



UNFAIR
The UN Refusal Agency

BOOK OF SHAME

**How UNHCR Fails to Protect Refugees
in Libya, Tunisia, and Niger**

**Vol.1
2025**

BOOK OF SHAME

**How UNHCR Fails to Protect Refugees
in Libya, Tunisia, and Niger**

Vol. 1
Testimonies collected within:
April 2024 - September 2025



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

Refugees in Niger
Refugees in Tunisia
Refugees in Libya

Aisha Aboubakar, Saddam Bahaa Al-Din Al-Sayyid, Khadja Bashiru, Yasmin Hussain, Salwa Ibrahim, Sheku Kargbo (Yannick), Achai Deng Ling, Iden Ngono Mboro, Suzanna Mosoro, Natasha, Joy Ozzy Olowojoba, Ore, Saleh Saeed, Suleiman, Awate Haile Tesgay, Janet Abiy Tewelmadin, Josephus Ojumerie Thomas
- VIA TUNISIA -

Zubeida Abdelgabar, Amir Abdulkrem, Mohamed Abdullah, Nour Alhuda, Malik Al-Tom, Abdelmalik, Zahra Dawood, Farid, Abdallah Hashim, Khalil Hussein, Ahmad Moursal, Imad Yousif, Ismail Yousef
- VIA NIGER -

People on the move in Libya who gave their testimonies via the collective hotline, Fatima Ahmed Hajar, Saleh Adam, Siddiq Ibrahim Ali
Khayrat Association for Refugees with Disabilities in Libya
- VIA LIBYA -

Viola Castellano, Raya Cohen, Marc Montany Dauſi, Josephine Fahr, Alessandro Montesi, Sarah Spasiano, Allison West, David Yambio

Published:
12.09.2025, Geneva (Switzerland)

Edited by:
Viola Castellano, Raya Cohen, Marc Montany Dauſi, Josephine Fahr, Sophia Igel, Alessandro Montesi, Sarah Spasiano, Allison West, David Yambio

Layout by:
Sophia Igel

Testimonies gathered via:
the collective hotline, various hotlines
Salahadine Juma, David Yambio

Timeperiod of collection of Testimonies:
april 2024 - august 2025

Testimonies translated by:
Mahamat Daoud, Salahadine Juma, Lam Magok, David Yambio

contact:
info@refugeesinlibya.org



Agadez, 19.08.2025, day 331 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



In front of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 13.11.2021, day 44 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Zarzis, 02.09.2022, Refugees in Tunisia

INTRODUCTION.....	14
THE WITNESS MUST SPEAK.....	18
On UNHCR in Libya and Beyond by David Yambio	
VOICES FROM THE HOTLINE.....	48
Documenting UNHCR Systemic Dysfunction and Its Consequences	
1. Introduction “How Does the Hotline Work?”.....	51
2. The System Controlling Asylum Seekers in Libya.....	54
2.1 The Hurdles of Registration.....	60
2.2 Clinging to an Unresponsive System.....	63
2.3 Difficulties in Renewing or Updating UNHCR Files.....	66
2.4 The Lack of Follow-Up and Protection after Registration.....	68
2.5 Facing Persecution and Discrimination Despite Having UNHCR Papers.....	71
2.6 Sea Crossing as the Last and Only Attempt to Escape.....	74
3. Protection and Emergency Hotline.....	78
3.1 Protection Hotlines Are Not Accessible.....	82
3.2 The “Protection Interview”.....	87
3.3 Lack of Protection for Women, Children, and Disabled Persons.....	90
3.4 Complaints Against Personnel Not Acted Upon.....	93
4. How the Lack of Health Assistance Affects Refugees’ Lives.....	98
4.1 Medical Neglect and Denial of Health Services.....	100
4.2 Violence, Sexual Abuse, and Psychological Harm.....	103
4.3 Administrative Failure and Communication Breakdown.....	106
4.4 Displacement, Homelessness, and Extreme Poverty.....	109
4.5 Repeated Appeals and Systemic Abandonment.....	112
5. What Is the Role of UNHCR in Libya?.....	116
5.1 The Indifference of UNHCR Staff Towards Refugees’ Suffering.....	119
5.2 The Inadequacy of the Humanitarian Infrastructure.....	122
5.3 The Systematic Backlogging and Concealment of Refugees’ Cries for Help.....	126
5.4 Reports on Corruption and Repression of Dissent at the UNHCR Offices.....	130
6. UNHCR and the Plea of the Charitable Association of Invalid Refugees.....	136
7. Conclusion “What Do We Learn?”.....	141

TESTIMONIES FROM REFUGEES IN TUNISIA.....	152
References.....	167

TESTIMONIES FROM REFUGEES IN AGADEZ.....	172
Background of the Camp.....	173
The Ongoing Protest Since 2024.....	173
Message by Refugees in Niger.....	183
Diary of Agadez.....	187
Naming the Accomplice.....	193
References.....	195

THE BIG PICTURE	196
Introduction.....	197
Refugee Protests Against UNHCR: A Pervasive Phenomenon.....	199
Protests in Egypt - 2005, 2011, 2016, 2020, 2021.....	199
Protests in Morocco - 2009, 2022.....	202
Protests in Kenya: Kakuma Camp 2025.....	204
Overview: Recent Refugee Protests Against UNHCR	205
“The Route-Based Approach”: UNHCR as a Border Externalisation Actor.....	207
1) Whatever the Masters Say: UNHCR Is Not Independent.....	208
2) Priority Shift: From Refugee Protection to “Mixed-Migration Management”.....	209
3) “Safe Pathways” as an Empty Promise.....	210
4) The Narrative Problem: UNHCR Adopting Xenophobic Tropes and Being Silent About Abuses.....	211
5) UNHCR’s Supervision Role: It Means Swimming Against the Tide, Not With It.....	212
6) Conclusion.....	212
Humanitarian Organizations Targeted by the Libyan Government.....	214

APPENDIX OF TESTIMONIES.....	216
-------------------------------------	------------

COLLECTIVE MANIFESTO.....	258
by Refugees in Libya, Refugees in Tunisia and Refugees in Niger	

INTRODUCTION

This book was born from rage, from grief, and from the refusal to remain silent. It was born from the betrayal we witnessed and lived—at the hands not only of militias, traffickers, and governments, but of the very institution that claimed it was there to offer protection: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Some of us endured that betrayal directly. Others stood beside those who did. Together, we refuse to forget.

We, the contributors and editors of this book, are survivors and those in solidarity with them. We are refugees, migrants, displaced people, and stateless persons. We are also community organizers, documentarians, activists, and truth-tellers. Some of us have lived the violence of the containment system stretching from the Libyan desert to European shores. Others have worked alongside those who have, helping to document, resist, and expose it. Some of the words in these pages come directly from those who survived Libya and are now part of Refugees in Libya, a self-organized protest movement. Others are written by comrades in Europe — members of the Alliance with Refugees in Libya — who organize together with Refugees in Libya and operate the solidarity hotline that was born from their struggle.

Many of the people whose voices fill these pages were registered as “persons of concern” by UNHCR. But we quickly came to understand that concern does not mean care. It does not mean action. And it certainly does not mean protection.

Together, we have written this book to break the silence that protects the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). For years, this international institution has claimed the power to determine who is “vulnerable” enough to deserve safety, who gets evacuated or left behind, who lives and who disappears. For years, UNHCR has met our protests with locked gates and polite excuses. When we protested in front of their headquarters in Tripoli and Tunis, they called the militias. When we asked to speak to donors, they told us it was against their “terms of engagement.” When we died, they said nothing.

In 2022, we launched the UNFAIR campaign to make this betrayal visible. “UNFAIR” stands for what UNHCR has become: The UN Refusal Agency. We spoke out. We organized protests. We held sit-ins and issued public statements. Some of us carried our testimonies to Geneva, to Brussels, and to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. We refused to be statistics, to be silenced, to be treated as files waiting for “durable solutions” while our communities bled.

The UNFAIR campaign sought to show how UNHCR has not only failed to protect but has actively collaborated with the European border regime that funds, manages, and weaponizes containment. This *Book of Shame* is part of that campaign. It is a demand for accountability, born not in think tanks but in detention centers and refugee camps, in protest tents and WhatsApp chats, in the grief and rage of those left behind and those who stood beside them. Our experiences and our demands needed to be preserved, recorded, and shared. They needed to be held

up to the world like a mirror. And so this book was born.

Reflecting not only the collective experiences and protests by and for refugees in Libya, but now also in Tunisia, Niger, and beyond, this book is not a book of data. It is not a book of policy reform proposals, nor of polished success stories. This is a *Book of Shame*. It is not just a condemnation. It is a record. A witness. A call to account.

Bringing together many voices, it begins with a searing chapter by David Yam-bio, a founding member of Refugees in Libya. It is both testimony and analysis, personal narrative and political indictment. David traces his experience from his childhood in what is now South Sudan to the warehouses and detention centers of Libya, and finally to the formation of the UNFAIR campaign.

It is followed by four chapters featuring testimonies from the hotline operated by the Alliance with Refugees in Libya. The testimonies come from those who were and are trapped in Libya, ensnared in Niger, or abandoned in Tunis, and vividly describe how UNHCR has failed them. These chapters were edited for clarity and security, but remain in the hotline users’ own voices.

Next, a chapter on Tunisia and one on Niger outlines how UNHCR’s containment role has expanded across the region, and how people are continuing to resist. It draws on documentation and interviews gathered by refugee-led and solidarity initiatives in the region. It examines the growing role of UNHCR in propping up European externalization through so-called humanitarian partnerships with transit states, with a focus on the Agadez Humanitarian Shelter and the repression of protests in Tunisia.

After that, a “big picture” analytical chapter on UNHCR connects the dots, situating the testimonies and experiences in the book within the broader structure of UNHCR’s operations, funding mechanisms, donor-state priorities, and the politics of humanitarian governance. It is co-authored by a team of researchers and activists, including contributors to the UNFAIR campaign.

Finally, the “UNFAIR Manifesto” closes the volume. The collective manifesto calls on us all to reject the prevailing unjust system, to listen to those it has tried to silence, and to fight for something better.

We offer this book not as a finished project, but as a document of struggle. A record of what we have seen, what we have endured, and what we refuse to accept. We know that many of those who most need to read it are the ones who cannot: those still stuck behind Libya’s walls or buried beneath Europe’s policies. But we hope that those who can read it will not look away.

We do not offer this book to gain pity or charity. We do not write as victims waiting to be rescued. We write as people who have organized, who have resisted, who have dared to name the machinery of abandonment, and who will continue

to do so.

The *Book of Shame* is not neutral. It is not balanced. It is not written in the language of polite advocacy. It is what must be said, by those who have been ignored for too long.

To those who work in or with UNHCR: read this and reckon with it. To journalists and policy makers: do not look away. And to those who are fighting with us, or who have yet to speak up: this book is also yours.

May it be a weapon, a record, a fire. May it burn away the silence. And may it clear the ground for something just to grow.

THE WITNESS MUST SPEAK: On UNHCR in Libya and Beyond

by David Yambio

In the eyes of many, it is considered ungrateful, even offensive, for a refugee to criticize the very agency that claims to offer them protection. A considerable amount of unwritten rules seem to govern the relationship between those who suffer and those who offer aid: the one who gives should not be questioned, and the one who receives must remain thankful, silent, and abiding.

This belief is deeply woven in the structures of international aid. What could be more confusing than seeing the oppressed turn their eyes not only toward their tormentors, but toward their supposed rescuers? But what if the hand that gives does not open the door? What if, while feeding someone, it also ensures they never exist in full meaning? What if, behind the language of care, lies a logic of control; one that decides who is worthy of protection, who must wait indefinitely, and who should simply dwell in despair or vanish from sight forever?

This question cannot be answered only by citing case numbers or reports. All human beings are thrust into this world without their consent. And yet, despite this shared condition of birth and uncertainty, the world treats some as though they must justify their very existence. Some are born into countries whose names alone become a life sentence. Some are born on the wrong side of borders, on the wrong side of war. And when they move, they are met with a great deal of suspicion.

Imagine a person is trapped in a cage, not by choice but by circumstance. The door slammed shut behind them, driven by forces far beyond their control: war, hunger, persecution, the collapse of their home and fear for their life. Inside the cage, they are hungry, injured, and grow weaker by the day.

Each morning, a worker approaches, brings food and water, worn blankets, maybe a word of false comfort. The worker says, *"We are here to help you."* The person accepts the food not because they trust the worker, but because hunger cannot be postponed. Eventually, they ask *"How long will I be here?"* The worker smiles faintly, offering no real answer. Perhaps they say, *"until you are safe"* or *"until the process is complete."* But the doors remain shut, the sky unreachable.

And so we arrive at the contradiction: humanitarian aid walks hand in hand with human containment. The food is real, the services exist, but the door that leads to freedom remains locked. And the one question that truly matters – "when does this end?" – never receives an honest reply.

So who is the person in the cage?

A person whose movement has been labeled a threat. A person called illegal, undocumented, undesirable, and uneducated – as if breathing and bearing life requires education. The person is not caged because they committed a crime, but because they crossed a line drawn on a map. They fled a conflict the world pretends it has no role in. Their skin, their status, or their citizenship falls outside the bounds of worthiness determined by distant powers. They could be Suda-

nese, Eritrean, Somali, Chadian, Ethiopian, Nigerian, Sierra Leonean, Congolese, or Malian. They could be a teenager fleeing forced military conscription, a woman escaping rape at the hands of militias, or a parent seeking medicine for a sick child. They could be any of us. But the system has marked them as less than human: a case file, a number, an object to be controlled. They are there because in the global order some lives are treated as problems to be managed, not people to be respected and protected, even by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an agency founded to protect them.

Now imagine a weary traveler, crossing an endless desert under a brutal sun, feet torn and swollen, lips cracked from thirst. Yet they walk on, driven by the faint hope of an oasis promised by a guide wearing a cloak of compassion, who points toward the shimmering horizon and urges them forward with soft words: *"Trust me, I will lead you to safety."* He offers a small flask of water, just enough to keep them walking, a crust of bread to quiet their hunger and a thin cloth to shield their eyes.

But the road stretches on. Day after day, year after year, the horizon never comes closer. The guide's voice fades, his visits grow rare, until the traveler begins to understand that the oasis is a mirage. A cruel illusion made to keep them walking in circles. They cry out, *"Where is the refuge you promised?"* The guide, now only a shadow against the heat, replies, *"Be patient, the process is underway."*

But the desert has no end. The guide—this false shepherd—is UNHCR. The desert, which has no end, is the system designed to bind the refugee to a path with no destination, to offer water, but never relief, bread, but never strength, a promise, but never freedom.

What if the system, dressed in the language of salvation, was never built to save, but to contain?

Tracing my very beginning, I was forced to learn almost immediately that survival is not a birthright, at least not in the valleys of beasts where I was born, in South Sudan in the late nineties, when the grip of wars had already done their damage. My family was forced into exile when I was only months old.

My country is said to have been a stage for the spilling of blood: the slaughter of children, the hanging of men, rapes I cannot speak of, homes torn apart or simply robbed and burned to ashes. I was born in a camp for internally displaced people. My family was then forced to flee to Congo, and later to the Central African Republic. When we returned to Sudan in 2005, there was a seeming peace after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was reached with the tormenting northern administration. Contrary to our lives in the camps of Central Africa, we "returnees" were free citizens again, legally at least. But the feeling was fleeting.

Soon, renewed armed conflict began, with attacks from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Roads were blocked and we began to starve. Again, we fled. I trav-

eled through Egypt, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Niger before ultimately, after a stint in the mines of Kouri, I was forced to flee to Libya.

As I write in 2025, Libya was and remains a terrible nightmare that I continue to carry in my consciousness, my thoughts, my body. Libya, by design, is a nightmare made of torture: by rape, forced labour, and extortion of money. Some are burnt with melting plastics. But I also speak of hunger, of thirst, of arbitrary detention. I speak of forced sleep deprivation, being prevented from using toilets, and psychological abuses in all their varieties.

In Libya, there lies a strong Arab anti-blackness, a racism older than many of us who suffer it. There is Islamic indifference in the sense that solidarity between believers does not cross the colour line. And there is Europe's hand, stretched over the Mediterranean Sea, making Libya and neighbouring countries its tools, its second hand that carries out torture, extortion and massacre.

A Black person cannot walk the streets without the perpetual fear of being attacked, just for being Black, for being a refugee, for being a migrant. Attacked in order to be enslaved and used. Unable to obtain transfer to a hospital, whether a child, a pregnant woman or a man bleeding near death. Unable to access schools, or simply to board public transport, to walk into a grocery store and pay for what you want without being mocked or intimidated. This remains Libya to this day.

I learned almost immediately upon arriving in Libya that I carried a body that could generate thousands of dollars. On the very evening I arrived, I was captured and locked into a warehouse in southern Libya. I was stripped naked, tortured, hung upside down, and starved for weeks. Exposed to torture I had not yet encountered in my wretched refugee life, I was terrified to the core.

The image and presence of UNHCR in southern Libya did not exist. Hence, Europe presented itself to me, as a powerful combination of imagination and despair, to which I would have to sail. With my accumulated suffering, I made my first attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea, only to be intercepted and returned to Libya, where I was thrown into a warehouse funded by Europe in Misrata, for numerous horrible months. In that warehouse – the Al-Kararim detention centre as they called it – UNHCR and other aid organisations were present.

It was their ability to access our containment camp, not their absence, that wounded us most. They came with cartons of blankets, notebooks, chess boards, and relief items designed to make us adapt to being treated less humanly, to control our anger and to lose our sense of time. They distributed hygiene kits and painkillers so we could forget our ailments and the hands whose violence caused them. They patched the wounds they could see, the skin and bones, but they did not speak of freedom. They claimed it was out of their hands.

They walked through the same iron gates, past the same guards holding Kalash-

nikovs, through the same square where we lined up like cattle, and they saw us. They saw our bruises, they heard our stories. They knew the women were being raped, night after night. They knew we were being enslaved, starved, used. And still, they came and went, claiming they held no power to liberate us. Their care, if it deserves that name, was divorced from challenging our captivity. Their humanitarianism was practiced without questioning why our suffering existed in the first place.

Some of us would ask what kind of protection they claimed to offer, when they bore witness to our cages, but closed their ears to our cries. We would ask what it meant to bandage our wounds but leave the bars untouched and the guards armed. Even the hungriest amongst us would ask what it meant to hand us sardines and soft drinks, but say nothing of the system that locked us in.

IOM came often, always with the same offer: so-called Voluntary Humanitarian Return, to the countries we had escaped at the risk of death, to the places where our miseries had all begun. UNHCR came only for those they deemed worthy of protection. A checklist of nationalities, only nine out of the more than twenty detained. They laid bare a hierarchy of suffering and those of us who fell outside it were told, quietly, to disappear under the pretext that Libya did not recognise our right to seek asylum.

Here, in the quietest of nights when I could not sleep, I would often wonder how suffering could be measured by passports or how persecution could be prescribed by one's birthplace. The Gambians, Senegalese, Nigerians and Ivorians suffered equally from the disease of neglect that plagued those from the nine selected countries. Who designed these categories and for whose comfort were they enforced? No one ever offered an answer. I watched as they moved through our prison, clipboards in hand, deciding silently whose humanity could be recognised, and whose would be postponed or ignored indefinitely.

UNHCR only recognised that I was worth entering into their Libya database after the world briefly turned its eyes toward us, when an airstrike hit the Tajoura detention centre in July 2019, killing more than 50 people. In the days that followed, UNHCR claimed to fear for the lives of refugees in detention and began registering people in other facilities as "persons of concern." But I was not in Tajoura. I was rotting in Al-Kararim, several hundred kilometres away. Even when they found me in possession of official refugee documentation from Chad, they told me they were unable to secure my release from unjust and arbitrary detention.

They promised to return, after carrying out careful diplomacy, and left me with a ten-digit code. They told me to hold onto it dearly, that it was my lifeline in Libya from that moment forward, and that I would need to present it at their office in Tripoli, should I somehow get myself out before they could come back for me. After a month, they still had not come, but I managed to escape from Al Kararim and made my way to Tripoli.

I had no choice but to turn to UNHCR. Half-dead, I walked to their office only to be ignored for days and then told that I needed an appointment to access the very building that claimed to represent and protect me. When I finally forced my way in, they handed me an asylum paper. Even they were surprised to discover I had been a certified refugee almost since birth—my data recorded across more than fifteen African countries. Still, I was told to wait while my status was “debated and decided.”

They offered no shelter for this wait. They claimed there were no camps for urban refugees in Tripoli or Libya at all. Instead, they handed me 450 Libyan dinars, about 80 euros in 2019, meant to last three months. It could not rent a room for even one. So I was abandoned to the harsh streets of a bleeding city. Haftar’s offensives in western Libya had already begun.

At that time, UNHCR had active evacuation programs to Niger and Rwanda, and resettlement programs to so-called safe third countries in the Americas or Europe. But when I asked to be evacuated, I was told I did not qualify. I was not “vulnerable enough.” What I understood then was heavy and simple: UNHCR does not help when you are still surviving. They wait until death is inescapable. But how can help be rendered to the dead?

Back then, UNHCR claimed to have registered around 40,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Libya, while the country held over 600,000 people on the move, all of them vulnerable, all in need of support. With less than 7% of the affected population under its so-called protection, UNHCR still failed to provide them with adequate medical, psychological, or social care, let alone protection from torture, rape, arbitrary detention, and forced deportation. So what exactly was UNHCR doing?

We asked, again and again. The answer never changed. They claimed their budget was insufficient. They said fewer than 1% would ever be resettled. And to qualify, one had to be “the most vulnerable.” That’s when the injustice revealed itself in full.

What was “vulnerability” when survivors of the Tajoura airstrikes were locked for months inside the Gathering and Return Facility (GDF), with no solution in sight? When Eritrean refugees were left to rot in the warehouses of Zintan for over two years? When the detention camps in Khoms, Tariq Al Sikka, Tariq Al Matar, and others were filled beyond capacity? What did it mean when women raped in Gargash were denied access to UNHCR buildings that claimed to offer protection?

As the situation deteriorated and it became clear that UNHCR would not take responsibility, I attempted again to cross the Mediterranean, in late 2019. I was captured at sea at gunpoint, pulled back to Libya, and imprisoned at Tariq Al Sikka detention camp.

UNHCR was there at the disembarkation point in Tripoli. Not to protect us, but

to fill their statistics. They handed out packets of biscuits and blankets, objects meant not to restore dignity, but to help us adapt to imprisonment. They told us they would advocate for “those of concern.” But heaven knows, they never did. I was detained in Tariq Al Sikka, then sold as a slave to Al Jadida prison, then headed by Osama Almasri Njeem—and still, UNHCR was there, distributing “non-food items” and hygiene kits, documenting our pain without doing anything to stop it.

In mid-2020, after my third attempt to cross the sea, I was again returned to Libya. UNHCR met us again at the port of Khoms and followed us back to the detention camp. In late summer of 2020, after my fourth attempt from Sabratha, UNHCR was there again. By then, their mockery and hypocrisy had become undeniable.

In the beginning of 2021, after my fifth attempt, I was again returned, this time to the infamous tobacco factory turned detention center known as Al Mabani. UNHCR was still there. I recall these scandals because I bore witness. And the witness must speak.

Time and again, we staged protests. Time and again, UNHCR ignored us—and called militias on us. The results were always the same: deaths, injuries, and arbitrary detention. Why did they treat us as a threat?

To understand this, I tried to see the situation from the most vulnerable vantage point, the one visible every day in front of the UNHCR’s gates in Gourji and at the Saraj headquarters. There, people would arrive as early as five in the morning and remain until nightfall, when staff and diplomatic police shut the gates behind them.

You didn’t need to ask who they were. You could see it: newly released victims of human trafficking, most of them minors and women; people returned from the sea, disoriented, sea-sick, without shelter or treatment; malnourished, half-dead bodies who had somehow survived Libya’s warehouses; men with gunshot wounds from militias; individuals infected with tuberculosis and other diseases from prolonged detention; people seeking to renew asylum documents; survivors of rape and sexual violence. All of them waiting. And all of them ignored.

When the number of people outside UNHCR’s gates rose above a hundred, the staff – almost all Libyans – would lose control. They cursed at us, blamed us for coming to Libya, and above all, for daring to want to live. But the people I described – the recently trafficked, the tortured, the sick – were what the humanitarian world calls “traumatised.” And those who are traumatised, when neglected, are often pushed to the edge. Tensions would rise. The guards yelled, beat, and kicked them. And sometimes, the people kicked back. A small war would erupt. The gates would slam shut. The facility would close. The suffering continued, only now hidden behind locked doors.

So where was the problem? UNHCR claimed it was a matter of mandate. They said they had no formal agreement with Libya, since the state had never signed the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. And yet, for over thirty years, they operated there anyway—carrying out Europe’s containment agenda, not a protection mandate. It became clear: UNHCR treated us as a threat because our visible presence, gathered outside their offices, risked drawing attention. From Libyan citizens, from journalists, from the international community. And many Libyans, as kind as most of them are, were furious at seeing people suffering in front of UN buildings—abandoned, untreated, ignored. Left to rot in plain sight. UNHCR did not want criticism. They did not want questions. They did not want donors to witness their failure. So they tried to silence us.

Among the few good people I met in Libya, one stands out: Tarek Lamloum. I came into contact with him after escaping forced conscription by the Rada militia, through a referral from someone at the UN Support Mission in Libya (UN-SMIL). From our first conversations, he showed me that there were still Libyans with good hearts. People like him were rare, and they were often punished for being good.

I learned that he had founded the Belaady Foundation for Human Rights after the 2011 uprising in Libya. His organisation focused especially on the rights of migrants and refugees, who, amid the chaos of war, were sidelined, criminalized, and in many cases reduced to slaves. I followed his work with growing interest and respect. One of the turning moments for me came on the 4th of January 2021. He posted a disturbing message on Facebook:

“One of the children kidnapped in Bani Walid arrived in Tripoli, in need of treatment, food, and water. Unfortunately, there are no organisations providing urgent assistance. UNHCR deals with phones and appointments—the patient dies while waiting.”

Attached was a photo of a dead boy. It confirmed everything I had come to understand. I didn’t message Tarek. I sat in silence and wept. By then, I had seen so much death in Tripoli that I could barely react. What could I do? I had nothing.

Then a message came from a comrade and fellow community mobiliser, Musa Siddiq Adam. In our shared WhatsApp group, he wrote that a young Somali boy had just died in Gargaresh, and that his body was still lying in a room next to his younger brother, who was barely alive. That broke whatever resignation I had left. I called Musa immediately and told him we had to act. We would try to save the boy who was still alive, and at least give dignity to the one who was dead.

I went to Gargaresh. There, I confirmed what Tarek had reported. The boy who died was Shoaib, 16 years old. His brother, Yasin, only 14, lay beside him, slipping in and out of consciousness. The two had been trafficked from Somalia, through Sudan, to Libya. They were tortured in Bani Walid for over a year, while traffickers

demanded \$15,000 from their family. When the traffickers feared they might die and become worthless, they dumped them in front of UNHCR’s headquarters in Gourji.

Shoaib and Yasin were registered as asylum seekers at the end of 2020. But no care followed. They were told to call a hotline to schedule a medical appointment. But they couldn’t even hold a phone. They were dying.

Shoaib did die—of neglect. That evening, we managed to have his body taken to a mortuary. But Yasin was still alive, and I vowed to do whatever it took to save him. I had no power, no connections, only rage. And so I carried Yasin on my back and walked to the UNHCR headquarters. I banged on the gate until guards came. They raised their rifles. I told them: *“I am already a dead man. But this boy must not die.”*

Something in them gave way. They let us in. A doctor from the International Rescue Committee, UNHCR’s implementing partner at the time, examined Yasin and placed him on a drip. But the decision to refer him to a proper hospital still lay with UNHCR. By late afternoon, they kicked us out of the building. I carried Yasin back to Gargaresh. The following day, I returned. I knocked. I waited. Nothing. The next day, I came back again. I refused to leave. Eventually, I was brought before UNHCR’s Head of Operations, who listened to my account, then took me upstairs to another of their implementing partners, the CESVI Foundation.

There, to my surprise, I was offered a contract on the spot. A position in their “Community-Based Care Arrangement Programme.” I was to become a “host,” someone trusted to house and assist vulnerable refugees in need of medical care, and someone to “mobilise the community.” There was no mention of payment, but I signed anyway. I hadn’t come for money. I hadn’t come to serve their mission. I joined because a boy was dying, and no one else would act. If signing a paper gave me access, I would sign to let me get him treated. But my loyalty was never to them. It was to the sick, the abandoned, the betrayed.

Yasin and I were referred to the Jugurthine Medical Centre in Tajoura, known as the JMC. He underwent treatment for several weeks. While continuing to monitor him, I moved to Gargaresh and began caring for as many people as I could. To outsmart UNHCR’s broken system, I began registering others as under my care, so they could access what little UNHCR support was available. Sometimes, circumstances leave you either living as if already dead, or alive while knowing death is near. In such circumstances, even the smallest acts of care can kindle hope. That, at least, was the role I chose. I didn’t have much, but I had that.

I grew visible, even powerful, in the eyes of the community. And perhaps, in the eyes of the system too. I had access to both sides. I lived among the people who were suffering, and I also now knew who held the power to help but didn’t. I saw how services were withheld, how certain categories of victims were prioritized,

while others were quietly excluded.

I came to understand that the system preferred pain from the past – trauma linked to the country of origin – not the ongoing violence we endured in Libya. Reports of torture by militias or prison guards were often ignored or refused. Testimonies were taken only when they aligned with a narrative that left Libya blameless.

For eight months, I observed UNHCR from the inside. By the second month of my contract, I was offered a new position—this time paid. But this payment came with conditions. I was told not to engage in community mobilisation, not to interact with outside actors. But how could I stop? I continued to volunteer for MSF, IOM, IRC, and even some Libyan organisations, anyone doing something meaningful for our communities.

Shortly before I resigned in August 2021, I was overwhelmed by reflection. How had I, someone without a formal diploma, someone whose education had been shattered by war, ended up working inside the very system I had fought to expose? I had no CV to speak of, only the scars of survival accumulated over two decades: a body marked by torture, lungs scarred by the sour air of detention camps, a heart hardened by innumerable betrayals. Was that what they valued? Or was it the noise I made, the way I had banged on their gates? Or had they brought me in to quiet me? To pacify my rebellion by coating it in responsibility? To give me just enough to stop asking questions?

I wondered if I was hired simply to do the work no one else would—to clean wounds others wouldn't touch, to sit with women who had no words left after rape, to hold the bodies of people whose skin was rotting from neglect. The kind of work that stains your hands, that no job description, no salary, no logo, could make clean.

What I observed within UNHCR was organised decay, a system where the language of protection had morphed into the language of avoidance. The so-called durable solutions – resettlement, evacuation, relocation – were dangled like a lifeline of hope. But they were not extended to those most in need. They were not offered to the man burned with melted plastic, nor to the woman raped to the brink of death, nor to the abandoned children left defenseless at Libyan checkpoints. Instead, these lifelines were sold. Yes, sold – for up to 5,000 US dollars, a price whispered and negotiated inside UNHCR offices. No one dared confront it, not even me. How could I, when the corruption was carried out by Libyan staff with strong ties to militias? Those with enough money could simply buy their way out of Libya and begin a dignified life in Canada, Sweden, or Norway. And those left behind? Those stripped of strength, of sanity, of the ability to advocate for themselves? They were told to wait. To wait for months. To wait years. To wait decades.

But waiting in Libya means a slow erosion of the soul. The desert sun, the racist insults, the arbitrary detention, rape, kidnapping, and hunger—these grind a person down until the only thing left is flesh and despair. What kind of society constructs a system in which a person must first be destroyed –physically, mentally, spiritually – before they are deemed eligible for protection? What does that say about humanitarianism? Even now, I still search for an answer.

