# The Past is not Past: The History and Context of Human Trafficking for Ransom in Libya

**Chapter** · January 2023

CITATIONS
0

**3 authors**, including:

Morgane Wirtz
Tilburg University
**16** PUBLICATIONS **34** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

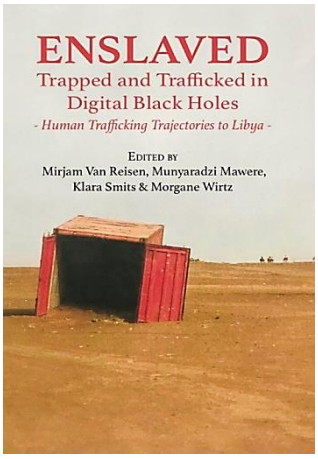
Mirjam van Reisen
Leiden University
**122** PUBLICATIONS **575** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

# The Past is not Past: The History and Context of Human Trafficking for Ransom in Libya

*Morgane Wirtz, Dion Ferdi de Vries & Mirjam Van Reisen*

**Chapter in: Enslaved**
Trapped and Trafficked in Digital Black Holes:
Human Trafficking Trajectories to Libya

**From the book Series:**
Connected and Mobile: Migration and Human Trafficking in Africa




Cite as: Wirtz, M., de Vries, D. F., & Van Reisen, M. (2023). The Past is not Past: The History and Context of Human Trafficking for Ransom in Libya. In: Van Reisen, M., Mawere M., Smits, K., & Wirtz, M. (eds), *Enslaved Trapped and Trafficked in Digital Black Holes: Human Trafficking Trajectories to Libya*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG, pp. 154-194. Chapter URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367254835_The_Past_is_not_Past_The_History_and_Context_of_Human_Trafficking_for_Ransom_in_Libya Book URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367254851_Enslaved_Trapped_and_Trafficked_in_Digital_Black_Holes_Human_Trafficking_Trajectories_to_Libya

## Contents

## Chapter 5

# The Past is not Past: The History and Context of Human Trafficking for Ransom in Libya[1]

*Morgane Wirtz, Dion Ferdi de Vries & Mirjam Van Reisen*

### Introduction: Crossing the desert is not just a job

*I enjoyed this trip to Agadez. In a fortnight, I had more opportunities to travel out of the city than when I lived here. The problem is that the bandits in the bush are a real threat to the whites. So we are forbidden to leave the town. But this time we had to go out because of the filming. Accompanied by an escort, I was able to see part of the desert that stretches for thousands of kilometres around my host town. I understood the adrenaline and joy that smugglers and traffickers feel when they set out to conquer this untapped land. Playground. Anything can happen. Anything goes. Nature's message is clear: "I am stronger than you".* (Fieldwork diary, Morgane Wirtz, 2 March 2021)

*In Libya, there is a history of smuggling people and goods across the desert. The movement of people has become illegal officially, while being tolerated, and even cultivated, in practice. This has contributed to the rise of human trafficking for ransom. In addition, Europe's migration policies, which have failed to curb migration, have made the practice of trafficking in persons more profitable. This chapter presents the history and context in Libya, which has created fertile ground for the proliferation of human trafficking for ransom.*

The smuggling – of goods and people – across the Sahara is a tradition that has spanned centuries. It is the idea of wanting to curb this practice that is more recent. The same is true for human trafficking. However, in recent times, a new and brutal form of human trafficking

[1] The research for this chapter was undertaken as part of the first author's PhD thesis and will be reused fully or in part for this purpose.

has emerged – human trafficking for ransom. First documented in the Sinai in 2009, Van Reisen, Estefanos and Rijken (2014) describe this new form of human trafficking, in which the victims are tortured for ransom using ICTs to broadcast the torture to relatives to ensure payment, as:

> *[…] particularly brutal and is characterised by abduction, displacement, captivity, extortion, torture, sexual violence and humiliation, commoditisation, serial selling and killing. The 'trafficking' aspect of the phenomenon involves the taking of people against their will or by misleading them and holding them as hostages for ransom and further sale. The trafficking victims are exploited as they are forced to beg for money from relatives, extended family or people in the diaspora to pay the ransoms demanded.* (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2014, p. 23)

These authors note that Eritreans appear to be particularly vulnerable to this form of trafficking: "This situation seems to have had particularly negative consequences for migrants and refugees coming from the Horn of Africa, particularly from Eritrea, as Eritreans constitute a particularly vulnerable category of migrants" (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2012, p. 87).

In their publication, *The Human Trafficking Cycle: Sinai and Beyond*, Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken (2014) picture Berhane on the cover, an Eritrean refugee who Estefanos[2] had interviewed while he was held in captivity for ransom in the Sinai. Berhane had paid a ransom of USD 40,000 and, following his release, was taken to an official detention centre – prison – in Egypt. He was subsequently deported to Ethiopia and moved to a refugee camp for Eritrean refugees in North Ethiopia (Tigray). Berhane then escaped through Sudan and Libya and found himself on the boat that sank near Lampedusa in 2013. He swam. Estefanos found him on the island where a battle was going on over control of the refugees between different law and order agencies in Italy and the Eritrean embassy/Peoples' Front for

[2] Meron Estefanos is a human rights activist, journalist, and radio presenter based in Sweden, who came into contact with Eritrean victims of human trafficking for ransom when they contacted her through her radio programme on Radio Erena (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2014).

Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the ruling party in Eritrea, the very regime from which Berhane was fleeing in the first place (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2014).

Although Sinai trafficking ceased in 2014 (Van Reisen & Rijken, 2015), for various reasons (including the return of Egyptian forces to the peninsula to fight terrorism and the building of a fence in the Sinai between Egypt and Israel, which prevented migrants and refugee from entering Israel), the practice is now seen in Libya – and this phenomenon is on the rise. In 2017, Van Reisen, Estefanos and Reim identified that after Sinai trafficking stopped, it expanded to Libya. They wrote: "There are indications that the same network of smugglers and human traffickers[3] are involved in the organisation of this new trade, including key coordinators" (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Reim, 2017, p. 74). These authors expressed concern about the emergence of a criminal culture, including militias, terrorist organisations and criminal organisations engaging with the refugees (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Reim, 2017), and there are concerns that the European Union (EU) is exacerbating this through funding aimed at the externalisation of its migration policies (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Reim, 2017; see also Tewolde-Berhan, Plaut, & Smits, 2017; Mekonnen & Sereke, 2017).

This point is also raised by Morone (2020) who shows that the economic crisis, the war, and the containment policy driven by the EU have worsened the situation of African migrants in Libya. Morone shows that, paradoxically, European policies to contain migration have led to more African migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (Morone, 2020). Malakooti (2019) shows that the

[3] The term 'smuggler' is used to refer to someone who is paid to organise an illegal journey. A trafficker is also paid to organise an illegal journey, but the purpose is to exploit the migrant or refugee (the legal elements of trafficking are "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit" see https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/human-trafficking.html). These terms are used interchangeably in this chapter in a non-legal way to describe practices, not to draw legal conclusions (see Glossary of Terms).

system of migrant detention, which on the surface is dedicated to containing migrants within African territory, is linked to the smuggling dynamics in Libya:

> *The increased risk of arbitrary detention has also led to the formation of more transnational networks, with migrants attempting to move from the Sahel to Italy within one network, as a way of avoiding detention in Libya.* (Malakooti, 2019, p. 6)

In this chapter, these different sources are gathered and combined with interviews and observations from the authors to set the context of human trafficking for ransom in Libya. This research has a particular spatio-temporal quality, being located in a particular area (Libya, in the context of a relationship with the world outside) and time-period (2017–2021, with a relationship with what remains in people's minds from earlier times).

The research presented investigates the question: *What is the context (current and historic) of human trafficking for ransom in Libya?* This question is formulated to situate current human trafficking practices in Libya in a time and place, acknowledging the fact that these practices emerge and settle in a history and are perpetrated by particular actors. As such, this chapter provides a bird's eye overview of the situation, before we zoom in on the details of human trafficking for ransom in Libya in subsequent chapters.

The next section introduces the methodology employed for research presented in this chapter. This is followed by the findings. Finally, a brief discussion and conclusion are presented.

