretary highlighted the importance of adhering to international human rights standards when he met with Prime Minister Serraj during his visit in August 2017. The UK is pursuing a comprehensive approach to migration to address the root causes as well as the devastating impact migration has on those who are most vulnerable. The UK's humanitarian programme includes substantial support to improve the standards in detention facilities in Libya. This activity is specifically designed to protect migrants' human rights and improve conditions, and is underpinned by the 'do no harm' principle. We have checks in place to make sure that is the case. We are very concerned about the conditions in detention centres, which is exactly why we are providing assistance and Assisted Voluntary Returns, and will continue to do so.

[Libya: Refugees](#)

25 Sep 2017 | HL1510

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, during his recent visit to Libya, the Foreign Secretary visited detention centres for refugees; and what information they have collected about conditions in those centres.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign Secretary did not visit any Libyan detention centres during his visit to Libya in August 2017, but did visit a centre in an earlier visit. The Foreign Secretary raised the importance of adhering to international

human rights standards with Prime Minister Serraj. We are very concerned about humanitarian conditions inside Libyan detention centres, particularly those not controlled by the Libyan Government. The UK is working to improve conditions and protect migrants' human rights in detention centres through its programming. The UK has provided £3.2 million in Libya for direct assistance in detention centres. We are also providing Assisted Voluntary Returns from Libya: this programme has supported the return of more than 1,400 migrants to their home countries.

[Libya: Refugees](#)

25 Sep 2017 | HL1508

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they intend to respond to the letter from Joanne Liu, International President of Médecins Sans Frontières, that was sent to the Prime Minister on 6 September concerning the conditions faced by people detained in Libya.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of Medecins Sans Frontieres' open letter to the Prime Minister and share their concerns about the standards of treatment those in detention face. This is why we are providing assistance to improve conditions in detention facilities as well as encouraging Assisted Voluntary Returns, and will continue to do so. This activity is specifically designed to protect migrants' human rights and improve conditions. It is underpinned by the 'do no harm' principle and we have checks in place to make sure that is the case. The key is to break the business model of smugglers and to prioritise interventions upstream in countries of origin and transit to reduce the need of migrants to leave their home country or move on from a safe third country in their region.

[Libya: Human Trafficking](#)

12 September 2017 | 8549

Asked by: Paul Masterton

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support the victims of human trafficking and exploitation in Libya.

Answered by: Alistair Burt | Department: Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DFID) is providing assistance to refugees and migrants at risk of trafficking and exploitation in Libya. So far this year, DFID has supported more than 20,000 emergency interventions such as healthcare, psychosocial support, hygiene kits and safe shelter. The UK Government is also assisting vulnerable migrants with voluntary returns from Libya – so far our support has helped more than 1,200 individuals to return home.

The UK government continues to support the Libyan authorities to tackle smuggling and organised immigration crime. We also continue to press for refugees and migrants in Libya to be treated in accordance with international norms and standards.

[Libya: Overseas Aid](#)

27 July 2017 | HL1131

Asked by: Lord Empey

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have provided any resources to persons or organisations in Libya from the budget of the Department for International Development; and if so, to which projects those resources were allocated.

Answered by: Lord Bates | Department: Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DFID) supports Libyan authorities and civil society organisations to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Libyans, migrants and refugees, working with trusted humanitarian agencies including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In addition, DFID is funding a project with the World Bank to improve public financial management in Libya's key financial institutions, as part of the cross-Departmental Conflict, Security and Stability Fund for Libya.

[Sub-Saharan Africa: Emigration](#)

27 Apr 2017 | 71900

Asked by: Alex Salmond

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to protect Sub-Saharan migrants trying to reach Europe against the risk of their being sold as slaves or hostages in Libya.

Answered by: Tobias Ellwood | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK aid programmes in source and transit countries increasingly focus on jobs and livelihoods, aiming to reduce the need for migrants to leave. We are also targeting people-smuggling gangs.

The conflict makes Libya a difficult country in which to operate. Nonetheless the UK has committed over £12.4 million since October 2015. This funding includes a programme partnering with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to improve living conditions for men and women in detention centres and assist the voluntary repatriation for migrants.

The UK is also supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in providing humanitarian relief and immediate lifesaving assistance to vulnerable populations in Libya.

Refugees: Mediterranean Sea

21 Mar 2017 | HL5872

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answers by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 9 February (HL Deb cols 1860–1861) about unaccompanied child refugees, what is their response to UNICEF UK's examination of the risks facing refugee and migrant children crossing the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy in their report, "A deadly journey for children: the central Mediterranean route".