Again and again, containment took priority over compassion. I observed with growing unease how UNHCR's Libyan staff refused to record the testimonies of victims tortured by Libyan actors. The reason? *"It damages Libya's image,"* they said. In practice, this meant silencing victims, erasing their immediate suffering on Libyan soil, and reshaping their stories so that blame rested only on their country of origin.

For us refugees, UNHCR has come to resemble a country—though one unlike any other. It has no flag or territory, yet it enforces borders we cannot cross, hands down decisions we cannot appeal, and imposes punishments without trial. It decides who will live in safety and who will remain in horror, who will be seen and who will remain invisible. In every sense that matters to human life, UNHCR wields the power of a state while refusing the responsibility of one. In this, containment always outweighs compassion.

The corruption was not loud or chaotic but polished, procedural, and calculated. Resettlement files could be bought and sold; the price of hope depended on how much cash one could muster. Meanwhile, those most in need were left languishing, their cases marked with phrases like "complex stories" or "missing details," convenient labels to ensure they would wait, and wait, and wait.

What weighed on me most, though, was the silence imposed on us. We, the refugees – the very people UNHCR claimed to protect – were forbidden to speak to journalists, forbidden to reach out to the international community. We could not even raise our voices outside UNHCR's offices without being branded criminals or troublemakers. How can truth survive when UNHCR's first act is to censor those who speak it? And so, the question returned to me, heavier each time: What help can be rendered to the dead?

I looked at the so-called "vulnerability criteria," and what I saw was an insult to reason. Young people in the prime of life, eager to study, to work, to build a future, were told they were not vulnerable enough. Men and women with talents or skills and the strength and ambition to exercise them – to paint, to sing, to farm, to teach – were told to wait, because their bodies had not yet been broken, because they had not yet been raped or tortured enough. Their vitality became their disqualification. And so they were left to wait, until their minds collapsed, their bodies weakened, their hope reduced to ashes. Only then, when they resembled corpses, did the system move them forward for "protection interviews." As if eligibility for rescue required first being destroyed.

This is not protection. It is regulation. We are not seen as individuals with names and dreams. We are reduced to cases, sorted into queues, labelled by eligibility, weighed by vulnerability as if life itself were a commodity. And always, the polite reassurances: *"We are assessing your case."* *"You are on the list."* *"You must wait your turn."* Words to keep us calm and quiet, to help us lose track of time. But behind this language is an invisible fence, a system designed not to shield people from danger, but to contain human despair, to ensure suffering stays managed and unseen.

And then, I turned the question inward. What was I to do against this ocean of darkness and injustice? Could I remain inside, cashing the small salary I was offered, bearing witness while participating in the betrayal? Or would I, with what little strength I had, refuse?

We, the community mobilisers, had submitted recommendations, action plans and solutions gathered directly from the people most affected. We had offered pathways to a better system. But they were received with polite nods, then shelved, forgotten, never implemented. Afraid I was becoming complicit in the hypocrisy, I quit. I resolved to use my remaining strength and the connections I had gained to search for alternatives among Libyans themselves—the good hearts that bloomed between the cracks of brutal soil. But even as I left, the questions followed me: What is protection when the protector silences the protected? What is aid when it arrives only after the spirit is crushed? What is justice when eligibility requires you to be broken beyond repair? And who profits from a system that waits for the dead to rise before it acts?

I had no answers then. I have few answers now. But my eyes were open, and I could no longer close them.

I returned to Gargaresh, home by then to tens of thousands of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants—whatever category both Libyan authorities and humanitarian institutions imposed on us. To ourselves, we were simply human beings: people with bodies, with needs, with desires, with the will to live.

Gargaresh was a wasteland. On the edge of Tripoli, makeshift tents, crumbling structures, and the absence of rights marked its boundaries. We lived there because there was nowhere else left to go. For many, it became the last station, a place where even when stripped of everything, people still clung to life. In this place, I found others who believed, as I did, that if life in Libya was to carry even a shadow of dignity, we would have to build bridges, even if fragile, between our refugee communities and Libyan citizens. It was not simple, but it had become necessary for survival.

To achieve this vision, we partnered with Libyan civil society, among them the Belaady Foundation for Human Rights, headed by Tarek Lamloum. Our idea was simple to say, harder to realize: to introduce ourselves to Libyans, to tell them

about the wars we had fled, the torture we had survived, the reasons we had ended up on their doorstep. And in return, to learn about Libya—its customs, its rhythms, its society. Understanding, we believed, was the only shield available to us.

To make this possible, we turned to the tools within reach: social media programs, FM radio broadcasts, YouTube channels, small platforms where we could speak directly. Where we could show we were not enemies of the Libyan people, but people seeking what they sought too: a chance to live with dignity. A month into this effort, at the end of September 2021, we sent out our first broadcast—a message of coexistence, fragile but full of hope. Two days later, the dream collapsed under the weight of armoured vehicles and armed men.

On the 1st of October 2021, in the dead of night, Libya's security forces, backed by militias affiliated with the Ministry of Interior, descended on Gargaresh. Military drones hovered overhead. Trucks waited to haul people away. Then came the raid.

Over 5,000 of us were rounded up in a single night, violently, indiscriminately. Men, women, the elderly, the sick, the malnourished, the pregnant. None were spared.

That night was not exceptional in its cruelty, only in its scale. The few of us who managed to escape ran towards the one place we had been told to trust: the UNHCR headquarters in Saraj. Where else could we go? Where else could we run? The papers they gave us declared us "persons of concern" to their office. Surely, we thought, they could not turn us away.

We stood outside UNHCR's gates, refusing to go back to where death and torture awaited. Our vulnerability was undeniable. We were terrified. Some of us carried open wounds from the chaos; others bore gunshot injuries. Shocked children had been ripped from their sleep and thrown out of their beds. People were deprived of food, of shelter, of even the smallest sense of peace and security.

UNHCR answered with polished words and invisible walls. They claimed their mandate was limited. They claimed they did not foresee the raid. But we knew they had met with the Libyan authorities days earlier and been told Gargaresh would be cleared. They knew thousands of us lived there under their "protection." They knew detention and deportation would follow. Yet, they did nothing—no warnings, no negotiations, no calls to embassies or international partners, no declaration of emergency. Their silence was bought at the price of our lives. And so, when the storm came, we were left to be swept away.

If there is any thanks to be given for that terrifying night, it is only this: in the face of violence and abandonment, we found each other. In our grief, our rage, our defiance, we came together to reclaim our agency and our voice. That is how *Refugees in Libya* was born.

We understood then, clearer than ever, that UNHCR was not with us. Yet for survival we still had to stand beneath its torn umbrella, even as it leaked hypocrisy. Libya, as a state and as an idea, would go on trading in our suffering, selling us as slaves, unless we spoke for ourselves. Upon this realisation, we mobilised a permanent sit-in—what became the 100-day protest. It was reckless, dangerous and unthinkable to many, but it made visible the crimes, the failures, and the silence that had suffocated us. To endure, we first had to build trust among ourselves: a community of people from over eleven nationalities, speaking different tongues, yet united in a common language—the language of pain, loss, and the will to live. It was the language of shared injustice.

We spoke through our hunger, through the scars carved into our skin, through the stories of loved ones still trapped in Libya's hidden warehouses, still raped, tortured, or reduced to numbers. We spoke because silence had already killed too many of us.

In the streets, Libyan citizens began to take notice. They saw women and children sleeping on concrete, heard our voices, and asked: Why are they here? Why are they camping in front of UNHCR's gates? Our answers were not diplomatic. We answered them with wounded bodies, with exhaustion, with honesty. Some Libyans brought food or water. Others brought their outrage. Many joined us in condemning UNHCR, whose mandate was protection but whose actions were abandonment.

UNHCR, instead of listening, shut down operations. They branded us "trouble-makers." They said we were not "the most vulnerable." As if suffering can be measured, as if pain has a hierarchy. When, at last, we compelled them to the table, their faces flushed with fear. They were terrified, not of us, but of what we represented: human beings refusing to remain statistics in their machinery of containment. Their response was predictable. Instead of protection, they offered us money—hush money no greater in value than what they had once given me when I escaped from Al Kararim in 2019. They told us to stop giving UNHCR a "bad image," warning that donors would flee.

When we asked for evacuation, we received the same empty refrain: "It is a process not within our control." When we demanded to speak directly with donors or with governments of so-called safe countries, to let them see our wounds and hear our voices, they refused. It was, they said, "against their terms of engagement."

For 100 days, UNHCR denied us even the smallest gesture of solidarity. Not a bottle of water, not a mat to sleep on, not a blanket against the rain. We remained outside their gates, shot at by militias, exposed on highways where children were struck and killed by cars. And yet we endured. We built bridges of solidarity over the Mediterranean, forging networks that carried our voices beyond Libya. From the halls of the Vatican to the marble offices of Brussels and Geneva, and into

the hearts and minds of European citizens, our cries could no longer be silenced. This, more than anything, is what UNHCR feared.

And so, UNHCR brokered meetings with the Libyan militias and the so-called government authorities, who offered us two options: disappear, or be taken to the warehouses of the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM). UNHCR did not challenge these options, but supported them. In that moment, their eagerness was clear: to dismantle our encampment, to wash their hands of us, to erase the traces of the violent raid in Gargaresh.

But we refused. Silence had already cost us too much. We had seen what awaited us behind those walls, and we demanded evacuation as the only solution.

By early January 2022, UNHCR closed its headquarters entirely. That closure was the green light for the final phase of our erasure. On the 10th of January, the same forces who raided Gargaresh returned. They burned and destroyed our protest camps. Hundreds — mainly women and children — were rounded up and taken to Ain Zara detention camp, a site financed directly by the European Union through the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding. Those of us who survived went into hiding, scattered like dust in the wind.

UNHCR never issued a statement. Not on the raids, not on the women, children, and sick people caged again in Ain Zara. But we — those who managed to cross the Mediterranean — could not afford to stay silent. How could we, when thousands of our comrades remain enslaved, imprisoned, raped, tortured, and left to rot.

In December 2022, we launched the UNFAIR campaign: *UNFAIR—The UN Refusal Agency*. The world deserved to know the hypocrisy hidden behind UNHCR's humanitarian language, and the cruelty of its containment disguised as protection.

Our criticism of UNHCR is not born of ideology or hatred. It comes from lived contradictions too heavy to bear in silence. It is never easy for refugees — those abandoned to death — to rise and speak against the very hand that sometimes offers a blanket, a bag of rice, or a paper called asylum. But survival alone cannot be the measure of life. To merely breathe while stripped of dignity, silenced, and managed by a system that decides everything yet refuses responsibility is a slow burial. That was the truth behind our campaign:

"UNHCR is UNFAIR."

We hoped to show that the unfairness was not a childish complaint but systemic betrayal. This was a structure of neglect disguised as protection. UNHCR had become an obedient extension of the borders that hunted us down. Instead of guarding our rights, it enabled the buying, selling, detention, deportation, containment, and erasure of refugee lives, so long as the Mediterranean stayed quiet and Europe undisturbed.

The words we wrote and carried forward were simple: “UNHCR has failed me.”

One survivor spoke them, but they carried the weight of us all. Again and again, those of us who endured the hell of Libya placed our last hopes in the UNHCR. We asked for protection, begged for evacuation and pleaded for safety. What we received was one word: unfair. And when we protested this betrayal, UNHCR turned its back. It hid behind mandates and diplomatic language, retreated into silence, and even resorted to violence to deter us.

We have never denied that the UNHCR mandate is necessary. In principle, it is bound to the idea that those forcibly displaced must be protected, that states must not close their doors, that borders must not become graves. Our criticism – and our rage – is precisely because we know this mandate and we have witnessed how far the institution meant to defend us has strayed from it, how it has instead become a gatekeeper deciding who lives and who dies.

For those of us in Libya, and for brothers and sisters from Cairo to Pretoria, Tunis to Ankara, the experience has been the same: of being processed but not protected, of being silenced when we scream, of being punished when we demand to live. UNHCR pretends to care, but the reality is reports, numbers and excuses.

We know Libya faces difficulties: war, militias, the lack of legal frameworks. But when there is will, action follows. When will is absent, the excuses are endless. And that is how UNHCR has presented itself to us.

Still, we believe UNHCR can and must do better. Because if not them, then who? Every man, woman, and child abandoned to Libya’s prisons, traffickers, and violence deserves more than paperwork and indifference. When we launched the UNFAIR campaign, we asked the world not to save us, but to witness, to amplify, to refuse to accept this betrayal. Yet three years later, what has changed?

The reader must pause here, not merely to feel outrage, but to reflect. How did UNHCR react when our campaign broke through the walls of obscurity they had so carefully built? Did our voices echo in Geneva’s offices, reaching the policy-makers whose ink determines our lives? Did they pierce the walls of Brussels, where bureaucrats turn refugees into problems to win votes? Did they shake the corridors of power where Frontex, Giorgia Meloni and others move us like chess pieces on a board we never chose to play on? And beyond the protests, the banners, the hashtags, what did we achieve for those left behind in Libya, still trapped in warehouses and sold like cattle?

The first answer is simple: UNHCR ignored us. Our emails went unanswered for weeks, sometimes months. Only when we appeared at their doorstep in Geneva on World Human Rights Day, in the snow, did they finally open their doors, doors guarded not against militias, but against us. When UNHCR did meet us, their reaction was almost comical. They complimented our “advocacy skills,” admired our campaign logo that mimicked and mocked theirs, and tried to flatter us into

silence.

They tried to make us feel we were being listened to, and that change was possible. They apologised for their failures in Libya, citing lack of international staff and visa restrictions—excuses we knew by heart. They promised reforms, and for a while, some changes in Libya came: militia-linked guards at their headquarters in Tripoli were replaced, waiting times shortened, access to healthcare accelerated, and a few detained comrades were released. New focal points in Libya and in Geneva were assigned to us.

But within months, it all collapsed. UNHCR cut communication, reinstated abusive guards, and made appointments unreachable. They told us that our campaign and criticism made donors reluctant to allocate resources to Libya.

In terms of the UNFAIR campaign’s achievements, our voices did reach Europe. They reached the UN agencies in Geneva, the parliamentarians in Brussels, and many who believe in equality and freedom of movement. But little changed. Europe has no intention of making life better for refugees. On the contrary, it welcomes our complaints, because they prove its policies are working exactly as intended. The toll is ours: broken bodies and minds, eroded dignity and survival permitted only when we are exhausted into servitude and have lost all sense of life and belonging.

In the face of this, we turned to each other, to radical solidarity. We initiated a hotline for those failed by UNHCR, to refer people to communities who could provide what was denied, like medicine, food, comfort. We became each other’s nurses, therapists and storytellers. This quiet rebellion of care has sustained us for years.

It also inspired comrades in Tunisia, in Zarzis and Tunis, who, like us, had been protesting in front of UNHCR’s headquarters, and were repressed with UNHCR’s complicity. They too refused silence; they have been continuing to protest against Tunisian and European state violence. In this book, they will tell their own stories. For suffering is one thing, but to be denied the dignity to tell it is a deeper crime.

Voices rose as well from Agadez, where since 2017 thousands have been contained in the Agadez Humanitarian Shelter camp, erected with the complicity of UNHCR and funding from Italy, Germany, Canada and others. Children are born stateless and futureless in an arid desert, abandoned in plain sight for the “security” of Europe. There is no school, no healthcare, no hope, and their peaceful protests are met with silence or violence.

So how did we arrive here, from passive recipients of aid, to critics, to protestors ignored, to the UNFAIR campaign, and now this project: the *Book of Shame*? Why must we call it that?

We have not been able to hold UNHCR accountable legally for its complicity in crimes against refugees. With others, we have been able to use law as a tool against perpetrators of state violence. We have not accused Libyan militias and government officials with words alone—we have walked our accusations and evidence into courts across Europe and to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. We have done the same for those in Europe whose agreements and silences have made these crimes possible, like Federica Mogherini, former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, high-ranking officials of Frontex and EU-NAV FOR MED, as well as national authorities from Italy and Malta. We have also confronted these European actors in their own courts: in the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg, in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, in domestic courts from Rome to Berlin, Paris to Madrid.

But with UNHCR, we hit a wall—not solid but deceitful. A wall of polite sentences and empty gestures, soft enough to sound kind, firm enough to keep us locked out. We are told there is no court to which we can carry our grievances, only the thin veil of an online complaint form that vanishes into an inbox nobody ever reads. Why is the very agency mandated to protect the displaced shielded from accountability?

The answer is simple enough. UNHCR sits atop the system without any binding oversight. It claims supervisory or advisory powers, but nothing compels it to act or punishes it when it fails. Its staff told us openly that they cannot force states to comply. But about their own failures, they are silent.

More dangerously, UNHCR is tethered to the will of states through its funding. A vast amount of its funding comes from voluntary state contributions, often earmarked to serve those governments' priorities, not those of refugees. Its governing body is made up of states and it can only function within a country if that government permits it to. Its operations live or die by the permission of states, so independence is a fiction. That is why UNHCR has never challenged Europe's deadly deals with Libya or Tunisia, nor Italy's recent pact with Albania.

Inside UNHCR, the walls are equally opaque. Decisions — on who gets protection, who receives aid, who is told to wait, and who is discarded — are hidden. Files vanish in the dark. Some receive a phone call informing them that they have been accepted for resettlement. Others get a simple, sharp rejection letter stating their asylum claim has been rejected. No reasons given. It feels like standing outside a locked room, trying to guess your fate from whispers within.

And all the while, UNHCR performs diplomacy—smooth and agreeable to states, disgusting for us. Criticism is avoided at all costs, especially when host governments are the abusers. The system only responds to crises like a fire brigade, bringing emergency shelters, distributing food rations, and gathering statistics of survival. Integration, dignity, and futures are treated as luxuries. Hence, we get containment camps like in Agadez.

When UNHCR speaks to the world, it points to vast numbers: the millions of people displaced and on the move, the billions of euros needed to address it. In this enormity, it finds shelter from accountability. The crises are complex, they say. The solutions are political, they remind us. UNHCR's own failures are washed away in the tide of statistics.

We know from our own experiences — brutal, personal, unforgettable experiences — that statistics cannot bury suffering. Throughout this text, I have shown how easily UNHCR overlooks the most vulnerable: those trafficked, tortured, abandoned in deserts, those disappeared into Libya's warehouses, those refused evacuation until death is upon them. These patterns repeat because this agency, for all its language, has woven itself into the machinery of containment, perhaps just as it was intended from the start.

I came to understand that taking UNHCR to court is not like taking a state or an individual to court. It is like trying to hold a shadow accountable. It slips through the fingers. It hides in technicalities. It survives by saying: *"We did our best. We are not to blame—states refused to act."*

And so we have come to understand that justice for this shadow system cannot be found in courtrooms. It can only be summoned through this *Book of Shame*. And it is no longer in our hands alone. It is up to the good people of this world to decide what punishment, if any, UNHCR deserves. By writing this, by documenting, by risking what little peace we have left, we have done what we can to carry forward a measure of accountability. That is no small thing.

Before I end my contribution to this book, I leave you with questions that have never left me: Who watches the one who is meant to watch over us? Who holds accountable the institution that profits from our displacement, that silences our protests, that negotiates with our torturers, and manages our suffering? Where should we turn when even the guardian of rights is part of the chain that keeps us bound?

As every dancer must leave the stage, I leave you with these pages, and with the voices that make up this *Book of Shame*. They speak for themselves. Because no matter how long I write, no matter how deeply I try to explain my disappointment, I can never fully express what failure feels like to each individual. Every person carries their wound differently. Every body absorbs pain in its own way. Rejection. Abandonment. The suffocating grip of this system—these things never feel exactly the same, yet they wound us all.

I have done my part. I have spoken. I have told you what I have lived and what I have seen. Now, I invite you to do your part, in good faith, in truth, and in the honour of human dignity.



In front of the UNHCR Tripoli, 03.10.2021, day 3 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



In front of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 11.11.2021, day 42 of the protests, Refugees in Libya



On the street in front of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 01.11.2021, day 32 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



At the gate of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 02.12.2021, day 63 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Tripoli, 02.12.2021, day 63 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



In front of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 04.12.2021, day 65 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



In front of the UNHCR, Tripoli, 04.12.2021, day 65 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Tripoli, 06.12.2021, day 67 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Tripoli, 08.12.2021, day 69 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Tripoli, 08.12.2021, day 69 of the protest, Refugees in Libya

VOICES FROM THE HOTLINE:

Documenting UNHCR Systemic Dysfunction and Its Consequences

with testimonies from april 2024 - july 2025

1. Introduction – How Does the Hotline Work?.....	51
2. The System Controlling Asylum Seekers in Libya.....	54
2.1 The Hurdles of Registration.....	60
2.2 Clinging to an Unresponsive System.....	63
2.3 Difficulties in Renewing or Updating UNHCR Files.....	66
2.4 The Lack of Follow-Up and Protection after Registration.....	68
2.5 Facing Persecution and Discrimination Despite Having UNHCR Papers.....	71
2.6 Sea Crossing as the Last and Only Attempt to Escape.....	74
3. Protection and Emergency Hotline.....	78
3.1 Protection Hotlines Are Not Accessible.....	82
3.2 The “Protection Interview”.....	87
3.3 Lack of Protection for Women, Children, and Disabled Persons.....	90
3.4 Complaints Against Personnel Not Acted Upon.....	93
4. How the Lack of Health Assistance Affects Refugees’ Lives.....	98
4.1 Medical Neglect and Denial of Health Services.....	100
4.2 Violence, Sexual Abuse, and Psychological Harm.....	103
4.3 Administrative Failure and Communication Breakdown.....	106
4.4 Displacement, Homelessness, and Extreme Poverty.....	109
4.5 Repeated Appeals and Systemic Abandonment.....	112
5. What Is the Role of UNHCR in Libya?.....	116
5.1 The Indifference of UNHCR Staff Towards Refugees’ Suffering.....	119
5.2 The Inadequacy of the Humanitarian Infrastructure.....	122
5.3 The Systematic Backlogging and Concealment of Refugees’ Cries for Help.....	126
5.4 Reports on Corruption and Repression of Dissent at the UNHCR Offices.....	130
6. UNHCR and the Plea of the Charitable Association of Invalid Refugees.....	136
7. Conclusion – What Do We Learn?.....	141

1.

Introduction

How Does the Hotline Work?

This chapter is based on testimonies gathered through the collective hotline of Refugees in Libya, a tool created to amplify the voices of displaced people trapped in the country. The hotline operates seven days a week and serves multiple purposes: it provides people on the move with information on local and international organizations that, in principle, should deliver humanitarian aid and protection; it offers a space for compassionate listening to counter frustration, exasperation, and despair; it records testimonies for advocacy; and it builds an archive of border violence.

The Collective Hotline is coordinated by members of the *Alliance with Refugees in Libya (ARiL)*—European-based citizens and non-citizens—who work in solidarity with self-organized refugee networks. It complements the smaller individual “hotlines” managed by refugees who managed to reach Europe but remain in daily contact with those still in Libya. While these individual lines often address urgent and violent crises, the collective hotline primarily accompanies families, single mothers with young children, and other vulnerable groups enduring daily dehumanization while waiting, often indefinitely, for evacuation to a safe country.

Over the course of about 16 months, some 1,500 migrant families have contacted the hotline, sharing their experiences and complaints. These testimonies reveal the extreme suffering of hundreds of thousands of people who remain invisible to the European public. Many have been stranded for months or even years, unable to return home and unable to escape Libya due to the European Union’s externalized border regime. Denied protection by the Libyan state—and unrecognized even with UNHCR documents, which local authorities refuse to honor—they have become prey to systemic exploitation by militias, armed groups, and even ordinary citizens who know that so-called “illegal immigrants” have no legal recourse.

The situation has deteriorated dramatically in early 2025, with a brutal wave of hatred emanating both from Libyan civil society and from the government, fueling mass expulsions of migrants to the desert and toward Agadez. Refugees also report expulsions to Tunisia, where self-organized communities, along with organizations such as Alarm Phone Sahara, have tried to provide support. ARiL has expanded its network to follow these shifting patterns of violence.

The hotline, however, cannot provide food, shelter, or medical care. At most, it can offer accurate information, refer people to UNHCR, INGOs, or the few local networks that exist, and—at considerable risk—mobilize comrades to search for disappeared individuals or accompany especially vulnerable cases to receive treatment.

For ARiL, the hotline remains first and foremost a tool for advocacy: a means to campaign for freedom of movement and to make visible the daily violations endured by entire communities of refugees and asylum seekers in Libya, whose rights are systematically denied by the Libyan state in collaboration with the EU’s politics of externalization, including the Memorandum of Understanding with Italy.

A few methodological clarifications are important. The hotline was not designed to collect complaints against UNHCR. Rather, its purpose is to provide support and to document the lived conditions of people on the move. The testimonies presented here are those that, spontaneously, mentioned UNHCR’s role—or its absence—among the many accounts received during a year and a half of activity. Messages came primarily via WhatsApp and voice notes; translations were done by ordinary translators; privacy has been respected by using first names and dates only, with exceptions for sensitive cases. In several instances, text has been shortened with (...) to protect anonymity or improve clarity.

From these fragments, however, a clear pattern emerges: UNHCR has become part of the problem confronting refugees in Libya. As one asylum seeker wrote, “There is a general failure and neglect of files, as well as clear shortcomings from the UNHCR and its partner organizations in Libya in responding to our needs.” Others recount imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, and psychological abuse—all while being denied recognition as asylum seekers if they do not belong to the nine nationalities officially recognized by UNHCR. The case of Hassan, a Chadian survivor of torture and sexual assault who was taken by “some good people” to UNHCR’s office, illustrates the cruelty of this exclusion: although he received some first aid, his right to international protection was denied.

Instead of offering protection, the bureaucracy managed by UNHCR—the registration process, renewals, and the so-called “protection interview”—masks the brutality of daily life. Single women and single mothers, even after reporting rape to the police, remain unprotected. As Sara testifies:

“We face persecution, violence, violations, racism, and non-acceptance in these societies due to our customs and traditions. We are not protected by the Libyan authorities, and we are not recognized as refugees. We are treated like illegal immigrants and thrown into prisons.”

Libya has become a trap for over 900,000 refugees and asylum seekers, invisible yet confined, where one can disappear or die without leaving a trace. This chapter gives space to the voices that reached the hotline—voices of women, children, young men, and elders—who testify to systemic abandonment, worsening conditions, and the lack of accountability at both the national and international level.

This report is both evidence and appeal. It documents how, rather than protecting, the international system silences resistance to oppression and the deprivation of fundamental rights. It asks UNHCR and IOM to confront their responsibility on behalf of the international community. And above all, it fulfills the promise made to the refugees themselves: to amplify their voices and bring them directly to those who claim to act in their name.

“Am I not a refugee like others?”

2. The System Controlling Asylum Seekers in Libya: Registration - Renewal - Validity

2.1 The Hurdles of Registration	2.2 Clinging to an Unresponsive System	2.3 Difficulties in Renewing or Updating UNHCR Files
2.4 The Lack of Follow-Up and Protection after Registration	2.5 Facing Persecution and Discrimination Despite Having UNHCR Papers	2.6 Sea Crossing as the Last and Only Attempt to Escape

In this section, we present testimonies regarding the delays in registration with UNHCR and the lack of follow-up after individuals have submitted their applications. UNHCR Libya only registers asylum-seekers from 9 nationalities: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. But according to UNHCR’s own numbers, only a fraction of refugees from these nationalities have been registered. The UNHCR has registered only about 90000 refugees¹, representing only 10% of those deemed as refugees, according to UNHCR criteria, and who are probably present in Libya. This means that the majority of the refugees who arrive in the country do not manage to register with UNHCR. In other words, UNHCR is not only limited to registering asylum seekers from only 9

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-operational-update-april-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

nationalities, but the accessibility to the registration, and thus to the eligibility to potentially benefit from its services, are limited in advance. From the biggest community of refugees in Libya, those of Sudanese nationality—approximately 330,000 according to UNHCR—only some 70,000 are registered.

One of the main reasons for this low registration rate is that the UNHCR office operates only in Tripoli and thus makes registration nearly impossible for those who are living elsewhere or have just crossed the border (from Egypt in the East, or from Kufra in the South). Many do not have the financial means to travel, and even if they do, they risk being stopped, attacked, harassed, or detained by police, militias, security forces, human traffickers or just violent civilians while travelling. Movement towards Tripoli is further hampered by discrimination against Black people in public transports. And UNHCR rules impose that the registration should be renewed every year! Indeed, in the messages that we have collected over a year through the hotline, we find many complaints concerning the difficulty not only to reach UNHCR offices in Tripoli, but also to obtain answers by them through phone calls.

Those who have managed to register themselves and their family as asylum seekers, testify to a widespread exasperation and frustration with the process, a bureaucratic labyrinth that people traverse, while facing discrimination, generalized violence and life-threatening situations. Essentially as Mohamed writes

“the commission (UNHCR) renews the file for me every year. It does not help me in any way, for any reason: I am sick, there is nothing registered on paper, and I have to wait for many years”.

What emerges is a prolonged and exhausting wait—one that is made even more unbearable by the hostile environment refugees live in Libya. These circumstances not only obstruct registration, renewal, and updates to their status, but also expose people to constant threats and instability while they wait for UNHCR to provide safety, a hope that rarely turns into a reality. Further complicating the process is the dependency on phone communication. If a phone is lost or stolen, individuals are unable to update their contact number with UNHCR, cutting them off from any chance of follow-up. So, for example, in the case of Mona, who after 4 years of being registered with UNHCR, her house was raided by the so-called “illegal immigration authority”, who

“took all our documents, and imprisoned the whole family. I need to retrieve our refugee documents— even my phone SIM cards are registered with the documents, and there’s no other way to get them”

and now she is unable to contact the office.

Those registered can ask for a so-called “protection interview”, if they are seriously threatened while waiting to be evacuated to a safe country, but they often feel very disappointed and neglected, as they are not contacted by UNHCR even months after they have asked for protection. Thus hundreds and hundreds of statements on the torturous experiences that asylum seekers are undergoing in Libya are not being registered by UNHCR, nor the systemic human rights violations

they suffer. One of many is the dramatic story of Ramadan, 22 years old, who was registered by UNHCR in Tripoli in 2020, went to Tunisia, tried to cross the Mediterranean, was imprisoned and then deported to the desert between Algeria and Libya. When he succeeded to return alive to Libya and finally (after 6 months) got an appointment to renew his file they would not listen to him:

“they told me that they don’t have time to hear all that and left me out. What I wonder is that if they don’t have time for me, to whom they have time for? Am I not a refugee like others? Don’t I deserve the same rights as other refugees?”

So, while the authorities in Libya have shut down all the NGOs who were partners of the UNHCR by March 2025, we wonder how it can pretend to have “completely taken over” the tasks of the NGOs and to “ensure activities continue and the needs of refugees are met”, as stated in its April 2024 report.²

The voices, collected through our hotline calls and written messages, tell a collective story of active abandonment. They reflect not only the systemic failure of registration systems but the human cost of institutional inaccessibility in a country torn by violent conflict and widespread racism against Black people.

The bureaucracy that UNHCR is managing conceals the brutality in which asylum seekers have to live in Libya, while waiting to be transferred to a safe place. The denial of rights of refugees from both the Libyan authorities – who do not even recognize the 1951 Geneva Convention nor UNHCR documents – on the one hand, and closed brutal EU border politics that do not open humanitarian corridors, on the other, renders the UNHCR a fig leaf of a bureaucratic “cage”, as described by David Yambio’s testimony. Refugees in Libya are indeed physically trapped. As one of them writes:

“we don’t know where to go. Even by the sea, we couldn’t escape to Tunisia, not even the sea. And even on the road to Morocco, we couldn’t escape. We don’t know what to do.”