## Methodology

The methodology detailed here describes the collaborative efforts of the research team Social Dynamics of Digital Innovation in Remote non-Western communities (SDDI). This team worked under the leadership of Van Reisen, who acted as principal investigator. The full methodology of the research underpinning this book can be found in Chapter 3: *Skin in the Game: Methodology of an Ethnographic Research with Exposure to Trauma*. The methodology uses a spatio-temporal analysis

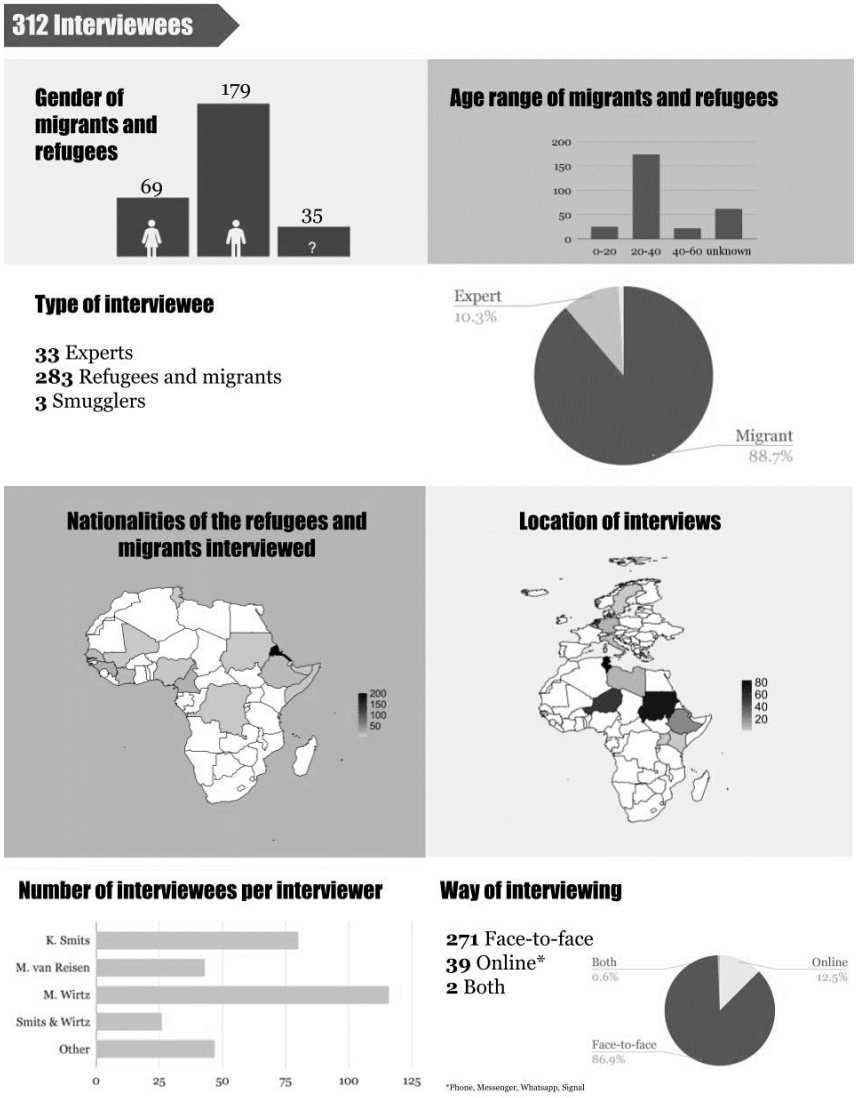
of the context of human trafficking for ransom in Libya, and provides an overview of the situation to describe the context in which the events studied in this book are situated.

The main material obtained for the ethnographic research was collected through participatory fieldwork. Observations and other material collected in various locations, both in-person and through digital communication, informed the background of this chapter. This material included reports, videos, social media posts, photographs and other information, collected and sent to us by resource persons in social media spaces and in personal communications, using participatory ethnographic research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016) and netnography (Kozinets, 2017).

The large majority of the interviews analysed in this chapter were carried out between March 2019 and December 2021 by Morgane Wirtz, Klara Smits and Adoum Moussa. Interviews by Mirjam Van Reisen were conducted in small focus groups, and several interviews from her previous research have been re-used for the purposes of this chapter. The SDDI research includes 312 participants in interviews. A total of 213 interviews were conducted and 12 reports based on interviews were analysed. Some of the interviews were with more than one person at a time, including 11 focus group interviews. Two-thirds of the interviewees were male. Of the respondents interviewed, 33 were expert/resource persons and 3 were smugglers (two of which were still engaged in smuggling at the time of their interview). The remaining 283 respondents, or 89%, were refugees and migrants. Of the refugees and migrants, 128 had been trafficked in Libya. Two-thirds of the refugees and migrants who were interviewed were aged between 20 and 40 years. The majority of the interviewees (n=203) were of Eritrean nationality. Others were from: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia. The interviews were held in Belgium, Italy, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, The Netherlands, Niger, Sudan, Tunisia, and online. The majority of

interviewees were in Tunisia (n=83), Sudan (n=73), Niger (n=54) and the Netherlands (n=48).

**Figure 5.1.Overview of interview statistics**[4]




[4] Some interviewees are noted as both expert and refugee/migrant, but only counted once towards the total number of interviewees.

To situate the development of human trafficking for ransom in Libya in a historical context, the first part of this chapter is based on a desk review of publications by academics, experts and leading humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organisations. Using keywords such as 'human trafficking', 'slavery', 'smuggling', AND 'Libya', sources were identified on Google Scholar (academic) and Google (non-academic). After the identification of the first set of articles and books on slavery in Libya, the economy of human trafficking and smuggling and the recent history of Libya, other publications were selected using the snowballing method. This analysis was started by Dion de Vries between May and August 2020 and supplemented by the other authors in 2022. Of the interviews analysed for this chapter, the focus was on the interviews with refugees and migrants (n=119) who have been through Libya. The interviews conducted with Eritrean refugees in 2015 by Van Reisen, Estefanos and Reim (2017) and Van Reisen and Estefanos (2017) were also reused for this chapter, when these helped to understand the history of human trafficking for ransom in Libya.

## A fertile ground: Historic context

### *Thirteen centuries of uninterrupted trade in people*

The historian and anthropologist Tidiane N'Diaye states that the Arab raids in sub-Saharan Africa began in 652, when, in a treaty, the Emir and General Abdallah ben Saïd imposed the forced annual delivery of 360 slaves on the Nubians (who lived in what is currently north Sudan and south Egypt). This uninterrupted trade spanned about 13 centuries, with the raids ended at the beginning of the 20th Century (N'Diaye, 2008):

> *The slave traders transported their 'prey' to the Arab-Muslim world in thousands of caravans via the Sahara desert. This crossing was done with camels and required a perfect knowledge of the natural resources of this vastness. There were certainly enough water points and wells for commercial caravans. But for captive transports, the ordeal was most horrific. It required a stopover to refresh these unfortunate people,*

> *so that they could recover their strength and look presentable, and be sold at the best price.* (N'Diaye, 2008, p. 189 [own translation])

N'Diaye argues that the long years of Arab drain on sub-Saharan Africa created Arab racism towards 'black' Africans. Eric Williams writes "Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery" (Williams, 1944). N'Diaye wrote: "The Arabic word abid (or abd), which meant slave, became from the eighth century onwards more or less synonymous with 'Black'" (N'Diaye, 2008, p. 66 [own translation]).

This history of slavery is also discussed by other authors. Denham, Clapperton and Oudney explored Fezzan in southern Libya between 1822 and 1824:

> *The depth of the well at Meshroo is from sixteen to twenty feet: the water good, and free from saline impregnations: the ground around is strewed with human skeletons, the slaves who have arrived, exhausted with thirst and fatigue.* (Denham, Clapperton & Oudney, 1828, p. 124)

Denham *et al.* describe the horrific scene they encountered as follows:

> *Every few miles a skeleton was seen through the whole day; some were partially covered with sand, others with only a small mound, formed by the wind.* (Denham *et al.*, 1828, p. 124).

This picture is not dissimilar to the situation today, with slavery firmly in existence in modern day Libya (see Chapter 10: *Straight Lines in the Sahara: Mapping the Human Trafficking Routes and Hubs through Libya* and Chapter 12: *Living Skeletons: The Spread of Human Trafficking for Ransom to Libya*).

### *From 1959–2011: Refugees and migrants as pawn*

Since the discovery of oil in Libya in 1959, the country has attracted foreign workers. The majority of them consider Libya to be a country in which they can work and send remittances to their families. This increased in the early 1990s, when Muammar Gaddafi set his sights on Pan-Africanism and became involved with different international organisations to foster development and integration in Africa. He welcomed thousands of African migrants to work and live in Libya.

Between 1998 and 2007, African nationals were allowed to enter without a visa (Malakooti, 2019).

In the early 2000s, Libya experienced an economic boom. Foreign residents arrived in large numbers. Bullying and racist violence worsened, work permits became difficult to acquire and the criminalisation of people from sub-Saharan Africa increased. By 2005, around 1.3 to 1.8 million refugees and migrants lived and worked in Libya, which, at the time, had only around 5.5 million inhabitants (Tsourapas, 2017). The number of people who decided to cross the Mediterranean Sea started to increase. Truong and Gasper state that the Libyan government realised, after the international sanctions on Libya were lifted in 1999, that migration could be a good entry point for negotiations. Denying migrants full legal status allowed the Libyan government to grant African migrants a minimum level of legitimacy, but little protection, and meant that they could be easily deported (Truong & Gasper, 2011).

The Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS's) regional policy of free movement of people, to which Libya belonged at the time, was in contrast to the increasingly stricter border controls and regulations established in Libya's cooperation with the European Union. The result was that a practice of tolerating free movement, including for seasonal labour needs, was combined with an increasingly impossible administrative set of requirements that created an 'illegal' sphere for all people on the move, pushing the facilitation of movement underground, economically enabled by bribes and extortion payments taken from migrants and refugees (Brachet 2010). Eaton (2018), Hüsken (2017) and Micallef (2017) explain that the activities of smugglers were tolerated by the government of Gaddafi. Brachet refers to this as 'remoteness', in which people live in and out of spaces and roles, defined by different sets of rules; in other words, 'remote' from policies and laws of the government:

> *Remoteness, in this sense, translates both a structural vulnerability and a certain form of power – the power to make one's self invisible, unpredictable and hence ungovernable.* (Brachet, 2010, pp. 168–169)

In a system of divide and rule, certain families, tribes and favoured groups had better access to smuggling activities than others (Micallef, 2017; Eaton, 2018). Moreover, tolerating the passage of a limited number of people across the Mediterranean Sea created political influence with European states (Truong & Gasper, 2011; Eaton, 2018). Under Gaddafi, smugglers operated in networks, which were already well established and well-connected outside Libya, to smuggling hubs like Khartoum in Sudan, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Nairobi in Kenya and Asmara in Eritrea (Hüsken, 2017; Micallef, 2017).