Answered by: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Department: Home Office

We support the principle of family unity and have several routes for families to be reunited safely. Our family reunion policy allows a spouse or partner and children under the age of 18 of those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. We have granted around 23,000 family reunion visas over the last five years. The Government is also fully committed to the timely and efficient operation of the Dublin Regulation, including the family reunification provisions.

The Government works upstream with the aim to stem flows from Libya to Italy. The UK is contributing to the EU's Operation Sophia, which to date has successfully saved over 31,000 lives in the Central Mediterranean. The UK government is providing a £7.5 million package of direct emergency humanitarian assistance – to tackle people smuggling, improve conditions in detention centres and support migrants and asylum seekers, including children, transiting through Libya.

We are working internationally to help prevent vulnerable people from becoming victims of modern slavery and other forms of exploitation. The Prime Minister (PM) pledged £30m of official development assistance to protect and support victims of trafficking as well saving lives and offering long-term solutions to refugees and migrants rescued at sea. The PM Taskforce is also making progress bringing the collective weight of Government to bear. We are already seeing progress in intelligence gathering and are developing our international strategy to tackle the threat overseas and deepen law enforcement cooperation. This will enable us to investigate, prosecute and otherwise disrupt the activity of slave drivers and traffickers of human beings. We also work closely with Europol and Eurojust to facilitate cross-border operations and joint investigations with European law enforcement agencies. We will continue to engage closely with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner on the issues of human trafficking and exploitation.

4. Early Day Motions

[Slave trade in Libya](#)

EDM 676 (session 2017-19)

12 December 2017

Jonathan Edwards

That this House deplores the actions of those who seek to enslave migrants passing through Libya; condemns in the strongest terms the abhorrent use of auctions to buy and sell slaves; notes with alarm the horror faced by victims of human trafficking and slavery in Libya and the lack of government control to protect them; points to a UN report in April this year warning that sub-Saharan Africans who travelled north to Libya were routinely facing detention in squalid conditions, becoming victims of rape, beatings and being sold into slavery; reaffirms that, so far, the UN's International Organization for Migration has helped 13,000 people get out of detention centres in Libya and 8,000 in Niger but warns that there are about 15,000 still suffering in such facilities; further notes that an online petition putting pressure on Libya to stop enslaving Black Africans started in November already has over 263,974 signatures; and urges the Government to work with the UN to end the atrocity of modern day slavery in Libya.

[Treatment of migrants and refugees in Libya](#)

EDM 978 (session 2016-17)

23 February 2017

Ann Clwyd

That this House is shocked by the appalling treatment of migrants and refugees in Libya by state officials and illegal people-trafficking networks, as depicted by the very powerful Ross Kemp documentary Libya's Migrant Hell, shown at a Parliamentary screening organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group; notes with considerable concern that many making the journey to Libya in the hope of reaching Europe are fleeing violent conflict and famine in their home countries; calls on the Government and its partners within the international community to assist Libyan officials and international and domestic humanitarian organisations, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that migrants and refugees within that country are treated with dignity, provided with adequate food and basic healthcare and not subjected to ill-treatment; and further calls on the Government and others to do much more to address the underlying causes resulting in increased flows of migrants and refugees as well as to ensure that safe and legal channels into Europe are provided for those who qualify for international protection.

Ross Kemp's documentary on Libyan migrants

EDM 976 (session 2016-17)

23 February 2017

Brendan O'Hara

That this House congratulates Ross Kemp, producer Jamie Welham and director Marta Shaw on their outstanding documentary, Libya's Migrant Hell, a film that exposes the harrowing reality of the journey made by hundreds of thousands of people from sub-Saharan Africa as they try to make their way to Europe via Libya; acknowledges the remarkable achievement of Mr Kemp, the production team, the crew and the local Libyan fixers in securing unprecedented film-crew access to areas of Libya regarded as off-limits, as well as to those people making the journey, the illegal people-traffickers, those running the Libyan detention camps and the Libyan coastguard; further acknowledges the personal risks taken by the production team in order to make the people of the UK fully aware of the truly awful fate faced by so many of those people who have chosen to escape their own country to try to get to Europe via Libya; and encourages all hon. Members to find the time to watch this excellent documentary and hopes that both the EU and, particularly, the Government will do everything they can to ensure that international aid reaches Libya and that they work towards urgently rebuilding the state of Libya.

5. Press releases

[Libya must end “outrageous” auctions of enslaved people, UN experts insist](#)

**OHCHR [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights]
30 November 2017**

The Government of Libya must take urgent action to end the country’s trade in enslaved people, UN human rights experts have said, after shocking images showing an auction of people were captured on video.

