



Euro-Med Monitor
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Subject: **EU Should Prevent Refugee Repatriation to Libya**

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H.E. Mr. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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Your Excellency,

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (a Geneva-based human rights organization), is greatly concerned with the ongoing repatriation of asylum seekers and refugees to Libya.

As part of the bilateral agreement between Libya's coastguard and European Union member states, such as Italy, aimed to essentially prevent people from reaching Europe by boat, more than 2,300 people have been apprehended at sea and returned to camps in Libya since January 2019.

This has significantly contributed to further increasing the dire situation of refugees in Libyan camps and has put enormous pressure on Libya's capacity as a war-torn country to absorb more refugees and migrants. It has also led people to choose more life-threatening and seriously dangerous routes in the Mediterranean with a higher risk of drowning in order to avoid repatriation to Libya.

Currently there are 50,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya, while the number of refugees held in illegal detention camps remains unknown.

The seriousness of human rights violations that refugees are subject to, across Libya, cannot be overemphasized. Refugees are prone to exploitation, violence, torture, forced labour and even slavery in some documented instances. Illegal detention camps are currently overrun by violence and chaos, with dreadful hygienic conditions and little or sometimes no access to drinking water.

This catastrophic environment has led to the death of some detained refugees from hunger and disease, amid virtually no capacity for Libya to punish violations of human rights.

Adding to this appalling pile of traumatic experiences that refugees and migrants are subject to in Libyan detention centres, is the fact that the ongoing military conflict in Libya poses mortal dangers to the lives of civilians and refugees alike.

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Few weeks ago, warring factions in Libya, particularly those under the command of Field Marshal, Khalifa Haftar, bombed a refugee detention centre in Tajoura, leading to the death of at least 53 refugees and the injury of 150.

With such atmosphere, the Euro-Med would like to emphasize that repatriating migrants and refugees – who escaped dire conflicts in their countries in pursuit of a safe refuge – to Libya is necessarily the equivalent of sentencing them to death, as the current situation in Libya is no less dangerous – and is sometimes even worse – than the countries refugees are fleeing from.

Furthermore, the Euro-Med is deeply concerned that the bilateral arrangements between EU members states, like Italy, and Libya's coastguard to repatriate refugees to such appalling detention camps in Libya, might spread to other EU member states and become the new norm, if not firmly and immediately addressed with proper drastic measures.

Therefore, the Euro-Med demands that immediate action be taken by the UNHCR to stop this alarming status quo in which refugees escaping death and conflicts are essentially turned back to ever-deteriorating and seriously dangerous detention camps in Libya.

For more information regarding the serious dangers that await repatriated refugees to Libya, please feel free to write our team.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Kindest Regards,

Muhammad Shehada
Europe Regional Manager and Policy Officer