According to various sources, the famous Eritrean human trafficker Ismael Abderaza Saleh/Abdurazak Esmail started his smuggling and trafficking activities in Libya around 2005/2006 (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017). A report published by Sahan Foundation and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) states that:

> *In addition to collecting money for the transfer of migrants and refugees across Libya and the Mediterranean, Esmail collects roughly [US] $4,000 for releasing migrants and refugees who may have been captured and placed in various detention centres, and providing them passage to Italy.* (Sahan Foundation & IGAD ISSP, 2016, p. 19)

Hence, it appears that a complex system of human trafficking was already operational in Libya in 2006. This time-point is consistent with an interview held in 2016 on the start of Sinai trafficking, which sets the origin of it in the planning of Eritrean and/or Sudanese weapons convoys heading to the Sinai in 2006 or 2007. According to the interviewee, the convoys were covered with Eritrean refugees, to make sure that drones would not detect the arms. It was then discovered that the extortion of human beings for ransom was 'good business' (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Reim, 2017). Van Reisen and Estefanos suggest that this operation was extended to the human trafficking of Eritreans to Libya and that this operation was led by Ismael Abderaza Saleh (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017).

By 2007, Libya, which was "one of the preferred routes chosen by migrants to reach Europe", had "ceased to become a safe place for

migrants" (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2012, p. 87). This was due to a series of bilateral agreements signed between Libya and Italy, with a view to making the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea much more difficult. The situation particularly affected Eritrean refugees, as "smugglers' favourite people", because Eritreans know very well that "if they go back to their country, it is over for them" (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2012, p. 87). Smugglers know that Eritreans are "a good deal for them" (Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2012, p. 87).

Italy and Libya worked together to make the passage through the Mediterranean Sea more complicated, notably through the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya signed in August 2008 (Camera dei Deputati Italia, 2008; Ronzitti, 2009). With the aim of 'combating illegal immigration', the Italian authorities tried to control the migratory flows from Libya to the Mediterranean Sea. In parallel with these policies, Libya has also worked on controlling its land borders. In 2012, Libya signed agreements on security and joint border control with Algeria, Niger, Chad and Sudan. In the following years, sand walls were erected on the border with Algeria and Niger (Carayol & Gagnol, 2021).

Tightening a web that would render people on the move 'illegal', even though the Libyan economy needed migrants, Libya imposed stricter requirements concerning visas for almost all foreigners after 2007. In 2010, a law was enacted stating that illegal migrants will be condemned to forced labour in jail or a fine of 1,000 Libyan dinars, before being expelled from Libyan territory (Malakooti, 2019). Ill treatment and torture were already being reported by migrants in detention centres (Amnesty International, 2010). By 2009, Human Right Watch reported that detainees were being sold from detention centres into forced labour conditions or released directly into the hands of smugglers, "who would take them into custody, demand more money from their families, and take them once again to the cities along the coast" (Human Right Watch, 2009).

At the same time, Italy and Libya worked together to make the passage across the Mediterranean Sea more complicated, notably

through the agreements of 30 August 2008 (Camera dei Deputati Italia, 2008). With the aim of combating 'illegal immigration', the Italian authorities controlled the migratory flows from Libya to the Mediterranean Sea and, in several cases, boats overloaded with migrants, mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, were intercepted at sea by the Italian authorities and sent back to Libya (Human Rights Watch, 2009). In 2009, one of these refoulements was brought to the European Court of Human Rights. It concerned the interception of three boats, carrying 200 migrants. The Italian authorities intercepted them off Lampedusa and returned them to Libya without identifying the migrants or informing them of their final destination. Known as the 'Hirsi ruling', the case led to a judgement of the Court against the practice, delivered on 23 February 2012. Considering that the situation in Somalia and Eritrea poses serious problems of insecurity, the Court observed that "according to the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] and Human Rights Watch, individuals forcibly repatriated to Eritrea face being tortured and detained in inhuman conditions merely for having left the country irregularly" (European Court of Human Rights, 2012).

The Court found that the Italian authorities failed to register the concerned individuals properly and that the procedure lacked an adequate analysis of their personal situation, thus violating Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits the collective expulsion of foreigners. The Court added that Italy had also violated Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits inhumane and degrading treatment, by intercepting vessels on the high seas and then handing over migrants to the Libyan authorities, where they "risked being subjected to ill-treatment in the requesting country" (European Court of Human Rights, 2012; Van Reisen, Estefanos & Rijken, 2012, pp. 87–88).

In his last years in power, Muammar Gaddafi increasingly used migration as a tool to pressure Europe for his own ends. In 2010, Gaddafi warned Europe that it would turn 'black' unless it got more serious about migration (BBC, 2010). "We don't know what will

happen, what will be the reaction of the white and Christian Europeans faced with this influx of starving and ignorant Africans", Gaddafi stated (BBC, 2010).

In February 2011, the first demonstrations against Gaddafi's regime broke out. The violent repression of the revolutionaries by forces loyal to Gaddafi led to a civil war. In March, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 authorising volunteer countries to intervene in Libya. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began its international military intervention. According to Micallef (2017), Gaddafi responded to NATO's bombings partly by releasing human smugglers from prison. The researcher adds that Libyan security personnel became directly involved in smuggling by rounding up African migrants and sending them on large fishing vessels to cross the Mediterranean, in a last attempt to blackmail Europe (Micallef, 2017). In 2011, the number of illegal border crossings spiked to 64,300, compared to 4,500 in 2010 (Tsourapas, 2017).

***2011 onwards: War as a breeding ground for human trafficking***

In 2011, with the fall of Gaddafi, the country saw a rise in attacks and violence perpetrated against people on the move. In the first months of the war in Libya, it is estimated that more than 400,000 Libyans and 750,000 foreigners fled the country (Morone, 2016). 'Black' people from sub-Saharan countries were hunted down and accused of being mercenaries in the pay of certain factions involved in the conflict. Sub-Saharan Africans were subjected to lynching, arbitrary arrest, murder and public hanging (Bensaad, 2012). The human rights situation worsened. Schmoll (2020, p. 65) writes: "Whereas before the civil war, only a few of the women encountered had been raped, rape seems to have become systematic in Libya from that year [2011] onwards" [own translation].

With the departure of Gaddafi, armed groups rose up to fill the power vacuum and protect their communities. These armed groups took over the tasks and institutions usually assumed by a government, such as security and law enforcement, in the areas they controlled. As factions have taken over these tasks and institutions, the line between

state and non-state actors in Libya has blurred. According to Eaton (2018), in order to preserve their local legitimacy, armed groups rarely seek to extort revenue from local residents:

> *Rather, they seek to generate revenues from clandestine or illicit activities likely to have fewer ramifications for their local reputation. Smuggling is an ideal business in this respect.* (Eaton, 2018, p. 21)

Since the beginning of the conflict in Libya, a war economy has developed in which armed groups fight for access and control of smuggling routes, oil and gas infrastructure, state entities, border posts, transportation infrastructure, and key import and export nodes (Eaton, 2018). Expanding human smuggling and trafficking is only one part of this growing war economy in Libya, which, according to Shaw and Mangan (2014) is comprised of four parts: weapons, migrants, drugs, and smuggled goods. Eaton estimates that the revenue generated by human smuggling in 2016 (for overland travel and the crossing of the Mediterranean) was around USD 978 million, which is equivalent to 3.4% of Libya's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 (Eaton, 2018).

One way for armed groups to generate income is, for example, to charge smugglers for each migrant they allow to pass through the territory they control. Another way is to become directly involved in human smuggling and trafficking activities. Others turn to the establishment and maintenance of migrant detention centres to sell the incarcerated migrants and refugees to human smugglers and traffickers (this is developed in the next section) (Malakooti, 2019). Kidnapping for ransom has become commonplace in Libya and targets Libyans and foreigners. In 2016, a Libyan citizen was released after having paid a ransom of USD 1.4 million (Eaton, 2018).

As it is the armed groups that control the official detention centres, and as these groups are also linked to the Libyan Coast Guard, the memorandum of understanding signed between Libya and Italy in 2017 (for the interception of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea) has in fact opened up a new revenue stream for the armed groups. Armed groups can now make money by letting smugglers work on their

territory or by arresting migrants and selling them (directly on the beach or from detention centres) to smugglers or human traffickers (Contreras, 2016; Eaton, 2018; Malakooti, 2019).

In 2014, the conflict in Libya was at its peak. In Tripoli, the Misrata militias resurrected the former General National Congress (GNC), while the House of Representatives moved to Tobruk in the east of the country near the border with Egypt, under the protection of the Libyan National Army (LNA), headed by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar. By the end of 2014, the number of armed groups operating in Libya was estimated at around 1,600 (compared to 300 in 2011) (ECCHR, FIDH & LFJL, 2021). The Libyan conflict led to increased interconnectivity between armed groups, smuggling and human trafficking groups, and terrorist groups, like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or Daesh), which emerged in the country after the 2011 revolution (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2016).