“We were extremely disturbed to see the images which show migrants being auctioned as merchandise, and the evidence of markets in enslaved Africans which has since been gathered,” the experts said in a joint statement.

“It is now clear that slavery is an outrageous reality in Libya. The auctions are reminiscent of one of the darkest chapters in human history, when millions of Africans were uprooted, enslaved, trafficked and auctioned to the highest bidder,” they said.

“The Government and the international community, particularly the EU which is the destination of most of the migrants, must take immediate and decisive action to ensure that this crime does not continue. They must also urgently prioritize the release of all those people who have been enslaved. Enslavement is most often an extreme form of racial discrimination,” they added.

The experts welcomed a Libyan Government commitment to start an investigation of the issue, and insisted that the pledge had to be turned into concrete action, such as ensuring protective measures and effective remedies for victims, without delay.

“It is imperative that the authorities urgently locate and rescue the victims of this horrendous crime and that Libya holds the perpetrators accountable,” said the experts.

An estimated 700,000 migrants are in Libya, a major transit country for those trying to reach Europe.

“It is critically important for the Libyan Government to implement measures to protect migrants - among whom are victims of trafficking and minorities from different ethnic backgrounds - in accordance with international human rights laws and standards,” the experts said.

“Migrants in Libya are at high risk of multiple grave violations of their human rights, such as slavery, forced labour, trafficking, arbitrary and indefinite detention, exploitation and extortion, rape, torture and even being killed.

“The enslavement of migrants derives from the situation of extreme vulnerability in which they find themselves. It is paramount that the Government of Libya acts now to stop the human rights situation deteriorating further, and to bring about urgent improvements in the protection of migrants.”

The experts also urged the international community to act in solidarity to support the investigation of atrocious crimes occurring in the country.

“UN Member States must stop ignoring the unimaginable horrors endured by migrants in Libya, must urge countries to suspend any measures, including bilateral agreements with countries of origin and transit, that expose migrants to further risks, and should ensure that any such incidents are expeditiously and thoroughly investigated,” they said.

“It is a dangerous trend that European States are shifting responsibility for migrants to African countries instead of creating regular, safe, affordable and accessible channels for them.

“Any agreement reached with the Libyan authorities needs to be in line with international human rights standards. European states can be held accountable for any human rights violations migrants are subject to.

“We remind the Libyan authorities and all other Governments that compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law norms is essential in the current climate of impunity and that justice must prevail,” they concluded.

[Joint press release of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union](#)

**European Commission
29 November 2017**

The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini met this morning in the margins of the African Union/European Union Summit to discuss concrete steps to address jointly the dramatic situation of migrant and refugee victims of criminal networks, in particular inside Libya.

They agreed to put in place a joint EU-AU-UN Task Force to save and protect lives of migrants and refugees along the routes and in particular inside Libya, accelerating the assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin, and the resettlement of those in need of international protection. This action will build on, expand and accelerate the ongoing work done by countries of origin, and the IOM, with EU funding, which allowed so far the voluntary return to their countries of origin of 13,000 migrants since January.

The work of the Task Force will be closely coordinated with the Libyan authorities and be part of the overall joint work that the African Union and the European Union, and the United Nations, will intensify to dismantle traffickers and criminal networks, and to offer opportunities of development and stability to countries of origin and transit, tackling root causes of migration.

The United Nations, the African Union and the European Union agreed to upgrade in a systematic manner their trilateral cooperation and to meet on a regular basis at the highest political level, notably in the margins of the UN General Assembly.

[EU Africa Summit: Footage of slave auction shows human cost of inexcusable migration deals](#)

**Amnesty International
27 November 2017**

Shocking footage of a slave auction of migrants in Libya released by CNN must serve as a wake-up call to European and African leaders that deals struck to prevent migrants and refugees from leaving Libya are exposing them to horrific human rights abuses, Amnesty International said today ahead of a key meeting between the European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) this week.

“The footage of human beings being auctioned off by other human beings has shone fresh light on the horrific plight of those trapped in Libya. But none of the leaders meeting in Abidjan should feign surprise.” said John Dalhuisen, Regional Director for Europe at Amnesty International.

“For years, we have documented how refugees and migrants stuck in Libya are exposed to arbitrary detention, torture, killings, rape, extortion and exploitation.

“EU migration policy has increasingly prioritised preventing refugees and migrants from reaching Europe, in the full knowledge that doing so is facilitating the abuse of hundreds of thousands of women, men and children who are trapped en route.

“By funding, equipping and instructing Libyan authorities responsible for serious human rights violations against refugees and migrants, EU countries, and Italy in particular, have become complicit in their abuse.”