So what is the purpose of the system? This is what Ahmed tells us about it:

“Guys, it’s been a year and seven months and nothing has been done for me. I received a survey call in August and until today I haven’t received any other call. Please, do something for me. I really hope they will respond to me and consider my situation. I desperately need help. When I go to Al-Nasr Street (address of one of UNHCR’s partner NGOs, now closed), they don’t let us stay; they tell us to send messages. We send messages, but there’s no response. I file complaints, but there’s no response. Many times I’ve called, and sometimes they open the line but don’t speak. I don’t know what to do. When I go to Al-Sarraj (UNHCR’s location), they don’t allow anyone to stand by their door. I want them to check my file because I haven’t received any help or anything for a whole year.” (06.07.2024)

² <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-operational-update-april-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

The complete lack of recognition and protection is proved by testimonies like Bakr, who, after five torturous years, is still in hiding—unable to reach Tripoli to register. He remains trapped in Zuwara, where even valid UNHCR documents grant no freedom of movement: local authorities refuse to recognize them, they offer no protection against arbitrary arrest or disappearance, and they do nothing to prevent attacks by gangs. As a result, he lives in constant fear. Another crucial and long testimony was provided by El-Tayeb, who suspects that his file renewal is “neglected” because he protested in front of the UNHCR in 2021:

“(…)And when I reached Libya I faced prisons (Tajoura prison in Tripoli, Janzour, and Al-Assa border prison with Tunisia) during my journey towards Europe, I tried to cross the Mediterranean sea but was pushed back twice by the [EU-funded so-called] Libyan Coast guard. I tried to cross the sea in July 2019. But we were returned from the sea near the Al-Bouri oil field. We were detained in Tajoura prison, and at that time the security situation of the capital was unstable until the prison in which we were was bombed. Most of my friends who we were with me died. We managed to escape at that time, due to the clashes that happened that day between the two governments. And when I was in the city of Janzour in May 2021, I was stopped at one of the gates and I was going to the UNHCR organization in Al-Sarraj to be registered, but I was also taken to prison for 3 months. During that period, many migrants who were brought from the sea were killed when some of them tried to escape. Most of **us** were used to do hard, forced work without pay with a high security guard, but I was able to escape when I also found the right opportunity.

Therefore, I decided to escape from the hell of Libya to Tunisia in August 2022, but as soon as we arrived, we were chased by drones, we were arrested and delivered to the Libyan border guards, and we were imprisoned in the prison of Al-Assa border. (.... after another failed attempt to cross the Mediterranean sea). Right now I am staying in Zuwara city hiding like other immigrants, trying to reach a safer country by crossing the Mediterranean Sea again. Many of us tried to register with the UNHCR but without results. In Zuwara city new immigrants like me of various nationalities encounter significant challenges in registering with the UNHCR. While they initially express a strong desire to register, disappointment sets in as they receive no response through various communication channels. (....)

Last, I emphasize the importance of providing safe routes for migrants in Libya, where they are exploited by criminal gangs. International efforts must be enhanced to ensure their safety and prevent them from being subjected to exploitation and unjustified arrests. ” (22.12.2024)

“I am from the capital, Khartoum, South. Before the war, I was about to get married, and the war came first. The family, due to the military strikes in the city, was able to travel to the city of Sennar and the center of Sudan. After

that, I turned the happiest family into the girl I was going to marry. I was able to help. I had the money to get married, and I spent the money on the travel of my family and the family of the only girl in my heart.

I am sorry, after they all traveled to the safe states, I went to Ethiopia, Amhara Region, 6/22/2023, and there was the UNHCR organization, I was registered, and then we were transferred as refugees to the Komer camp. I was registered as a refugee, 12/30/2024, and then it happened to us as refugees in Amhara Region, looting, beating, and killing, and all the Sudanese refugees. We left the camp on 5/2025/1 and then we went to Qabat and Lala in the Amhara region, and it was dangerous in heavy rains and Saabin, and on top of all of this, they were working as refugees with violence, hitting me with bullets every day, and killing me with all the coldness, even the soldiers who were refugees were attacked by (Al-Shafta), and I did not know where my family was in Sudan, all the areas in central Sudan were attacked, then I knew that the girl I was going to marry had died, and so did I. I completely **collapsed** and made the decision to go to Libya for myself and work so that I could ease the pain and start over and immigrate to me (Canada) I love work and workers I find myself at work better than anything and Canada is the only safe place in my opinion and in it I find the practical, educational and healthy environment so after I passed away (my love) may God have mercy on him and forgive him I became without hope or homeland in my country everything is destroyed and collapsed and all my family is in Places tense with war, threatened by hunger and diseases, my mother, father, sister and children, and all my brothers remain in different states, I cannot return to Sudan, and in Libya I faced the biggest problems due to skin color, racism, and colonialism, imprisonment and expulsion from work without giving me monthly salaries, then the landfill went to me and I became like a homeless person, and I work every day, but there is no safety, I am attacked everywhere.” (21.07.25)

28.05.2025 Bahir: I'm 24 years old and I'm from Ethiopia. I entered Libya in January 2021 by Al-Kufra. On my way to Tripoli I was caught by human traffickers in Bani-walid and was detained asking me for ransom of 2000 US dollars but I couldn't pay, so they continued torturing me for 9 months until the other Eritreans, who have been detained together with me, managed to pay the amount they were asked for. I was the only one who couldn't pay, so they released me together with those Eritreans. When they released me, I didn't have any place to go, so I was sleeping on the road for 2 days until an Ethiopian guy called Sultan found me and took me to his house. After spending 2 days in his house he accompanied me to the UNHCR office for the registration and medical treatment. But when we reached the UNHCR office they refused to let me in despite my critical health condition. I tried and tried to convince them that I really need medical treatment urgently, but they insisted on not letting me in. They told me to go back and get an appointment through a text message and come back. We went back to Sultan's house and after a few days a Libyan man saw me and had a pity on me, so he took me to the pharmacy and bought all the medicine I needed. After taking those medicines I got well. Later I managed to access the UNHCR office and got registered. It was in November 2021.

*

20.02.2025 Shadia: I have lost all my identification documents, including my passport and passport receipt. The only thing I have is a photo on my phone. I was at the Egyptian-Libyan border, and my husband and I were detained in Turkina for 3 days before being released. After that, we received some assistance and stayed with the Sudanese community in Tobruk for 10 days because we had lost everything—money, passports, and all identification documents, including the UNHCR card from Egypt. We then stayed with a Sudanese family. After that, I tried to get an appointment for registration. We managed to get an appointment for December 5th, but unfortunately, but it was canceled. From Tobruk, we moved to Ajdabiya. We were stopped several times on the road due to not having a curfew pass. After much hardship, we reached Ajdabiya and then Tripoli. The journey from Ajdabiya was full of suffering at the checkpoints. At one checkpoint in Misrata, the security officer in charge tore up the photos of my identification documents, saying they were useless and that only originals were acceptable. Since we didn't have the originals, we were forced to get off the vehicle. My husband and I were detained at the checkpoint for an entire night and released the next day. We arrived in Tripoli and got a new appointment. We completed the registration and stayed with another Sudanese family for a while so my husband could look for work, but he couldn't find any. (...) I don't know anyone in the area where we live, and I don't know how to handle the situation or what to do. I called the complaints hotline (1404), but they told me they couldn't help and would only forward my complaint to the commission.

*

10.06.2024 Suleiman: (...) I then traveled to Morocco and applied to the UNHCR. I was accepted as a refugee in 2023. However, the Moroccan government conducted raids against migrants and deported them without the knowledge of the UNHCR. I was forcibly deported to the Algerian border and handed over to the Algerian authorities, where I

2.1 The Hurdles of Registration

The registration is the first step for any refugee who arrives in Libya. Despite its importance, it can be done only in person and only in Tripoli, where the UNHCR office is located. This implies a long and costly trip for many, often families or single women with kids, which could be very risky as black people are often attacked in the streets and fall prey to armed groups and militias. Also refugees registered by UNHCR in Egypt or Tunisia have to register again.

“Many of us tried to register in the UNHCR but without results.”

Examples →

was imprisoned with other migrants. I escaped from the prison and returned to Libya. I contacted the UNHCR in Morocco and informed them of what had happened. They advised me to go to the nearest UNHCR center in Libya. In April I scheduled an appointment at the UNHCR in Seraj and got an appointment for September 2023. On the day of the appointment, I was arrested on my way to the UNHCR and imprisoned for two months and twenty days. They took all my money and phone. I escaped from prison and contacted the UNHCR for a new appointment on 2023/12/19. I explained my situation and registered with the UNHCR in Libya with a new file number. I have a refugee file from Morocco and an asylum seeker file in Libya. (...)

*

28.05.2025 Abdu: I'm Ethiopian, I'm 26 years old. My wife and I entered Libya in March 2023. Once I arrived in Al-Kufra my wife was caught and locked in the prison and I wasn't able to save her. I waited and waited but she wasn't released. I left Al-Kufra city and reached Tripoli alone and was registered by UNHCR. After spending 8 months in prison she survived and joined me in Tripoli. Since she joined me in Tripoli we have been trying to reach UNHCR and add her in my file and also update what happened to both of us during all this period, but we have been ignored by UNHCR. Every time we go to the UNHCR office they say no interviews without appointments through mobile, and at the same time they are not responding to our calls and messages, we are even tired by sending messages. So my

request is that UNHCR must change the way they are dealing with us. We as refugees have the right to access the UNHCR whenever it's necessary and we have the right to be listened to.

*

07.10.2024 Mohamed (whose UNHCR file had expired in 2022): (...) I have been trying every day to send messages but have not received any response from them. I am a person in great need. Since I entered Libya, my situation has been very difficult, and the struggles have continued, especially after the events in Gargash, moving from one prison to another. But thank God, I hope to request a renewal of my file and seek protection. Thank you(...). I had two protection interviews, each lasting half an hour. At first, there was some interest, but after the events in Gargash, I have become homeless, like many others, and sometimes I sleep in the streets. My life in Libya feels like it's all in prison. I am asking for protection and for my file to be renewed, please. Thank you.

*

22.05.2024 Amna (a single mother of 6 children whose father is missing): I went on the 24th and the date (for an interview) was on the 23rd. For six months I've been trying to get an appointment (...) and UNHCR has kicked me out.

*

01.08.2024 Omar: I am currently residing in Tripoli, Libya. I have applied for asylum with the UNHCR since 2023.

Until now, I have not heard anything from them. Throughout the past year, I have been arrested by militias multiple times. I was kidnapped twice in Zawiya by an armed group and imprisoned once in Qanem, and warned once.

*

20.04.2025 Loobna: I had a renewal appointment, and since I live far from the UNHCR office, I went to Abu Salim so I could be nearby and not miss it. But the appointment was postponed to another day. On the same day, I had a severe toothache, so I went out around sunset to a pharmacy. I was taken by members of the "Support and Stabilization" forces and imprisoned for three days. (...)

2.2 Clinging to an Unresponsive System

Despite its importance, the registration, the first step that assigns the asylum seekers their new recognized identity, once she/he had fled his/her own state, it is often very frustrating as people feel that they are given a short time to explain their story – which they believe will determine their eligibility for protection and resettlement to a safe country, nor are they contacted by UNHCR months, even years, later. Meanwhile they are left in an uncertain and dependent condition, as Mohamed writes

“My phone is always on.... I’ve contacted all the organizations, but there’s no response. I sent everything to the commission, but there’s been no feedback from them until now.” or: “What I wonder is that if they don’t have time for me, to whom do they have time for?”

“My only hope is the UNHCR, which is my only resource.”

Examples →

29.05.2025 Ramadan: I’m 22 years old, I’m a Sudanese refugee living in Tripoli since 2020. I have been registered by UNHCR since 2020 (...) Then I joined the protest camp of 2021 that was organized in front of the UNHCR office and continued protesting peacefully until we were arrested on the night of 10 January 2022 and taken to Ain-zara prison, I was locked there until March 2023, I managed to escape. Then after one year, in March 2024 I left Libya and entered Tunisia crossing the land border. Then from Tunisia I also tried to cross the Mediterranean sea but I was intercepted by Tunisian coastguards and pulled back and locked in a prison. I spent 33 days in prison and they deported me to the desert between Libya and Algeria. I had to walk 2 days and reach Libya, it was in September 2024. Once I returned to Tripoli I sent a lot of messages to UNHCR requesting an appointment to renew my file and update them on what I passed through. They didn’t reply to me directly, but I had to wait 6 months to receive a message from them telling me that I got an appointment. When I arrived at the office on appointment day, they just asked me for my name and the file number, then they renewed the file and told me to leave. I wanted to update them of what I went through but they told me that they don’t have time to hear all that and left me out. What I wonder is that if they don’t have time for me, to whom do they have time for? Am I not a refugee like others? Don’t I deserve the same rights as other refugees?

16.05.2025 Abubakr (lost 3 children

in Libya): By God, I have been calling these numbers – 0917127644 – for six months and they do not answer. I also send WhatsApp messages and they don’t reply. The IOM (International Organization for Migration) numbers also don’t answer. I’m trying to reach them through messages and calls, both regular and on WhatsApp, but they don’t respond. (...) I just want to reach them in any way so they can respond to me. I’ve tried as much as I can, but unfortunately, they don’t respond – not to calls, not to messages.....

*

22.11.2024 Suleiman: I registered with the UNHCR in Al-Sarraj. I was interviewed three times on the same day, but I don’t understand the purpose of these interviews. An employee told me they would contact me with assistance, but until now, no one has reached out to me (...) My only hope is the UNHCR, which is my only resource.

*

19.04.2024 Abdelmajid: I had a registration interview at UNHCR and the interviewer did not ask me any questions about my life story, even though I tried a lot to tell him it, but he did not listen to me and told me that choosing asylum in other countries is like this without any narration of my story, and the topic surprised me. Please, I just want my story to reach the authorities concerned with helping refugees outside Libya and for my story to receive the attention necessary to get out of Libya to safety.

*

9.12.2024 Ibrahim: There is difficulty in obtaining appointments for registration, additions, or medical consultations. There is a general failure and neglect of files, as well as clear shortcomings from the UNHCR and its partner organizations in Libya in responding to our needs.

*

26.12.2024 Mohammad: If my application is still pending, they should inform me if it's been rejected (...). Since 2019, I've received no help, protection, or contact—nothing. What should I do? I'll keep trying the Mediterranean route. My phone is always on. (...) I have contacted all the organizations, but there's no response. I sent everything to the (UNHCR) commission, but there's been no feedback from them until now.

*

30.09.2024 Hanaa: Frankly, they do not give us the opportunity to speak to them. The employee says that it is only registration and please wait for a call and they will not contact us. We have been registered since 2021 and until now there is no news from the Commission

2.3 Difficulties in Renewing or Updating UNHCR Files

If people manage to obtain a UNHCR file number, they still need to renew it after a year which renders this bureaucratic step a big challenge for those who do not live nearby and need to spend money and take the risk of a long trip only to renew the document, often with 4, 5, 6 children, often single mothers, that have to present themselves in the office; yet, despite the effort, the interview is often short and does not even serve for updating important details. Asylum seekers also need to update the document, or add new family members or remove those who passed away, or simply change their phone numbers as phones are often stolen or taken away when they are being arbitrarily detained. But even this proves to be an almost impossible challenge, as getting an appointment for renewal is extremely demanding. As for example in the case of Haroon "When I went to the commission, they told me to send messages, but they haven't replied to me. I have been sending SMS for months without a response. I use someone's phone to send messages on WhatsApp every day." The telephone becomes the only hope to be in touch with UNHCR, as in the previous example of Mona whose house was raided by the so-called "illegal immigration authority".

"I need an appointment to add a new birth and renew my file"

Examples →

17.02.2025 Mohamed: I don't have a place to stay. Sometimes I sleep on the street, and sometimes I find single people who let me stay with them for a day. I tell them my story, and they allow me to sleep with them for just one day, then I leave. As for the phone owner, he is the owner of a vegetable shop on the street. He is just a nice person, and I asked him for help, but he told me he couldn't assist me. He said that I can only take his phone to contact him, and I cannot ask him for more because it's very difficult for someone to give you their phone to contact them, given the danger of the area.

16.05.2025 Nour: We are now in Benghazi, and we need to renew our documents and add a newborn to our file, but we haven't been able to do so because traveling to Tripoli costs a lot of money.

14.01.2025 Nasra: By God Almighty, I have sent messages many times without receiving any response from 1404. Regarding the renewal appointments, there has been no response for 4 months. I have been sending messages, and there is no reply. Now, my wife has given birth to a child, and I called again, but still no answer.

18.02.2025 Mona: On 01/12/2024, people from the illegal immigration authority raided us, took all our documents, and imprisoned the whole family. I need to retrieve our passports – even

my phone SIM cards are registered with the passport, and there's no other way to get them. My SIM cards have been registered with the organization for 4 years. Please, I kindly ask for your help.

18.07.2024 Haroon: I don't have WhatsApp. Every day I send messages to the commission using someone else's phone. This is my registration number: XXXXX. When I went to the commission, they told me to send messages, but they haven't replied to me. I have been sending SMS for months without a response. I use someone's phone to send messages on WhatsApp every day. (...) 24.07.2024: Yes, no response at all. (Videos of a number not answering from Cesvi, from UNHCR protection)

29.12.2024 Mohammed: My UNHCR document has expired, and I couldn't renew it because I lost my original SIM card in prison. I've since obtained a new number, which I need to be added to my file so UNHCR can contact me in the future.

2.4 The Lack of Follow-Up and Protection after Registration

Once registered, people are left to fend for themselves in an unsafe, hostile environment—sometimes for months, sometimes for years—without any update on their case or prospects for relocation to safety.

"I have been imprisoned multiple times in Libya, living like a stray dog"

writes Mohammed. In the meantime, they remain easy targets for physical and sexual exploitation and abuse. Many turn to UNHCR, requesting the so-called "protection interview" in search of physical and psychological safety. All too often, the response is simply: "We don't have a solution for your problems."

"They say (on the phone), 'We don't have a solution for your problems.'"

Examples →

29.04.2025 Ananadia: I am very afraid for my daughters. As for myself, I was subjected to an incident of kidnapping and harassment. I need international protection, safety, and security, and protection from racism. My children are being subjected to racism – this is unjust (...) I have sent many messages without any reply, and no one has paid attention to my case, even though it is serious and important.

•

25.09.2024 Malhamah: Today, I have an appointment with the (UNHCR) organization to renew my file. I explained my situation to them, and that my husband is missing. The employee told me that they can't do anything for me, and that I need to get an appointment with the Cesvi organization and go to them. I have sent them a message, but still haven't received any reply. Now, I have nowhere to go, and I'm sitting by the gate of the UNHCR office (...)

26.09.2025: I went to the Cesvi organisation today and the employee told me to open a report in Mistrata. I tried to open a report in Mistrata, but they told me that 'you don't have papers', what should I do?

•

27.10.2024 Wayam: I'm calling the protection people (of UNHCR) but there is no response. (...) I am very tired. Every day I wake up in the morning and stand at the UNHCR door to meet them, but they tell me to make an appointment. I called to make an appointment, no answer. I just want to come in and tell them what happened, we came from

Sudan and our situation is very difficult (...)

•

29.04.2025 Sawsan: I have tried repeatedly (to call the protection line), but I have not received any response from the organisations. I have not been able to bear it any longer, and in the last two days, a group of armed men have been coming to our house, banging on the doors and telling us to leave or they will kill us. They say, 'We don't want any Africans here. Leave our country'. We are terrified and afraid.

•

07.05.2024 Mohammed: I have been imprisoned multiple times in Libya, living like a stray dog, and what I fear most is the progression of diseases to a critical state that could cost me my life. Currently, I suffer from nervous colitis, hepatitis, inflammation in the left kidney, and an anal fissure, all resulting from my time in prison. Now, I am afraid of returning to prison again due to paperwork and medical certificates, as I am infected with hepatitis(.

•

03.09.2024 (Anonymous): I've been calling all the UNHCR numbers, but no one is answering. How long will it take for them to respond, until my mother loses her life? I sent messages to the IRC (International Rescue Committee), but they did not reply. I called the complaints number 1404, but no one responded to me.

•

22.04.2024 Sadiq: I was robbed at the gate on my way from Karema to Janzour. They took my bag, and I lost the UNHCR file. I tried contacting the UNHCR, but they haven't responded to return my file in over fifteen days. They took everything we have, and my situation is difficult. I need your help to retrieve my file and I need protection.

•

12.11.2024 Mona: I went to prison for illegal immigration. My sister reported to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Libya. They said, 'We don't have a solution for your problems.'

•

02.08.2024 Hafiz: I came to Libya but did not find peace and stability here. I was imprisoned, tortured, and severely abused in Bani Walid for three months. I registered with the UNHCR for asylum and protection, but so far, I have not received protection or care from any party. (...) 27.08.2024: I moved to Sabriya, Zawiya, and registered with the UNHCR to and have requested asylum and protection. (...) They told me they would contact me later, but I still have not received any help from the UNHCR. (...) 30.10.2024: They told me I would be contacted later, but so far, I have received no help or support from the UNHCR. I am continually exposed to violations, threats, harassment, and theft at my current residence and during transportation.

2.5 Facing Persecution and Discrimination Despite Having UNHCR Papers

UNHCR registration documents hold no effective value with the police, health services, or other Libyan authorities, as all refugees are treated as “illegal migrants” and often arrested and tortured as Bakr testifies:

“We were arrested for illegal immigration. They took us from the work station, 5 people, to prison, where we found many people, almost 150 people, including Sudanese, Chadians, Nigerians, and others. There in the prison, there was severe beating and torture.”

The UNHCR registration document has no effective value as far as the police, health services and the Libyan authorities, considered anyhow those who have it to be illegal migrants. Rather, refugees are criminalized and are denied access to any form of social or physical protection. As a result, the bureaucracy that UNHCR is managing – registration process, renewal, and so called “protection interview” – conceal the brutality in which asylum seekers have to live in Libya, while waiting to be transferred to a safe place. The denial of rights of refugees from both the Libyans on the one hand, and brutal EU border policies unwilling to open humanitarian corridors, on the other, renders the UNHCR in Libya a fig leaf for an unprecedented situation of human rights violation and put many people, especially, single woman or single mothers in a very vulnerable situation even if they go to report their abusers to the police.

“They (the police) refused because I am a foreigner and a refugee”

Examples →

11.02.2025 Hanan: On Thursday, 19/9/2024, (the Taxi driver) Instead, he took them (the two girls) to his house and raped them, along with other men. He filmed them, beat them on their chest, stomach, and back, and I took them to Al-Khadhra hospital because they were sexually assaulted and badly beaten. At the hospital, they only gave Asjad oxygen and said they should go to the Zawiya Street hospital. When we arrived at Zawiya Street hospital, they told us to go to the police station because it was a criminal case. However, at the police station, they refused to take the case because we didn't have official papers. We went back to the house, but we didn't receive any medical care or assistance. The man is threatening us, saying that if we go to the police again, we will be thrown in prison, and we don't know what to do.

14.07.2024 Faisal: Today, I was targeted by the Libyan government on the street. They asked for my passport and residence permit, but I have nothing except my commission card. They said if you don't have a passport, bring money or go to prison for illegal immigration. I told them I have no money, and they took the 150 dinars I had with me, which I was going to use to buy food. Libya is a problem. I contacted the protection department, but they didn't answer, and I have sent them messages with no response either.

22.07.2024 Zaina: On 1/14/2024, I was kidnapped and raped by the militias,

and I was detained for 14 days. Other incidents occurred on 10/7. He confessed to the police department and they told me that I have an illegal identity 'We will not make a report for you'.

30.01.2025 Sara: We came to Libya in search of security, safety, and the dignified life we lost in our country. However, to our deep regret, we were met with a harsh and bitter reality that we are experiencing as refugees in Libya. We face persecution, violence, violations, racism, and non-acceptance in these societies due to our customs and traditions. We are not protected by the Libyan authorities, and we are not recognized as refugees. We are treated like illegal immigrants and thrown into prisons.

10.06.2024 Suleiman: (...) We are constantly dealing with security and immigration police due to the lack of proper documentation, and I entered Libya illegally. I do not have a passport, and the UNHCR document is not recognized. Every day my life is in danger, and the living conditions are unhealthy.

20.02.2025 Bakr: I was arrested on the 31st of October. We escaped from the prison on the 5th of November, from Abu Salim prison. We were arrested for illegal immigration. They took us from the work station, 5 people, to prison, where we found many people, almost 150 people, including Sudanese, Chadians, Nigerians, and others. There in

the prison, there was severe beating and torture. They beat me badly and insulted me. The situation here is not safe at all.

•

09.04.2025 Abdeen: (...) Nowadays we are living a difficult time as the Libyans are inciting violence against us, especially when they see us holding a UNHCR document, they hate us and insult us even if we are trying to cross the road, they try seriously to hit us.

•

01.12.2024 Muadh: have applied for asylum with the UNHCR since 2023 (...). So far, there has been no news from them. (...) I only have a piece of paper from the UNHCR. Militias say that this paper is useless. Since I registered with the UNHCR, I've been imprisoned three times. This last time, I was released about a week ago. Please look into my case, and thank you very much.

•

06.01.2024 Heba: My children are deprived of their minimum rights and I cannot go out safely because of threats from a policeman and I am completely unable to open a report because I do not have any personal identification documents and I cannot obtain any documents because I cannot deal with my embassy because my country could not protect me or my husband from arrest before today.

•

27.09.2024 Malhamah: They told me to

file a report at the police station in Misrata, organized by the Tazfifi in Tripoli. They told me that my issue is a security problem related to the Ministry of Interior in Misrata(...) I told them (Cesvi) about my husband missing and they asked me to file a disappearance report in Misrata (...) They (the police) refused because I am a foreigner and a refugee (...). Cesvi said : We can't help you with your security issues, we can't help you with it until your husband shows up and we can see what we can do for you.

•

2.6 Sea Crossing as the Last and Only Attempt to Escape

Indeed, more and more asylum seekers write us that after months and years of being registered with UNHCR and enduring abuses, discrimination in a constant struggle for survival, they see no other solution left to them but to cross the sea, even if they know there are high chances of being pulled back and returned to detention or to perish in the trip because of active abandonment and let-to-die strategies of EU's coast guards. These messages illustrate the frustration and desperation in the face of continued hardships and injustices and a bureaucratic labyrinth that provides neither protection nor food, shelter and basic health care. The asylum seekers are practically trapped, and recently, a growing number of parents with children talk about considering taking to the sea.

"A while ago, they said it's impossible to resettle migrants, and even if there were resettlements in Libya, no one wants their country (...). If they open the sea, within 42 hours, they won't find anyone." (02.04.2025)

"If I make it, that's good. If I don't make it, it's better to die in the Mediterranean Sea than to live in Libya."

Examples →

05.04.2025 Emad: At the beginning, at the gate, I entered after filling out the form through the link and then entered the reception. I encountered many nationalities being registered for voluntary return (...) I entered the protection office and (...) explained my situation and asked them to evacuate us to any place other than Libya. They refused and said that they cannot do that, despite knowing that the Libyan government has closed all partner organisations like Cesvi and others and there are no organisations that function except the UNHCR. I told them that if I am not evacuated anywhere I will risk the children across the sea or across the desert to get out of Libya, I cannot live in Libya, we are dying in Libya slowly.

•

05.01.2025 Fakhraddin: All of Libya is not safe, even if I go to the Danish Refugee Council : We just want to leave Libya, that's it. If there is no way, we will try to cross the Mediterranean Sea. If I make it, that's good. If I don't make it, it's better to die in the Mediterranean Sea than live in Libya. There is no other option, just death in the sea.

•

02.04.2025 Adam: Even now, we still don't know where to go. (...) we can't escape to Tunisia, neither by the sea. And even through the road to Morocco, we can't escape. We don't know what to do. The commission is not helping us, it's not working for us. Even today, I saw the news of their press conference, they said that partner organiza-

tions have closed their offices. So, the situation is getting worse every day(...) A while ago, they said it's impossible to resettle migrants, and even if there were resettlement in Libya, no one wants their country. (...) I swear by God, if they open the sea, within 42 hours, they won't find anyone..

•

06.032025 S.: A divorced woman with two small children and a disability in her left hand used to live with me. She never told me she was planning to travel by sea. She left with her children, but they were caught and imprisoned in Abu Salim prison. When she was released, she came to me—oh my God, she and her children were in a miserable state. Seeing her in that condition broke my heart. I don't know what they did to her. She told me she only wanted bread and water. She also warned me not to risk my children's lives. Seeing her like that terrified me. She was just skin and bones.

“silent like a thirst”

3. Protection and Emergency hotline

3.1 Protection Hotlines Are Not Accessible	3.2 The “Protection Interview”
3.3 Lack of Protection for Women, Children, and Disabled Persons	3.4 Complaints Against Personnel Not Acted Upon

This chapter documents how the emergency hotline for people who registered with UNHCR is unreachable or does not provide solutions even when people manage to signal emergency cases or raise complaints about human rights violations. The UNHCR Protection Hotline (0917127644) which work Sunday to Thursday 08:30-16:30) and Tawasul Common Feedback Mechanism hotline: 1504 (previously 1404), which work Sunday to Thursday, 9:00-23:00 and is supposed to work “Country-wide to obtain information on humanitarian programs, voice complaints and provide feedback and get referrals to the humanitarian organizations that are best-suited to handle the reported issue.” These numbers however are restricted to working hours In addition to that, the UNHCR has also a referral mechanism for survivors of sexual violence through a hotline managed by IRC (International Res-

cue Committee), which should guarantee them priority to urgent health case and access to medical care within 72 hours of the incident.

Hundreds of thousands are stuck for months, others are stuck for years, and their numbers are growing, as they are not being able to return home nor to escape from Libya due to the EU border regime. Most of them are not registered with the UNHCR and thus not eligible for any help, as in the case of Mawadda, a young student alone, who stayed in front of the UNHCR headquarters but was not allowed to enter, because

“When you call them, they say you have to be registered with UNHCR or otherwise, they don’t help you.” (11.09.2024)

Thousand like Mawadda become victims of systemic violation of their rights as refugees, deprived from any physical or legal protection, while their survival depends often on the same militias and other groups which exploit them systematically as forced labor, and subject them to sexual violence and torture to extract profit from them. This is why they need above all physical and psychological protection and call for UNHCR, which has an intergovernmental mandate to protect at least those who are registered with UNHCR.

The testimonies challenge the very notion of UNHCR’s protection system, revealing how its services are unavailable, unreachable, and ineffective. Aside from a few minor exceptions these mechanisms fail to improve, or even affect, the dire conditions of most of those who turn to them in desperation. Some question whether they serve any purpose at all, besides sustaining the humanitarian mask of the EU border regime.

“Most numbers are disconnected all day, and the rest ring with no answer,”

writes Amina, adding:

“There is no life in those you are calling,”

using a Sudanese proverb that captures the feeling of those whose pleas fall on deaf ears (23.04.2025).

They all become victims of systemic violation of their rights as refugees, deprived from any physical or legal protection, while their survival depends often on the same militias and other groups which exploit them as forced labor, and subject them to sexual violence and torture to extract profit from them. This is why they need above all physical and psychological protection and call for UNHCR, which together with IOM have a mandate to protect at least those who are registered with UNHCR.