On 17 December 2015, the United Nations sponsored the Libyan Political Agreement, in an attempt to bring political unity and stability to Libya. Through the agreement, the Government of National Accord (GNA) was internationally recognised, as was the Higher Council of State and the elected House of Representatives (Sawani, 2020; United Nations Security Council, 2015). However, foreign-backed armed groups remained in strong positions. The climate of insecurity led to the development of jihadist factions in the country. Haftar owes his success in the east of the country largely to his fight against the Islamic State between 2014 and 2018. Also in 2016, the jihadists lost control of the town of Sirte, after heavy fighting with Misrata forces, affiliated to the Government of National Union (Wintour, 2016).

Van Reisen and Estefanos (2017) describe how Eritrean refugees were abducted by armed gangs, possibly ISIS, in Libya, with testimonies gathered from interviews conducted in 2015. Given their extremely vulnerable position, Eritrean refugees have little option but to pay what is referred to as the 'ransom' for crossing the Sahara desert to be released by the traffickers (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017, p. 169). Refugees describe how during the journey, which is

arranged by 'facilitators', they come in contact with police at check points, armed militia, and soldiers, and they find it hard to know who is on which side or representing which authority:

> *People saw us as we left and first we were found by Libyan police. I don't know which side they are on. I'm not sure if they are part of the government or the opposition, but they found us anyway.* (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017, p. 171)

This group of refugees was then abducted and taken to what appears to be ISIS controlled areas, where they were split into Christians and Muslims. Around that time, in 2014, refugees reported that ISIS was stationed "to abduct people who cross the Sahara" (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017, p. 172). According to these authors, refugees identify the Eritrean Ismael Abderaza Saleh as "the head of the human trafficking organisation in Libya" (Van Reisen and Estefanos, 2017, p. 173), who set up shop in Libya in around 2005. Other people working for him are involved in the day-to-day business, such as the Eritrean trafficker Kidane (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017).

Between 2014 and 2019, there was growing conflict between the east and west of the country. With the country split into essentially two governments, both of which asserted their claim to power through the support of factions, tribes, militias and armed groups, institutions and resources were up for grabs. To make matters even more difficult, foreign involvement in the civil war has been more prominent since 2019, despite a UN arms embargo. At first foreign involvement was mainly disguised under the claim that intervention was necessary to stop the spread of Islamic extremism, as ISIS had started to take hold in Libya. However, Libya's natural resources and strategic location led to foreign actors establishing their sphere of influence (Badi, 2020; Trauthig, 2020; UNSMIL, 2020).

The Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Khalifa Haftar received much of its military strength from mercenaries and foreign backers such as Egypt, Russia, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, as well as political support from France. The GNA was backed by Turkey, Qatar and Italy. Important clashes took place in spring 2019.

Due to Turkey's increased involvement since 2020, the scales have been tipped in the GNA's favour, as the LNA was pushed back from Tripoli and other strategic towns were retaken. Despite losing control over these areas, the LNA remains a powerful entity in the rest of Libya (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).

Unity in Libya continues to be fragile. The ceasefire between the warring parties has led to the formation of an interim government. The UN-backed peace process has led to Libya's first unified government since 2014, meant to see the country through until elections, which were initially planned for December 2021 (Middle East Eye, 2021).

Since March 2022, there have been two governments in Libya, which are opposed and continue to fight each other: the government of Abdul Hamid al-Dbeibeh, who is the prime minister in Tripoli, and the government of Fathi Bashagha, established in Sirte and supported by Khalifa Haftar. The first assures that he will not give up his position until elections are held. The second assures that he will organise the elections once in power. Other armed groups continue to hold sway in other parts of the country. During the summer of 2022, clashes erupted regularly in Tripoli between several armed groups (Tallès, 2022).

The armed conflict in Libya, which has been going on for more than 10 years, has greatly impacted on the situation of migrants and refugees in Libya. Migrants and refugees have become collateral victims of the war (see Chapter 13: *Hell on Earth: Conditions in Official Detention Centres in Libya*). Several official detention centres holding migrants and refugees have even been targeted by bombings (Amnesty International, 2019; Wintour, 2019). Some migrants and refugees have been forced to take up arms (see Chapter 13). According to Morone (2020), the Libyan conflict and the ensuing economic crisis have also fed human trafficking, in the sense that migrants who had previously seen Libya as a place of work have started to look at it as a land of transit to the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. The proliferation of weapons and the accessibility of certain

drugs are also elements of the Libyan conflict that have favoured the development of human trafficking for ransom.

### *Outlawing migration*

Libya is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, which defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of states to provide protection (UNHCR, 2011). Nor has Libya established a formal framework for the admission, protection or welfare of asylum seekers or refugees. Hence, the UNHCR operates in Libya without full official recognition by the authorities.

Entry into Libya without an official permit is punishable by a fine and indefinite hard labour. Therefore, migrants and refugees who move around the country without a visa are liable to be arrested at any time and incarcerated in a detention centre. There are no guidelines on how long migrants should be detained or on what conditions they can be released (Malakooti, 2019). The distance between the regulations on the one hand and the reality on the ground is what Brachet (2010) refers to as 'remoteness'. As those in charge of the policies are not present on the ground, the reality in the lived situation is totally different from what the policies intend to achieve.

In this sense, the result of the externalisation of the European policy is the opposite of what it intends to do, namely, to prevent people from crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Due to this policy, smugglers and traffickers have had to come up with new routes to avoid authorities, which are often more dangerous, making refugees more vulnerable. To avoid a confrontation with the police, smugglers go deep into the desert, increasing the risk. Accidents and the abandoning of migrants in the Sahara desert have become more frequent. A smuggler interviewed by Wirtz for an earlier publication explained:

> *We created a new road. In the past, it was used by drug traffickers. This road is so far away from everything that if you have a breakdown here, you're sure to die. There are only gazelles there. Sometimes you are even afraid of running over them. It would cause problems for the car.* (Wirtz, 2017)

His colleague added, bitterly:

> *Four months ago, we had a puncture. We couldn't get the tyre off and by the time we got help, nine people had died from lack of water.* (Wirtz, 2017)

When they see the security forces, some drivers prefer to abandon their 'commodities' than be caught red-handed in smuggling (Wirtz, 2019). To avoid being abandoned in the Sahara, many migrants pay for their journey only after they have arrived at their destination. As migrants do not usually take money with them when crossing the Sahara (because it would be stolen by drivers or by bandits), it can take some time after their arrival at their destination before the money is sent by their relatives to the smugglers. Delays in payment are common. But, as a smuggler interviewed by Wirtz in 2017 stated, drivers don't have time to waste:

> *Once in Libya, passengers have to pay. If they don't, it's like a crime. We have taken so many risks! I put them in a room and lock it until they give me the money. They can only go out when it's really too hot. After three or four days, they will definitely suffer from the heat. They will give the money.* (Wirtz, 2017)

Despite the strict regulations, which make people on the move more vulnerable and mean that they have less protection, migrants and refugees continue to enter Libya. The security crisis in Libya did not immediately lead to an economic crisis. In 2012, Libya recorded a staggering 86.8% growth in GDP (World Bank, 2022) and, hence, continued to attract sub-Saharan migrants, who came to Libya to work as part of circular migration. Others considered Libya as a transit country on the way to Europe. The smuggling networks continued to develop and became organised at the international level. At the end of 2011, Syrian refugees started to arrive in Libya, from where they also crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. From 2013, some smugglers start to advertise their services on social media (Malakooti, 2019). As a result, the number of arrivals in Italy increased (UNHCR, 2016).

In 2012, collaboration between the Italian government and Libya on border control resumed and detention centres were (re)opened in Khoms, Benghazi, Gharyan, Sabha, Tripoli and Zawiyah (Morone,

2016). The Libyan Department for Combating Illegal Migration (under the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration [DCIM]) was created. Under the Ministry of the Interior, the mission of the DCIM is to oversee detention centres and to integrate militia-run centres into the state system. The DCIM, which is administratively in charge of the official detention centres, has little oversight on the ground, given that the centres are remote and far from Tripoli where the DCIM officials have their offices (Malakooti, 2019). Malakooti found that:

> *Given the power and influence of armed groups in Libya today, it is impossible for the detention centres, even the official ones, to operate effectively without the support or buy-in of armed groups.* (Malakooti, 2019, p. 6)

On 3 October 2013, 366 migrants died off Lampedusa. Italy set up Operation Mare Nostrum, through which the Italian navy became involved in controlling the Mediterranean Sea, identifying and arresting smugglers and rescuing migrants and refugees in distress at sea (which does not mean that once rescued they are brought to Italy). However, it was criticised for the costs involved and the idea emerged that the sea rescues were a pulling migrants to Italy, knowing that they would be saved by the Italians. Hence, a year after it started, Italy abandoned this initiative. As soon as the Italian government abandoned Operation Mare Nostrum, the number of deaths at sea increased (Camilli & Paynter, 2021). In 2021, 3,231 people were reported to have died or disappeared while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2022).