“European and African leaders must hold each other to account at the forthcoming Summit and reject any partnership that violate people’s human rights. AU leaders need to draw the line, and push the EU and its member states to open more safe and legal routes for refugees and migrants,” said John Dalhuisen.

[IOM UK hosted event on the trafficking and exploitation risks faced by children and youth on the move to Europe](#)

**International Organization for Migration
18 October 2017**

To mark Anti-Slavery Day in 2017, IOM UK hosted an event drawing on the findings of the IOM and UNICEF joint report ‘Harrowing Journeys’ launched in September 2017. The event brought together speakers from IOM, UNICEF UK and the Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart, former co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Trafficking. The

event was moderated by Lucy Lamble, Associate Editor for Global Development at the Guardian.

Harrowing Journeys shows that while all migrants and refugees are at high risk, children and youth on the move are far more likely to experience exploitation and trafficking than adults aged 25 years and above.

The report also highlights that travelling on the Central Mediterranean route is particularly dangerous, with most of the migrants and refugees passing through Libya where state institutions are weak and lawlessness and violence widespread.

Alieu, 17, who travelled through Libya on his journey from the Gambia to Italy, where he is seeking asylum, described shockingly pervasive violence: "Everybody has a gun," he says. "Small boys – that's what really surprised me – old men. Everybody has an AK-47."

"The lack of safe and regular migration pathways heightens the risk of trafficking and exploitation for children and youth on the move" said Irina Todorova, Senior Regional Migrant Assistance Specialist (Counter-Trafficking and Child Protection), IOM Regional Office for the EU, Norway and Switzerland.

UNICEF has been gathering evidence to support the protection of children which shows that perpetrators benefit from the existing flaws in the system. "Safer legal routes mean smugglers and traffickers have fewer opportunities to exploit children" said Stefan Stoyanov, Senior Policy and Advocacy Adviser (Trafficking and Exploitation), UNICEF UK.

Children who are alone and seeking sanctuary are always vulnerable and at high risk of abuse and exploitation. The narrowing of legal channels to the UK pushes these children into the hands of traffickers. The Dubs scheme provided a legal route for children to come and live safely in the UK. However, the chaotic manner in which it was enacted on the ground has created a lack of trust in official pathways resulting in children putting themselves at harm and turning to criminals to help them make their journeys to Europe.

Discussions during the Q&A session focused on practical steps the Home Office and Police can take to support children following the trauma of their journeys and the exploitation and abuse they have faced. Frontline professionals with a duty of care who encounter children called for safeguards to be guaranteed in existing procedures, to ensure that children are protected.

"A child is a child and we all have a responsibility to protect them" said the Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart.

The report findings emphasise the urgent need for action to protect those most vulnerable on the move. These include establishing safe and regular pathways for children on the move; strengthening services to protect migrant and refugee children whether in countries of origin, transit or destination; finding alternatives to the detention of children on the move; working across borders to combat trafficking and

exploitation; and combatting xenophobia, racism and discrimination against all migrants and refugees.

Children and youth are at the heart of IOM's global mandate on migration. IOM will continue to provide protection and assistance to migrant children and youth, especially unaccompanied and separated children and youth.

To read the full report please click on the following link:

https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/press_release/file/Harrowing_Journeys_Children_and_youth_on_the_move_across_the_Mediterranean.pdf

Foreign Secretary visits Libya: August 2017

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

23 August 2017

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson pledges UK support to tackle migration and the terrorist threat from Libya.

The government is stepping up efforts to deal with threats posed to the UK from Libya as the Foreign Secretary makes his second visit to the country in less than 6 months.

The Foreign Secretary has been in Tripoli today where he met with the Libyan Prime Minister, Fayyez Al-Serraj, to discuss what more the UK can do to support the Government of National Accord and the UN-led political process to help stabilise Libya.

The Foreign Secretary also outlined a package of additional support to help Libya deal with the terrorist threat and to tackle illegal migration. This includes:

- £3 million to remove improvised explosive devices from Sirte, following the success in pushing Daesh out of the city earlier this year.
- £1 million to fund demining training across Libya, including in Sirte and Benghazi.
- £1 million to help rebuild critical infrastructure and restore basic public services through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UK has already contributed £1.5 million to the UNDP since 2016.
- £2.75 million to support women's participation in peace-making and rebuilding Libya.
- £1.29 million of new UK aid funding over the next 2 years to support displaced people with food, essential hygiene items and urgent healthcare needs.

The government has also agreed to increase its engagement with the Libyan law enforcement authorities to tackle organised crime and trafficking, building on the work the UK is already doing with European partners to strengthen the ability of the Libyan Coastguard to secure its own borders in a manner which respects international law.