We collected hundreds of individual cases over a period of 15 months which paint a grim and consistent picture: the emergency and protection mechanisms claimed by UNHCR and its partners in Libya are largely inaccessible, unresponsive, and ineffective. Refugees and asylum seekers—many of whom are survivors of sexual violence, torture, forced labor, or life-threatening circumstances—are repeatedly met with silence, bureaucratic delays, or empty assurances after attempting to

contact hotlines or file complaints. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, and disabled individuals face severe risks without the protection they are promised, despite the UNHCR’s stated procedures for prioritizing urgent health and safety needs. And if you come to the UNHCR offices without an appointment, no matter how urgent or life-threatening your case is, you are not accepted. This is extremely crucial for sexually harassed women:

“I was harassed and beaten by a taxi driver who also stole my bag containing my passport. I reported the incident to the International Organization for Migration, but they said I needed a police report. I went to the police station, and they told me I needed a medical report due to the assault. I went to the hospital, got a medical report, and then returned to the police station, but they refused to file a report and threatened to hand me over to illegal immigration because I entered through the desert. I complained to Sarraj (UNHCR) Protection, the 1404 hotline, and INTERSOS organization, but no one responded to my request for protection(...) some of which did not respond and some of which responded with a helpless and unconvincing response. We have reached despair, and we have no choice but to be patient.” (she added 14 screenshots of missing calls on the 17.09.2024)

The pattern is not of isolated failure but of systemic collapse. Complaint numbers function more as dead ends than channels for redress, and in many cases, calling the hotline only results in a case being “registered” with no further response. Allegations of misconduct, intimidation, and corruption involving UNHCR personnel remain uninvestigated, compounding the feeling of abandonment among those seeking help.

While we chose to put in evidence some of the most common complaints of refugees in Libya, in the annex we have piled tens and tens more of these desperate messages, often accompanied with screenshots or even video documenting the calls people in dire stress do in vain.

“Unfortunately, I went on the 29th and they didn’t find a solution for me. Honestly, I am feeling hopeless again. They have no solution for me, and God is my witness. O mighty God ease this hardship. The UNHCR is like the people say, ‘silent like thirst.’” (31.01.2025)

Worse, we have serious information regarding alleged misbehavior and corruption of the personnel.

The complaint system, as it stands, does not offer accountability—it conceals evidence of systemic violations of human rights in Libya. This concealment is itself a form of complicity.

“I was raped in Libya by the 55 militia in Sayyad”

reported a woman who was going to one of the bakeries near the militia’s location,

“my path was blocked and I was raped. After I was raped, I was thrown in one of the streets in Sayyad. I fainted and was helped by one of the residents of Sayyad (...). I tried to contact the (UNHCR) commission and no one answered,

and no one helped with anything" (02.01.2025)

UNHCR and its partners must either urgently reform their protection infrastructure in Libya or stop misleading the public and the international community with hollow promises.

Some of the complaints are in the form of a direct letter to the UNHCR's authorities:

"To the Honorable High Commissioner for Human Rights

Peace be upon you.

With reference to the subject above, I am submitting a request for assistance.

I have been registered with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Libya since August 6, 2023. We have gone through extremely difficult circumstances. I was kidnapped, tortured, and abused in the Zuwara area on April 27, 2024. I submitted a complaint to the Commission regarding my psychological condition, requesting support and protection. The Commission did not respond.

I attempted to leave Libya on April 25, 2025, crossing the Mediterranean Sea toward a safe and desired location, but our journey was cut short. Our people drowned – some died, others survived. It was a traumatic incident for me and still affects my mental state. We were rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard and imprisoned. We were tortured, insulted, and ransom was demanded.

I kindly ask that you consider my request and provide the necessary assistance – especially with regard to my health and psychological condition, as a priority for survival.

Please note that I have lost all my phone numbers and devices. (Badr, 11.07.2025).

3.1 Protection Hotlines Are Not Accessible

Most of the messages are usually like this one:

"I also called the numbers of partner organizations they gave me during registration, but there was no answer. Today, I have called more than 500 times, but there is no response."

Or,

"I contacted them, but there was no response, god help us."

These simple heartbreaking messages, we have learned, condense a very frustrating and exhausting experiences by people in emergency situation who are calling the numbers they were given if they need help, as described by Musa (15.01.2025):

"All day long, I try to contact the numbers that were sent to me +218910011491, +218(0)922767166 (Cesvi), +218 (0)910027716 (Cesvi), +218 (0)917872725, 0917127644 (protection hotline), 1404 (Tawasul), +218910028462, 0910354839, 0910347365, 0920001167. There is no response on WhatsApp, no text message, no regular call, but I want to know if these numbers are not affiliated with the UNHCR. Why is there no response to the least one of them or is there by the designated persons, don't I have a right to contact them seriously I'm so tired I can't bear it anymore if you seriously care about me as a human being as a refugee reply to me as soon as possible and if that is not the case, contact me after it is too late, after death. There is no atonement needed, my Lord is always with me and protects me."

An emergency response would be especially important for women who are abused, as in the message of Marsa (21.05.2024)

"I contacted 1404 and filed my complaint because there is no security. I have been subjected to harassment and attempted kidnapping. This is the second complaint because my daughters are at risk and there is no safety. I also called other numbers, but the calls either go unanswered

or disconnect without a response. I am simply requesting security to be provided. (...) I'm sending messages but there's no reply. (...) I went to the International Organization for Migration and complained about what happened to me and my daughters. They asked me to contact the UNHCR and Tawasul, but the UNHCR did not reply. I call and there's no answer. Tawasul I call, I send messages, but there's no response. If these authorities don't listen to us, who will? We are refugees, wherever I go they tell me they're not the relevant authority. I try to contact the UNHCR and even Tawasul, but I can't get in without an appointment. I send messages and call, but there's no response at all."

It is maybe not surprising if the two emergency numbers for hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers in Libya are limited to certain days and to certain work hours, but the result is dramatic: attempts to reach the 1404 and later, 1504, hotline remain often without success, or they provide just an automated reply or a vague reassurance with no tangible outcomes. Some individuals have made tens –even hundreds of calls over extended periods, yet remain without protection, support, or even acknowledgment.

"I called 1404 more than a thousand times but there was no answer."

Examples →

29.04.2025 Amina: Date: April 27, 2025

Incident Summary: 1. Morning Attack (Today): o While taking my children to school, we were targeted by the same perpetrator who previously assaulted us at our home. 2. Thursday Attack (April 24): o My husband was beaten and robbed on Al-Anjelah Street. The assailant stole: His official identification documents, all his weekly earnings. Critical Concerns: Immediate Safety Risk: The perpetrator is escalating attacks (home - public - targeting children). Document Loss: Without IDs, we cannot access protection services or humanitarian aid. Financial Crisis: Stolen wages leave us unable to pay rent/buy food. Urgent Requests: Police/UNHCR intervention to arrest the perpetrator. Emergency replacement of stolen documents. Temporary relocation for family safety: They only gave me blankets from a partner organisation, and that was it. 29.04.2025 I tried to contact the protection department, but unfortunately, I haven't been able to get through today. The number is always busy or out of service, but I'm still trying.

15.03.2025 Abdulrahman: every day I appeal to the organization, but to no avail and without a response. I was physically assaulted, and my hand was broken, I was also sexually harassed, and I was detained in Tripoli for nothing except that I am a Sudanese refugee fleeing the war, and I was used for hard labour with no food and blankets in the extreme cold, breaking walls, moving heavy objects and every inhumane work I was used for.

17.01.2025 Musa: No organization has addressed my plight. It is unbearable to feel that my existence in this life is meaningless.... To any humanitarian organization, the responsibility lies with you to ensure the well-being of those who turn to you for support. Neglecting to respond to my requests and ignoring my calls and messages reflects a serious disregard for your responsibilities. While the idea of crossing the sea in a flimsy boat is undoubtedly 22.01.2025: I have tried to reach out to them countless times, but unfortunately, there has been no response. I am very tired and truly cannot bear this any longer, my life here is even more perilous than you can imagine.

05.12.2024 Madiha: I contacted the complaints department and explained that I am sick, living in difficult conditions, and lacking freedom. Our children are not getting an education, we don't have a home, and my husband doesn't have work. I explained all these issues to the protection department, but I haven't received a response yet. However, I am still waiting. 20.01. 2025: The numbers shown in the message called a lot but he says they can't be reached.

05.05.2025 M.: I received a call from the Commission on the 29th. I went on the 30th and they interviewed me for evacuation. I returned with my children, but I don't know what will hap-

pen after the evacuation or to which country we will be sent.

.

26.08.2024 Muahab: I didn't get help from UNHCR, they didn't answer my calls, my 14-year-old daughter was harassed (...), please help me and my children. (...) I tried to contact the (UNHCR) commission, but they did not respond to me so I want to renew the file, but they did not reply to me, please help me.

.

08.08.2024 Salem: I was imprisoned on July 23, 2022, and was released on September 3, 2022 (...) I was imprisoned again in October 2023 and was released on November 2 (...) My passport, phone, and everything were taken from me (...) I contacted the (UNHCR) commission, but I have not received any response.

.

28.05.2025 Hassan (screenshots of no answer): On 2nd of September 2024 I was attacked at home by some militia, they beat me and took all I had, it was in the Abu Salim area. On 16th of October 2024, I was kidnapped and got locked in a private prison and started torturing me until I had to pay ransom and they released me. On 18th of November 2024, I was kidnapped again, and they were taking me somewhere, on our way I managed to kick the car door, jumped, and ran away (...). And I tried to contact UNHCR many times so they can do something for me, but they never reply to my calls and text mes-

sages. My country is in a war and here in Libya I'm not treated like a human. I became hopeless.

.

25.08.2024 Karim: I have tried several times to get protection, but they have not responded or paid attention to me. I have tried several times to contact the same commission, but there has been no response. I am now registered in Siraj (UNHCR).

.

15.04.2025 Mouda: My husband called the complaints number, but they didn't listen to him and hung up on him. Why is that? We're not getting any response from anywhere, and the UNHCR is supposed to be a humanitarian organization. They should respect human rights. I also tried to call, but they keep disconnecting the call. By God, I swear I'm telling the truth. We've been calling since Thursday, but we didn't know if the complaint number had changed. We just found out tonight that it changed to 1504. But I don't understand why they treat us like this, as if we're not human.

.

31.12.2024 Suleiman: For an entire month, I have been calling all the numbers you provided, but I haven't received any response from the protection organization. Specifically: UNHCR Protection Hotline: 0917127644. I've called this number more than 1,000 times throughout the month, but I haven't received any response. Sometimes the call connects, but no one answers, and other times it is out of

service. (...) I also called 1404, but there's no response. I've been calling them for an entire month and haven't received any answer. I truly hope you can help me as I am in urgent need of assistance.

.

15.04.2025 Aziza: My eldest son was imprisoned 12 days ago, and I still do not know where he is. I am very ill, and my husband has an injury in his leg. I went to the UNHCR office, but they did not let me in. I have tried calling all their numbers, but I have not been able to reach anyone.

.

3.2

The “Protection Interview”

Those who are lucky enough to be invited for a “protection interview” are often very disappointed: they feel that they are not given enough time to explain their story – which they believe will determine their eligibility for protection while waiting to be evacuated to a safe country, and they are not contacted by UNHCR months, even years, later,

“clinging to hope for aid”.

Despite UNHCR’s mechanisms for complaint registration, most testimonies describe a system that either fails to respond or acknowledges complaints without any follow-up. “Your request has been registered” and nothing more.”

“If the Human Rights Organization doesn’t protect me, then who will, other than the UNHCR”

writes another woman. Many get very confused and worry about their dependency on their phones and phone numbers (if they had to change the number, or if they do not answer the expected call). But even when there is finally someone who responds, it is often only to hear an ineffective reaction to their situation; worse, most of the complaints are registered but remain unanswered. Thus, we assume that UNHCR has many testimonies concerning the violation of human rights in Libya, but is incapable or unwilling to act upon them.

“clinging to hope for aid”

Examples →

10.04.2025 Abubakr: We met with the UNHCR in Tripoli, Libya, in late September last year, hoping for assistance and support in our search for safety, stability, and education for our children. Due to the dire circumstances in the country, we have received no help—though we are in desperate need. For months, we’ve tried in vain to reach partner organizations. In January, we met with the International Organization for Migration, still clinging to hope for aid. We remain in a state of agonizing anticipation.

05.09.2024 (Anonymous): I tried to denounce the harassment to Cesvi. The response was ‘Your request has been registered’. I called 1404 so many times. The response was that the organization cannot help me with my imprisoned husband and they cannot do anything for me.

13.11.2024 two orphans: (...) two days ago we were on the street in front of the commission, because the owner found that the number of residents was too much and he expelled us. So now we are sleeping on the street and there is no safety, there is a quantity of children harassing us since yesterday and they do not leave us alone (...) There are police cars that take people wandering in the street to prisons and we are very afraid that they will take us and the biggest fear is that the boys in the street will harass us, I beg you to help us, we called 1404 and told them that we are now in the street and so far

they haven’t helped us.

19.04.2024 Sharaf: I have filed several complaints with the (UNHCR) Commission, whose reference number is 1404. I have filed more than one complaint, but there has been no response until now. I explained my situation to them, including what happened to me in Benghazi – being detained by militias in camps, under threat and torture several times.

21.05.2024 Ahmed: Yes, I called 1404 many times; they told me only to file a complaint. And the protection hotline numbers never respond at all.

01.07.2024 Buthaina: By God, I tried a lot, but with no result. You told me 1404 (...) I have called many times, and they say they will pass my complaint to the people in the (UNHCR) commission, and they will call you. By God, it has been six months, and they still haven’t called.

21.04.2024 (Anonymous): Our situation is extremely difficult. We’ve been calling the partner numbers of UNHCR, but there’s no response. I’ve been registered for a while now, but I haven’t received any assistance or protection. I called 1404, and they said the protection team would call and help. I waited, but nothing. Since I registered, I haven’t received a single call from anyone at UNHCR. I’m sick now, trying to see a doctor from UNHCR, but still no re-

sponse. Please help me in any way you can.

.

31.12.2024 Mohammed: I contacted the number 1404 and called several times. I was answered by an employee, and when I tried to file a complaint about the incidents, he told me it could only be done by appointment. I went to the Norwegian organization to submit the complaint, but they did not respond to what I said. I also contacted the renewal numbers to get an appointment to renew my file, but there was no response. I have been registered since 10/18/2023.

3.3

Lack of Protection for Women, Children, and Disabled Persons

In these testimonies it emerges how the referral mechanism for sexual abuse and violence fails especially those most at risk—women, children, and people with disabilities. Survivors of rape, sexual violence, and abuses often report not being able to reach emergency services within the critical 72-hour window for medical care, as the coordinated mechanism of the UNHCR states it would do. Some women face repeated sexual violence with no safe housing, while children are kidnapped, harassed, or tortured. Several disabled persons report being completely neglected by the protection system despite their severe vulnerabilities. The failure to respond leaves these groups exposed to ongoing violence and trauma.

“I was given pills at the hospital and until now, they haven’t provided me with protection”

Examples →

02.01.2025 Qasmeh (single mother):
(...) A Sudanese woman hosted me in Tajoura for about two months, but she said she was traveling, and I was forced to return to the same place near Sarraj, close to the UNHCR, under the trees. The same man has been following me (again), saying I have no place to go except in front of the UNHCR in Sarraj. Two nights ago, I went to a garden near Sarraj near the university. I entered the bathroom, and he was watching me. When I came out, he attacked me, hit me, threw my child to the ground, and took my bag and phone. I was too terrified to scream, and he chased me as I ran away. I went to a police station, but he ran away. When I spoke to an officer, he said, "You don't have legal papers and are here illegally. Go to the UNHCR." I left for the Sarraj gate late at night, around 12:30 AM, and sat there in fear with my child. (...) This man is ready to kill me, as he knows I am alone, unsupported, and have no one to protect me. He says, 'Your UNHCR paper won't protect you. I have Libyan and Sudanese papers, and I have a car. I can kidnap you at any moment.' He claims to be working with Tripoli militias and to know all of them, repeating, 'You have nowhere to go.' What should I do? I've called the hotline (1404) to complain, but they say the UNHCR doesn't provide personal protection. I feel completely helpless and am now sitting outside the UNHCR, unable to move. What should I do?

13.05.2025 Adawiyya: I am registered with the UNHCR and they issued me a protection document (...) They told

me they would call me, but no one has contacted me. Sometimes, I don't even have food for my children.

25.07.2024 Amani: I have been raped four times. I was working as a babysitter in a Libyan household, and a boy there was threatening and raping me, using a weapon and pictures to intimidate me. (...) I filed complaints with the commission several times, but the boy is still threatening me.

27.05.2024 Norah: I need protection as I was subjected to assault and rape on March 25th by my ex-husband, and I am currently at risk of being killed. I have relocated several times, but I am still in danger. I tried contacting the commission but received no response. I don't know what to do. Both my husband and I are in danger.

03.09.2024 Aisha (single mother with children): I am here with my children without a provider, and my situation is difficult. I am being threatened by a man who is trying to take my children away from me. I try to contact the commission, but they do not respond

15.04.2024: On December 6th, my son Mohammed, 16 years old, was abducted by militias, detained, and tortured. I reported the incident to the commission, but they did not consider the matter. There has been no communication with me until now.

04.02.2025 Shaimaa: I have a son who was imprisoned because of a Libyan man they were working with. The person stole money, and my son testified that he took the money. We are being threatened, and my son has to change his statement. They even beat my son, who is 3 years old. He keeps threatening me, saying they will kill or kidnap him. I called 1404 again, and they also told me they couldn't help. I am a mother with no support.

25.07.2024 Abdullah: UNHCR does not answer our calls and I am disabled person, I registered since January there's no any kind of support from other parts of organizations, I just took ones 'cleaning materials' from IOM, since that I didn't get any support.

25.06.2024 Wisam: I went to relieve myself near a tree, and two men with covered faces attacked and harassed me. I went to the UNHCR and spoke to an officer. He told me to book an appointment, but unfortunately, he didn't support me.

3.4

Complaints Against Personnel Not Acted Upon

While UNHCR offers avenues to report misconduct by staff, the testimonies show that complaints about personnel are not addressed. Many report on an inadequate attitude of the personnel, some –report being threatened outside UN buildings or being asked for bribes in exchange for registration or assistance. These allegations are very serious yet appear to vanish into a non-transparent complaint system that lacks accountability or follow-up, further eroding trust among already traumatized populations

The lack of transparency of the UNHCR and the inadequate services are a fertile ground for violence, bribery and corruption. The neediest who have no other place to go, often single women with children, become subjected to threats and extortion by the people who mediate the (physical or linguistic) access to the “fortress” of UNHCR..

One of the messages is about an interpreter in the UNHCR who previously worked in the Sarraj office, as well as with the UNHCR’s partner organizations and tells about how he used to mediate resettlement procedure for Asylum seekers, particularly Eritreans and Syrians, bribing the employees. As another person puts it:

“They are exploiting us, and what is most sad is that they protect each other. Most of them are relatives. (...) I don’t argue with them much because they can do whatever they want to me. They have the power to do so.”

“They warned us that if we didn’t leave and they found us in front of the UNHCR the next day, they would close our case file and there would be no other option. We left, crying and hungry.”

Examples →

28.05.2025 Bahir: In May 2024 I was kidnapped from the work station by some militias, and they took me to the prison of Maya 55 and they were torturing me and asking me for ransom, but I didn’t have anything to give them, until I spent 3 months in Maya prison and one day they took us out for work and I managed to escape from the work place. Since November 2021 the day I was registered by UNHCR till today I have never been contacted by UNHCR, I have never received any assistance from them and I’m passing through very difficult situations. I’m willing to get access to their office to tell them what I’m passing through, but they are not replying to my messages. Here is the UNHCR number I have been sending messages since: +218 91-0019417 but no any reply. Through a friend I know that some UNHCR staff receive a bribe between 350 to 400 Libyan dinars from the people to give them appointment for new registration or to renew the file.

13.11.2024 Abdu: Currently, there have been raids since the day before yesterday, yesterday, and today (...) Those detained in the house have now been held at their headquarters in Karimia for two days... I contacted this number. Regarding security issues, they said they can’t help with protection matters; they only handle medical care and voluntary repatriation, but they can’t protect us, nor can the UNHCR... With the UNHCR, people reportedly must pay bribes—300 dinars for a new appointment, 1000 dinars for a protection interview, and 1500 dinars for a

resettlement interview. For relocation to a third country, a single person must pay 10,000 dinars and a family 17,000. UNHCR Libya is all fraud, cheating, and extortion. Their employees lack any humanitarian approach. I’m convinced of this after hearing it from the office manager in Zarzis and staff members S. and M. It’s common knowledge that you must pay money for things, like a lottery -- church sponsorship, economic sponsorship, or the family sponsorship program. The UNHCR doesn’t protect you from security threats, nor do they offer medical assistance or legal support. People who face physical and verbal abuse get their files shelved while the UNHCR receives funds from other countries and the European Union. Their staff care only about the money, and there’s no point in being registered with UNHCR in Libya—it’s all fraud. (...) 14.12.2024: There are people inside the UNHCR who volunteers are, acting as interpreters. They collaborate directly with employees. For instance, a trusted employee will give a report and claim that it’s been approved, yet it gets delayed multiple times. We’ve heard details about a single person who admitted that he had paid a bribe of 10,000 dinars to be called for a resettlement or humanitarian evacuation interview. He said if you have a family, you’ll need to pay 17,000 dinars, and in exchange, your file will be sent to the receiving or hosting countries.

26.09.2024 Malhamah: Today, I had an appointment with the organization to renew my file. I explained my situation to them, and that my husband

is missing. The employee told me that they can't do anything for me, and that I need to get an appointment with the CESVI organization and go to them. I have sent them a message, but still haven't received any reply. Now, I have nowhere to go, and I'm sitting by the gate of the UNHCR office.

•

11.09.2024 Asaa : Last week, we went to the UNHCR and told them that we are sleeping on the streets, that there is no safety, and we are very scared. We complained to them about our situation and told them that we often call the complaints number, but there is no response. We went there in the morning and stayed until six in the evening. As the staff were leaving at the end of the day, they saw us standing at the door in our worst condition. We explained our situation, and they told us to go back where we came from. We asked them, 'Do you accept that we, as young women, sleep on the streets?' They said they couldn't provide us with housing and that we should leave. They warned us that if we didn't leave and they found us in front of the UNHCR the next day, they would close our case file and there would be no other option. We left, crying and hungry.

•

04.02.2025 T. :I have a complaint about an employee named Saji, a Libyan national working in the CESVI, Refugee Settlement Section, in the Sarraj office. In 2020, I had an interview with Saji on February 16, 2020, for determining my status at the Sarraj Refugee Settle-

ment Section. After the interview, I was supposed to travel to Rwanda or Niger. Since the interview, I have still been in Libya. We were six people who had interviews, and all of them traveled to Rwanda, but I am still here in Libya. I want to change my situation. I am now married, and here is the phone number of Saji, the employee in the Settlement Section at Cezvi. The call was made from this number, and the number is still active: 0910017565.

•

12.05.2025 K. (screenshot of the following call): 'Hey, I'm an employee from CESVI. I have your file number. If you don't give it to me, I'll report you. I called you, but you didn't answer. I won't let your file go through. Listen, K. it's better for you to give me the money I told you about so I don't report you. If you don't come, I'll report you. It's better for you to bring the money and come. It's better for you to bring the money and come, or I'll break into your house. This is my last warning. The next time, it will be worse for you.' (...) I am afraid of the person who is after me. There is no safety in the area where I live. There is no safety and no protection (...). This number: +218930152635. Al-Bahid is in my possession, and I have a voice recording from the CESVI organisation. I complained to them, and they told me that they couldn't do anything because they wanted to kidnap my daughter from school. I took my daughter out of school out of fear. I'm going to die. My husband is dead.

•

02.09.2024 A.: UNHCR's partner organization, CESVI, contacted me and said I met the criteria for resettlement or humanitarian evacuation. They said I could pay money for resettlement or evacuation. I told them no because UNHCR's services are supposed to be free. The call got cut off.(....)

•

25.03.2025 Salma: So they tried to imprison me: a cooperative employee from CESVI called me and asked me to go to the door of the Commission and register the names of the people. But I couldn't go, so I asked one of my friends to go and gave him the employee's number. When he went, he found the police and was arrested (...). He and his friend were imprisoned in prison for 6 months without charge...

•

13.08.25 Sanaa: The Libyan Commission employees will not allow the truth to come out. They are very skilled at falsifying facts, based on my personal experience with them. A friend has met with an employee after a long struggle and his file was opened, he told him that it was a protection interview and that he would receive a sum of money, but he did not conduct a protection interview and did not even receive any money. They are exploiting us, and what is most sad is that they protect each other. Most of them are relatives. I know them personally, so I don't argue with them much because they can do whatever they want to me. They have the power to do so. (...)

*“Why aren’t we
like other people?”*

4. How the Lack of Health Assistance Affects Refugees’ Lives

4.1
Medical Neglect and
Denial of Health
Services

4.2
Violence, Sexual
Abuse, and
Psychological Harm

4.3
Administrative Failure
and Communication
Breakdown

4.4
Displacement,
Homelessness, and
Extreme Poverty

4.5
Repeated Appeals
and Systemic
Abandonment

This chapter presents harrowing testimonies spanning from physical neglect, sexual violence, bureaucratic inertia, and the despair of individuals denied not only protection but also their basic humanity. Taken collectively, they offer a chilling indictment of the humanitarian regime for asylum seekers operating in Libya: a system overwhelmed, under-resourced, and, most damningly, complicit in border violence and systemic neglect. As one young woman asked in desperation:

“And if we are raped they will give us birth control pills. These pills caused me pelvic pain and for 5 months I haven’t had my period, and the pain is still there, why doesn’t anyone accept us? Why aren’t we like other people? We don’t have a shelter and no one cares about us. Why? life is harsh.”
(02.09.2024)

Others describe the collapse of even basic medical services:

“I submitted my medical report in July 2024, but my case has not been addressed. They told me I must wait. A full year has passed and still no response.” (15.05.2025)

The consequences are not abstract but immediate:

“My wife just gave birth, and the baby had a heart problem. We had a referral paper from the clinic, but we couldn’t find any ambulance at all. The baby has passed away, and the mother is in a very, very difficult condition.” (15.05.2025)

According to the UNHCR website “Health services are provided by the UNHCR partner International Rescue Committee.” It states that a limited number of individuals with appointments are served every day, so people need to book an appointment in non-emergency situations by calling a number active in normal office hours. In case “of a life-threatening medical emergency”, the Tawasul number is supposed to provide a solution (see chap. 3).

In the following testimonies what emerges is how these services do not deliver the advertised support, leaving people in desperate physical and psychological conditions.

As of March 2025 even this insufficient system collapsed, with NGOs like Cesvi providing psychological support closed, while UNHCR is working with the government, according to its report¹, to find a new referral system for health emergencies. Meanwhile people suffer tremendously, some get very precarious psychologically, some die.

“Is it possible that the UNHCR doesn’t have the resources to provide healthcare, protection, education, and vocational training?” (28.12.2024)

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-operational-update-april-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

4.1 Medical Neglect and Denial of Health Services

Health is a fundamental human right, yet for many refugees in Libya, access to care is neither guaranteed nor operational. The testimonies in this section describe illnesses left untreated, pregnancies lost, and surgeries denied. Hospitals routinely refuse to admit “foreigners”, and humanitarian actors pass responsibility in endless referral loops. The result is widespread suffering, worsened by chronic conditions, trauma, and poverty.

As one mother explained after months of pain and hospital rejections:

“They told me clearly that they can’t take care of my operation. So till today I’m sick and don’t know what to do. If UNHCR can’t take care of my treatment then to whom should I go?” (28.05.2025)

Others describe the discriminatory practices of Libyan hospitals:

“I went to the hospital and they told me they don’t operate on foreigners. In reality, they do – they just refused because of racism, since I am a refugee. I left the hospital with my head down and a broken spirit.” (10.05.2025)

In such a hostile environment, even banal and common diseases and wounds, left untreated and worsened by everyday life conditions, become potentially lethal.

“They told me clearly that they can’t take care of my operation”

Examples →

28.05.2025 Juhayna: My name is Juhayna, I'm a Sudanese refugee, I live in Tripoli, I'm 29 years old. I'm a mother of two children (...) Now I live on a small olive farm in the Zawiya area. I left my country because of the conflict that broke out in 2023, looking for a safe place and better life. I arrived in Tripoli in July 2023. I got registered by UNHCR in January 2024. During my stay in Tripoli I was subjected to arbitrary arrest several times, got kidnapped, detained and got abused sexually. In September 2023 I wanted to cross the border to Tunisia but I was caught and locked in Al-Assa prison, where I spent 2 months and got very sick so they released me. In December 2023 I was locked in the prison of Zuwara, where I spent one week and got released. In July 2024 I was sleeping on the road with my children as I didn't have a house; a Libyan man came and found us in very difficult condition and told us that he wanted to offer us a shelter having a pity on us. He took us to a place where we can't get out of it, and locked us. It was like a private prison, and he used to rape me and even invite his friends to do the same thing to me. I spent 15 days and I fell seriously sick, therefore they threw me out with my children. A taxi man was passing by and I asked him to take us to the UNHCR office and I explained to him that didn't have any money to pay him, so he accepted and drove us to the UNHCR office. I did a medical check and they told me that I got uterine inflammation and I need medical surgery. They wrote some reports and sent me to a public hospital, but the doctors said they don't operate on foreigners in that hospital and they directed me to a

private hospital. In the private hospital they asked me for a mount of 4500 Libyan dinars for my operation. Then I went back to UNHCR and told them about it and they told me clearly that they can't take care of my operation. So till today I'm sick and don't know what to do, if UNHCR can't take charge of my treatment then to whom should I go ? I'm completely disappointed and despair

28.05.2025 Michael: My name is Michael. I'm from Eritrea. I'm 24 years old. I entered Libya in February 2023. I passed by Al-Kufra city and arrived in Ajdabia, there I was caught by human traffickers. They locked me in a private prison and started torturing me and asking me for ransom. After spending 6 months in that human traffickers' store with torture and suffering, my family could collect amount of 5000 US dollars from the churches and transferred the money to these traffickers and they released me. By the time I was released I was very sick and I couldn't even speak Arabic. People found me lying on the road with a skeletal body, they asked me some questions but I said Eritrea, Eritrea then they understood that I'm from Eritrea and I couldn't speak Arabic. They called some Eritreans who were living around and they took me to their house. After spending a few days with them I took an appointment with UNHCR using the phone of these Eritreans who hosted me. I went to the UNHCR office on 27 of June 2024 for my appointment, and my health condition wasn't stable yet. So I asked UNHCR staff to guide me to their medi-

cal team to do medical exams and get some medical treatment. But they told me that they can't do that on the same day, and told me to go back home and get another appointment to come back and finish with medical exams. They just delivered the UNHCR file for me and guided me to the door. Since that day I have been sending messages and calling them but there is no response for me till today. My roommates helped me to buy some medicine from the pharmacy but I'm still sick. I need to be treated totally and UNHCR is not replying to my calls and text messages. I don't know why they are ignoring me.

15.05.2025 Israa: The doctor has decided I need surgery, but I cannot afford the cost. I submitted my medical report to the UNHCR in July 2024, but my case has not been addressed. I submitted the report again in February this year, but they said the UNHCR does not have the capacity to perform the surgery and that I must wait. I have not received any response yet, despite filing several complaints, which have been ineffective.

04.02.2025 Adam: By God, it's been a while since I communicated with you. It's been a period of illness, and I've tried several times. The appointment number was busy, and since January 21, 2025, until today, I have not received a response. I bought some medications from pharmacies and took them to relieve inflammation, colds, and body aches, but after everything,

there are only about four of us, and no one is helping.

20.02.2025 Safiya: I called an ambulance, but they told me to go to the nearest clinic and said they would call us back, but no one called. I also contacted 1404, but there has been no response so far. These are the same kinds of violations we faced in Egypt, and now they are happening again, even worse. There has been no response from the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

4.2

Violence, Sexual Abuse, and Psychological Harm

Beyond physical illness, many refugees are survivors of rape, trafficking, and torture. The absence of psychosocial support from UNHCR and affiliated NGOs magnifies these wounds. Women and children in particular suffer the dual trauma of violence and abandonment, with their pleas for help often met with silence or derision. One of the most shocking cases was reported by H.:

"The taxi driver took them to his house and raped them, along with other men. At the hospital they refused to treat them, and at the police station they said without papers we would be imprisoned." (11.02.2025).