On 2 February 2017, a new memorandum of understanding was signed between Italy and Libya. In this agreement, the mechanism of interception of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea was reactivated (as in 2009–2010). However, the deportations are no longer carried out by Italy – which was found to be illegal by the European Court of Human Rights – but directly by the Libyan Coast Guard (trained and equipped by Italy). In 2018, Italy closed its ports to humanitarian ships that rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. When asked why

migrants and refugees are still drowning, Carola Rackete, captain of the civil rescue vessel Sea-Watch 3, answered as follows:

> *European Union wants them to drown, to scare those who might attempt to cross. They drown because Europe denies them access to any safe routes and leaves them no options other than to risk their lives at sea.* (Rackete, 2020)

Migrants and refugees refer to those decisions as the 'closure of the Mediterranean Sea'. As with all migration policies, this has had a direct impact on them.

Micallef (2019) notes that the impact of the closure of the Mediterranean Sea and other anti-migration measures, like border controls and crackdowns on smuggling, have led to a broken migration system. Whereas, before, profit could be extracted from the movement of migrants and refugees, now criminal actors are increasingly turning to extortion. "Ransoming, in particular, appears to be on the rise as a result of a shift in modus operandi, with smugglers now seeking to extract greater profit through extortion, as the smuggling business proper becomes more challenging" (Micallef, 2019, p. 3). This has had a direct impact on the experiences of migrants and refugees in Libya, and the time they spend there.

## Migrants and refugees in Libya today: Findings from the interviews

As can be seen from the previous section, the historic context in Libya, the conflict since the fall of Gaddafi, and Europe's (and Libya's) migration policies have created fertile ground for human trafficking. The realisation of the relevance of the history of the slave trade in Libya is present in the perceptions of the people on the move to Libya. This perception was confirmed in the interviews conducted for this research. This section contains excerpts from the interviews conducted with Eritrean refugees and others.

### *Perception of migrants in Libya*

The thirteen century-long slave trade of sub-Saharan African people by Arabs can still be felt in North Africa. Migrants and refugees –

particularly from sub-Saharan Africa – are considered by many Arabs to be inferior. This can sometimes justify their inhumane treatment in the eyes of smugglers.

For example, some smugglers in Agadez from the Tuareg and Tubus ethnic groups stated that the 'passengers', those who come from the coastal countries, were inferior to them (Observation, Wirtz, Agadez, 2018). Often, these people were denigrated because of their lack of knowledge of the desert. This perception can be seen in the following quote by an ex-smuggler, explaining what happens to migrants and refugees abandoned by their driver in the desert:

> *They [the migrants] don't know that you shouldn't walk the desert. When you're out of water, you must stay in one place. Don't lose hope, hold on to hope. If you keep this hope, perhaps God will send someone to save your life. That's how they die. They walk off, in a row. Then it's over, they're dead.* (Interviewee 1001, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, 2018)[5]

Migrants and refugees, particularly if they have black skin, face different forms of racism. A Somali man, talking about Libyan smugglers, shared the following:

> *They don't care about your religion! If you are praying with God, they say: "Why are you praying with God? You are black, God doesn't know you."* (Interviewee 1028, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, May 2020)

A young Gambian man recalled the following:

> *Inside the country [Libya], if you are walking like this, as you are a black man, if they see you they all know you are a stranger. Some people are insulting you. Some people will throw you stones; many, many things like that. Some people also will have understood these people are people they can use for work. Some people will pay you. Some people may give you work, but after, when the work is finished, they will not pay you.* (Interviewee 1043, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, May 2020)

[5] This interview was also published in the documentary Teghadez Agadez (Wirtz, 2019).

Not being paid for work performed is a common experience for migrants and refugees in Libya. Several interviewees explained that they had been treated like, or called, slaves. A man, who had been imprisoned in Tajoura detention centre, recalled the following:

> *Every morning when someone comes there, he says: We need five eubayd", which means 5 slaves. "I need five slaves." Everybody that is hearing that one, they are feeling angry.* (Interviewee 1199, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, January 2020)

An Eritrean man described how he had been treated in Kufra, Southeast Libya:

> *They forced me to work with Libyan people in a garden for six months, without getting money. I was not working for a salary. I was working during the day and during the night I was sleeping in the hall with the other people. He said that if I was not going to work, he would hit me.* (Interviewee 1024, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, November 2019)

As described in the previous section, slavery is part of the historical context of Libya. Nowadays, it is still common to meet migrants or refugees, like the Eritrean man quoted above, who have been forced into slavery.

### *Blocking movement in Libya*

The migrants and refugees also have an awareness of how policies are affecting them and creating certain realities, on which they comment in the interviews. The policies aimed at discouraging migrants and refugees from traveling in northern Africa and Libya's neighbouring countries have had a major impact on human trafficking. As movement itself has been pushed into the realm of illegality, migrants and refugees have become even more vulnerable. It is not possible for them to turn to law enforcement officials if they face abuse by smugglers, traffickers or others. Therefore, they remain hidden and their problems invisible. Journalist Sara Creta explained:

> *Migration is like a movement of people. The link is: as soon as you make this a crime, and you use detention, you increase smugglers, you increase trafficking. Because now these people, all of a sudden, are outside of the community. If they are*

*outside, anything could happen to them. Before, this was a community where the migrants were still sort of within. In some cases it might be smuggling, but not yet trafficking.* (Sara Creta, interview with Smits, face-to-face, April 2019)

Smugglers working in Agadez, Niger, saw human trafficking for ransom starting in west-south Libya after law 036-2015 was implemented in Niger (Interviewees 1079 & 1080, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, October 2019). Since then, any form of trade in migration has been repressed in Niger. Smugglers are hunted by security forces. As explained above, smugglers abandon their passengers in the Sahara if they fear being arrested. Migrants and refugees now prefer to pay once they have arrived at their destination. For many people in Agadez, this explains the proliferation of 'credit houses'[6] in southwest Libya. 'Credit houses', or human traffickers' houses, are places in which migrants are locked until they pay for their trip. A smuggler explained:

*If after three days, the driver doesn't get his money, he takes [the migrant]. There are ghettos [credit houses] where you can bring people. [The chiefs of those places] will give you the money, the rest is not your problem. [...] Now it is between the chief of the ghetto and the migrant. He likes it or not, his parents will pay the money.* (Interviewee 1080, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, October 2020)

Further, the same smuggler specifies:

*The credit houses started when they started banning crossings to Libya. This is in 2016, late 2016. That's when the credit houses started to set up everywhere, in Sabha, in Bani Walid. Because since they closed the borders, there is no more passage to Libya. That's when the credit houses started.* (Interviewee 1080, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, August 2020)

Over time, the modus operandi applied in the credit houses became very similar to what is applied in human traffickers (ware)houses, as described by Eritrean refugees. Some human traffickers have also

[6] See more on the term 'credit house' in the Glossary of Terms.

realised that migrants do not have to be in debt to lock them up and hold them for ransom. An ex-smuggler in Agadez explained:

> *How to betray migrants? You take the migrants and their money [here, in Agadez]. And then, you call someone there [in Libya], someone who puts migrants in [credit houses] and who sell migrants. You always have his number. You call him. And you say: "A driver is going to bring you people. They have not paid yet. They will pay at the destination [once in Libya]. He answers: "Well, anyway, send them to me. If there are people who have not paid, they will pay. Send them here". So, this is the story of [credit houses]. This is how the story of manipulating people started. Smugglers started this. And it is smugglers from here who started this.* (Interviewee 1001, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, 2018)[7]

The same smuggler stated "Nobody can stop migration; migration is a right" (Interviewee 1001, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, 2018).[8]

### *Libyan Coast Guard feeding human traffickers*

Attempts by Europe and the Libyan Coast Guard to prevent people from crossing the Mediterranean Sea – referred to as the 'closure of the Mediterranean Sea' – have had direct consequences for migrants and refugees. A 30-year-old Eritrean man described his attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea in winter 2018. He explains how the push back to Libya drives migrants and refugees back into the hands of the human trafficking organisations:

> *After two days we entered the Mediterranean Sea to go to Italy. Almost four hours. When I am going, I forget all the problems of the store [human trafficker's house]. I have hope. I will see the sea. Maybe tomorrow, I will enter Italy. I will change my life. Also, I will help my sister and my brother. Also, there are many people in Eritrea, I will help them because I know the way. After four hours, we saw the boat of Italia. Everybody was happy. It was far. That is why one person called the telephone. The connection man had given us a telephone. [He had said:] "When you see the boat from Italy, call them to ask for help". The driver of the boat called Italy.*

---

[7] This interview was also published in the documentary Teghadez Agadez (Wirtz, 2019).

[8] This interview was also published in the documentary Teghadez Agadez (Wirtz, 2019).

*But the Italian people called for Libyan soldiers [Libyan Coast Guard], because they cannot enter the international water of Libya. That is why they call Libya. They took all the people. Really at that time, all the people need to die. Really. Because when you are caught, again you will be sold. All the people are thinking [about the fact that] there are many, many connection men[9] in Libya. The Libyan connection men when they catch you in the sea, they will sell you again. That is why all the people are afraid. Some people want to enter the water. They want to kill themselves because they don't want to see that bad life again. So, when caught, we returned back to Libya.* (Interviewee 1004, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, April 2019)

An Eritrean teenager described a similar experience, but he added that some of the passengers in the boat were directly sold to human traffickers from the wharf:

*We tried to enter the Mediterranean Sea. [...] In a boat. Almost 270 people. One boat. All Eritreans. Maybe a few were Ethiopian. After going for seven hours, we were cut by the Libyan Coast Guard. We were brought back to Libya. When I was on the ground of the ship, even when we were returned, I'm thinking that I have reached Italy. [I was in the bottom of the ship], I couldn't see, even the Libyan Coast Guard or the Italian ship. When I reach the ground, I'm expected that I had reached Italy. Unfortunately, I saw some guards from Libya. After that, separately, 30 people were brought back to Qasr bin Ghashir [detention centre]. Unfortunately, 38 persons from us, they were kidnapped by the Libyan Coast Guard. Actually, we don't know what happened to them. [...] Actually, we think that maybe they are kidnapped, but we don't have an idea but, sometimes they do things like this. Some are going back to the detention centre and some people are kidnapped in order to take money from them.* (Interviewee 0010, interview with Smits, face-to-face, July 2019)

[9] In this context, the term 'connection men' is used by migrants and refugees to refer to the person at the top of the network in which they are trafficked (see Glossary of Terms).