During his visit to Tripoli, the Foreign Secretary met with the Libyan Naval Coastguard to hear about their UK training. Delivered by the Royal Navy, training has focused on activities such as search and rescue, boarding and inspecting vessels, human rights and the treatment of migrants.

Speaking from Tripoli, the Foreign Secretary said:

“Libya is the front line for many challenges which left unchecked can pose problems for us in the UK – particularly illegal migration and the threat from terrorism.

“That’s why it is so important that we work with the Libyan government and our partners to help bring stability to Libya, stopping it from becoming a fertile ground for terrorists, gunrunners and people traffickers in close proximity to Europe.

“This means supporting the new UN Representative and the political process, but it also means practical efforts too – including the new kit we are providing to make Sirte safer for Libyans and the work we are doing to ensure that the Libyan coastguard can secure their own borders, reducing the number of illegal migrants heading for Europe.”

During his visit, the Foreign Secretary met with Libyan Prime Minister Fayyez Al-Serraj, Foreign Minister Mohamed Siala and the President of Libya’s High State Council Abdurrahman Swehli. Mr Johnson underlined the importance of Libya’s different political and social groups working together to overcome the current political conflict.

[...]

[Torture, rape and slavery in Libya: why migrants must be able to leave this hell](#)

Oxfam

09 August 2017

Rape, torture and slave labor are among the horrendous daily realities for people stuck in Libya who are desperately trying to escape war, persecution and poverty in African countries, according to a new report by Oxfam and Italian partners MEDU and Borderline Sicilia.

The report features harrowing testimonies, gathered by Oxfam and its partners, from women and men who arrived in Sicily having made the dangerous crossing from Libya. Some revealed how gangs imprisoned them in underground cells, before calling their families to demand a ransom for their release. A teenager from Senegal told how he was kept in a cell which was full of dead bodies, before managing to escape. Others spoke of being regularly beaten and starved for months on end.

Oxfam and its partners are calling on Italy and other European member states to stop pursuing migration policies that prevent people leaving Libya and the abuse they are suffering.

158 testimonies, of 31 women and 127 men, gathered by Oxfam and MEDU in Sicily, paint a shocking picture of the conditions they endured in Libya:

- All but one woman said they had suffered from sexual violence.
- 74% of the refugees and other migrants said they had witnessed the murder and/or torture of a travelling companion.
- 84% said they had suffered inhuman or degrading treatment, extreme violence or torture in Libya.
- 80% said they had been regularly denied food and water during their stay in Libya.
- 70% said they had been tied up.

Roberto Barbieri, executive director of Oxfam Italy, said:

“These testimonies paint a horrifying picture of the lives of refugees and other migrants in Libya. They are a damning indictment of Europe’s efforts to keep people from escaping violence, slavery and even death.

“These are people who are escaping war, persecution and poverty – and yet in Libya they encounter another hell.

“People must come first: the EU should provide safe routes for people to come to Europe and have access to a fair and transparent processes for claiming asylum.”

Due to a lack of safe and regular routes into Europe for refugees and other migrants, the central Mediterranean route from Libya to Italy has become the major port of entry for those trying to reach Europe. More than 180,000 people arrived in Italy via this route in 2016. Over 95,000 people have already arrived so far this year.

European member states have been pursuing policies preventing people from leaving Libya so they don’t make it to Europe’s shores. These actions expose refugees and other migrants to suffering and death, and this must end.

[13/07/17: Meeting with the UK Ambassador to Libya](#)

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights

13 July 2017

The All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) met with the UK Ambassador to Libya, H.E. Peter Millett, on 13 July, to discuss the political and human rights situation in the country, as well as the appalling treatment endured by migrants there.

PHRG Chair Rt Hon Ann Clwyd MP chaired this meeting, which was off the record.

The PHRG will continue to monitor the situation in Libya closely and to raise its concerns, particularly in connection with the plight of migrants, with the relevant interlocutors.

UK tackles deadly migration crisis in Central Mediterranean

Department for International Development

21 June 2017

On Friday, the Prime Minister will announce new UK efforts to tackle the deadly migration crisis in the Central Mediterranean.

A new three year programme to tackle the migration crisis will help reduce the number of people risking the perilous Central Mediterranean route to Europe, and get humanitarian support to those in desperate need, the Prime Minister will announce while at the European Council on Friday.

Speaking at the European Council in Brussels, the Prime Minister will confirm details of the package which will enable voluntary returns and reintegration for those already in transit, get lifesaving food, clean water and medical care to those in need, and tackle people trafficking and smuggling.