For others, the silence of institutions is equally devastating:

"I was raped and contacted the partner organisations but there was no response. Finally, I called the ambulance and they told me to wait for the medical team – but nobody ever came." (21.09.2024)

"I was raped and contacted the partner organisations but there was no response"

Examples →

02.09.2024 A. : I sent messages to the UNHCR but got no response, I am afraid that my sisters and I will be raped again, we are tired of life, why don't the UNHCR people respond to us? And if we are raped they will give us birth control pills. These pills caused me pelvic pain and for 5 months I haven't had my period, and the pain is still there, why doesn't anyone accept us? Why aren't we like other people? We don't have a shelter and no one cares about us, why, life is harsh.

05.04.2024 Aman: I swear to God, I was pregnant for seven months before the rape incident occurred on 23/5/2023. I went to the (UNHCR) commission, they told me to come back later, and they filed a complaint for me (...). I was given pills at the hospital and until now, they haven't provided me with protection. Our situation is extremely difficult, I am in need. (...) UNHCR people don't answer my calls, they don't answer my letters, they don't answer my complaints (...)

21.09.2024 Feryal: I tried to contact a number of international partner organisations, but there is no response to my complaint, and every day I am harassed and forced to leave work, all this has already happened to me from harassment, beating and rape, I became very confused what to do as a divorced woman with no support and frightened children exposed to danger, bullying and inappropriate language

24.09.2024 Abu's wife: Unfortunately, I was raped and I contacted the partner organizations, but there was no response. Finally, I contacted the rescue organization, and they responded to me and told me to send my information, and after Friday prayers the medical team will arrive. I sent the information, and so far no one has contacted me(...). UNHCR answers very rarely to people in need. Instead, try to contact again Cesvi, asking for support

30.04.2025 K. (whose daughter was raped): I contacted the Commission (UNHCR) and there are no medical services, and because my daughter is urinating involuntarily and cannot sleep (...) I tried to get help through the UNHCR, but there's no doctor. (...) My daughter is still sick, and I took her to the UNHCR, but there is no doctor available.

04.08.2025 Mouda: A man is holding me back in his house. I can't leave or do anything (...). What should I do? God, help me get out of here. My husband doesn't have a phone so I can't contact him, and I don't know where we are. They beat me and treat me very badly. I have to wash and clean, and if my baby cries, they beat him even though he is small. (...) Even my little boy was beaten. The man's wife is very mean and doesn't give us anything to eat. I wish we were in Nyala. At least if the plane hits us, we'll die as martyrs. Death is better than humiliation and disgrace. The man's wife doesn't know

I have a phone, and even if she did, she would probably take it away from me and I would lose contact with you. Find my location as soon as possible.

•

16.05.2025 Hassan: I contacted the psychological support numbers and they responded to me. I told them about my problems, but their response was as if they were saying, 'You live in Misrata.' I told them that I was in Misrata and they said they would forward my complaint and that I should call their office in Misrata, but I have not received any calls. The other numbers are always disconnected.

•

01.07.2025 Zina: I'm filing a complaint today. I had an endoscopy appointment for my child at Tripoli Medical Hospital. I went to do the procedure, and my child was fasting. But they told me there was no anesthesia or sterilization available. This is the second time this has happened to my child. Back in February, they gave me an appointment for June. When I went in June, they said I needed to do a blood test. I did the blood test and brought it back while my child was fasting, and again they told me to come back after a month. So today, June 30, they said there's still no sterilization or anesthesia. They told me to go to the Awqaf Center in Ma'tiga. I took a taxi and went there, but they said they no longer treat foreigners.

•

07.08.2024 Amal (a woman who was

raped): Yes, I was contacted by the International Organization for Migration. They said they would help me, but so far, I haven't received any assistance. They told me to see a gynecologist and a psychiatrist, but I don't have the money for a taxi to get there.

4.3 Administrative Failure and Communication Breakdown

Beneath the weight of trauma is another, quieter failure: bureaucracy. Dozens of testimonies recount futile attempts to reach hotline numbers, book appointments with medical facilities, receive financial assistance for medications. The systemic unresponsiveness of UNHCR and its partners turns crisis into chronic despair, creating the sense that there is no path out—no help on the other end of the line. This is the testimony of a young man showing desperation and powerlessness in the face of the death of a dear one

"Honestly, the people haven't responded at all. I called all their numbers — even the complaint line — and no one answered. Someone close is dying, and you can't even get an appointment." (11.12.2024)

Others describe being caught in endless referral loops that leave them without care:

"The doctor at UNHCR mocked me. They keep telling me, 'Go to this hospital, go to that organisation,' but at the end of the day, there is no treatment, only endless referrals." (28.12.2024).

Overall, like with registrations (cap 2) and emergency cases (cap 3), UNHCR and partner organizations administrative and communicative delays fail to respond to the urgent health problems of refugees.

Someone close to you is dying, and you can't even get an appointment."

Examples →

28.12.2024 Adam: As for the 1404 hotline, they don't respond at all, not even a bit, to schedule a doctor's appointment. With all the challenges and unclear circumstances, I don't know any way to contact them (...) Is it possible that the UNHCR doesn't have the resources to provide healthcare, protection, education, and vocational training? (...) 04.02.2025: By God, it's been a while since I communicated with you. It's been a period of illness, and I've tried several times. The appointment number was busy, and since January 21, 2025, until today, I have not received a response. I bought some medications from pharmacies and took them to relieve inflammation, colds, and body aches, but after everything, there are only about four of us, and no one is helping...

11.12 2024 (Anonymous): Honestly, the people haven't responded at all. I called their numbers and they didn't answer. Even the complaint line for Cesvi at 0924701185, and the protection services at 0910027716, and the assistance line at 0922767166, no one responded. Even the health services of the International Rescue Committee at 0910021584, and another number at 0910347365, no one answered. I called 1404, and they said "we've forwarded your case." I don't know how to contact them, but tomorrow we will go to them. We will go to the health services of the International Rescue Committee. Someone close is dying, and you can't even get an appointment, and still, no one is responding. But tomorrow, we will go to them.

16.05.2025 Naglaa: We cannot even take her to the hospital because of the security restrictions on the road. They do not allow us to go, and the numbers of the Commission are all blocked, and even complaints receive no response even though we are registered with them

28.12.2024 S.: The doctor at the UNHCR, Dr. Magdi, told me to go to the embassy and try to get a national number. He mocked me. We fled the Sudanese government because they were forcibly conscripting everyone who had done military service and my husband had done national or military service and the embassy can't issue a Libyan national number to my daughter. Let me explain. They tell me, 'go to this place,' and I go, and then I tell them there is no solution or treatment, and they tell me, 'go to this hospital,' and I go, and then I tell them there is none, and they tell me, 'Go to this organization.' Can you understand what they're doing to me?

08.04.2025 A. : This picture witnesses the suffering of my ill mother as we tour the Libyan clinics which refuse to receive the patient on the pretext that she is not a resident of the State of Libya and has a UNHCR registration card, a special status. What is worse is that private hospitals in Tripoli argue that they do not receive such cases and refer them to the central center and the central center refuses to re-

ceive them, and the attempt is repeated to no avail. As for our relationship (with UNHCR), our only access to the Commission is the number 1404, and whenever we contact it, either its busy, or it gets rid of us with the health care number 0910347365, which is always either closed or busy until the family lost its greatest and most prestigious components.

4.4

Displacement, Homelessness, and Extreme Poverty

Health crises are compounded by homelessness, hunger, and economic precarity. Many refugees describe being thrown onto the streets—sometimes post-hospitalization, other times due to unaffordable rent or fleeing violence. Children sleep beside trash heaps, mothers sell their phones to buy bread, and hunger is a daily reality.

“Now, we are sleeping on the street. I’ve been eating only one meal a day – just biscuits – for more than three days. Honestly, I’m starting to have bad thoughts.”

People rely on the temporary help of other fellow refugees or civilians, which is incapable to solve their condition of extreme precariousness:

“We were forced out of our home and ended up sitting on the street for over 12 hours with the children, until a Sudanese man took pity on us. But the house is so small we must leave again.” (03.04.2025).

Sometimes this condition of need creates situations of exploitation and enslavement like in the case of a mother trapped in domestic slavery, expressing the despair of abuse and confinement:

“Death is better than humiliation and disgrace. Even my little boy was beaten, and the wife of the man holding me doesn’t give us food. We live like prisoners.” (04.08.2024).

Health protection also means to prevent these situations of physical deprivation to happen but once again UNHCR does not assure the very basic life conditions necessary to survive and not get sick.

“The UNHCR has truly rejected us. All doors have been closed in my face.”

Examples →

12.07.2025 D.: We went to the UNHCR office, but they didn’t do anything for me – not even for the sick person, my brother. He wasn’t visited, and no one asked about anything, even though I informed them. It was truly disappointing. They told me to go and call again. I don’t understand how the UNHCR office works. (...) We are sleeping on the street, on the roadside. This person – my brother – is sick and cannot endure this. The money I had in my pocket is gone. (...) I couldn’t find a room within the budget of the woman who had 200 dinars. Rent in Tripoli is really expensive. Truly, there’s nothing. When I came here, there was only one room – the one I rented was a shared room with five people, each paying 100 dinars. They wanted 200 dinars from me and my brother, but I couldn’t find a place. Now, we are sleeping on the street. By God, I’m in the street in Jurdina. Most likely, I will have to sell my phone to find a place. I can’t take this anymore. I’ve been eating only one meal a day – just biscuits – for more than three days. My money is completely gone. From morning until now, I haven’t eaten anything, and neither has he. I’m waiting to sell my phone just so he can eat, and maybe I’ll have a little bit of money left to get around. (...) I swear I’m borrowing money from people to feed my brother. More than three days now. I ask people, and even the people here in Tripoli are in bad shape. Some people sleep on the streets, and some are in very difficult situations. If my brother wasn’t sick, maybe I could say we’re doing better, but the truth is that he is very sick. That’s why I can’t say that. The situation in Tripoli isn’t bad only for us –

families and children are sleeping on the streets, right in front of the UNHCR office. What makes our situation worse is that my brother is sick. That’s why others are slightly better off – because health is truly a treasure. If a person has their health, they have something invaluable. But me? What am I supposed to do, really? The UNHCR has truly rejected us. All doors have been closed in my face. Honestly, I’m starting to have bad thoughts. I wonder if one day I’ll lose control and something terrible will happen. I’m overwhelmed with fear and terrible thoughts just because I know there’s no way for me to help my brother. This is my message – I don’t know when the world will let me have a phone again – but we really can’t afford anything anymore. The situation is getting worse. I have nothing to feed my brother. I can’t even find a place to leave him in order to look for work. Every place I find is too expensive, starting at 500 dinars and up. His condition is really bad. We’re sleeping in Jurdina, on the main road. Hope has become just an idea, not something real. I feel sorry for myself, and I feel sorry for him. I don’t know what I’ll do. If things continue like this, he might die. I truly need a miracle to save him. I’m sorry I didn’t reply to you until today when I went to the UNHCR office. It’s because I don’t have money. I can’t even activate my internet. (...)

03.04.2025 Emad: Peace be upon you, Geneva. Unfortunately, we were forced out of our home and ended up sitting on the street for over 12 hours with the children, until a Sudanese man

took pity on our situation and invited us to stay at his house. We went to his place, but the house is extremely small and cramped—it can't accommodate two families. So, I leave in the morning and go out to the street just to free up some space in the house. Yesterday, the homeowner came and said the number of people is too high, and we must reduce it. We felt guilty, so now we're searching for another place. Based on your recommendations, I went to the IOM (International Organization for Migration) today and registered with them. I explained everything to them and asked for protection and assistance, but nothing concrete was offered. They just said, 'Go, and we'll call you.' Keep in mind, I told them everything about my situation and even mentioned that I came based on your recommendations. I don't know where to go now

•

4.5 Repeated Appeals and Systemic Abandonment

Perhaps the most damning theme is the sheer duration of neglect. Some refugees have spent years registered with UNHCR without receiving assistance. Their messages turn from hopeful to pleading, and finally, to hopeless. These are not isolated administrative errors but a pattern of systemic abandonment—an indictment of a humanitarian regime that has ceased to function. As one man expressed after months of waiting in vain for treatment for his injured leg:

"My file has been open one year and three months ago, and still no contact from them." (10.05.2025).

Another testimony reveals the despair that comes when even childbirth leads only to tragedy:

"My wife just gave birth, and the baby had a heart problem. We had a referral paper from the clinic, but we couldn't find any ambulance at all. The baby has passed away, and the mother is in a very, very difficult condition." (15.05.2025)

The repetition of such stories underscores that the issue is not individual negligence, but structural abandonment.

"Until now, I haven't been treated, and I can't afford it."

Examples →

15.05.2025 Rehab: My wife just gave birth, and the baby has a heart problem. We have a referral paper from the clinic to Gharyan Hospital, but we couldn't find any ambulance at all. Meanwhile the baby has passed away, and the mother is in a very, very difficult condition.

•

17.04.2024 Amina: Unfortunately, the commission doesn't care about us. When I asked the commission for medical assistance due to my injuries in the eyes and spinal cord, they didn't respond. How can I lodge a complaint?

•

10.05.2024 Al-Noor: I was injured in my left leg and came to Libya in 2024 to receive treatment and medical care. I went to the UNHCR and told them about the problems I faced on the way and in Sudan, including torture and beatings. They gave me a file and said, 'We will contact you.' I left and waited for their call for about three months, but no one contacted me. I called the complaints number and told them I wanted to see a doctor. They gave me a doctor's number. I called and was given an appointment. I went and met the doctor, who referred me to the Accident Hospital. I went to the hospital and met an orthopedic specialist, who told me I must get lab tests and an MRI scan. I went to the radiology department, and they told me they don't have a knee scanner. But in reality, they do — they just refused to do the MRI because of racism, since I am a refugee. I left the hospital with my head

down and a broken spirit. I called the UNHCR complaints number again and told them what happened. They said they would raise the complaint. Until now, I've received no response. A full year has passed, and still no contact from them. My file has now been open for one year and three months.

•

03.01.2025 Qasmeh_ (Mother of a five-months-old child and husband in prison). Complaints and guidance: (UNHCR) Protection, Cesvi 2, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Assistance Department, German organization, UNHCR. These are the numbers I've been sending messages to since July, up to today, with no response. If you don't believe me, I can take screenshots and send them to you. And these are my reports from the Red Crescent. The reason is bodily harm after someone assaulted me with sexual harassment from behind. I went to a doctor, and they confirmed it. Until now, I haven't been treated, and I can't afford it.

•

19.05.2025 Faiza: I came to the UNHCR and made an appointment so they could hear my case, but they did not listen to me. They just registered me. I am now staying at someone's house. I became pregnant again. I was working in houses to earn a living. I started bleeding. I called the UNHCR and the emergency services, but no one cared about me. I had no money for the hospital. I waited until I had a miscarriage. I came and found nothing from the po-

lice, no help, no contact, no one cares about me. I went back to the hospital, and they told me to go to another hospital—even though they had already taken the surgery fee.

•

21.02.2025 (Anonymous): I called the complaint hotline 1404, and they said that the commission will never protect you. How are we supposed to understand this? (...) I have suffered from stomach pain since the first time they pushed me to the desert of Algeria, and until they got back to Libya, when they imprisoned me. (...) I've been trying to contact them (UNHCR) so they can give me an appointment with a doctor, but they haven't responded for two weeks. What is going on? Does the commission not have the ability to provide basic services? Is it just about personal interests? The commission says they can't understand because of the pressure from the large number of people, but is it really true that they don't have the resources to hire more staff? Even the numbers to book health appointments are only two; how can this be explained?

•

“The UNHCR doesn’t protect you”

5. What Is the Role of UNHCR in Libya?

5.1
The Indifference of
UNHCR Staff Towards
Refugees’ Suffering

5.3
The Systematic
Backlogging and
Concealment of
Refugees’ Cries for Help

5.2
The Inadequacy of
the Humanitarian
Infrastructure

5.4
Reports on Corruption
and Repression of Dissent
at the UNHCR Offices

This chapter is based on detailed testimonies about the actual functioning of the UNHCR office in Tripoli. The UNHCR does not provide neither protection nor adequate support nor services even to the registered asylum seekers who are waiting to be transferred to a safe place. By its own report: only 400 people were assisted in the first 4 months of 2025 (out of the 90,000 registered by UNHCR).¹ Meanwhile the refugees must undergo an increasingly dehumanization process in all areas of life – by the authorities, by militia and by civilians. UNHCR recently confirmed that 80% of the surveyed reported “protection incidents”.²

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-operational-update-april-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

² *ibid.*

While the status of refugee is given in function of the recognition of the need to flee from the country of origin, they people cannot understand how to navigate a a Kafkian bureaucracy that only some lucky ones can enter:

“We as refugees have the right to access the UNHCR whenever it’s necessary and we have the right to be listened to.”

It has become clear that these asylum seekers – and the hundreds of thousands of non-recognized refugees – are stuck in Libya for months if not years, enduring further inhuman conditions, sometimes worse than ever before, without being protected nor by the local authorities nor by UNHCR. By their own words:

“They (Emergency number 1404) said, ‘You came here illegally.’ I replied that, yes, I did cross the desert, but I didn’t come here to stay—I came to cross the sea.”

Even before the suspension of the NGOs in Libya (March 2025), as the testimonies demonstrate, the services and the modalities in which they were implemented were dramatically insufficient (see Health emergency and protection chapters). However, in the new report from April 2025³ UNHCR itself plead to substitute partner NGOs work, instead of denouncing Libya’s politics that prohibit refugees’ support.

This situation renders thousands of refugees trapped within a vicious circle of detention and torture, , to the point they prefer to risk their and their childrens’ lives by crossing the sea, as in the following testimony (06.05.2025) :

“On April 30, we had a serious problem. The two men living in the house physically assaulted me. I called the UNHCR hotline, and they told me to leave the place and change my residence – then they hung up. I’m a mother of 7. I called a friend of mine who said she was in Zuwara and told me to come to her. I took my children and went to her. She then suggested we cross the sea because she knew the boat owner, and he was ready – and I agreed, as the offer was tempting and I didn’t have to pay anything. We set out on May 2nd at dawn, and ten minutes later, the Libyan police arrived and arrested us. We were taken to a prison called Osama Prison in Zuwara, where we stayed for two days. Today, I was released along with my five daughters, but my two sons were not released. When I asked about them, they said: ‘We don’t know your sons. Just go, go’. (...) And I am certain that my sons were imprisoned with me. Both of them are diabetic, and I honestly don’t know what to do.

I contacted UNHCR, but they said they are not responsible for security-related issues.”

The testimonies of registered Asylum Seekers unveil a disrespectful attitude

³ ibid.

from UNHCR staff, a totally insufficient support, and a series of Human Rights’ violations to which they are exposed. Thus, the UNHCR seems to be rather a bureaucratic system which registers refugees but that is incapable of really supporting them in a country which does not recognize their rights as refugees, and leave them prey to militias and civilians in spite of what is written in their mandate. As one of the testimonies clearly states:

“The UNHCR doesn’t protect you from security threats, nor do they offer medical assistance or legal support. People who face physical and verbal abuse get their files shelved while the UNHCR receives funds from other countries and the European Union”.

Furthermore, failure to improve or denounce these conditions on the international level—particularly to the United Nations and the European Union—perpetuates the abuse and obscures the true extent of insecurity in Libya for migrants. The complaint system, as it stands, does not offer accountability—it conceals evidence of systemic violations of human rights in Libya, as for example in this testimony:

“I was imprisoned in the Sirte area by the army group Tariq bin Ziyad, and they beat us and used us for their personal purposes such as cleaning the battalion headquarters, washing their personal clothes, and unloading loads from large cars at the gates. I contacted UNHCR and notified them, but they did not provide me with any kind of protection, and now I am sick with cartilage disease and cannot work.” (23.08.2024)

The suspicion that UNHCR is serving as a fig leaf to the systemic violation of human rights of refugees in Libya, is reinforced by testimonies about torture, extortion, rape and other abuses that are “registered” but remain unanswered, worse – concealed!

5.1

The Indifference of UNHCR Staff Towards Refugees' Suffering

The personnel in the UNHCR are often inadequate and contemptuous, with the result that even when a person (or a family) accesses the office, they do not address the problem and show no empathy, bringing people, who had waited for a long time for this appointment, to despair. Rather, despite repeated cases of sexual violence against women, violence against children, death threats, abduction and disappearance of people, UNHCR is not offering protection, neither denouncing the situation. Instead, many people are often facing cynical response such as "move to another place" or "get out" from city, although knowing that moving in and between cities has become very expensive and very dangerous for refugees (often with small kids), as they are systematically being extorted, violated or arrested in the street, and do not have places where they can hide.

"They say, 'who told you to come from Sudan?' or 'Don't worry about it, this is the solution!'"

Examples →

16.12.2024 Salima: I called him in 1404 and (the employee) told me that they can't manage anything for you and I went to the Siraj commissioner's office (UNHCR) and the employee told me 'who told you to come from Sudan?'

•

03.11.2024 Adam: Even today, I called the hotline at 1404, and they told me that the UN doesn't have any service related to legal protection for issues like police harassment, threats, and bullying by security forces. They said, "You came here illegally." I replied that, yes, I did cross the desert, but I didn't come here to stay—I came to cross the sea. I asked how I can avoid facing the same fate as others in shared housing. The employee responded dismissively, saying that this is just how things are in Libya and that Libyans don't accept this. I told him, "This is the reality we're living in," and that was his attitude. He added that these are the laws of the Libyan state. The employee's attitude was very rude. Honestly, whether these people are educated or uneducated, it's all the same here. It's hard to believe that even educated employees, who have studied international law, act this way (...). How can we understand this? When you try to speak honestly about what's happening, they get angry. Even during the call, the employee was annoyed. I really don't understand—are these crimes they're committing truly supported by the international community? It's as if they have full support, or how else could it be like this?

•

07.05.2025 Fatima: Yesterday, I went to the International Migration office and met with the protection team. The employee told me that, regarding my son, there is no medical team available, and regarding my husband, he said, 'Go to a different location, not the city of Zuwara.' (...) 08.05.2025: On Monday, I contacted the UNHCR (...). And regarding our situation, we can't leave Zuwara due to our financial circumstances. We currently don't have the money to move from one place to another. My husband works a day or a week in the farm because there's no work and due to security conditions.

•

18.02.2025 Nasra: Number 1404 does not answer me, nor does the relief number. And an employee named Tariq told me that neither the commission nor the police would be able to help me. He told me to get out of Tripoli completely. I go out and walk with my children, and they are militias. Wherever I go, they call me. I stay like this until they kill me and my children and I don't do anything.

•

11.05.2025 Mohamed: I always call the protection number 0917127644 and send messages, but there is no response. I called the complaints number, and the employee told me that he would file my complaint, but I have been waiting for a year and three months until the date of the document has expired. When I first met the employee, I couldn't tell her my problem because she didn't give me a chance to

•
 speak. She asked me a few questions, gave me the file and told me she would call me. A year and several months have passed and I haven't received a call from them.

•
 09.09.2024 Heba: Unfortunately, when I contacted 1404 and informed them that I do not have identification documents to file a report, they told me to move to another place and said they couldn't provide security. Even when I asked for more time to explain, they apologized, saying they couldn't help. (...) 10.09.2024 (Video of no answer calls): Even the presence of my (dead) son in the UNHCR document. His presence makes me feel sad. I asked for his picture to be separated from the document because he died. Unfortunately, no one responded frankly. I wanted to update them of what I passed through, but they told me that they don't have time to hear all that and left me out. What I wonder is that if they don't have time for me, to whom they have time for? Am I not a refugee like others? Don't I deserve the same rights as other refugees?

•
 21.05.2024 Masra: I contacted 1404 and filed my complaint because there is no security. I have been subjected to harassment and attempted kidnapping. This is the second complaint because my daughters are at risk and there is no safety. I also called other numbers, but the calls either go unanswered or disconnect without a response. I am simply requesting

security to be provided.(...) I'm sending messages but there's no reply. (...) I went to the International Organization for Migration and complained about what happened to me and my daughters. They asked me to contact the UNHCR and Tawasul, but the UNHCR did not reply. I call and there's no answer. Tawasul calls, I send messages, but there's no response. If these authorities don't listen to us, who will? We are refugees, wherever I go they tell me that they're not the relevant authority. I try to contact the UNHCR and even Tawasul, but I can't get in without an appointment. I send messages and call, but there's no response at all.

5.2 The Inadequacy of the Humanitarian Infrastructure

The UNHCR site in Libya declares it "provide(s) material support to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers" who need shelter – but for most of the asylum seekers' or refugees who contacted us -- this is not true! Although following the instruction on the site ("If you are in need of support, please call and explain your situation to one of the call" the UNHCR protection line, Cesvi hotlines or 1404), promised to be contacted if found eligible for support – nothing happens: the "lucky ones" get one-time support per year, in what amounts to be few hundreds of dinars, hardly covering a month rent for a family; similar practices are announced for those eligible to core relief (non-food) items (essentially cleaning material) once a year....

The network of other partner NGOs and IOs (mainly IOM and CESVI) announced on the site, is often another vicious circle, where vulnerable people are sent from one office to another without finding someone to address their problem. Even those few who are eligible to get support by IOM in places run by other refugees, as the testimonies show, are not safe and they are pushed to beg or prostitute in the street, while IOM employees prefer to ignore these complaints.

"What I mean is that the organizations present in Libya are not incapable, meaning they are not incapable of providing aid to refugees they choose to do so"

"How is it possible that UNHCR lacks the capability to provide even basic services?"

Examples →

22.07.2025 H.: The Commission (UNHCR) took an interest in me and found me a place to stay, saying it was a women's shelter. But the woman in charge of the shelter kicked me out. She wanted to take advantage of me and the Commission. She told me to go and beg for money from young men on the streets. I am a broken woman, walking with crutches... I sleep in the streets, but it is difficult to sleep because I see young men standing over me. (...) 02.08.2025: On Wednesday, I was at the door of the commission. The police arrested us from the door of the commission. I ran away. On Thursday, I slept in a place with many rooms. 3 people around me to rape me. A woman and her children beat the men with a stone. They left me (...) 30.7.2025: I am sitting on a street where they are harassing me.

27.02.2025 Sana: Subject: Submission of a Complaint. I, Sudanese national, born on 1979, and a registered refugee with UNHCR in Libya, would like to bring to your attention that I visited your esteemed office on Monday, 24/2/2025, seeking assistance with some issues I am facing with my family members. You directed me to go to the Danish organization. I did go to them on Tuesday afternoon. When I met one of their employees and explained that I wanted to file a complaint, he informed me that their working hours had ended and asked me to leave and come back on Wednesday morning. This was even though I had already endured hardship and spent my money on a taxi to get there, money that I could have

better spent on my children's needs. On Wednesday, 26/2/2025, as per the employee's instructions, I returned to meet them. I encountered another employee who asked me the reason for my visit. I explained that I wanted to file a complaint regarding my protection and that of my family. He sarcastically asked why I hadn't gone to UNHCR, and his manner deeply offended me. I couldn't control my emotions and broke down in tears. Another employee, who introduced himself as a legal advisor for the organization, came by and asked me about my issue. He assured me that he would help me submit my complaint, unlike the first employee who had been dismissive and had insisted I leave and return the next day. Unfortunately, I left without achieving anything, having wasted both my time and money. I am sharing this with you in the hope that you will understand my situation and provide justice. May Allah reward you greatly and bless you. Thank you for your understanding and support.

13.02.2025 H. (after her daughter was abducted, raped, beaten and filmed the previous night; IOM): I swear they asked me about when I left Sudan and what happened there. I told them I have problems in Libya. They apologized and told me to speak to the protection office. One of the employees was from Tunisia, and there was a foreigner with a translator. They completely refused to let me talk about my problems in Libya. They only asked me about the issues that took me out of my country. This interview

is from sometime in the 11th month. In January they called me and said they needed a paper recognizing asylum in Egypt.

18.09.2024 Ibrahim: The organizations that are operating here:

Note: They have no role; they haven't provided anything

CESVI Organization – partner of UNHCR

Norwegian Refugee Council – also a partner

Danish Refugee Council

International Rescue Committee – partner of UNHCR

International Medical Corps

INTERSOS Organization

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

UNHCR Psychosocial Support Team

Al-Bayan Organization for Women and Children

Handicap International

These organizations have not offered us any meaningful assistance. We are in need for all kinds of help.

18.11.2024 (Anonymous): Even the complaints line and the legal consultation hotline were no help. UNHCR

doesn't protect you from anything; they just tell you to figure it out on your own (...). How is it possible that UNHCR lacks the capability to provide even basic services? (...) If UNHCR doesn't even have a shred of humanity and only works for their interests without.

23.12.2024 Mohamed (LGBTQ, threatened): (...) I went to IOM but I couldn't take appointment through their links and I tried to call them as well but I couldn't because their number inaccessible, and I call to UNHCR (complain number) 1404, I talk with UNHCR I told them I need protection he took my name & my mom's name too, and said will contact me, but they didn't call me till now and right now I'm really in need my situation is getting worse. (..) what hope is left?

15.09.2024 Hanwa: We have been at the UNHCR office in CESVI since 7 a.m., waiting for the protection officers. After they met with us, they left us sitting on the ground, and they didn't even take the evidence from us. They told us that the woman we were with, who treated us in the worst way, is our only option – either we return to her, or we stay on the streets.

02.07.2025 Idris: Until now, I am still suffering due to housing issues and lack of stability here in Libya. I am now asking UNHCR to provide me with housing. I have not received anything from the refugee agency – no pro-

tection or anything else. I have tried to contact them thousands of times without getting any result. I have been registered with UNHCR since 2023, and to this day, I am still requesting housing and protection. I also ask for work opportunities. I have reported all of this to you and others.

29.09.2024 Ibrahim: What I mean is that the organizations present in Libya are not incapable, meaning they are not incapable of providing aid to refugees if they choose to do so. I'm saying that the support provided by organizations in Libya does not match the scale of suffering experienced by refugees. For example, the CESVI organization: Contact: 0910027716 / 0922767166 Norwegian Refugee Council: Contact: +218931387236 / +218913500364. The above-mentioned organizations, which operate in Tripoli, claim to be working, but I personally have not felt their impact at all.

29.05.25, R.: (...) Then after one year, in March 2024 I left Libya and entered Tunisia crossing the land border. Then from Tunisia also I tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea but I was intercepted by Tunisian coastguards and pulled back and locked me in the prison. I spent 33 days in the prison, and they deported me to the desert between Libya and Algeria. I had to walk 2 days and reached Libya; it was in September 2024. Once I returned to Tripoli, I sent a lot of messages to UNHCR requesting for an appointment to renew my

file and update them what I passed through, they didn't reply to me directly, but I had to wait 6 months to receive a message from them telling me that I got an appointment. When I arrived to the office on appointment day, they just asked me from my name and the file number, then they renewed the file and told me to leave.

16.10.2024 Salha: am now staying on the street (after domestic violence)... Yes, I called UNHCR on 1404, I called them and told them what happened in August and in September, and I called them, but they did solve my case, and I visited the CESVI Commission and the Sarraj Commission (UNHCR) and told the guard about entering me, but the guard refused to let me in.