A Nigerian man who was interviewed in the south of Tunisia described in detail the collaboration that sometimes exists between the rescue teams, the Libyan Coast Guard and human traffickers:

> *That was on 25 November 2018, he organised pushing one boat. That was a Sunday. [...] Unfortunately, we couldn't confirm [make the crossing]. Our boat had a problem in the Mediterranean Sea. We journeyed for like 12 hours in the Mediterranean Sea. Even an NGO came. Because we called them. They came with a helicopter. They threw life jackets to us. All of us we received a tube, this motorcycle tube. I can say that everybody was protected. We still have life jackets. So our boat had a problem. So, by the grace of God, nobody died in the boat. Even, there was a woman that came with her baby, like one-year-old baby. And six-year-old daughter. So, by the grace of God, nobody died in that boat. So, we called the rescue. The rescue [boat] came. They threw the life jackets. When we were waiting even the water rescue [boat] came, they parked on one side and they watched us – though it was not the rescue ship. They were there looking at us. They were waiting for the main rescue ship to come. Unfortunately, our boat had a problem. Our boat broke up. So, everybody, most of the women were crying, all of that. So, we were there, waiting. Because our captain he was about to drive to meet the ship that was parked there. But all of a sudden, the Libyan Coast Guard came. They arrested us and they brought us back to Libya, to the main city of Khoms. And we had to stay there. That was on Tuesday. We were rescued on a Tuesday. We stayed there, from Tuesday to Friday. We were in pandemonium in that particular place. We had to stay there. So the Libyans, the wicked Libyans, they decided that they will release us, but they will release us like, five by five in number. Not knowing that they have planned to sell everybody to those stupid, to those wicked Asma boys[10] [human traffickers].* (Interviewee 1030, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, January 2020)

Those testimonies – which are only the testimonies of the survivors – show how laws, adopted far away, can have a direct and decisive impact on the life of migrants and refugees. They are the testimonies of drowned hopes, following the closure of the Mediterranean Sea.

---

[10] '*Asma* boys' is a term mainly used by migrants from West Africa to refer to armed people who kidnap migrants and refugees in the streets.

***Push backs feeding human trafficking***

The 'closure' of the Mediterranean Sea has not only led to more deaths, but it has also meant that escaping from Libya is more difficult. A human trafficking cycle has emerged, with migrants being arrested by the Libyan Coast Guard at sea, imprisoned in DCIM detention centres, and from there either sold to human traffickers or released and asked to pay again to cross the Mediterranean Sea (see Chapter 13: *Hell on Earth: Conditions in Official Detention Centres in Libya*). For the three Eritrean refugees quoted below, the closure of the Mediterranean Sea had prompted human traffickers to increase human right abuses and extortion:

> *In 2015, 2016, it was fine to cross the Mediterranean [Sea], but after that, the chance was very small. The Mediterranean was closed. [...] That is why the smugglers, the traffickers, they don't want to send you if you have paid one time. You will pay one time, they will sell you. You will pay three times… Life is like that.* (Interviewee 1059, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, June 2020)

As well as prices increasing, refugees are being sold and resold:

> *Before 2016, every Libyan smuggling worker did not know anything. The Eritrean smugglers [were] paid by dinars. Now everything is known. So, if one Libyan catches you, he wants from you USD 8,000, USD 10,000. Even if you pay, he can sell you [again]. [...] First, we discuss with the smuggler, USD 3,800. After that, when they send us to Sabratha, they try to send a thief. Then the thief asks us for more money. Then the thief says, don't worry, I will out you [let you out]. Just pay USD 1,700 USD. So, you pay USD 1,700. And then the thief again asks us for USD 5,000. That's in Sabratha. Just like a ball. We are a ball, those smugglers are the players.* (Interviewee 1013, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, April 2019)

Even those who have paid large sums do not always survive:

> *There are people who paid, raised money [ranging] from about 10,000 to 20,000 [US] dollars, yet they couldn't make it alive.* (Interviewee 1051, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, June 2020)

The majority of interviews with migrants and refugees conducted for this book were carried out between 2019 and 2021. As time passed, the researcher observed that it became more common for refugees to

report being resold or re-kidnapped and forced to pay the ransom several times.

***Migrants and refugees as collateral damage in the civil war***

As mentioned in the literature review, the war in Libya has had a great impact on migrants and refugees. The clashes that took place in the spring of 2019 left a mark on the minds of African migrants and refugees. Some of them have ideas about the engagement of Khalifa Haftar in the Libyan conflict, and they have positive and negative feelings about this. Some of them stated that Haftar's troops had 'liberated' them. A Senegalese woman interviewed in Agadez a few months after her return from Libya explained:

> *President Khalifa Haftar [...] is the best president for Libya. Since he started to take over the country, the life of migrants is getting better. He has reduced the suffering. Whenever he finds a prison, he breaks it.* (Interviewee 4001, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, August 2020)

Some detainees described being released from human trafficking warehouses in Bani Walid by the troops of Haftar. A Senegalese man shared the following:

> *Yes, Haftar's army, they came there and broke the whole prison, then we went out. Everyone ran. We entered the village. We had no shoes. When I came out, I only had a pair of slim panties. [...] They came to break all the prisons. Then we were taken out. There were 150 of us.* (Interviewee 4002, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, August 2020)

Another migrant who was waiting to be returned to Senegal explained that Haftar's troops liberated him from Tariq al Matar detention centre:

> *We stayed there for four months like that, the flight for Senegal didn't come. Then Haftar's people came and broke the prison of Tariq al Matar. They broke the whole prison, then they let us out, then I came back to Tripoli.* (Interviewee 4003, interview with Moussa, face-to-face, August 2020)

However, from the point of view of this research, whether or not the troops of Khalifa Haftar have a policy of freeing migrants and refugees from the hands of human traffickers remains speculation.

***Conflict providing a push towards Europe***

The insecurity in Libya, intensified by the conflict, is pushing more people to take the dangerous journey to Europe over the Mediterranean Sea. A Guinean man, who attempted the crossing of the Sea in October 2019, explained:

> *I was there. It was hard for us, that's why we say we're going to try our luck to leave Libya. [...] Because there we were stuck. Haftar took the plane up to come and bomb. There were deaths, so many deaths, that I can't stay there now. I left there. I asked the Africans who knows a good network to leave, they gave me the number of an Arab in Zuwarah. I contacted the Arab. He asked us for 2,000 Libyan dinars [USD 405] [to cross the Mediterranean Sea].* (Interviewee 1045, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, May 2020)

Others fled to neighbouring countries, like this Cameroonian man living in Tunis:

> *After everything that happened, the war that started there... the problems with Khalifa Haftar and with the explosions... So we found ourselves in Tunisia quickly. There we worked a bit. If I was in Tripoli [there would be] the troubles of the war every day and night. Always explosions. I'm a bit traumatised. I took the road to Tunisia.* (Interviewee 1036, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, May 2020)

When asked what the impact of peace on migration in Libya would be, a smuggler interviewed in Agadez answered as follows:

> *If there is peace, the credit houses [human traffickers' holding places] at the level of Libya will stop. There are kidnappings because there is no peace. Everybody is free and controls at home [on his territory]. That's why it continues and why they continue to kidnap people, because there is no government, nothing. But if there is peace, I hope that all the credit houses will be closed.* (Interviewee 1080, personal communication with Moussa, face-to-face, 14 October 2020)

The insecurity, the proliferation of armed groups and their empowerment to fight against illegal migration have actually led to more and more people trapped in the human trafficking cycle. Bani Walid is now nicknamed the 'ghost city' by migrants. No one will ever know how many bodies have fallen in the desert and in the sea.

## Discussion

In an attempt to control the 'migration crisis', Europe has externalised its borders. The Libyan Coast Guard is arresting migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea to bring them back to Libya where they are incarcerated in detention centres or sold to human traffickers. An interviewee for this chapter explained that some of the boat passengers preferred to die in the water than to be brought back to Libya (Interviewee 1004, interview with Wirtz, face-to-face, April 2019). Similar testimonies have been published in various press articles (Carretero, 2019; Medina, 2019).

Publications by academics, experts and leading NGOs denounce the forced returns to Libya, which they say are fuelling human trafficking (Contreras, 2016; Creta, 2021; Hayden, 2022). It has been demonstrated by the testimonies given for this chapter that the Libyan Coast Guard collaborates with the smugglers/traffickers; as they are in charge of intercepting migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, they are in a position to 'conduct business' by letting smugglers/traffickers work in their territory or by selling the migrants and refugees they have intercepted to the traffickers (Contreras, 2016; Eaton, 2018; Malakooti, 2019).