Taken together, this will not only save lives, but also reduce the need for dangerous journeys and reduce irregular migration – which is also in Britain’s national interest.

The new UK support will initially target transit routes running from the Horn of Africa and West Africa through to countries including Niger, Egypt and particularly Libya, where growing numbers are looking to make the dangerous crossing into Europe. In 2016, a record 181,000 people arrived in Italy via this route, with a greater number expected in 2017. Of the 5,000-plus migrants who died at sea last year, the vast majority – nearly 4,600 – lost their lives on this Central Mediterranean route.

The commitment announced today builds on existing UK action to tackle the underlying drivers of the migration crisis including conflict, disease and instability, and help create jobs, education and opportunities so that people are able to build a better future for themselves closer to home.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

“The UK has been at the forefront of responding to the migration crisis and our work to date has helped reduce total migrant numbers to Europe since 2015. But worryingly, more and more people are now using the incredibly dangerous Central Mediterranean route.

“This new UK support will provide desperately needed aid and protection to tens of thousands of the world’s most vulnerable. But critically it will also make clear the massive risks involved at every stage of this route and provide alternatives so those who change their minds can return home.

“As well as saving lives, this will provide vulnerable people with meaningful alternatives to the treacherous crossings into Europe. Building on our existing work to deal with the root causes of migration, this approach is about using our aid in a smart way, as part of a

coordinated approach across Government, to provide protection to people who need it and serve Britain's national interests."

The new £75 million package will be delivered over the course of the next three years. It will retain a degree of flexibility to allow prioritisation of emerging needs, but the initial focus will include:

- supporting those who want to return home by facilitating travel and helping with reintegration on their return;
- providing lifesaving food, clean water, and medical care to the most vulnerable refugees and migrants, including those making desert crossings;
- funding to the International Organization for Migration and United Nations High Commission for Refugees' Emerging Resettlement Country Mechanism, providing financial and technical support to create the necessary infrastructure and systems in countries capable of hosting resettled refugees – this includes countries in Asia and Latin America;
- supporting governments in Africa on transit routes to improve the management of migration and make it safer – for example by improving the capacity to provide protection to asylum seekers and refugees, and to tackle people smuggling and trafficking at a local level; and
- providing flexible funding for unexpected humanitarian needs, such as sudden spikes in the number of arrivals, extreme weather, flooding or outbreaks of disease.

22/02/17: Showing of "Libya's Migrant Hell"

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights 23 February 2017

The All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) organised a screening of Ross Kemp's powerful documentary "Libya's Migrant Hell", followed by a Q&A with Ross (RK), the film's producer Jamie Welham and director Marta Shaw, on 22 February, to raise greater awareness about the appalling suffering of those making the journey through Libya to the coast in an effort to reach Europe, including those held in official and unofficial detention facilities in the country and those in the hands of highly organised people-trafficking networks, and the urgent need for the international community to do more to alleviate that suffering.

The PHRG would like to thank PHRG Chair Ann Clwyd MP for chairing the meeting, and Baroness McDonagh and her staff for assisting with the organisation.

The film can be viewed using this link: <https://vimeo.com/200699175> Password: Libya11

The main points made during the Q&A following the screening were as follows:

- Ross Kemp said that though he usually had some sense of hope about how problems raised in his films could be addressed, he felt that right now, given NGOs are not able to operate in Libya, he didn't see answers in the short- or long-term.

- In a response to a question from Brendan O'Hara MP about the locations at which migrants are being held in Libya, RK said that some 7000 are in official detention centres. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) sends some migrants back home on flights. It was rumoured, however, that many migrants were being dumped on the Libyan border.
- In a response to a question from Lord Hussain about what the UK and EU should be doing as a matter of urgency, RK said that ultimately a political solution was required in Libya, but that the UK and EU also had to ensure more people were made aware of the perils of the journey to dissuade them from attempting it.
- Amnesty International UK stressed the need for more safe legal routes for those entitled to international protection.
- In a response to a question from Joan Ryan MP about assistance available to migrants and refugees in Libya, RK said that only the Libyan Red Crescent was very active and that IOM was helping send people back to their home countries.
- In a response to a question from Natalie McGarry MP about migrants' expectations on their arrival in Europe, RK said that many who made it to Europe worked in the black economy, but did not tell the truth to those back home about what their lives are really like because they did not want to lose face.

6. Opinion pieces

[Returned migrants are being robbed, raped and murdered in Libya](#)

OHCHR

**Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
08 September 2017**

Last week, in Paris, seven European and African heads of state or government agreed a plan of action on migration and asylum, linked to movements from sub-Saharan Africa via Libya to Europe. The final text acknowledged a shared responsibility to address the root causes of irregular migration and the human rights abuses faced by migrants, the need to protect those who need protecting and support for the contribution of regular and well-managed migration.