5.3 The Systematic Backlogging and Concealment of Refugees' Cries for Help

Complaints and the testimonies regarding abuses and violence are acknowledged ("registered") but remain unheard in the UNHCR voice box or register... UNHCR offices in Libya detains innumerable complaints which go unanswered, thus covering up innumerable cases of violation of human rights, such as

"I informed the Commission that my brother was imprisoned, and after ten days, my brother called me from Tunisia,"

or

"I was raped in Libya by the 55 militia in Sayyad"

remain concealed.

The suspicion refugees have that UNHCR is actually serving to cover up to the systemic violation of their human rights, is reinforced by testimonies that denounce the fact that torture, extortion, rape and other abuses are "registered" but remain unanswered, worse – concealed!

"Where are the rights and duties they talk about? People are submitting false reports to get funding from donor countries for their personal interests, not for humanity."

"People who face physical and verbal abuse get their files shelved while the UNHCR receives funds from other countries and the European Union."

Examples →

25.11.2024 Suleiman: Yes, truly, I was in one of the harshest prisons in Libya, Al-Assa Prison. I entered Al-Assa Prison in November 2023, where I endured severe torture, including being shot in the leg. At times, they beat us for no reason and used every method to scare us into paying a ransom. Due to the war in Sudan, I was unable to contact my family for any help, so I remained in prison for five months. I was released in March 2024 by the same people who detained me. I was on the brink of death. I was thrown in a place called Rigdaleen, near Zuwara, in the farms. I was completely devastated. A day later, by coincidence, a Libyan man saw me and took me to the hospital in Rigdaleen. I stayed in the hospital for three days, improved a little, and then went to Zuwara. Those were the hardest days of my life in that prison. Initially, I was with an organization in Zarzis, Tunisia, specifically in the UNHCR office in Sango, in early October 2023. There were intensive campaigns and raids by the Tunisian National Guard, who would detain large groups of young men daily in Zarzis and the surrounding areas. The government officials claimed that UNHCR documents were invalid in Tunisia, arrested us, and handed us over to militias at the Libyan border, who released us only upon paying a ransom. This was a coordinated trade operation between both sides. I was arrested at the end of October 2023. We used to sleep near the organization's building, among the olive trees, as people were dispersed in the area. The National Guard raided us at around 4 a.m. while we were fast asleep. First, they fired tear gas nearby, which blinded us with extreme pain. Then, they arrested us

during the raid and beat us with sticks and kicked us. Those were hard days and unforgettable memories. They took us to the National Guard headquarters in Ben Guerdane, near the Libyan border. There, I was also severely beaten. These were tough days. I gave them my UNHCR card, but they said I would be deported. At that moment, they hit me with a stick, breaking my left hand mercilessly. Later, they transferred us to a military base at the border. The treatment there was also brutal. The young men were beaten severely with electric shocks and frightened with their dogs. These were harrowing days. One of the young men was killed due to torture after attempting to escape. The next day, they deported us to a desert area between Tunisia and Libya, where there is a lot of saltwater. At this location, the Tunisian army handed us over to the militias of Al-Assa Prison. We were terrified with heavy weapons to prevent any escape attempts. Those were tough days I lived through. They then transferred us to Al-Assa Prison in the desert. Thank you for listening to my story. I found no opportunity to share what happened to me except during the registration day with the UNHCR office in Seraj. I told them everything during three interviews in one day.

29.05. 2025 B.: I entered Libya in January 2021 by Al-Kufra. On my way to Tripoli I was caught by human traffickers in Bani-Walid and was detained asking me for ransom of 2000 US dollars but I couldn't pay, so they continued torturing me for 9 months

until the other Eritreans who were detained together with me could pay the amount they were asked for and I was the only one who couldn't pay so they released me together with those Eritreans. When they released me, I didn't have any place to go, so I was sleeping on the road for 2 days until an Ethiopian guy called Sultan found me and took me to his house. After spending 2 days in his house, he accompanied me to UNHCR office for the registration and medical treatment. But when we reached UNHCR office they refused to let me in despite my critical health condition I was in, I tried and tried to convince them that I really need medical treatment urgently, but they insisted to not let me in. They told me to go back and get appointment through a text message and come back.(...) Later I managed to access UNHCR office and got registered it was in November 2021. In May 2024 I was kidnapped from the workplace by some militias, and they took me to the prison of Maya 55 and tortured me, asking me for ransom, but I didn't have anything to give them, so I spent 3 months in Maya prison and one day they took us out for work and I managed to escape from the work place. Since November 2021 the day I was registered by UNHCR till today I have never been contacted by UNHCR, I have never received any assistance from them and I'm passing through very difficult situations. I'm willing to access their office to tell them what I'm passing through, but they are not replying to my messages.

21.08.2024 Omaina: My husband went to work in the direction of Zawiya and was arrested and tortured by militias. They demanded a ransom, and he has currently escaped from them. I have children whose father is deceased, and their mother is missing due to the war. They are now being subjected to beatings, harassment, extortion, and bullying by other children. Even I am facing harassment, and the children are living in fear and distress. We have been registered for ten months, and we ask for your help, but we have not received any assistance.

23.08.2024(Anonymous): I was imprisoned in the Sirte area by the army group Tariq bin Ziyad, and they beat us and used us for their personal purposes such as cleaning the battalion headquarters, washing their personal clothes, and unloading loads from large cars at the gates. I contacted UNHCR and notified them of this, but they did not provide me with any kind of protection, and I am sick with cartilage disease and cannot work.

24.06.2024 Wisam: (...) My registration appointment was on February 5, 2023. After that, they did not follow up with me for a year, until my brother was imprisoned in one of Libya's prisons, specifically in the Skah Prison. After his release, we went to the Commission to inform them of what happened, but they refused to speak with me. We tried repeatedly to communicate with the UNHCR employees, and eventu-

ally, we were lucky to speak with them. We informed them of the problems we faced, but they did do anything for us. At the end of Ramadan, my brother and I were sleeping in the Sarraj forest when government officials arrested everyone in the forest, including my brother. I escaped from them, and (...) informed the Commission that my brother was imprisoned (after ten days, my brother called me from Tunisia...), but they mistakenly closed my file, and to this day, they have not responded to me or reopened my file. I am begging for your help.

•

02.01.2025 Ara: I was raped in Libya by the 55 militia in Sayyad. I was going to one of the bakeries near the militia's location, and my path was blocked, and I was raped. After I was raped, I was thrown in one of the streets in Sayyad. I fainted and was helped by one of the residents of Sayyad (...) I tried to contact the (UNHCR) commission, and no one answers, and no one helps with anything. I was raped and my father and brother were imprisoned, and my brother was beaten. when I complain to the commission, they say that the protection standards do not apply to you (...).

•

21.12.2024 Adam: (...) Where are the rights and duties they talk about? People are submitting false reports to get funding from donor countries for their personal interests, not for humanity.

5.4 Reports on Corruption and Repression of Dissent at the UNHCR Offices

Complaints, protests and even criticism against UNHCR operating modalities, the opaque way they provide aid or even evacuation to some, are repressed, sometimes with brutality. The most vulnerable people that have nowhere to stay often come stationed in front of the UNHCR, but are threatened and expelled.

"They warned us that if we didn't leave and they found us in front of the UNHCR the next day, they would close our case file and there would be no other option. We left, crying and hungry."

The lack of transparency of the UNHCR and the inadequate services are a fertile ground for violence, bribery, and corruption: in and outside their office, the neediest who have no other place to go are subjected to threats and extortion by the people who mediate the access to UNHCR. This in turn results in a loss of confidence in the UNHCR system in large, the main agency which is supposed to protect the asylum seekers:

"The Commission in Libya is just playing games, and they are involved in bribery through intermediaries and translators."

"The Commission in Libya is just playing games, and they are involved in bribery through intermediaries and translators."

Examples →

29.05.2025 Mujahid: I'm from Ethiopia, I'm 23 years old, now I live in Tripoli. I entered Libya by Al-Kufra it was in 2022. When I arrived in Al-Kufra I was arrested and detained (...) I was transferred to Barsas prison. I spent 3 years inside the prison of Barsas until I got kidney problem and became very weak. Therefore, they threw me out on the road. Then I could reach to Tripoli in January 2025. I took an appointment with UNHCR and went to meet the employees on the date, I wanted to tell them all my story, but the employee refused to give me enough time to say all I had. He told me that they don't need to hear all that, and they just delivered the file and told me to leave. I was completely shocked and disappointed by their behavior. How someone's file can be evaluated without collecting the full details of the story? How should they know if the person deserves certain humanitarian service? I am sure that if the employee wasn't a Libyan, he would have given me enough time to explain everything for him. I suffered enough in this country. I really need to go to a safe country.

31.07.2025 Mohamed: I got the following message from a Canadian WhatsApp number. (...) It is a number one can get it from one of the refugees in front of the toxic UNHCR in the period when I went to register at the UNHCR:

'Peace be upon you

Read and check carefully the details: You will apply through the High Commission for Refugees in Tripoli Al-Sarraj

After submitting the application for two days, the Commission will contact you from its official number and inform you of the receipt of the application and the request is under processing and study, the file is studied from 5 days to 15 days after the result is issued either with approval or rejection if it is With approval, you will be contacted from the official UNHCR number and the UNHCR will inform you of the approval and the date of taking fingerprints and medical examination.

The cost of the file is \$ 2500 and is paid in two instalments, paying half of the agreed money after the approval is issued and the other half after your interview when the air tickets are granted. The required papers are what are the required papers if it is a family

1_ Personal photo with white background (for each individual)

2_ Photo of ID (for each individual)

3_ Your email

4_ Two active mobile numbers

5_ Family statement (family book) if available

6_ Accurate home address

7_ Passport photo (if available)

You must send the papers neatly and clearly exclusively.

Thank you'.

13.11.2024 A.: (...) With the UNHCR, people as is well known, one must pay bribes—300 dinars for a new appointment, 1000 dinars for a protection interview, and 1500 dinars for a re-settlement interview. For relocation to a third country, a single person must pay 10,000 dinars and a family 17,000. UNHCR Libya is all fraud, cheating, and extortion. Their employees lack any humanitarian approach. I'm convinced of this after hearing it from the office manager in Zarzis and staff members Sonia and Mona.

It's common knowledge that you must pay money for things like the lottery, church sponsorship, economic sponsorship, or the family sponsorship program.

The UNHCR doesn't protect you from security threats, nor do they offer medical assistance or legal support. People who face physical and verbal abuse get their files shelved while the UNHCR receives funds from other countries and the European Union. Their staff care only about the money, and there's no point in being registered with UNHCR in Libya—it's all fraud.

I initially came to Libya to pass through, hoping to study, secure my future, and support my family. But now it's too late; I've lost my family. Host countries don't see us as humans but as labor to boost their economy. We work, pay taxes, and respect their laws, but we're offered no protection. I called 1404 and asked them to close my UNHCR file in both Libya and Tunisia and delete all my data. They said they didn't know if that was possible. (...) My

goal was to complete my studies, learn a trade and languages. Now it's too late; the UNHCR controls our future. I remember in October 2021, outside the UNHCR office, a security guard at the door confirmed this harsh reality. Now, my only option is to attempt crossing the sea one day or go through Morocco.

27.02.2025 (Anonymous): The Commission (UNHCR) can't provide legal protection, social protection, health services, or any assistance. You are exposed to violence and lack of educational protection like language courses. The Commission in Libya is just playing games, and they are involved in bribery through intermediaries and translators. People pay money for resettlement or humanitarian evacuation. There's a system based on sponsorship and economic and political interests. Even the resettlement files aren't being processed. I was told by a representative that I need to pay 6000 dinars for medicine and other services. This is the system under which they operate. I understand that this is how the administration works, and they ask for money for services that should be free. There's no protection or support from the authorities or organizations here. I'll probably have to go to the sea, or perhaps to Morocco. The protection system doesn't exist, and they will accuse you falsely, torture you, take you to court, and imprison you for months, only to later apologize. I don't know what to do anymore.

I tried everything, and now the only

option left seems to be to leave. It seems like the Commission doesn't even understand what protection means. (...)

•

03.01.2025 Fakhruddin: We don't have food to eat, and we can't even pay rent to have a place to stay. Right now, we are homeless on the street, me and my wife. Oh world, what is the solution to this? Where are the human rights? We are living a life where we have nothing. We are human beings, oh world, find us a solution. Should we drown in the sea? Death in the sea is better than living between life and death. I choose death as the only solution. The commission is just a name. Why haven't they offered us anything?

We've been living like this from 2003 until today. How INGO should we live like this, world?

•

29.05.2025 S. : According to what I heard from the refugees I collected the information from, when they send complaints directly to UNHCR hotline numbers or send lots of messages requesting for new registration or for renewal of their files the UNHCR block them to not be able to send them any message again with the same number, then the refugees are obliged to buy another Sim card to start sending just short text message and wait for months to receive a response from them....and sometimes there's no response at all.

•

18.09.2024 Hanwa: Women and children sleeping in the open in front of the UNHCR office in Al-Sarraj. (...)

•

27.05.2024 Mohammed: My life has become nothing but torment. The UNHCR does not even allow us to stand at their gate, and there are merciless police officers there. Contacting them via phone has become completely impossible.

•

29.05.2025, Abdu: (...) My request is that UNHCR must change the way they are dealing with us. We as refugees have the right to access the UNHCR whenever it's necessary and we have the right to be listened.

“If we are dying, then let us die with dignity and courage.”

6. UNHCR and the Plea of the Charitable Association of Invalid Refugees

One of the strongest voices that has reached the Hotline is the voice of the self-organized refugees is the Charitable Association for Sudanese Persons with Disabilities in Libya. This association includes persons with all types of disabilities: physical disability, intellectual disability, deaf and mute disability, visual impairment. In addition, there are people with other conditions such as chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, herniated discs, childbirth complications, fractures, installation, replacement, or maintenance of prosthetic limbs. It represents people that maybe more than any other group suffer from the negligence and abandonment of refugees in Libya and is the utmost symptom to the deaf ear policy of the UNHCR in Libya. It is in the background of their special needs and the systemic denigrating attitude towards them on behalf of the UNHCR, that brought them together. They have decided to get together and to fight not for oneself but for everybody, as one of them wrote:

“We cannot save everyone, but at least we have the honor of trying.”

The association was established on 04/10/2024 and it includes by now close to 100 persons. The secretary of Media of the association, Mr. Saleh Adam, explains

“The biggest and most important issue is that UNHCR refuses to deal with us in even the simplest matters. Worse, a staff member at the office is currently threatening to close our files as refugees in general and as persons with disabilities in particular.

As for the Libyan society, it is unacceptable—they refuse to employ people like us, even though we have qualified personnel in different fields. Yet no one listens.

For this reason, we are in urgent need of a fundamental and immediate solution to these problems.” (20.08.2025)

The message of the president of the association (12.08.2025):

Peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you.

I am Siddiq Ibrahim Ali, President of Khayrat ("Charitable", editors note) Association for Refugees with Disabilities in Libya. Based on the notification I received about submitting a complaint to the United Nations in Geneva, I was pleased with this idea, and we, as the Executive Office for Persons with Disabilities, have agreed to it with our sincere thanks and appreciation to you.

Our complaint can be summarized as follows:

We are a group of persons with disabilities who were forced by the ongoing war in Sudan and the resulting security breakdowns, racial and color-based persecution, and subsequent acts of revenge, exploitation, and sexual harassment (especially against women) to flee. In our country, schools were destroyed, health facilities shut down, and nearly all state institutions collapsed. The deteriorating security situation forced us to escape to Libya in search of safety, medical care, and education for our children.

We registered with UNHCR in Tripoli, thinking we would receive assistance in various areas. However, there has been a clear shortcoming and an unreasonable lack of response, despite the fact that persons with disabilities are among the most oppressed groups in society—especially in the field of work, since there are no job opportunities due to disability. Our children have no access to education or medical care. Even people with disabilities suffer from housing problems, as they cannot afford rent due to little or no income. We have not seen any solutions from UNHCR regarding these issues.

For these reasons, we agree to submit a complaint to address our situation in Libya, where we suffer from severe security conditions. We request that special focus be given to us in the following areas:

1) Security 2) Education 3) Medical care

These are our demands. We deserve to live a dignified life, and it is our right to enjoy all the rights and obligations set forth in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the regulations issued under it.

With great thanks and appreciation, we welcome this initiative.

Siddiq Ibrahim Ali

President of the Association

The message of the Media Secretary (13.08.2025)

With greetings and respect,

Subject: Granting Approval

After consultations, we, as the Executive Office of Al-Khairat Charity Association, have decided to submit our complaint to Geneva, due to the poor treatment and lack of consideration shown to us as refugees, and especially as persons with special needs.

We are being oppressed from three sides:

By UNHCR

By partner organisations

By the local community here

With regard to UNHCR: there is no healthcare or medical support at even the minimum level, no humanitarian or food assistance, no evacuation or resettlement, and we face severe suffering. We cannot serve ourselves like others, and UNHCR has not resolved our situation. We are now in a very critical condition.

For example, my group and I (five people) went to UNHCR on 25/02/2025. We formed a committee and met an employee named Nizar, who provoked us and insulted us, saying: "How could UNHCR give you food assistance or pay your rent for a year?" I told him that we are a very vulnerable group and a priority for the United Nations, but he refused to deal with us, so we left.

Currently, our group numbers 81 people, and many more are on their way to join us. We strongly appeal to you to consider our cases in order to reach a permanent solution.

We kindly request that if you conduct a visit, you meet with us directly so you may hear the truth from us, not from UNHCR.

We also ask that a copy of the complaint be sent to me after it is submitted.

Thank you very much.

Saleh Adam

Media Secretary

The message from the financial secretary (12.08.2025):

Hello,

I am Professor Fatima Ahmed Hajar, the financial secretary of Khayrat Charity Association for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs in Libya.

I am sending you my approval to submit a complaint on behalf of our association to the UNHCR, based on what I was informed of.

I went with a group of persons with disabilities to the UNHCR gate in Tripoli, pleading for our situation to be considered. We were subjected to humiliation and severe mistreatment, but we did not give up—we continued to insist that they listen to us.

An administrative staff member came out to us and requested that we form an officially registered association with the Libyan government, saying that gathering in this way could expose us to legal issues and possibly even arrest.

We asked how to establish the association, and he told us we should go to the embassy. We decided to collect 10 dinars each month so that persons with disabilities could afford to move around.

We went to many places and contacted the embassy, and we were granted approval to establish the association.

When we returned again to UNHCR, however, we were subjected to humiliation, mistreatment, and threats that our files would be closed. One of the staff members told us: "Go away, I don't want noise."

We are struggling, striving, and working hard, but we find no one to support us.

My son is suffering and I want help for my son, for the other children, and for the persons with disabilities. Our situation is tragic and indescribable. We try to collect 10 dinars from those who can work, just to buy basic medicines and cover transportation for registering the association.

The matter is very difficult, but we are trying to support one another, and we truly need help.

7.

Conclusion

What do we learn?

The testimonies presented in this report paint a grim and consistent picture: what is advertised as a humanitarian protection system in Libya is, in reality, inaccessible, unresponsive, and ineffective. Refugees and asylum seekers—many of whom are survivors of torture, sexual violence, forced labor, trafficking, or other life-threatening circumstances—describe their attempts to reach help through hotlines, complaint mechanisms, or UNHCR offices as futile. Far from serving as lifelines, these systems function as dead ends. Calls are acknowledged with a “registration number,” but almost never followed up. Complaints vanish into silence. Requests for urgent medical treatment, psychological care, or basic shelter are ignored or delayed until they are meaningless. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, and people with disabilities, who should be prioritized according to UNHCR’s own procedures, face heightened risks with little to no protection.

The testimonies make clear that these are not isolated failures, but part of a wider pattern of structural abandonment. Refugees recount being trapped in cycles of violence, untreated illness, and bureaucratic obstruction, while the very institutions mandated to protect them are either unresponsive or complicit through inaction. As one refugee put it,

“We as refugees have the right to access the UNHCR whenever it’s necessary and we have the right to be listened to.”

Yet rather than engaging with community representatives or self-organized groups, UNHCR’s approach has often been one of exclusion or outright suppression. Those who raise concerns are met not with dialogue, but with intimidation.

Even in rare instances where services exist on paper, they are inaccessible, discriminatory, or performative. Around UNHCR’s “fortress” in Tripoli, the lack of transparency, together with inadequate and selective services, has created fertile ground for violence, bribery, and corruption. Refugees describe a protection regime that has normalized neglect as its operational reality, one that conditions displaced people to navigate unreachable hotlines, indifferent offices, and procedures that promise accountability but deliver abandonment.

This systemic dysfunction is compounded by allegations of misconduct and corruption involving UNHCR personnel, which remain uninvestigated. For those seeking help, this reinforces the feeling that there is no recourse, no impartial oversight, and no genuine protection. Instead of providing safety, the complaint system conceals evidence of abuse and erases accountability. This concealment,

in itself, is a form of complicity.

The international community cannot feign ignorance of this reality. By maintaining the illusion of care while knowing that protection mechanisms fail in practice, UNHCR and its partners mislead vulnerable individuals into a false sense of safety. Worse, the failure to escalate or denounce these conditions to the United Nations, the European Union, and other relevant bodies ensures that the cycle of abuse continues unchallenged. In doing so, international institutions risk becoming active participants in sustaining a system of containment and suffering. To continue this status quo is not to avoid failure—it is to institutionalize it.

The voices gathered here—from mothers forced to sleep on the street with their children, to young men tortured by traffickers and ignored when they sought help—must not be dismissed as isolated anecdotes. They are evidence. They demand not only empathy but accountability. They call for recognition that UNHCR’s presence in Libya is not neutral. By operating as it does—without transparency, without accessibility, and without accountability—it enables, rather than prevents, harm.

If UNHCR is unable or unwilling to provide real protection in Libya, it has a responsibility to say so openly rather than uphold the façade of accessibility and care. Continuing to advertise these services as functional while knowing they fail only deepens the harm. UNHCR and its partners must urgently reform their protection infrastructure in Libya, or stop misleading the public and the international community with hollow promises.

These testimonies ask a simple but urgent question: if not UNHCR, then who will act? As one refugee, confronted daily with violence and abandonment, demanded:

“I really don’t understand, are these crimes they’re committing truly supported by the international community? It’s as if they have full support, or how else could it be like this?”



In front of the gate to the UNHCR, Tripoli, 04.12.2021, Refugees in Libya



Tripoli, 10.12.2021, day 71 of the protest, Refugees in Libya



Agadez, Refugees in Niger



In front of the IOM office in Tunis, Refugees in Tunisia



In front of the IOM office, Tunis, Refugees in Tunisia



Tunis, April 2022, Refugees in Tunisia



Zarzis, Refugees in Tunisia



Zarzis, 2022, Refugees in Tunisia



Zarzis, 14.02.2022, Refugees in Tunisia



Tunis, Refugees in Tunisia

TESTIMONIES FROM REFUGEES IN TUNISIA

The reader might be asking: Who are Refugees in Tunisia? Are they just refugees abandoned by UNHCR and the international community? Well, “Refugees in Tunisia” may refer to refugees present on Tunisian territory, but this very phrase has also been claimed by refugees as a political act—an act of resistance, and a refusal to be silenced, erased, and forgotten.

Like us in Refugees in Libya, they began as a voice against UNHCR’s inadequate services. In early 2022, they organized sit-ins in front of UNHCR in Zarzis to demand better treatment and evacuation out of Libya. When they faced repression, they mobilized further and became more horizontal and self-organized, eventually relocating their sit-ins to Tunisia’s capital, where they targeted not only UNHCR but also IOM and the Tunisian state.

They built their own committees: decision-makers, spokesmen and spokeswomen, community mobilizers, and others. They embraced strong unity by involving more than 15 different nationalities. They went from physically occupying UNHCR’s premises to creating Twitter accounts through which they shared their plight and resistance with the international community, the media, policymakers, and solidarity networks across Europe.

In 2023, when Tunisia became increasingly hostile and deadly towards Black Sub-Saharan people, they moved into the olive groves as an act of defiance, building makeshift tents there, while others continued to camp in front of IOM and UNHCR in Tunis. In both the olive groves of Sfax, Jebeniana, and El-Amra, they remained a voice for the thousands of refugees stranded in the country. They built self-organized hospitals when Tunisian authorities banned humanitarian organisations—local and international alike—from providing support to refugees.

Their movement maintains strong relationships with wider refugee networks in Libya, Niger, Morocco, Algeria, and Europe. Today, Refugees in Tunisia remain a powerful actor, challenging not only UNHCR and IOM with their testimonies but also the complicity of European authorities in financing the tortures to which many succumb.

Below is a glimpse of what they are experiencing. As an act of claiming their own agency, they have put their testimonies forward.

“I have shared my testimony to enter the Book of Shame, because there remains no word to describe how UNHCR is equally an accomplice in our sufferings” – Iden Ngono Mboro

The situation in Tunisia is deadly—a deadly situation for refugees, migrants, vulnerable women seeking safety, and even for some Tunisians. People are fleeing because they are forced to, not just from West or East Africa, but also Tunisians

themselves. Difficult circumstances have pushed many to migrate to Europe.¹

A little more before 2023, the situation in Tunisia was still relatively safe and favorable. Refugees could work and move freely. But since the European Union increased pressure on the Tunisian government with exorbitant payments, the situation for refugees has dangerously reversed. The President also in late February 2023 incited the population to racism and persecution of refugees. A wave of arrests in May 2024 put not only civilians who were helping the young people in prison but also members of recognized humanitarian organizations that had been operating in favor of refugees in humanitarian, social, legal, and health capacities.

This suppression of NGOs and the migrant community has created dangerous and worsening conditions for migrants, including forced returns to Libya, where many experience further abuse, trafficking, and sexual violence. Now, the refugees lack any form of support, even what would be their right, such as the ability to apply for asylum in Tunisia.

In a deal signed in July 2023, the EU pledged substantial financial and technical support to help Tunisia deter migrants and tighten border control. However, this agreement was made without input from civil rights organizations and has exacerbated conditions for migrants, especially those from sub-Saharan Africa, who face increasing hostility, arbitrary arrests, and forced deportations.

Migrants are often forcibly removed from public spaces and detained without due process, with authorities using violence and forcibly evicting hundreds, including children and pregnant women.²

UNHCR’s core mandate is to ensure the protection of refugees, returnees and stateless persons, but the UNHCR has been neglecting migrants for a long time – also in Tunisia. We asked refugees in Tunisia to share their experiences with the UNHCR so that we could publish them in the Book of Shame. The experiences described in the testimonies are recurrent – they are not isolated cases, but systematic. They show that – if people have the chance to receive a UNHCR card – it is worthless, as Sheku Kargbo (Yannick) and Aisha Aboubakar recount:

“My name is Sheku Kargbo (Yannick). I arrived in Tunisia with my wife on August 19, 2023, seeking safety and a chance to live with dignity. Instead, we have been subjected to suffering, discrimination, and repeated violations of our human rights.

Although my wife is a registered asylum seeker and a UNHCR cardholder, the protection promised by UNHCR has failed us. We have sent many messages to UNHCR asking for help, but the reply is always that “activities are suspended”

¹ <https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/the-human-cost-of-migration-across-libya-tunisia-a-crisis-ignored-exclusive-interview-with-david>

² <https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/refugees-migrants-in-tunisia>

and that due to “limited finances” they cannot help us.

My wife asked for me to be added to her file so that we could be registered as a family with our three-month-old baby. Instead, UNHCR said they would first take away her card and later ask her to re-apply with me, leaving us without protection in the meantime. This approach has made our lives more difficult and left us exposed.

We were arrested in Sfax at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea and forcibly transported to the Algerian desert along with other migrants, including women and children. There, we were abandoned without food, water, or shelter – a direct violation of our human dignity.

My wife was also arrested in Tunis while pregnant, on Barcelona Street. She spent several days in detention, even though she showed the police her UNHCR card. The police ignored her protection document and treated her as if she had no rights.

Before moving to Tunis, we lived in Sfax, where migrants like us faced some of the worst abuse. Our tents were burned down, leaving us exposed to cold nights without shelter. We experienced hunger, exposure, and constant fear. Thugs and criminal groups targeted us, and we lived under the threat of kidnappings. We were also harassed and discriminated against by both citizens and the police.

Every day in Tunisia is a struggle for survival. Instead of being offered protection, we have faced arbitrary arrests, forced displacement, desert pushbacks, and systematic neglect.

As a young family with a baby, our suffering has been immense. We are appealing for recognition of our condition and for urgent support for migrants in Tunisia.

We share this testimony not only for ourselves but also for the many other migrants and refugees in Tunisia facing the same suffering.

My story is difficult, but I know that others may have suffered even worse.

All we ask for is safety, dignity, and the chance to live as a family free from fear and neglect.”

“My name is Aisha Aboubakar, I came to Tunisia in 2014 when war reached my village in Burkina Faso. The journey was hard and we lost some on the way. When I arrived here, I was told UNHCR would protect me and my two children but when I went to their office in Tunis they gave me a paper that had no meaning, the police continued to harass me on the street and call me names. In May 2024, my son was arrested and beaten one night by Garde Nationale, because he had no ID card even though he showed the receipt of the UNHCR,

they said it is not valid in Tunisia, I went back to UNHCR many times crying for help to rescue him but no lawyer was provided, no interpreter. All these years I worked in people’s houses and was beaten by an employer and still no one came, I asked for schooling for my children and they told me to wait for years, it has been more than ten years and I am still waiting, my children are grown now and they feel abandoned and I have no words to comfort them because I too feel abandoned. UNHCR does not see our suffering.”

Arrests, the neglect and denial of support and schooling for children is also something that Suzanna Mosoro experienced and testifies:

“My name is Suzanna Mosoro, I came from Congo in 2019 after soldiers killed my husband, I arrived with three children, I went to UNHCR to ask for housing and support but they told me to wait, I waited for years, I begged for school for my children but they were rejected because of their papers, my eldest son was arrested and beaten by police, when I went to UNHCR they said they cannot interfere with Tunisian authorities, I feel betrayed because I thought protection meant standing with us when the state attacks us, but instead UNHCR abandoned us, we were thrown out of rented houses because we could not pay, we slept on the streets, my children fell sick, and I cried every night asking why we are left like this, and still they did nothing. For the past few years now, we have attempted to stand up and raise the alarm to the international community to acknowledge what is happening to us here in Tunisia. We have been disappointed over and over again but we remain hopeful that soon the world will react.”

The lack of schooling already shows that UNHCR does not even offer any protection to minors. Yasmin Hussain and Natasha continue to report on their experiences as minors:

“My name is Yasmin Hussain, I was only 15 when I reached Tunisia in 2020 after fleeing Somalia. In Libya I couldn’t get any help from UNHCR either. Here in Tunisia, I was told minors get protection but when I went to UNHCR they said I must wait, I waited for two years without papers, I was attacked by men who promised to help me with work but instead locked me in a house, raped me and forced me to clean and cook, I escaped and told UNHCR but they didn’t even write my story down, they told me to be patient, I lived on the street in Sfax and was arrested by the National Guard, they beat me and pushed me to the desert with others, I thought at least UNHCR would send someone but they never came, I returned by myself and went to their office again in Zarzis and they closed the door, now I am still under 18 but I feel like an old woman, I lost my childhood waiting for them to protect me. We have no one else to turn to. May God help us.”

"My name is Natasha, I am from Liberia, I was brought to Tunisia in 2015 when I was still a child, my mother died on the journey and I was left alone, UNHCR told me they will help unaccompanied minors but nothing was done, I was moved from one family to another, many abused me and made me work as a maid, I told UNHCR but they said they had no resources, I was arrested several times by the police who said my card means nothing, I was pushed to the border with Algeria and left to walk back, I grew up without school, without love, without any protection, and now I am 20 years old and still waiting, the years of my life wasted because UNHCR abandoned me to the violence of the state and the streets saddens me everyday, that is why I want to use my voice to help others."