As well as the externalisation of Europe's borders, the containment policies in Libya's neighbouring countries have also had an impact on human trafficking. The fact that in 2016, for example, the Sudanese government started deporting Eritrean refugees to Eritrea has led to Eritreans taking the route to Libya or Egypt, where they risk falling into the hands of human traffickers (Van Reisen & Estefanos, 2017). In Niger, Wirtz observed how the adoption of law 036/2015 repressing any form of trade in migration has criminalised an activity that previously took place under the supervision of the authorities. Smugglers who take convoys of migrants to Libya are now severely repressed (Wirtz, 2017). The smugglers testifying in this chapter explained how this has contributed to the proliferation of 'credit houses' in Libya. Migrants and refugees are now travelling in complete illegality, which has made them even more vulnerable. As

their have no legal status in Libya, they cannot turn to law enforcement if they face abuse of any kind. Hence, they remain hidden.

The Libyan civil war has also fuelled human trafficking, with the proliferation of armed groups, which include the facilitation of the activities of human traffickers in their business model. Migrants and refugees encountered for the purpose of this book have explained how the war has impacted on their migration journey. However, a limitation of the research is that most of the migrants and refugees interviewed had travelled through areas controlled by the UN-backed government, whereas the information obtained from Haftar backed areas is scarce. Hence, any analysis of the impact of the war on migration would be entirely speculative.

For the UN's special rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, by indirectly participating in bringing people back to Libya, the EU could be complicit in crimes against humanity under international law:

> *If European countries are paying Libya to deliberately prevent migrants from reaching the safety of European jurisdiction, we're talking about complicity in crimes against humanity because these people are knowingly being sent back to camps governed by rape, torture and murder.* (Hodal, 2018)

Brachet (2010) calls the intricate interplay between the legal structures and agreements, which frame certain situations as more or less 'legal', and what is actually happening on the ground as 'remoteness'. He suggests that through this concept we can obtain a better grasp of the actual consequences or unintended effects of the policies in terms of what happens on the ground. This requires an anthropological in-depth study of the situation (Brachet, 2010). It is clear from this research that the policies designed to stop migration are not having the intended effect and, due to 'remoteness', are not being applied on the ground.

## Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to give the spatio-temporal context (current and historic) of human trafficking for ransom in Libya, from

an external perspective, and set the background for the chapters to come, which present a more emic point of view. And, as can be seen from this chapter, in Libya, the past is not past. After their travel in North Africa in 1828, Denham, Clapperton and Oudney wrote:

> *The horrid consequences of the slave trade were strongly brought to our mind, and although its horrors are not equal to those of the European trade, still they are sufficient to call us every sympathy, and rouse up every spark of humanity.* (Denham, Clapperton & Oudney, 1828, p. 124)

If a journalist could picture the area around some wells in the Sahara or enter a human trafficker's house, we can assume they might find something similar to what these explorers saw two centuries ago.

Hence, to understand smuggling and trafficking in Libya, it is important to remember that people have been earning a living from crossing the Sahara for centuries. It is only in recent years that external actors like the EU have sought to regulate or curb this practice. In addition, the slave trade in sub-Saharan African people by Arabs spans thirteen centuries. This has left a mark on the culture, with sub-Saharan African's perceive by Arabs as the 'other'.

Attempts to outlaw migration on the Central Mediterranean route, while they may have curbed the number of people risking their lives on the route, have increased human trafficking activities and the vulnerability of migrants and refugees. Several interviewees explained that the 'credit houses' appeared only after the criminalisation of smuggling. People on the move are now circulating illegally and have no access to the police or to justice.

In addition, the closure of the Mediterranean Sea has also increased the dangerousness of this migration path. According to the testimonies presented in this chapter, the Libyan Coast Guard intercepts migrants and refugees at sea and brings them back to Libya. This situation is perceived to be feeding human trafficking for ransom because, as detailed in Chapter 13: *Hell on Earth: Conditions in Official Detention Centres in Liby*a, migrants and refugees are sold to human traffickers, either directly by the Libyan Coast Guard or by the guards working in the official detention centres. Having been returned to

Libya, most seek to leave again. This means that, sooner or later, they will return to a smuggler or human trafficker to facilitate the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. This can be referred as the human trafficking cycle, a term first coined in 2014. The situation is exacerbated by the current civil war in Libya, with refugees becoming collateral victims or forced to flee clashes (see Chapter 14: "*Dead-dead": Trapped in the Human Trafficking Cycle in Libya*).

**Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Europe External Programme in Africa (EEPA) for its support, through the project Europe-Africa Response to Human Trafficking and Mixed Migration Flows.

**Ethical clearance**

Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from Tilburg University REC2017/16; REDC # 2020n13; REDC# 2020/01 3a; REDC 2020.139.

**Author contributions**

Morgane Wirtz is the author of several sections in this chapter and provided a first edit of the final version. Dion Ferdi de Vries provided an early draft of this chapter and authored several sections in this chapter. Mirjam Van Reisen provided input and edited the overall text.

**References**

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2020). *Shifts in the Libyan civil war*. [Online]. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 16 June 2020. https://africacenter.org/spotlight/shifts-libya-civil-war/ (accessed 6 October 2022)

Amnesty International. (2010). *"Libya of tomorrow" what hope for human rights?* [Online], Amnesty International, 23 June 2010. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde19/007/2010/en/ (accessed 2 September 2022)

Amnesty International. (2019). *Libya: Horrific attack targeting refugees and migrants at detention centre must be investigated as a war crime*. [Online], Amnesty International, 24 April 2019. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/04/libya-horrific-attack-targeting-refugees-and-migrants-at-detention-centre-must-be-investigated-as-a-war-crime/ (accessed 30 April 2021)

Badi, M. (2020). *Russia isn't the only one getting its hands dirty in Libya: The United Arab Emirates, backed by France, is helping to fuel continued bloodshed in the North African country*. [Online], Foreign Policy, 21 April 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/21/libyan-civil-war-france-uae-khalifa-haftar/ (accessed 21 August 2020)

BBC. (2010). *Gaddafi wants EU cash to stop African migrants*. [Online], BBC, 31 August 2010. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11139345 (accessed 6 October 2021)

Bensaad, A. (2012). L'immigration en Libye: une ressource et la diversité de ses usages. *Politique Africaine*, *125*, March 2012, pp. 83–103. doi:10.3917/polaf.125.0083 (accessed 2 September 2022)

Brachet, J. (2010). *Blinded by security: Reflections on the hardening of migratory policies in central Sahara.* Working Paper 26, October 2010. Oxford: International Migration Institute, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford. https://ora.ox.ac.uk/catalog/uuid:5aec37ef-f98b-4b38-b891-452dad5d9abe/download_file?file_format=&safe_filename=WP26%2BBlinded%2Bby%2BSecurity.pdf

Camera dei Deputati Italia. (2008). *Ratifica ed esecuzionedel Trattato di amicizia, partnerarioato e cooperaione tra la Repubblica italiana e la Grande Giamahria araba libica populare socialista (DDL 2041).* https://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/schedela/apriteleco mando_wai.asp?codice=16pdl0017390

Camilli, A., & Paynter, E. (2021). *Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013–2020.* [Online], The New Humanitarian, 12 January 2021. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/01/12/migration-central-mediterranean-timeline-rescue (accessed 8 September 2022)

Carayol, R., & Gagnol, L. (2021). Ces murs de sable qui surgissent au Sahara. [Online], *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2021. https://www.monde-

diplomatique.fr/2021/10/CARAYOL/63629 (accessed 7 September 2022)

Carretero, L. (2019). *Migrants refusant de débarquer en Libye: "Je préfère mourir sur ce bateau que de retourner en Libye"*. [Online], InfoMigrants, 14 November 2018. https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/13335/migrants-refusant-de-debarquer-en-libye--je-prefere-mourir-sur-ce-bateau-que-de-retourner-en-libye#:~:text=%2Dt%2Dil.-,%22Je%20pr%C3%A9f%C3%A8re%20mourir%20sur%20ce%20bateau%20que%20de%20retourner%20en,%2C%20insiste%2Dt%2Dil (accessed 9 October 2022)

Contreras, N. (2016). *Libya a human marketplace*. Prix Carmignac du Photojournalisme. Paris: Éditions Skira

Creta, S. (Director). (2021). *Libya: No escape from hell*. [Documentary], Java Films. https://saracreta.com/libya-no-escape-from-hell/

Denham, D., Clapperton, H., & Oudney, W. (1828). *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern and Central African in the years 1822, 1823 and 1824 (Volume 1)*. London: John Murray

Eaton, T. (2018). *Libya's war economy predation, profiteering and state weakness*. London: Chatham House. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-04-12-libyas-war-economy-eaton-final.pdf (accessed 6 September 2022)

European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), & Lawyers for Justice in Libya (LFJL). (2021). *No way out: Migrants and refugees trapped in Libya face crimes against humanity*. Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de I'Homme (FIDH). https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/no-way-out-migrants-and-refugees-trapped-libya-face-crimes-against-humanity (accessed 16 January 2022)

European Court of Human Rights. (2012). *Case of Hirsi Jamaa and Others vs. Italy (Application 27,765/09)*. Council of Europe, 23 February 2012. http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-109231 (accessed 20 September 2012)

