



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Directorate A – International & Horizontal Affairs
A.3 – **International Affairs**

Brussels
HOME.A.3/MB

Dear Sirs,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 18 October 2021, which the Commission has considered with real concern. I am now replying to you on behalf of the Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Margaritis Schinas, to whom you addressed your letter.

The loss of life during the security operation that Libyan authorities carried out in the Al-Mabani detention centre in the first week of October shocked the world, including the Libyan public. I send you my sincere condolences upon the passing of your friend and other detainees who tragically died as a result of that operation.

The deplorable situation and treatment of migrants in Libya's detention centres is a source of real concern for the European Union. We continue to raise this very issue at the highest level with Libya's interim executive, including during the recent visits to Tripoli by the High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell, Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi. The European Commission also provides lifesaving assistance and protection services and support efforts to establish standardised procedures that ensure that Libyan authorities accommodate migrants rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard in reception centres that meet international humanitarian standards.

The European Commission has also expressed strong concerns about the situation of large numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers gathered outside the Community Day Centre in Tripoli, and we have called on Libyan authorities to adhere to UNHCR's guidance so as to avoid impediments to UNHCR's work at this centre.

The EU places human rights at the heart of its efforts to improve conditions for refugees and migrants in Libya. Our general objective vis-à-vis Libya remains saving lives, protecting those in need and combatting trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling. The EU provides substantial support to vulnerable migrants so that they may voluntarily return and reintegrate into their countries of origin. We also seek to enable legal pathways, including resettlement, for those in need of international protection.

The EU continues to stress, jointly with its international partners in the United Nations and the African Union, and in its interactions with Libyan authorities, that Libya must end the arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees and find alternatives to detention. The situation in these detention centres remains wholly unacceptable.

The European Commission has put in place a comprehensive range of actions to assist Libya in better managing migration in line with international standards. We work with UN Agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and NGOs to try to improve the conditions of migrants and refugees in Libya, provide protection, promote alternatives to detention and establish safe spaces for the most vulnerable. We have also stepped up assistance to migrants and refugees to help address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supported by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR have carried out the basic repair of infrastructure in official detention centres managed by the Libyan Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration. These works have sought to improve hygienic conditions and basic infrastructure.

The European Union also works closely with Member States and UNHCR to make sure that resettlement pledges are implemented as swiftly as possible, especially as concerns resettling the most vulnerable refugees evacuated from Libya to Niger and Rwanda, and that direct resettlement and humanitarian corridors from Libya continue to function. Since November 2017, 6,583 persons have been evacuated or resettled from Libya: 1,761 people through resettlement in EU Member States; 813 individuals via humanitarian evacuations to Italy; 3,361 persons via the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger; and 648 persons via the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Rwanda.

Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) from Libya remains an immediate and necessary life-saving option for stranded migrants who wish to return home and rebuild their lives. The voluntary humanitarian return programme responds to the humanitarian and protection imperatives of vulnerable and stranded migrants. The EU Trust Fund has made a substantial financial contribution to the return of 53,505 migrants from Libya to their countries of origin since 2015, implemented by IOM.

While evacuation flights have recently resumed, the number of humanitarian evacuation and resettlement places provided by third countries remains limited. Therefore, priority is given to refugees most at risk, including vulnerable individuals.

The EU, along with the United Nations and the African Union, has also been seeking to revitalise the Trilateral Task Force for Stranded Migrants in Libya to continue the evacuation of persons of concern from Libya via the Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda or via direct resettlement in third countries. I can assure you that the EU will do everything in its power, so that these mechanisms continue to operate and continue saving lives.

I assure you that the EU continues to work actively to address the plight of refugees and migrants in Libya's detention centres.

Yours faithfully,

Davinia WOOD
Head of Unit

[E-signed]