The testimony by Natasha also shows, how women in particular are facing abuse and rape, receiving no protection from UNHCR. Khadija Bashiru, Salwa Ibrahim and Iden Ngono Mboro report the same about rape and harassment:

"My name is Khadija Bashiru, I came in 2017 from Nigeria when Boko Haram killed my brothers, I reached Tunisia thinking there would be safety, instead I found myself in detention after attempting to cross the sea in 2023, the guards beat me and stole my money, I went to UNHCR after release and begged for help, they did nothing, I went again and again and each time they sent me away, I was raped by a Tunisian man who promised me shelter and when I went to UNHCR crying for help they told me to go to police but the police laughed at me and insulted me, I feel betrayed because I thought UNHCR was for women like me, instead I was left alone, exposed, carrying trauma with no support, and I know many Nigerian sisters here who share the same story of being abandoned and silenced. Especially when we mention being Nigerians, they think we are liars and that we deserve no protection."

"My name is Salwa Ibrahim, I am 19 years old. I arrived from Darfur in 2019 after my father was killed and my mother disappeared, I crossed through Libya and then was pushed here in 2022, I thought UNHCR would give me safety but instead I was forced to live in Zarzis with other girls where men harassed us daily, I went to complain to UNHCR about the attacks but they said they cannot interfere with the police, when we protested for protection they sent us away, I was beaten during a raid and they broke my tooth, I begged UNHCR for medical support but they said there is none available, I tried to go to school but they said foreigners cannot register, I am now 19 but I feel I lost my whole teenage years here waiting for a protection that never came, instead of helping us they left us exposed to the violence of the guards and the racism of the street. Many times we have tried to contact the big office in Geneva but it remains unreachable. I hope that they can hear us this time because Tunisia is no longer a place of safety and security for us."

"My name is Iden Ngono Mboro, I reached Tunisia in 2022 after my husband was killed in by the francophone militia in Cameroon and I had no choice but to flee, I went straight to UNHCR office here in Tunis and they told me to register online, I did but months passed with no response, I tried again and again until I lost hope, I was arrested by the National Guard when I tried to travel to Sfax, they beat me, stole my belongings and dropped me near the Algerian desert, I came back with other people, hungry and weak, and when I went to UNHCR office in Zarzis, they shut the door, I begged them for food or medicine because I was bleeding inside but they gave nothing, they sent me away like I was not human, I feel broken because I believed they were there to help us but instead I was abandoned to the cruelty of the police and to hunger. I cannot speak of the rape that I have received in this country without any psychological support from the UNHCR, they see our rape as nothing. I have shared my testimony to enter the Book of Shame, because there remains no word to describe how UNHCR is equally an accomplice in our sufferings."

Apparently also UNHCR does not have any word, also not about the consequences for mental health that can result into suicide attempts as Janet Abiy Tewelmadin shares:

"My name is Janet Abiy Tewelmadin, you know Ethiopia has been at war for the past years and things has not fallen into place, when I fled, I came to Tunisia with my son in 2021 after crossing Sudan and Libya, I begged UNHCR to register us but they said the system is full, my son was arrested when we were trying to move to another city, he was beaten and accused of being illegal even though we had gone many times to UNHCR office, I went back and asked them for help, they said nothing could be done, I saw my son losing hope and falling into depression, he tried to kill himself once because he felt invisible, I begged UNHCR for a psychologist but none was offered, they just said we should wait, and now my son is only 17 but feels destroyed, we live with fear every day, and I cannot forgive the UNHCR because they abandoned us to the violence of the police and the racism of this society."

Awate Haile Tesgay clearly states what the UNHCR should be doing instead of refusing to act and compiling statistics:

"My name is Awate Haile Tesgay, I crossed from Eritrea in 2018 after military prison and torture, I thought UNHCR would understand our suffering because they know what Eritrean people face, when Libya failed me for years, I went to Tunis office and they denied me entry for many months, when finally I was given a paper it gave me nothing, no safety, the police still targeted me, I was once arrested with my husband and they threatened to deport us to Libya, I went to UNHCR and cried that if I am returned to Libya I will be killed but they

said they cannot intervene, I lived in farms and worked day and night without pay and when I complained UNHCR said they cannot fight employers, I saw other Eritrean women also beaten and abandoned, we are forgotten here, and it is clear UNHCR is not protecting us but only writing statistics while we are exposed daily to violence. I want to be evacuated out of here.”

The disastrous human rights situation, the ongoing political and economic crisis in the country, and not least also UNHCR’s continuous failures to ensure adequate protection, in the past have sparked many protests against the UN agency.

In 2013, sit-ins and hunger strikes raised attention to the unbearable living conditions in the UNHCR Choucha refugee camp. The refugees demanded an end to the UNHCR’s ignorance, access to food, medical care and recognition for resettlement.³ After an Eritrean refugee was denied proper medical care and died due to failure to provide help in April 2019, a group of refugees began protesting against the ever-deteriorating situation within the UNHCR shelters and their long wait to be resettled. Instead of listening and working towards feasible solutions, Vincent Cochetel, the UNHCR’s special envoy for the Western and Central Mediterranean, only arrogantly responded that “he doesn’t care if they [the refugees] go back to Libya”.⁴

After more and more people began to be expelled from their shelters in 2021, a self-organized group of refugees started to draw attention to their situation. In February 2022, nearly 200 refugees launched a peaceful protest in front of the UNHCR offices in Zarzis and Medenine. Many of the protesters, coming from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, Niger, Libya, Central African Republic and Somalia, had to endure the cruelties of Libyan detention centers before trying to find refuge in Tunisia. The refugees repeatedly emphasized that they feel failed by the UN agency and demanded that the Tunisian authorities as well as UNHCR respected their rights as refugees and allowed evacuation to safe third countries. Saleh Saeed, a Sudanese refugee, explained why he joined the protest:

“The real problem is, the UN commission has abandoned its main role, which is our protection. Instead of doing that, it has left us on the street. We were living in Zarzis, and the UN commission demanded our evacuation from there, cut off all funds and stopped protecting us.”⁵

Also Achai Deng Ling has been part of the protests:

“My name is Achai Deng Ling, I came to Tunisia in 2016 when I was still a

³ <http://no-racism.net/article/4434>

⁴ <https://ftdes.net/unhcr-vincent>

⁵ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/39955/refugees-demand-evacuation-from-tunisia>

young girl, I gave birth here and became a mother, I went to UNHCR to ask for shelter because I had nowhere to sleep but they refused, they told me to go find friends or community to host me but I had no one, I slept on the street with my baby under the rain, when the police came they beat me and took me to the desert near Algeria with other families, I thought at least UNHCR would follow up but when I came back they acted like they didn’t know me, my child grew sick and I went to their office again and again, they sent me away, no health care, no school, nothing, I worked in farms carrying heavy loads while carrying my baby, I feel my whole body is broken but worse is that UNHCR watched and did nothing, they left me to face the cruelty of this country alone. I have been part of every protest in front of UNHCR offices in Zarzis and here in Tunis but they are very efficient in repressing and silencing us.”

After more than two months, the police brutally evicted the protests in coordination with UNHCR and the sit-in moved from Zarzis in front of the UNHCR main office in Tunis. The solutions proposed by the protesters kept getting ignored and several were arrested by security forces. In fact, the agency’s only response to the refugees, who have been enduring for months undignified conditions, was to suspend its services and to close all doors in their faces. UNHCR even dared to respond to their demands in a most cynical and disrespectful way, stating that the agency is “not a travel agency”⁶. Following months of tireless protest and press conferences in the Tunisian capital to make their sufferings heard, the refugees’ protest was again violently dispersed by Tunisian authorities. The operation was accompanied by forced evictions, arrests, verbal and physical assaults, and the forced transfer of some members of the protest group to unknown locations.

Rather than engaging in serious exchange and dialogue with the remaining protesters, UNHCR and the Tunisian authorities considered that those people still protesting outside UNHCR’s office were “not covered by its mandate”, and thus were accused of obstructing the agency’s work. At the same time, the Tunisian government keeps on fueling stigma, racism, and hate against refugees in Tunisia⁷. Muhammad Faraj Abdullah, one of the demonstrators, was run over and killed by a car while protesting for his rights in front of the UNHCR office.⁸

“As a refugee I have rights and UNHCR recognises me as a refugee. But I have to sleep in the streets and have to deal with bad weather and epidemics. We demand evacuation to another country because there is discrimination and persecution even from the Tunisian Council of the UNHCR. Where are my rights as a refugee?”

⁶ <https://alarmphone.org/en/2022/04/19/criminalization-of-refugees-the-dark-side-of-eu-and-unhcr-policies-in-tunisia>

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62376905>

⁸ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/40876/in-pictures-migrants-in-tunis-stage-Protest-outside-unhcr>

Saddam Bahaa Al-Din Al- Sayyid said, condemning the lack of protection by UNHCR⁹

On September 6, 2022, while families of the disappeared and the deceased at EU borders came together for a protest action in Zarzis, it was again Vincent Cochetel who, this time, blamed the mourning mothers for the disappearance of their children. As if that was not enough, he even called for their criminalization through 'symbolic prosecution'. Instead of blaming the EU border and visa regime, instead of denouncing the deadly migration policies of Europe, UNHCR's special envoy chose to blame the victims, turning them into perpetrators.¹⁰

Despite repression, violence, and attempts by the UNHCR and the Tunisian government to make them invisible, refugees in Tunisia and the relatives of those who disappeared and died at sea, are not giving up. Their protest for safe passage and resettlement in safe countries continues.¹¹

It is not only men who protest for their rights. Also Ore from Nigeria organized a women's and children's protest against the deportations to the desert:

"My name is Ore, I am from Nigeria and I have been in Tunisia since August 2023 until now. I tried to register with UNHCR in the same month I arrived but I was denied registration. Then, around September 2023, I was forcefully deported to the Algerian desert by the National Guard. I spent a month trying to get out of the desert, and in early October I reached Sfax, where I stayed on an olive farm. From there, I made calls to UNHCR to plead for registration so I could have something to identify myself with, since my passport had been forcefully taken from me by the National Guard and never returned. I was denied at each attempt.

In December 2023, some comrades and I organized a peaceful women's and children's protest, with the aim of pleading for an end to forced deportations to Algeria and the Libyan desert by the National Guard. In January 2024, I left the olive farm and went straight to the UNHCR office in Zarzis to get registered, but I was still denied. I cried and begged to be given a chance to be heard and to explain why I needed protection, but I wasn't listened to. Instead, a staff member directed me to the Tunisian Refugee Council in Medenine, stating that they partner with them and that I could get registered there. I immediately left for the place, and upon arriving there with other people also seeking registration, we were told that only the UNHCR Zarzis branch had the right to register us, not them. They asked us to go back. It became clear that they just wanted us to leave the vicinity. They obviously knew we

⁹ <https://youtu.be/LaN5r0RHFeg>

¹⁰ <https://alarmphone.org/en/2022/09/09/joint-statement-calling-for-the-dismissal-of-unhcrs-special-envoy-vincent-cochetel>

¹¹ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/44110/tunisians-protest-over-alleged-cover-up-of-deceased-migrants>

wouldn't get any help in Medenine.

This continued until February 2025, when, after my persistence and refusal to give up, they eventually registered me. However, this registration didn't come with any form of assistance until April 2025, when a lawyer friend helped me request a humanitarian visa through UNHCR. I was interviewed, and then I started receiving a 200-dinar monthly cash assistance, which is about 60 to 70 euros. I am expected to pay bills, buy food, clothing, and, of course, my medication from this monthly cash assistance. Some months, some of us don't receive the cash assistance, and when we complain, they say it is a system error.

This has continued until now. Currently, I am experiencing a mental breakdown. A doctor gave me a list of tests to be done, but none has been carried out because I did not receive my cash assistance this month, and the health department of UNHCR has not shown any form of assistance."

Josephus Ojumerie Thomas is one of the most important figures in the migrant-led movement in Tunisia. Since his arrival in 2020 he has been at the front of protests against UNHCR and IOM, challenging their silence and endless postponements. He also stood openly against the violence of the Tunisian government and its citizens, and against the European migration policies and agreements that feed and reward this violence. His voice joined others in denouncing the deals that make Tunisia a prison gate for Europe.

He helped lead the encampments outside the UNHCR gates in Tunis, and he endured the raids, the teargas, and the arrests that followed. When refugees were pushed out of Sfax and forced into the olive groves of El Amra and Jebeniana (see below), Josephus was among those who held the community together.

He did not only protest. He organised. He helped create self-managed hospitals inside the camps, built by refugees themselves to provide the most basic medical needs. With medicines and funds gathered by Refugees in Libya, through comrades in the diaspora, and through solidarity networks across Europe, lives were saved — women, men, and children who would otherwise have been left to die. His testimony that follows carries not only his own suffering but also the memory of collective struggle against UNHCR, IOM, the Tunisian state, and the European system that sustains it.

"My name is Josephus Ojumerie Thomas, a Sierra Leonean by nationality. I arrived in Tunisia in 2020, in Zarzis, after fleeing military prosecution in my country.

From the beginning, UNHCR failed to provide protection. My first appointment in Zarzis was postponed for 4 months. When the date came, I was told to wait another 6 months before being interviewed. In 2022, I moved to Tunis. At UNHCR in Lac 1, I was referred to their sub-office in Manar 1, where my appoint-

ment was postponed again for 3 months. At the end of 2022, when my wife and young son joined me in Tunisia, we went to UNHCR together. Again, we were given another 6-month delay. Each postponement left us exposed and without any form of protection.

On 21 February 2023, after the president of Tunisia gave a hate speech against Black migrants, violence immediately followed. In Ariana Raoued, Tunisian citizens attacked Black migrants and refugees in their homes. Women and girls were raped. Men and boys were attacked with machetes. I was at work when I heard about the riot. I rushed home and found our apartment scattered and my family missing. After hours of searching, I found them with the help of an old Tunisian woman who had hidden them.

We went to both IOM and UNHCR in Tunis, seeking protection. Neither agency helped. At IOM, staff told me only that they would “try to find a lawyer.” At UNHCR, we camped outside their offices. At night, thugs came to attack us. Police were sometimes called but offered no real protection. The attacks repeated, and both agencies ignored our cries for safety. This period showed us clearly that neither UNHCR nor IOM intended to protect us.

In April 2023, I was arrested during a violent crackdown on migrants outside the UNHCR office. The incident began when a Sudanese woman was filmed while praying by a man in plain clothes. When she confronted him, he slapped her. Other comrades tried to intervene, and an argument started. Soon, police arrived in riot gear, firing teargas. Tunisian civilians joined the police, throwing stones at us. In the chaos, I was chased, caught, and beaten. They pepper-sprayed me, forced me to unlock my phone, and tried to delete videos. I was hit with batons and taken into detention, where I was tortured and then transferred to prison for months.

When I was released, I tried to restart life in Sfax. But another wave of violence broke out. Many Black migrants were killed, many badly injured. Those of us who survived were pushed out of the city and forced to live in the olive areas of El Amara. We lived without shelter, food, or medical care – women, children, and men exposed in the open. Hunger, sickness, and fear were our daily reality.

In August 2024, I became gravely ill from injuries caused by police beatings. I went to Médecins du Monde (MDM), who referred me to a larger hospital. The hospital refused to treat me because I had no passport. A British journalist friend helped me see a private doctor. Scans showed blood clots around my kidney, a direct result of the police beatings. I could not complete the treatment because of lack of funds. This experience showed me that even when agencies claim to provide medical support, migrants are left to die if they lack documents.

Even with testimonies, protests, and video evidence, the abuses continue.

UNHCR and IOM delay, deflect, and refuse protection. They leave us exposed to violence, arrests, sickness, and death.

Today, I am in Tunis again with my pregnant wife, waiting for her to give birth. I live with the pain of my injuries and the pressure of uncertainty. Tunisia is not safe for Black migrants and refugees. UNHCR and IOM have abandoned their role. I pray for a cure to this systematic violation of our lives.”

From 2022 to 2024, the sit-in evolved in both form and content, with the demands of the people involved continuously changing. The sit-in in front of the UNHCR and IOM offices at Lac 1 in Tunis eventually became a meeting and living space for all those who had been left without protection, representing a focal point for the mobilization of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Tunisia. In March and April 2023, the protesters organized peaceful demonstrations, interacting with the media, posting videos through the “Refugees in Tunisia” Twitter account, and attracting international attention. However, on April 10, this camp was violently evicted by Tunisian authorities. Witnesses reported mistreatment during and after the arrests, with detainees held in precarious conditions and denied access to legal representation. Rather than addressing the demands, UNHCR shifted blame onto the protesters, claiming they were the reason others could not access its services.¹² Despite the brutal repression, some protesters managed to recover both physically and emotionally, solidifying the group remaining in the informal camp outside the IOM headquarters. Protests continued, albeit on a smaller scale, until May 3, 2024, when Tunisian security forces forcibly evicted the camp in Tunis. The operation, conducted at dawn with the use of tear gas and tasers, led to the arrest of hundreds of people and the deportation of about 400 migrants to the Libyan border, in clear violation of international human rights standards. Throughout this time, UNHCR was slow to respond to the protesters’ demands, eventually stating that they could not meet them due to a lack of capacity for independent action.

After the violent eviction, people were forced to flee the cities and seek refuge in the countryside, living in inhuman conditions and becoming the target of a structural violence that affects both their physical security and their dignity. Yet, amid the olive groves of Sfax informal camps were built up. Alongside suffering and dehumanization, the camps became the only place of life, gathering, and protest for the migrants who remained in the country. Here, resistance means organizing to survive: it is the struggle of those who, despite the incessant losses on land and at sea, continue to live, help, and denounce. Among the protagonists of these stories are doctors, nurses, and other migrants who, by joining forces, provide assistance and save lives, responding with acts of care to the necropolitics that abandons them to death. These necropolitics were intensified in the past two years, beginning with the xenophobic speech given by the Tunisian president in February

¹² <https://reliefweb.int/report/tunisia/unhcr-deeply-disturbed-violent-protests-occurred-its-tunis-premises-and-urges-dialogue-and-de-escalation>

2023. His words legitimized a series of systematic violences: mass evictions, layoffs, physical assaults, and repressive political measures.¹³

In this hostile setting, registration with UNHCR is a hollow bureaucratic formality, offering no real protection. As a result, individuals remain vulnerable to arrests, evictions, deportations, and rapes. One of many harrowing examples is the case of Anderson, a 25-year-old asylum seeker from Sierra Leone. While attempting to travel from Sfax to Tunis to renew his UNHCR card, he was detained along with approximately 130 others. They were beaten and abandoned in the desert without food or water. After 12 days, 29 of them were rescued thanks to the coordinated efforts of friends and the group Refugees in Libya. However, Anderson's story is not an isolated incident. The forced expulsion of vulnerable individuals to the deserts of the country has become systemic.¹⁴

"My name is Suleiman. At the beginning, I was with an organization in the Zarzis area, the UNHCR office in Sango. Around October 2023, daily raids and chases by the Tunisian National Guard began in Zarzis and the surrounding areas. Near the UNHCR, large groups of young people were arrested. The authorities said openly that the UNHCR card is not valid in Tunisia. We were arrested and deported to the Libyan border, handed over to militias, and released only after paying ransom, part of a trafficking system carried out between both sides.

At the end of October 2023, I too was arrested. We were sleeping beside the organization's building in Zaytoun, where people stayed among the olive trees. At around 4 a.m., the National Guard came while we were in deep sleep. First, they sprayed tear gas, burning our eyes until we could not see. Then they arrested everyone. I was beaten with sticks and kicked, and taken to the National Guard headquarters in Ben Gardane. There too I was beaten severely. I showed them my UNHCR card, but they said: "This is worthless, you will be deported." I was beaten again and my left hand was broken.

We were then transferred to a military camp at the border, where others were beaten with electric shocks and intimidated with dogs. One young man was killed under torture because he tried to escape. The next day we were deported to the desert area between Tunisia and Libya, a place with salt water. There the Tunisian army handed us directly to militias from Al-Assa prison, under heavy weapons. We were loaded into militia vehicles while the Tunisian authorities returned to Tunisia. From there we were taken to Al-Assa prison in the Libyan desert.

¹³ <https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/between-asphalt-and-dust-repression-protests-and-migrant-self-management-on-the-margins-of-tuni>

¹⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/12/in-tunisia-refugees-and-migrants-are-expelled-to-the-desert-left-helpless>

Later, when I finally managed to register in Libya, in Al-Sarraj, I explained everything to UNHCR in three interviews on the same day. But nothing came. I never found an opportunity to tell any authority what happened to me until that moment, and even then no protection was given. Still, I hoped at least that my story would be shared with UNHCR, or that some help would come. It was the only choice left, even though they already knew and kept silent.

Now it is autumn, with rain and cold weather, and I have nothing to sleep on, not even a blanket. I urgently need support and protection, but instead the Tunisian authorities continue to hand people to militias at the border, transported in government trucks, men in one vehicle, women in another. We are beaten, insulted, cursed, and then delivered into the hands of traffickers. The hardest days of my life were lived in those areas between Tunisia and Libya.

Tunisia is not safe for us. UNHCR has known all of this from the beginning and has chosen silence. May God make things easier for me."

Albeit the constant exposure to violence, the residents of the camps in the olive groves have developed systems of self-management to face daily challenges and protect themselves from external aggressions - something that UNHCR failed to do.

REFERENCES

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/refugees-migrants-in-tunisia>

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/if-we-stay-here-we-are-going-to-die>

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/the-human-cost-of-migration-across-libya-tunisia-a-crisis-ignored-exclusive-interview-with-david>

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/joint-statement-tunisia-is-not-a-place-of-safety-for-people-rescued-at-sea>

<https://www.africanews.com/2022/02/15/refugees-protest-in-tunisia-against-unhcr-demanding-immediate-evacuation/>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/38550/migrants-protest-in-tunisia-and-call-for-evacuation>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/40876/in-pictures-migrants-in-tunis-stage-protest-outside-unhcr>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/12/in-tunisia-refugees-and-migrants-are-expelled-to-the-desert-left-helpless>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/tunisia/unhcr-deeply-disturbed-violent-protests-occurred-its-tunisia-premises-and-urges-dialogue-and-de-escalation>

<https://www.meltingpot.org/en/2022/05/4-mesi-per-strada-214-persone-rifugiate-o-richiedenti-asilo-chiedono-il-ricollocamento-in-un-paese-sicuro/>

<https://www.dw.com/en/tunisias-anti-migrant-crackdown-raise-concerns-over-further-human-rights-violations/a-70554337>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/38550/migrants-protest-in-tunisia-and-call-for-evacuation>

<https://ecre.org/eu-external-partners-investigative-journalists-accuse-eu-of-complicity-in-migrant-dumping-in-north-african-countries-%e2%80%95-eu-commissioner-says-migration-deals-need-to-be/>

<https://alarmphone.org/en/2023/04/26/if-we-stay-here-we-are-going-to-die/>

<https://inkyfada.com/en/2022/04/23/demonstrations-demanding-asylum-hcr-zarzis-tunis-tunisia/>

<https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/darfuri-refugees-join-protest-in-tunisia>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/tunisia-presidents-racist-speech-incites-a-wave-of-violence-against-black-africans/>

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-000784_EN.html

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/23/tunisia-kais-saied-racism-migrants-black-tunisians/>

<https://apnews.com/article/tunisia-president-racism-migrants-african-382d1f18fc63d0c89d0e7425761bbb1b>

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250406-migrants-driven-from-tunisian-olive-groves-left-in-limbo>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/23/i-dont-know-where-i-will-go-refugees-run-out-of-options-in-tunisia>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/sep/19/italy-migrant-reduction-investigation-rape-killing-tunisia-eu-money-keir-starmer-security-forces-smugglers>

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/09/28/migrants-are-being-dumped-in-tunisia-s-el-amra-a-busy-port-of-departure-to-europe_6140578_4.html

<https://www.startribune.com/stranded-migrants-confront-violence-and-despair-as-tunisia-partners-to-keep-them-from-europe/600372147>



Agadez, 21.12.2024, day 90 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



Agadez, 30.01.2025, day 113 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



Agadez, 09.07.2025, day 290 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



Agadez, 17.08.2025, day 329 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



Agadez, 19.08.2025, day 331 of the protest, Refugees in Niger

“We want international protection in a safe place for refugees and asylum seekers!”

TESTIMONIES FROM REFUGEES IN AGADEZ

“Our situation seems marginalized, sidelined. There’s a clear disparity between us and the other camps. Ours receives no attention – it feels like it depends on global political dynamics that we’re not aware of.”

– Farid

Fifteen kilometers from the city of Agadez, the so-called Humanitarian Center run by UNHCR stands isolated in the desert. This chapter highlights the protest of the refugees who have been stuck there for years.

BACKGROUND OF THE CAMP

The Agadez Humanitarian Center was opened in 2017 with money from the European Union, channeled through the Italian Ministry of the Interior and presented as part of a new regional program for “protection.” UNHCR was placed in charge, together with Niger’s Commission Nationale d’Éligibilité (CNE) and local partners such as the NGO ADKOUL. Officially, it was a “transit center,” meant to shelter people evacuated from Libya or intercepted in Niger while awaiting resettlement. In reality, it became a desert camp of confinement.

“You can’t work; there’s no employment here. Some people are even attempting suicide – it’s dire. Nothing is right here.”

By 2018 there were already more than 1,000 refugees inside, most of them from Sudan’s Darfur region, but also

from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. They had fled massacres and torture, passed through Libyan prisons and traffickers’ houses, only to find themselves placed in tents 15 kilometers from Agadez city, in a site surrounded by desert, dust, and military checkpoints.

Conditions were harsh from the beginning. Refugees were not allowed to work, they could not move freely, and the center’s services were minimal. The health clinic opened only for limited hours, and emergencies at night were left untreated. Education never came, even though nearly 40 percent of the people were children. Food rations were insufficient. Toilets overflowed and diseases spread. Pregnant women miscarried without medical care. Fires broke out in the camp in 2019 and 2020, destroying shelters. When refugees protested the conditions in December 2019, one was shot dead by Nigerien forces during a demonstration outside the UNHCR office.

In January 2020, anger erupted again after UNHCR admitted that more than a thousand refugee files had been “lost.” Families who had already waited years were told to start the process from the beginning. Around 1,500 people walked out of the camp in protest, refusing to live in what they described as “a prison in the desert.” Some slept in the open; others tried to reach Agadez city. They were met with arrests and violence by Nigerien security forces. Reports described Sudanese refugees being detained, beaten, and forced back into the camp. UNHCR officials welcomed the release of some detainees but did not prevent the crackdown that had placed them there.

“Every day, at 9 a.m., we organize a sit-in in front of the humanitarian center offices, bringing slogans that express our legitimate demands. We arrange ourselves in two rows – men, women, children, the elderly, disabled, and children without documents. Photographers take pictures and videos showing the refugees’ opinions”

THE ONGOING PROTEST SINCE 2024

For those who stayed, life in the camp settled into a slow violence of waiting. Some have been stuck in Agadez since 2017 without resettlement. Others were forcibly returned from Algeria, Libya, or Tunisia as part of Europe’s border externalisation policies and ended up trapped again in the center. By 2023, more than 2,000 people had passed through its gates; around 1,500 remained.

The people did not stop speaking. They formed committees, wrote letters, and began documenting their lives with banners and photographs. Children carried sheets of paper that read: “Refugees in the desert without solutions.” Others wrote:

“Our past is sad, our present is bad, and our future is unknown, so we don’t want to stay here.”

These words circulated on social media, carried by comrades in Niger and by networks of solidarity in Libya and Europe.

In September 2024, after years of silence, the refugees began a new daily protest. At nine o’clock every morning, they gathered in front of the camp’s offices, women and men, the elderly and children, lined in two rows. They held banners, they gave testimony, they insisted on their rights: to be moved to

safety, to receive education for their children, to live with dignity. They created a Twitter account, elected representatives, and named themselves publicly as “Refugees in Niger.”

The response was repression. Bureaucratic procedures were suspended. Medical services were cut. In February 2025, food vouchers were withdrawn from families who continued to protest, while those who stayed silent were allowed to receive it.

“Bad news, since this morning the water has been cut off from the Agadez camp.”

16.07.2025

@refugeesinniger

On 25 March 2025, eight human rights defenders, leaders of the refugee committee were arrested and detained for 10 days without charge. In July, six of them were stripped of refugee status. In August, Nigerien gendarmes in riot gear raided the camp and arrested the six again. They went missing for days

“Agadez Center: The UNHCR in Niger has not yet issued any statement or details regarding the refugees forcibly detained. We demand justice and an investigation into their deportation. This is a violation of human rights. We don’t want to stay in a country that forcibly deport refugees.”

06.09.2025

@AbdImalik6060

and were finally deported across the border into Chad. Three were mothers with children still inside Agadez. UNHCR staff were present but did nothing to stop the arrests.

By September 2025 the protest had lasted more than 300 days. Hunger, intimidation, and the constant threat of arrest marked daily life. Yet all this human rights defenders continued to gather, to write, to speak. Their demands have been clear and consistent since the beginning: recognition as refugees, access to healthcare and education, relocation to a safe place, and the right to live with dignity.

“349 days of proving that refugees make a difference when we organize. They arrested six of our comrades for this fact. Unity terrifies those who profit from our division.”

06.09.2025

@Mayor_refugees

The Agadez Humanitarian Center is not an accident of failed administration. It is the direct result of European policy, Italian coordination, Nigerien enforcement, and UNHCR management. It holds refugees in desert tents for years without solutions, while claiming the language of protection. Against this, the people have refused silence. They have created their own committees, maintained their own solidarity, and kept their struggle visible through testimony, banners, and daily defiance.



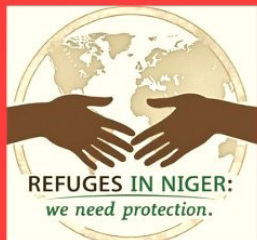
Agadez, 19.07.2025, day 300 of the protest, Refugees in Niger



Agadez, 22.06.2025, day 273 of the protest, Refugees in Niger

EMERGENCY APPEAL

FREE THE AGADEZ 6



Keep Eyes On Agadez: Stop EU Funded Collective Punishment, Forced Starvation & Enforced Disappearances in the Sahel.
#KeepEyesOnAgadez

NOUR ALHUDA
MUSA, 28

ZAHRA DAWOOD,
33

ZUBEIDA
ABDELGABAR, 33

Protect our Future:
Petition to the
Niger Government
for Food, Water and
Rights in Agadez



MOTHER OF 5

MOTHER OF 1

WIDOWED,
MOTHER OF 1



ABDALLAH HASHIM,
27



MOHAMED
ABDULLAH, 27



IMAD YOUSIF, 30

WE NEED YOU: Sign
the Petition to
UNHCR Leadership
to Restore Dignity
and Protection for
Refugees at the
Agadez
Humanitarian
Centre

"Free the Agadez 6", Refugees in Niger



Border
Resistance



Refugees
in Libya



Association des mères
de migrants disparus



Refugees
in Niger

Immediate Freedom for the Detained Refugees in Niger

A call for solidarity with the detained refugees by the Nigerien authorities, who were arrested after demanding protection, healthcare, food, safe drinking water, and an end to forced isolation in the arid desert



Four Sudanese refugee women, three Sudanese refugee men, and one Chadian refugee were arrested and detained by the Nigerien authorities after they were abducted from inside the Agadez refugee camp in Niger

اللاجئة المعتقلة



زينب حسن نهار
أرملة و أم لأربعة أطفال

اللاجئة المعتقلة



هدى موسى محمد و أم
لأربعة أطفال

اللاجئة المعتقلة



زهرة داوود جمعة
أرملة و أم لثلاثة أطفال

اللاجئة المعتقلة



زينب عبد الجبار
أرملة و أم لابن و أخوين

اللاجئ المعتقل



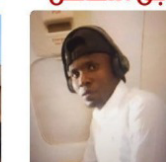
عبدالله هاشم

اللاجئ المعتقل



محمد عبدالله

اللاجئ المعتقل



عمر ليبانا بلنكه

اللاجئ المعتقل



عماد يونس



18.11.2024, an act of arson on the house of one of the key figures of the ongoing protests, the human rights defender Ahmed Adam, Refugees in Niger



Nigerien armed forces harassing refugees in the camp, Refugees in Niger



The forced arrest of the six representatives, 21.08.2025, Refugees in Niger



Water deliberately cut off, Refugees in Niger



Refugee status revocation notice, to the human rights defender and representative Zahra Dawood, Refugees in Niger



MESSAGE BY REFUGEES IN NIGER

08.09.2025

“The situation had escalated since the beginning of our peaceful protest here in the Agadez Humanitarian Center.