Hayden, S. (2022). *"My fourth time, we drowned": Seeking refuge on the world's deadliest migration route*. London: Harper Collins

Hodal, K. (2018). Humanity is on path to self-destruction, warns UN special rapporteur. *The Guardian,* 10 December 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/dec/10/humanity-is-on-path-to-self-destruction-warns-un-special-rapporteur-nils-melzer (accessed 7 September 2022)

Human Rights Watch. (2009). *Pushed back, pushed around: Italy's forced return of boat migrants and Asylum seekers, Libya's mistreatment of migrants and Asylum seekers*. [Online], Human Right Watch, 21 September 2009. https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/09/21/pushed-back-pushed-around/italys-forced-return-boat-migrants-and-asylum-seekers (accessed 2 September 2022)

Hüsken, T. (2017). The practice and culture of smuggling in the borderland of Egypt and Libya. *International Affairs*, *93*(4), 897–915. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix121 (accessed 2 September 2022)

Kozinets, R. (2017). Netnography: Seeking understanding in a networked communication society. In: C. Willig & W. Stainton Rogers (2017), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Malakooti, A. (2019). *The political economy of migrant detention in Libya: Understanding the players and the business models*. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, pp. 1–103. https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Final-Report-Detention-Libya.pdf (accessed 2 September 2022)

Medina, J. (2019). *I'd have rather died at sea than return to Libya, says rescued migrant.* [Online], Reuters, 23 November 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-ngo-idUSKBN1XX0DS (accessed 9 October 2022)

Mekonnen, D., & Sereke, W. (2017). Prosecuting Sinai trafficking: An overview of options. In: M. Van Reisen & M. Mawere (eds), *Human Trafficking and Trauma in the Digital Era: The Ongoing Tragedy of the Trade in Refugees from Eritrea*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Micallef, M. (2017). *The human conveyor belt: Trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya*. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. https://globalinitiative.net/wp-

content/uploads/2017/03/GI-Human-Conveyor-Belt-Human-Smuggling-Libya-2017-.pdf (accessed 2 September 2022)

Micallef, M. (2019). *The human conveyor belt broken: Assessing the collapse of the human-smuggling industry in Libya and the central Sahel*. Geneva, Switzerland: The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 1–92. https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Global-Initiative-Human-Conveyor-Belt-Broken_March-2019.pdf

Middle East Eye, & Agencies (2021). *Libya: Parliament approves interim government*. [Online], Middle East Eye, 10 March 2021. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/libya-parliament-approves-interim-government (accessed 6 October 2022)

Morone, A. (2016). Crise de l'État et politiques migratoires dans la Libye post-Kadhafi. In: A. Bozzo & P-J. Luizard, *Vers un Nouveau Moyen-Orient? États Arabes en Crise Entre Logiques de Division et Sociétés Civiles*. Roma: TrE-Press, pp. 243–260

Morone, A. (2020). Les migrations Africaines dans la Libye post-2014: Guerre, crise économique et politiques d'endiguement. *Migrations Société*, *2020/1*(179), 29–42. https://www.cairn.info/revue-migrations-societe-2020-1-page-29.htm (accessed 2 September 2022)

Moussa, A., & Wirtz, M. (Directors). (2021). *TRAMADOL*. [Documentary], 235 Productions. http://www.morganewirtz.com/video/tramadol/

N'Diaye, T. (2008). *Le génocide voilé*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard

Rackete, C. (2020). *Live on Mo. 29 June from 16 o'clock: Carola Rackete Livestream/One year after: Statement by Carola Rackete*. [Online], Sea-Watch, 29 June 2020. https://sea-watch.org/en/29-06-carola-rackete-livestream/ (accessed 14 August 2020)

Ronzitti, N. (2009). The Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New prospects for cooperation in the Mediterranean? *Bulletin for Italian Politics*, *1*(1), 125–133. https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_126121_smxx.pdf

Sahan Foundation, & IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP). (2016). *Human trafficking and smuggling on the Horn of Africa-Central Mediterranean route*. Sahan Foundation and IGAD ISSP https://igad.int/attachments/1284_ISSP%20Sahan%20HST%20Rep

ort%20%2018ii2016%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf (accessed 10 November 2021)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business Students* (7th Edition). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited

Sawani, Y.M. (2020). Gaddafi's legacy, institutional development, and national reconciliation in Libya. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, *13*(1), 46–68. https://doi.org/10.1525/caa.2020.13.1.46

Schmoll, C. (2020). *Les Damnées de la mer. Femmes et frontières en Méditerranée.* Paris: Editions La Découverte

Shaw, M., & Mangan, F. (2014). *Illicit trafficking and Libya's transition: Profits and losses.* [Online], Peaceworks, No. 96, United States Institute of Peace, 24 February 2014. https://www.usip.org/publications/2014/02/illicit-trafficking-and-libyas-transition-profits-and-losses (accessed 6 September 2022)

Tallès, O. (2022). *En Libye, la trêve ne tient qu'à un fil.* [Online], La Croix, 30 August 2022. https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/En-Libye-treve-tient-qua-fil-2022-08-30-1201230794 (accessed 7 September 2022)

Tewolde-Berhan, Z., Plaut, M., & Smits, K. (2017). The policy agenda in Europe and Africa. In: M. Van Reisen & M. Mawere (eds), *Human Trafficking and Trauma in the Digital Era: The Ongoing Tragedy of the Trade in Refugees from Eritrea*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Trauthig, I. K. (2020). *Islamic State in Libya: From force to farce?* London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, pp. 1–26. https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ICSR-Report-Islamic-State-in-Libya-From-Force-to-Farce.pdf (accessed 24 August 2020)

Truong, T.-D., & Gasper, D. (2011). *Transnational migration and human security: The migration-development*. Berlin: Springer

Tsourapas, G. (2017). Migration diplomacy in the Global South: Cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya. *Third World Quarterly, 38*(10), 2367–2385. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350102 (accessed 2 September 2022)

UNHCR. (2011). *The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.* Geneva: UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ec4a7f02.html (accessed 15 October 2021)

UNHCR. (2016). *Italy sea arrivals dashboard January–October 2016*. [Online], UNHCR. https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/52543 (accessed 6 October 2022)

UNHCR. (2022). *Les statistiques du HCR sur les traversées de la Méditerranée révèlent un nombre croissant de morts et de tragédies en mer*. [Online], UNHCR, 10 June 2022. https://www.unhcr.org/fr/news/briefing/2022/6/62a36b14a/statistiques-hcr-traversees-mediterranee-revelent-nombre-croissant-morts.html (accessed 9 October 2022)

United Nations Security Council. (2015). *Resolution 2259 (2015), adopted by the Security Council at its 7598th meeting, on 32 December 2015*. S/RES/2259 (2015). http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2259 (accessed 24 August 2020)

UNSMIL. (2020). *Report of the Secretary-General*. United Nations Support Mission in Libya. https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_to_sc_15_january_2020_eng.pdf (accessed 21 August 2020)

UNSMIL, & OHCHR. (2016). *"Detained and dehumanised". Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/DetainedAndDehumanised_en.pdf (accessed 25 January 2022)

Van Reisen, M., & Estefanos (2017). Human trafficking connecting to terrorism and organ trafficking: Libya and Egypt. In: M. Van Reisen & M. Mawere (eds), *Human Trafficking and Trauma in the Digital Era: The Ongoing Tragedy of the Trade in Refugees from Eritrea*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Van Reisen, M., Estefanos, M., & Reim, L. (2017). Human trafficking in the Sinai: Mapping the routes and facilitators. In: M. Van Reisen & M. Mawere (eds), *Human Trafficking and Trauma in the Digital Era: The Ongoing Tragedy of the Trade in Refugees from Eritrea*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Van Reisen, M., Estefanos, M., & Rijken, C. (2012). *Human trafficking in the Sinai: Refugees between life and death*. Nijmegen: Wolf Publishers

Van Reisen, M., Estefanos, M., & Rijken, C. (2014). *The human trafficking cycle: Sinai and beyond*. Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers

Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism & slavery*. Richmond, VA: The University of North Carolina Press; William Byrd Press

Wintour, P. (2016). Isis loses control of Libyan city of Sirte. [Online], *The Guardian*, 5 December 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/05/isis-loses-control-of-libyan-city-of-sirte (accessed 6 October 2022)

Wintour, P. (2019). UN calls for inquiry into Libya detention centre bombing. [Online], *The Guardian,* 3 July 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/03/air-strike-kill-libya-tripoli-migrant-detention-centre (accessed 30 April 2021)

Wirtz, M. (2017). Niger: dans l'univers des passeurs d'Agadez. [Online], *Le Point Afrique*, 14 November 2017. https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/niger-dans-l-univers-des-passeurs-d-agadez-14-11-2017-2172166_3826.php (accessed 7 September 2022)

Wirtz, M. (2019). The plight of refugees in Agadez in Niger: From Crossroad to dead end. In: M. Van Reisen, M. Mawere, M. Stokmans & K.A. Gebre-Egziabher (eds), *Mobile Africa: Human Trafficking and the Digital Divide*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG

Wirtz, M. (Director). (2019). *Teghadez Agadez.* Gsara. http://www.morganewirtz.com/video/teghadez-agadez/

World Bank. (2022). *GDP growth (annual %) Libya*. [Online], World Bank Data. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=LY (accessed 3 September 2022)