



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
2 September 2022

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-first session

12 September–7 October 2022

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Partners For Transparency, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2022]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Exploitation of Illegal Migrants in Recruitment as Mercenaries in Libya**

### **Overview of the relation between illegal migration and recruitment of mercenaries in Libya**

Since the outbreak of popular protests in Libya in 2011, and the country's entry into a state of widespread conflict and civil war, the situation of undocumented migrants has become more difficult, given the pervasive prevalence of grave human rights violations to which they are exposed. The evidence obtained by Partners for Transparency confirms that armed factions and terrorist militias recruited illegal migrants to fight or exploited them to carry out other functions that are seriously dangerous and difficult, such as carrying heavy weights including military equipment and ammunition and transporting them from one combat axis to another. Some of them work in welding workshops and armor maintenance and in the processing of sand smell in front of fighters. Besides, they clean war equipment, supply tanks with diesel and missiles and the service of fighters in particular the older and are sometimes used as human shields(1).

In the same regard, these militias use many methods and tactics to recruit illegal migrants into their ranks. A large number of them are attracted with funds due to their extreme poverty situation. Many are tempted to travel abroad through Libya after taking part in the fighting. Terrorist groups are abducting migrants and forcing them at gunpoint to train as fighters or suicide bombers and some are persuaded to join terrorist currents for ideological reasons(2). However, some militias bring illegal migrants from the African Sahel region, such as Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Nigeria, the Niger and Burkina Faso, into their ranks(3).

As such, Partners for Transparency points out that the continuation of forced recruitment in the armed conflicts in Libya, as well as the spread of the culture of impunity, impede the process of transition to peace, democracy and the rule of law, and undermine the process of building Libyan institutions. Partners for Transparency expresses its fears that ISIS is exploiting illegal migrants to recruit them in some areas in south Libya, specifically in the Fezzan region.

### **Human rights certificates confirm the continued recruitment of illegal migrants in Libya**

Partners for Transparency has had access a large number of human rights testimonies confirming the continued recruitment of illegal migrants in the context of the Libyan conflict. In August 2021, an expert claimed that illegal migrants in western Libya are used as human shields, as their detention centers are under the control of militias and are forced to participate in various hostilities(4).

In the same context, a number of migrants and refugees previously detained in detention centers in and around Tripoli pointed out that they were forced to carry weapons and engage in large-scale hostilities(5), while one of the migrants from the Sudan who lived in Libya confirmed that he was lured by money to participate in various military operations. In particular, in support of combat missions and the transfer of ammunition(6). On the other hand, one of the women fleeing Libya's migrant camps confirmed that armed factions recruited youths from Sudanese families to take part in fighting with them on multiple fronts(7). Human rights estimates also indicated that staff in some migrant detention centers in isolated areas of Libya sold illegal migrants to local armed groups with the aim of recruiting them in armed military operations or combat(8).

### **Fears of ISIS exploiting illegal migrants to fight in its ranks**

Partners for Transparency is deeply concerned about the information indicating that ISIS is trying to build its forces and regain control in many parts of south Libya, in particular (Fezzan region), relying on the recruitment of new elements of African migrants. The Organization

continues to use illegal migrant smuggling networks in Libya in order to attract new elements to join them. The organization has already succeeded in bringing the elements into its ranks. The analysis of terrorist operations in the Fezzan region indicates the participation of many African migrants(9).

It is worth mentioning that ISIS has been increasing its army by abducting illegal migrants and controlling trafficking routes, while forcing a large number of migrants to participate in various combat missions and operations. Migrants recruited are trained on shooting and running in the desert with heavy equipment and those who refuse instructions are severely tortured and abused(10).

## Recommendations

In conclusion, it can be said that the presence of armed factions and mercenaries in Libya with the exploitation of illegal migrants in hostilities impedes the work of the peaceful political process and increases the persistence of grave human rights violations. This is reinforced by the culture of impunity prevailing in Libya's various rights issues to reduce the exploitation of illegal migrants in Libya's hostilities, Partners for Transparency recommends the following:

- The need for all foreign forces, mercenaries and combatants to leave Libya within a specified time frame in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the outputs of the Paris and Berlin conventions.
- The need to integrate armed forces and militias into one State's official military force.
- The need to cease the exploitation of illegal migrants in hostilities and associated tasks.
- The need to improve the situation of illegal migrants, guarantee their rights and enhance humanitarian response to their demands in order to prevent their exploitation.
- Special attention should be paid to confronting the return of ISIS to carry out numerous terrorist operations and attempt to return and control in southern Libya, through the exploitation of illegal immigrants.

---

(1) <https://bit.ly/3dnOSMN>

(2) <https://bit.ly/3zXneh5>

(3) <https://bit.ly/3QgyCf7>

(4) <https://bit.ly/3Aljc3B>

(5) <https://bit.ly/3JS5qbQ>

(6) <https://bit.ly/3QFJfb9>

(7) <https://wapo.st/3w55mQx>

(8) 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report Libya. opt

(9) <https://bit.ly/3bRevFg>

(10) <https://bit.ly/3zXneh5>