These are important commitments, but they do not disguise the fact that the plan is geared primarily towards stopping people en route to Europe.

There is no simple solution to this most complex of issues, no magic bullet that will reconcile the pressures on people to escape war, persecution or poverty, climate change and other man-made disasters, with the reluctance of European nations to accept large numbers of migrants and refugees.

Perhaps the most worrying omission in the Paris document, is a failure to draw up a detailed blueprint to tackle the hidden human calamity that continues to take place within Libya, and along its coast.

Last December, a report issued jointly by my office and the UN Support Mission in Libya detailed the horrendous violations and abuses faced by migrants in official and unofficial detention centres in Libya. The report received some attention at the time, but memories are short when facts are inconvenient.

Nine months later, the situation has, if anything, grown worse. Allegations pour in, far beyond our capacity to verify them. Reports of bodies in the desert, in the forest, on the beaches. UN human rights staff contact the morgues in various towns, which complain they do not have enough space to store all the bodies. Some migrants die of thirst, hunger or easily-cured illnesses, some are tortured or beaten to death while working as slave labour, others are just casually murdered.

The unidentified bodies are buried in unmarked graves. Others simply disappear, unrecorded, unmourned, while somewhere in a far-flung country south of the Sahara, relatives wait anxiously for news that will never come. Apart from them, hardly anyone appears to care.

Our staff also document the rape of women in detention. They find ways to meet women who are locked up all day by men – the same men who organize their rape by night. In some cases, every night. We talk to these women, but are powerless to extract them from this ghastly fate. Such rape is endemic. Yet, both inside and outside Libya –

despite reports like our one of last December, or articles like this – hardly anyone appears to care.

The information we receive is sketchy. We only hear from some parts of the country. Other parts are too dangerous to access, either for UN staff or others who might pass on the information. We cannot even guess the scale of the abuses inflicted on migrants in all these hidden places, untouched by the rule of law. The situation of migrants crossing Libya was appalling during Gaddafi's era, but it has become diabolical since.

And here lies the moral – and legal – dilemma for the EU. When we interviewed migrants in Italy, we found many had been picked up by the Libyan Coast Guard during their initial attempts to escape. It didn't stop their desperate efforts to reach Europe, it just made them more desperate after they were delivered back to the clutches of militias and state employees who exploit and abuse them. Returning people to detention centres where they are held arbitrarily, and face torture, rape and other serious human rights violations is a clear breach of the international law prohibition of 'non-refoulement'.

The EU, and Italy in particular, are committed to supporting the Libyan Coast Guard – a coast guard that has shot at NGO boats trying to rescue migrants at risk of drowning – with the result that the NGOs now have to operate much further out to sea. A coast guard that sometimes rescues migrants in distress – but sometimes chooses not to. Like the militias onshore, coast guards also sometimes beat, rob and even shoot the migrants they intercept. Some European authorities play down the behaviour of a coast guard which jeopardises lives, while criticizing the NGOs trying to save them.

Yesterday, 7 September, the President of one of those NGOs, Joanne Liu of Médecins Sans Frontières, published an open letter in which she described the horrendous conditions she and her staff have encountered in the detention centres, and decries what she describes as the "cynical complicity" of those who support returning migrants to Libya while turning a blind eye to what is going on there. I fully support her analysis, and share her disgust at this situation.

I do not wish to downplay the Paris agreement, which contains the important recognition that a comprehensive response is needed to this complex situation. But it is very thin on the protection of the human rights of migrants inside Libya and on the boats, and silent on the urgent need for alternatives to the arbitrary detention of vulnerable people.

Serious action is needed to protect the hundreds of thousands of migrants bottled up in Libya, as innocent people continue to die or be maltreated every single day, on land and at sea. We should not continue to avert our eyes from this brutal reality.

Libya: Open letter - European governments are feeding the business of suffering

Médecins Sans Frontières

Dr Joanne Liu

06 September 2017

Dear European Leaders,

What migrants and refugees are living in Libya should shock the collective conscience of Europe's citizens and elected leaders.

Blinded by the single-minded goal of keeping people outside of Europe, European funding is helping to stop the boats from departing Libyan waters, but this policy is also feeding a criminal system of abuse.

The detention of migrants and refugees in Libya is rotten to the core. It must be named for what it is: a thriving enterprise of kidnapping, torture and extortion. And European governments have chosen to contain people in this situation. People cannot be sent back to Libya, nor should they be contained there.

MSF has assisted people in Libyan detention centres in Tripoli for over a year, and has witnessed first-hand the scheme of arbitrary detention, extortion, physical abuse and deprivation of basic services that men, women and children suffer in these centres.

I visited a number of official detention centres last week and we know that these official detention centres are just the tip of the iceberg.

People are simply treated as a commodity to be exploited. They are packed into dark, filthy rooms with no ventilation, living on top of one another. Men told us how groups of them are forced to run naked in the courtyard until they collapse from exhaustion. Women are raped and then made to call their families back home asking for money to be freed. All the people I met had tears in their eyes, asking again and again to get out. Their despair is overwhelming.

The reduced numbers of people leaving Libyan shores has been lauded by some as a success in preventing loss of life at sea, and smashing smugglers' networks.

But with the knowledge of what is happening in Libya, that this should be lauded as a success demonstrates, at best, pure hypocrisy and, at worse, a cynical complicity in the organised business of reducing human beings to merchandise in human traffickers' hands.

The people trapped in these well-documented, nightmarish conditions in Libya need a way out. They need access to protection, asylum and increased voluntary repatriation procedures. They need an escape to safety via safe and legal passage, but, to date, only a tiny fraction of people have been able to access this.

This horrific violence against them must stop; there needs to be a basic respect for their human rights including access to sufficient food, water and medical care.

Despite declarations by governments that improvements need to be made to peoples' immediate conditions, this is far from happening today.

Instead of confronting the vicious cycle that their own policies are creating, politicians have hidden behind unfounded accusations towards NGOs and individuals who attempt to help people in dire straits. During its search and rescue operations at sea, MSF has been shot at by the European-funded Libyan Coast Guard and repeatedly accused of collusion with traffickers. But who is colluding with criminals here? Those seeking to rescue people, or those enabling people to be treated like a commodity to be packed and sold?

Libya is just the most recent and extreme example of European migration policies which go back several years, where a primary objective is to push people out of sight. The EU-Turkey deal from 2016, what we have seen in Greece, in France, in the Balkans and beyond, are a growing trend of border closures and push backs.

What this does is close options for people who seek safe and legal ways of coming to Europe and pushes them further and further into the smugglers' networks, which European leaders insist they want to dismantle. Safe and legal avenues for people to cross borders are the only way to eliminate the perverse incentives that allow for smugglers and traffickers to thrive whilst at the same time fulfilling border control objectives.

We cannot say that we did not know that this was happening. The predation on misery and the horrific suffering of those trapped must end now.

In their efforts to stem the flow, is allowing people to be pushed into rape, torture and slavery via criminal pay-offs a price European governments are willing to pay?

Yours sincerely

Dr Joanne Liu
International President, Médecins Sans Frontières

7. Further reading

[Lord Ahmad addresses Amnesty International](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
12 December 2017

[Libya's dark web of collusion: Abuses against Europe-bound refugees and migrants](#)

Amnesty International
11 December 2017

[African Union-European Union summit 2017: Joint statement on the migrant situation in Libya](#)

01 December 2017 2017

["Those responsible for war crimes and other serious crimes in Libya must not escape justice"](#)

UK Mission to the UN
Susan Dickson
08 November 2017

[Statement to the United Nations Security Council on the situation in Libya, pursuant to UNSCR 1970 \(2011\)](#)

International Criminal Court
Fatou Bensouda
08 November 2017

Operation Sophia: a failed mission

- [House of Lords European Union Committee](#), HL 5 2017-19, 12 July 2017
- [European Commission response](#), 03 August 2017
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office response](#), 14 September 2017

[A call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking](#)

Department for International Development/10 Downing Street
20 September 2017

[Harrowing journeys: children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation](#)

International Organization for Migration and UNICEF
12 September 2017

'You aren't human any more': migrants expose the harrowing situation in Libya and the impact of European policies

Oxfam
09 August 2017

Libya - Joint Declaration

"Paris agreement"
25 July 2017

Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
20 July 2017

A deadly journey for children: the Central Mediterranean migration route

UNICEF
03 February 2017

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Libya, including on the effectiveness of technical assistance and capacity-building measures received by the Government of Libya (A/HRC/34/42)

UN Human Rights Council and UN Support Mission in Libya
13 January 2017

Libya humanitarian response plan 2017

UN OCHA [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs]
05 December 2016

Libya November 2016 update

Commons briefing paper CBP-7816
01 December 2016

Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2016–17

Foreign Affairs Committee, HC 834 2016-17
25 November 2016

Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options

Foreign Affairs Committee, HC 119 2016-17
14 September 2016

EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Libya

European Commission

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).