After the continued worsening of conditions in the center and the ongoing violations by UNHCR staff and partner organizations inside the camp, we decided to organize a peaceful sit-in in front of the UNHCR office, to demand a dignified life and a future for our children.

The peaceful protest began on 22 September 2024 in order to achieve our demands, because we want a dignified life and lasting solutions. But we faced many challenges, threats, intimidation, attempts to sow division among us, and efforts to dismantle our unity. UNHCR staff cut off food, and the threats continued until the imprisonment of eight people—four men and four women—who were human rights defenders, our representatives. The government forces detained them for 10 days from 25 March to 04 April 2025. This arrest was supported by UNHCR, as Mr. Arzuqa said later on.

Because of the peaceful sit-in, within one month six people died due to medical negligence. In the past months, some refugees left the humanitarian center and never returned, overwhelmed by the pressure inside the camp exercised by UNHCR and its partners. Which had caused them severe psychological distress and led them to abandon the center altogether.

On Wednesday, 16 July 2025, the CNE with approval from the UNHCR revoked the refugee status of our eight representatives who had been imprisoned unjustly earlier.

Then came another dangerous threat from the CNE office, who entered the camp accompanied by two armed men in a terrifying manner, threatening a large number of refugees to intimidate them and to arrest the eight again. They set a deadline, saying if the eight did not present themselves by the appointed time, they would be taken by force. This took place on Thursday, 7 August 2025 at 3 p.m. The threats happened inside homes, frightening the children.

After this, on the 21st of August 2025, the police and gendarmerie stormed the camp with many vehicles, accompanied by four CNE officials: Mr. M.K., the deputy director; Mr. Noah from the protection section; interpreter Adam; and interpreter Abdulrahim.

They arrested again six of the representatives by force, three women and three young men. They had no arrest warrants and gave no reason for the arrests. They broke into homes, smashed doors, terrified children and women, and drove through the camp at high speed, creating panic. They were look-

ing for the refugee Omar Libana, one of the eight whose refugee status had been revoked, but he escaped from the center in fear. Until now he has not returned, and his whereabouts remain unknown.

The authorities said openly that they had the names of all activists in the camp, and another list of refugees to be arrested at any time. They also said they were monitoring anyone who published posts on social media. Meanwhile UNHCR has done nothing about this situation, and has given no clarification until now.

The six arrested human rights defenders are:

1. Mohamed Abdullah
2. Imad Younes
3. Abdullah Hashim
4. Zubaida Abdeljabbar
5. Huda Mohamed
6. Zahra Daoud

All of the arrested women are mothers. Huda has five small children, Zahra has three children, and Zubaida has one minor child. Zubaida is also a widow. These women were arrested in front of their children without mercy; they did not commit any crime, only because they demanded their rights and the rights of their children to live with dignity.

On the morning after their arrest, we sent two refugees to the police station in the city to find out where they were. At first we found them in the police station. Later that same day at 1 p.m., we sent food through another refugee, but by then the six were no longer there. When we asked about their whereabouts, the authorities only replied that they had been transferred, but did not say where.

Days later, staff from the NGO COPI (working on psychological support) and Red Germany (working on protection of women, children, and people with chronic illnesses) visited the homes of the detained women and said they wanted to provide aid such as food supplies to their children. They told the families that the six detained refugees were “not refugees,” and that is why they only came to provide some aid. But the children said clearly that they wanted nothing except their mothers. The representative of Red Germany, Mrs. Zainab, promised she would report the situation to higher authorities and then left immediately.

None of them considered the severe psychological impact on the children who saw their mothers taken in front of them. UNHCR meanwhile only stood by watching while the refugees’ rights were violated.

At the same time, CNE staff, together with a few weak-hearted refugees, spread rumors in the camp, especially targeting the children of the detained women, to frighten and destabilize them. Refugees testified that some CNE staff, especially interpreter Adam, come to the camp at night to monitor our movements and activities.

On 2 September 2025, UNHCR staff and their partner organizations held a meeting in the camp. There were two UNHCR staff and several from partner organizations. When asked about the six detained refugees, they said that they had been handed over to the Chadian government in the presence of UNHCR in Chad, and added that these six were “criminals.”

In this situation, we asked who was responsible for us in the camp. Mr. Arzuqa from UNHCR’s resettlement section replied that it is the Nigerien government who is responsible for us and for everything in the camp. He also said that concerning the children of the detained women, negotiations were underway with UNHCR, and if an agreement was reached, the children would be deported to join their mothers.

In recent days, new faces have appeared in the camp, apparently new UNHCR staff. Four people—three men and one woman—were seen wearing UNHCR badges, always accompanied by CNE staff or older UNHCR staff, but they did not introduce themselves and the refugees do not know who they are.

All of this proves the depth of UNHCR’s involvement in violations against us: refugees in Niger. Every act of repression carried out by the Nigerien government against refugees in the camp has happened with the agreement of UNHCR in Agadez. This is clear from how their staff avoids answering refugee’s questions and evades their responsibilities.

So from inside the camp we, the refugees, say to all authorities and bodies that claim humanity: where are you? Where are you while we live in terror, in fear of this immense force that knows no humanity and no mercy

How long must we continue in this suffering?

We say clearly: we do not want to remain here. Please help us.

Dear honorable people, look at these vulnerable refugees. We ask you to carry our voices, our messages, our cries of pain from inside the camp to every responsible authority. We are forgotten. We are afraid. We are in danger. Please help us. We do not want to stay here.”

DIARY OF AGADEZ

by the Collective Hotline

The collective hotline is in constant contact with people stuck in the "Humanitarian Center" in Agadez. Here you find an excerpt of the messages since February 2025:

27.02.2025 Ismail: As is the case in the humanitarian center in Agadez, we continue to protest peacefully in front of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 158 days since the protest began, the commission has not made any statement regarding us, but they have cut off food to the refugees for the seventeenth day. We are very concerned. The commission has completely abandoned us. Our children and women are suffering greatly from this tragic humanitarian situation. We have patients in a very critical condition.

28.02.2025 Ismail: The humanitarian situation in Agadez is very difficult after the food card was cut off. The suffering is increasing every day. We have nothing to eat. We appeal to you all that we need to stand with us. 159 days to demand a decent life. They are trying to silence our voices by cutting off food. We do not stop at our demands and peaceful protest. You know that here there are no human rights. That is why we always denounce that we do not want to stay here for that reason.

13.03.2025 Ismail: 172 who started the peaceful protest in front of the UNHCR office in Agadez, Niger, were completely ignored. The refugees are completely forgotten here. They suffer a lot in this desert. They do not want to stay in the desert. They want a decent life. They want safety and peace. We came to the UNHCR to protect us, but unfortunately our rights were violated in all forms. Even food was cut off. There are no human rights here at all.

14.03.2025 Ismail: This refugee's name is Badria, a refugee here in Niger, Agadez since 2021. This woman is a widow and has children. In February, she did not receive the food card for her children. She went to one of the employees of the government office in Drake, whose name is Noah, and told him that she did not receive it. He told her that tomorrow we will give Abubakar, who is the representative of the director of the humanitarian center here, the food card for you and he will deliver it

to you. When Abubakar came and she went to him to get her share, Noah told her that he did not give him anything. Abubakar called Noah on the phone and told him about this woman. He told him that she should go to the Drake office, the government office. Before she went, Noah came to the center. She went to him, but she did not get anything. He ignored her and did not listen to her well. She went to the government office vehicle and got in. When Noah asked her where she was going, she told him that she wanted to go to the office to meet the director. Her children had nothing to eat. He did not say anything. They all went to the office. Noah and Boubacar entered the offices and told the secretary not to let this woman enter. When she tried to enter, they prevented her and one of them hit her in the face. She got up and went to the police station. To file a report against the person who beat her, tell her that she is a refugee, and they will not file a report against her until she returns to the Drake office, the office where she was beaten, and they give her a paper or permit to file a report. How can you beat me and go with me to the police or give me permission or write that you beat me? How is this injustice? The poor thing returned to the humanitarian center here and told us about that.

24.03.2025 Ismail: The situation remains the same.. The UNHCR has not responded to our demands. Rather, it is seeking to silence us by preventing food cards for refugees. For the 13th day now, the humanitarian situation is very difficult. A state of frustration. The psychological state of the refugees is very bad. We do not want to stay here at all.(...) Of course, first of all, I entered Libya at the end of 2019, meaning I spent approximately 3 and a half years there. During this period, I was imprisoned four times. I entered the Mediterranean Sea three times, all of which failed and ended in prison. I tried to leave Libya and go to Morocco, but I was unable to cross Algeria. I was arrested and imprisoned for 21 days after they took all my clothes and phone and returned me to Niger. The hell I lived in Libya, I don't think I will ever forget it. Even now, while sleeping, I have nightmares and strange things. I sometimes get very upset about things that if someone told you about them, you wouldn't believe them, but a person who lived in Libya will believe it because he will be in the same way again. (...) when I arrived in Niger, I was subjected to a very harsh operation, I do not know how to convey the information to you, but we were identified in a very difficult

way, the peace was on my neck and my face was in the sand, everything I had was taken and I was beaten with a shotgun, and I was deprived of movement. The event was from five in the evening, I remained in the same place forcibly until eight in the morning, with no food, no drink and no cover.

28.03.2025 Abdelmalik: Until now, there is no clarification regarding the detained refugees. The situation is very difficult. We are worried about them and we will continue our peaceful protest. We demand from all concerned parties that we do not want to stay here.

06.04.2025 Ismail: As for our detained brothers, yes they were released without any charge or crime or accountability. That means they were arrested while they were innocent and unjustly detained for 11 days. What should we do? Should we just write about them on the pages or should we file a complaint against those who unjustly detained them?

07.04.2025 Ismail: Human rights violations in the Agadez humanitarian center continue to face refugees. A refugee was beaten in front of the UNHCR office after being reported by the staff of the organization Atcol, who represents the director of the humanitarian center. His name is Abubakar, who informed the police of the center. When I asked Abubakar what the problem was and why he reported our brother, he told me that I don't have a problem with him alone, but with three of them. He mentioned their names and said that they do not respect him. The only problem is that they do not respect him. When they went to the police station, Adam and Mikasoum, representatives of the CNA office, came and insulted them. The deputy director of the CNA office said to them in French, "Ambis-selle."

27.04.2025 Ismail: The Agadez Humanitarian Center is suffering a lot. A week ago, we lost a 29-year-old girl due to the lack of a health center. She got sick at night. When morning came, we took her to the hospital in the city. She died before arriving at the hospital. Secondly, our comrade Saeed spent four days in the hospital. They only gave him medication. No one could stand up for him. Saeed lost his life in this way. The UNHCR ignored many psychological cases here. A state of collapse is being solved at the last moment. Abu Bakr is also a refugee. He was released for more than ten days and was not

found. We informed the UNHCR, but it did not do its job. All of this is due to our psychological pressure. A refugee was also missing and when we asked him, he said that he was in prison and was arbitrarily imprisoned. Abu Bakr, an employee of an organization called Atcol, reported him. He was imprisoned for 40 days. We are truly suffering a lot here. The UNHCR in Niger, Agadez, does not protect refugees and will never stand with them.

30.04.2025 Ismail: Our comrade, Saeed, passed away, mercy and forgiveness. He doesn't have a family here, but he knows we have good friends who only found out after he went underground and we will pray for him. We are therefore very concerned that UNHCR in Niger is abandoning refugees in the most basic necessities of life.

03.05.2025: Sister Makina Ibrahim passed away while she was living in the city in a house belonging to the organization. She was pregnant in the last month. She felt her stomach moving to give birth. She asked someone to contact the person in charge of refugees. She is a refugee, of course. When he called him around twelve at night, he told him it was too late. You take action. I cannot help you or take care of you. This person carried this woman to the hospital designated for refugees. They arrived around one o'clock because they were lost and did not find the hospital. When they entered the hospital, they found a doctor named Maryam. She performed a natural operation on her and she delivered her baby safely. But the unfortunate thing was that immediately after the birth, she did not find anyone with her, not a doctor or even a nurse. She started bleeding and the situation continued, and no one came. The escort searched for someone to help them and serve Asaf to stop the bleeding. He found the nurses sleeping. He told them that he wanted help. When they came, they found the room filled with blood. They looked at him and said to him, "Why did you tell us? You can tell the doctor." He took him to the doctor's office. He found him sleeping as well. He told him that he wanted help. When the doctor came, the room was completely filled with blood and she was tossing and turning. The doctor said, "What do you want me to do?" The escort said, To the doctor, I am not the doctor, you are the doctor. He did nothing until she lost her life. After that, he transferred her to the big hospital, to the morgue, just to obtain a death certificate. All this time, the UNHCR did not come. They came after transferring her to the cemetery in the last minutes.

24.06.2025 Abdelmalik: Hello, we are refugees and asylum seekers facing imminent danger, in the Agadez transit center. Because suffering and mistreatment and violations and threats inside the Agadez transit center. the food has been cut off, the imminent starvation is cause many diseases and problems for refugees and asylum seekers. We are living in the suffering and mistreatment and violations and threats inside the Agadez transit center. We appeal to all of you to speak about the situation in the Agadez transit center with the higher authorities so that a solution can be found.

25.06.2025: For more than eight years, we have lived in this transit center, where we now face unbearable harsh conditions, lacking the most basic necessities for a decent life. With each year, the pain and suffering increase, and the violations and abuse and prisons remain the same. The harsh environment has caused us many psychological illnesses, crises, allergies, shortness of breath, and extremely high temperatures. Due to deliberate medical negligence, we have lost many refugees. We do not want to stay here. We want a decent life in a safer place than this transit center, and to seek effective refugee status, a suitable environment, a better education than here, and a future for our children. We need permanent solutions. We are waiting for your help. Thank you very much again.

13.07.2025: It is very clear that the government controls all humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Today we were in a meeting with the Deputy Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Agadez, Mr. Justin. During the meeting, the Deputy Director of the CNE office came and refused the meeting and said to the representative of the Commission, "Why are you meeting with refugees?" The meeting was cancelled. "You are breaking the law." The Deputy Representative of the Commission tried to make him understand. He refused and said, "This way you are breaking the law." Is sitting with refugees a crime if the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees...It is a crime with refugees if the UNHCR does not sit with us and hear our voice. Who will sit with us and hear our voice?

16.07.2025 Ismail: 8 among the leaders of the peaceful protest got an order of expulsion.

29.07.2025 Ismail: Osman Bangura, a Nigerian refugee who was forcibly deported and with him is also a refugee from Sierra Leone, Good Luke.

31.07.2025 Ismail: Hello, how are you doing? I hope you're well! Anyway, they bring the names of these people and they are signed from the ministry of interior and defense and they are required in present, and they did not, so if not then the government will arrest them immediately. So just now give us a week you will hear something.

26.08.2025 Ismail: According to the information we received, we could be arrested at any moment, so I will leave you my Facebook page. My phone will be taken away from me.

NAMING THE ACCOMPLICE

We, the refugees in Agadez, charge UNHCR with injustice, neglect, and what can only be described as “shame”.

We charge UNHCR with creating, together with the European Union and Italy, a desert camp of confinement and calling it protection.

We charge UNHCR with keeping us here since 2017 under the name of humanitarianism, while denying us solutions.

We hold UNHCR accountable for the deaths caused by medical neglect, for the miscarriages, and for the emergencies left untreated in the night.

We charge UNHCR with cutting food and water to families as punishment for peaceful protest.

We accuse the UNHCR of arson, threats, and intimidation, which have destroyed our shelters and caused us to live in fear.

We hold UNHCR accountable for the killing of a Sudanese refugee in December 2019 outside their office, when Nigerien forces opened fire on those protesting neglect.

We hold UNHCR accountable for cooperating with the Nigerien authorities when our elected representatives were arrested, stripped of refugee status, disappeared, and deported.

We charge UNHCR with the disappearance of our comrades, including mothers torn from their children, handed over to Chad in the presence of UNHCR staff.

We charge UNHCR with allowing the Nigerien state and its police to raid our homes, break our doors, and frighten our children.

We shame UNHCR for standing by in silence while these abuses were carried out inside their own center.

We charge UNHCR with failing to provide education for our children, leaving an entire generation without school or future.

We hold UNHCR accountable for the lies about resettlement, for the lost files, for forcing us to wait seven years and more in tents.

We shame UNHCR for allowing night raids, intimidation by its interpreters, and the monitoring of our movements and social media, turning this camp into a place of fear.

We hold UNHCR accountable for the slow violence of waiting, the psychological damage, and the despair imposed on us as policy.

We shame UNHCR for calling us “migrants” or even “criminals” while knowing we are refugees, erasing our rights with their words.

REFERENCES:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/jun/27/un-accused-of-abandoning-refugees-niger>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/63890/niger-tensions-running-high-among-migrants-at-unhcr-center>

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/is-the-humanitarian-shelter-in-agadez-niger-humanitarian-refugees-stuck-there-for-7-years-asks>

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2025/08/27/niger-arrests-six-sudanese-refugees-raid-agadez-camp>

<https://canariannews.com/stuck-in-the-desert-thousands-of-refugees-protest-living-conditions-in-niger/>

<https://www.meltingpot.org/en/2024/11/stuck-in-niger-the-unheard-cry-of-refugees-from-a-camp-funded-by-italy-and-the-eu/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/gadezs-desert-despair-have-europes-border-policies-turned-refugees-fleeing-conflict-political-pawns-forced-live-inhumane-conditions>

<https://thesudanimes.com/africa/niger-arrests-six-sudanese-refugees-after-protest-at-agadeer-camp/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/sudanese-refugees-niger-suffer-protests-met-crackdowns>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/1/7/tragic-and-absurd-sudanese-refugees-detained-in-niger>

<https://www.unhcr.org/africa/news/press-releases/unhcr-welcomes-release-eight-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-agadez>

<https://www.refugeesinlibya.org/post/we-don-t-want-to-stay-here-abandoned-in-the-desert>

<https://migration-control.info/en/blog/situation-at-the-unhcrs-camp-in-agadez/>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/21940/un-delegation-arrives-in-nigers-agadez-after-refugee-camp-blaze>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/feb/04/sudan-refugees-forced-to-sleep-in-desert-after-clash-with-niger-security-forces>

THE BIG PICTURE



INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will broaden the picture of our criticism of UNHCR geographically to other regions and analytically to look from a greater distance at policies of UNHCR that contribute to making it UNFAIR. UNHCR often claims to be the “voice of refugees” or to speak on behalf of “all refugees”, which, not least, also reflects in their X username “@Refugees”. Nevertheless, knowing that there is no system to hold UNHCR accountable for its actions, the agency in many instances has ignored the voices of refugees. Many times, their protests to bring attention to the violation of their rights as refugees and human beings have been silenced or invisibilized. No matter if in recent examples in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt or elsewhere in the past, self-organized and peaceful protests against UNHCR, in the vast majority of cases, have resulted in collective punishments, suspension of services, brutal evictions, and not rarely also in the detention of the demonstrators, enforced by UNHCR’s very own security personnel or national authorities.

The UNHCR often presents itself to refugees as a sort of government on whose protection they depend and who interferes in the most intimate of personal live decisions and decides upon personal matters like where and how people live, what they can and cannot eat, the type of profession they can follow and the kind of medical assistance they can and cannot receive. However, even though the agency’s control over peoples’ lives can extend over vast areas of their personal lives, there is almost no possibility for them to participate in these decisions or even make their voices heard. If UNHCR was a country, it would be an undemocratic dictatorship.

Through its presence and promises by UNHCR’s officials, the agency upholds refugee’s hopes for resettlement to safe third countries. In fact, the chances for resettlement in reality are extremely low: less than 1% of all individuals qualifying for resettlement are actually resettled. This abstract hope that is merely more real than a dream, keeps people stuck in countries where they are not safe and cannot build a future, often for many years. With the illusion of resettlement, UNHCR provides a fig leaf to externalization policies of states in the Global North, keeping people far away from its territories and therefore finally assisting these countries in sealing off their borders. Especially in Libya, most people who fled their war- or poverty-torn home countries are not even registered as asylum seekers with the UNHCR and therefore live in a state of rightlessness.

We would like to underline that, even in light of all these criticisms, we strongly believe in the importance of UNHCR’s mandate and work. Yet, looking at the future of refugee protection, we must ask ourselves: What will happen after UNHCR has lost all of its political leverage? Undoubtedly, it would be a decisive win for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an organization without any clear legal mandate to protect and speak up for those in need. This competition for funding and areas of operation between the two agencies, however, should not lead to UNHCR shying away and practically copying IOM’s role in migration management and border protection. Instead, UNHCR must hold up its mandate and stay true to its role of being an advocate and protector to displaced people and not a service provider in national border control policies.

REFUGEE PROTESTS AGAINST UNHCR: A PERVASIVE PHENOMENON

Refugees in Libya are far from the only refugees who organized and protested against UNHCR. In fact, the unfair treatment that refugees face by UNHCR has been sparking many powerful protests. From Cairo to Pretoria, from Tunis to Ankara, refugees around the world raised their voices and have taken their protest to the streets against. The agency's response is always the same: pretend to care, change nothing, neglect, repress.

And yet, they will not be silenced. Their powerful voices and stories will be amplified in the following pages. Since it is impossible to adequately represent all of the struggles, we will present in more detail the protests in Egypt, Niger, Tunisia, Morocco, and Kenya.

Protests in Egypt –2005, 2011, 2016, 2020, 2021

In June 2004, UNHCR Egypt stopped issuing protection status to people from Sudan, leaving thousands of refugees in a legal limbo. Faced with unbearable living conditions, poverty, unemployment, arbitrary detention, daily harassment and racism by Egyptian authorities as well as a general lack of future prospects, a group of refugees began to educate themselves about their rights through visiting the local university library. They started a peaceful sit-in protest close to the UNHCR headquarters in Cairo in September 2005 that soon involved over 3,000 refugees claiming their rights. The protesters referred to themselves as "Refugee Voice in Egypt" and presented their claims to the UNHCR office, demanding the reopening of previously closed asylum cases and future possibilities of international resettlement.¹

"Until our demands are met, we will not relent. We would rather die here than face the conditions the UNHCR is imposing by closing its doors to us." – Amer Khaled, one of the spokespersons of the protest, expressing his convictions.² As a form of collective punishment, the agency suspended its services and declared all protesters as "not of concern to UNHCR" by withdrawing their refugee status³ and labelling them as "economic migrants". In consequence, UNHCR assumed to no longer have an obligation or responsibility to care for the group and demanded the Egyptian government to intervene and break up the protest various

times⁴. In light of UNHCR's efforts to delegitimize the protest, the refugees did not back down and the protest grew.

As the sit-in went on, the hopes for their situation becoming better grew high. However, at the end of Ramadan, the police forcefully raided the protest camp. The event was described as "the night the screams never stopped". Police first made an effort to persuade the refugees to board the buses they had provided. When they resisted, the officials began to fire water cannons and attack the refugees with batons, killing 28 and arresting 650 people⁵. Egyptian human rights organizations called the events a "massacre" and condemned them as "a full-blown crime committed by Egyptian security forces in collaboration with UNHCR against unarmed refugees"⁶.

In 2011, dozens of Sudanese refugees appealed to the UN agency in Egypt for protection and resettlement through a sit-in protest after experiencing severe racism, harassment, and beatings by members of Egyptian civil society⁷. After Ethiopian refugees had repeatedly protested against their mistreatment in front of the UNHCR office in Cairo over the past years⁸, April 2016 became the scene of further tragic events in the history of refugee protests. Getu Ayana set himself on fire in front of the UNHCR office after he and other members of the Oromo community were denied asylum seeker status by the agency. Asli Nure, one of the 40 Ethiopian protesters, tried to put out the flames. Her clothes also caught fire. Both eventually died due to their injuries⁹.

More recently, Egyptian police again used violence against Sudanese protesters. They arbitrarily arrested at least 30 people in December 2021 and January 2022. The sit-in took place outside the Egyptian headquarters of the UN refugee agency. The protest was again directed against the ongoing everyday harassment and racism, the continuous lack of protection, and further delays in resettlement that people have faced in Egypt for many years. In the course of the protests, Sudanese community activists also regularly published accounts of the abuses, raids, arrests, and persecution they have experienced by Egyptian authorities¹⁰.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/526a22cb6/mandate-high-commissioner-refugees-office.html>

² See UNHCR Statute, as well as Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and Article II of the 1967 Protocol.

³ https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/GAPP/Report_Edited_v.pdf

⁴ <https://sudantribune.com/article12670>

⁵ <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/sexualviolence/mahmoud.pdf>

⁶ <https://sudantribune.com/article13918/>

⁷ <https://egyptindependent.com/sudanese-protests-force-unhcr-close-cairo-office>

⁸ <https://www.opride.com/2013/06/23/unhcr-moving-oromo-refugees-to-a-safer-area-within-cairo>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-egypt-oromos-idUSKBN-13V1FC> (status: 04.09.2025)

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=307804114456578> (status: 04.09.2025)



Egypt, december 2022

Protests in Morocco - 2009, 2022

In June 2009, more than 100 refugees organized a sit-in in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Rabat, lasting several days. In a press release¹¹, the Rassemblement de Tous les Réfugiés au Maroc (RTRM) denounced the unbearable living conditions refugees in Morocco had to endure for many years. They criticized the constant outbursts of violence by authorities, arbitrary arrests, no access to work, education, and health care, UNHCR's inefficiency as well as a general lack of protection inside the country. The demonstrators demanded not only an improvement of their situation, but rather their immediate resettlement to countries in which their rights would be respected.

"We are chased by the police because we hold no documents. And we frequently get beaten up by them. Moreover, people who ask for reinstallation are beaten up by the guards at the UNHCR office." - Michael McCullough, a refugee from Liberia¹².

At that time, Moroccan authorities categorically refused to issue residence permits to refugees recognized by UNHCR, preventing them from finding legal work, accessing the education system, health care, and other public services. Moreover, refugees were repeatedly arrested and deported to the Algerian border, as Moroccan security forces refused to accept their papers issued by UNHCR. In total, 250 of the approximately 600 refugees, recognized by UNHCR in Morocco, previously had submitted resettlement applications to the UN agency. The refugees also had written a joint open letter to various European embassies, in which they disputed the legitimacy of UNHCR and the agency's claimed monopoly in representing their interests¹³.

"It [the UNHCR refugee card] is a beautiful thing, no? But it is of no use to us. It is the responsibility of the UNHCR to see to it that our rights are respected, but all of us are condemned to a life as beggars in this country."¹⁴ - Stéphane Gnako, RTRM spokesperson.

After first negotiations, many false promises, and maintaining a continuous sit-in for over a week, the refugees were forcibly evicted by the police on the night of June 27, 2009. An attempt to get back in front of the UNHCR headquarters was again violently prevented by security forces. Shortly after UNHCR representative Johannes van der Klaauw promised the demonstrators that he would engage in negotiations again, various human rights organizations throughout Europe declared their solidarity with the protesters and wrote a collective letter to UNHCR.

11 <https://www.lacimade.org/maroc-les-refugies-se-mobilisent> (status: 04.09.2025)

12 <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2009/06/23/1911> (status: 04.09.2025)

13 Scheel, S., & Ratfisch, P. (2014). Refugee Protection Meets Migration Management: UNHCR as a Global Police of Populations. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40 (6), 924-941. (status: 04.09.2025)

14 <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2009/06/23/1911> (status: 04.09.2025)

The announced negotiations ended without any positive result. On the contrary, the Moroccan police once again attacked the refugees under the use of brute force. At least four were injured so severely that they had to be taken to hospital. It remains unclear how many people were arrested as part of the police repression¹⁵. Following a request of UNHCR to remove the demonstrators from the front of their office, five refugees were put on trial for their participation in the protest¹⁶.

However, this was neither the first nor the last time that UNHCR decided to turn the demands of refugee protests down in order to maintain its own moral authority. In fact, the delegitimization, criminalization of, and violence enacted against refugee protesters from UNHCR's perspective is often deemed necessary as they challenge the agency's legitimacy as alleged sole advocate and protector of all refugees¹⁷.

More recently, on June 28, 2022, a protest was held outside the UNHCR's office in Rabat. The protests followed the brutal killing of 29 humans and the injuring of hundreds more attempting to enter the Spanish enclave of Melilla four days earlier¹⁸. A reported number of 70 refugees demonstrated against the inhumane treatment and violence inflicted by Moroccan law enforcement agencies. They criticized UNHCR's silence in response to the recent events, demanded answers for the murder of their comrades, medical treatment for those injured, and to claim their right to protection, residence permits, resettlement to safe countries, decent work, and access to health care¹⁹.

Protests in Kenya: Kakuma camp 2025

300 000 refugees, mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia, live in Kakuma camp in Northwest Kenya. In February 2025, UNHCR and UN's World Food Programme (WFP) cut food allocations to 40% of the basic minimum ratio due to funding shortages. As a response to these repeated cuts, thousands of refugees living in the camp started a peaceful protest demanding the reinstatement of essential supplies, most importantly food assistance.

In their protests, people were holding up signs calling for more food, also bringing their empty cooking pans to the protest. Andrew Dafir, one of the protesters said "I feel neglected and lost because I have no other way to survive." He earlier received an announcement telling him his monthly food allocation will drop to 3kg of cereals, completely cutting cooking oil and beans. At the same time, monthly cash payments increased by around 25%, covering food purchases barely enough for one day²⁰.

When, after several days of protest, UNHCR did not react in any way, the protesters decided to march towards UNHCR office. Whilst UNHCR still showed itself unreachable²¹, security forces engaged using excessive violence, weaponry, and teargas. The clashes lead to several people being severely injured and hospitalized²². A curfew was imposed to prevent further protests from taking place, threatening protesters with detention in case of non-compliance. Deputy camp manager Sylvester Kuya even blamed the protesters for disrupting other services such as efforts to restore waterholes, teaching, healthcare, and food distribution, and called for the protest to be pacified. Meanwhile, UNHCR explains away its own responsibility by justifying that misinformation led to the protests, and promising public deliberation to clarify all issues in the future²³.

Recent newspaper articles instead emphasise how increasing famine and malnutrition endanger the lives of refugees living inside the camp, leaving hospitals severely overcrowded by mostly children, and elderly seeking treatment for acute malnutrition²⁴. Once again, UNHCR fails its own mandate.

¹⁵ <https://www.aktionbleiberecht.de/2009/07/coyote-chronik-der-fluchtlings-proteste-in-rabat> (status: 04.09.2025)

¹⁶ <https://www.lacimade.org/maroc-communique-du-rassemblement-de-tous-les-refugies-au-maroc-rtrm> (status: 04.09.2025)

¹⁷ Scheel, S., & Ratfisch, P. (2014). Refugee Protection Meets Migration Management: UNHCR as a Global Police of Populations. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40 (6), 924-941. (status: 04.09.2025)

¹⁸ <https://alarmphone.org/en/2022/06/26/29-deaths-at-european-borders-the-migration-policy-agreement-between-spain-and-morocco-that-kills> (status: 04.09.2025)

¹⁹ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220629-morocco-migrants-protest-at-un-refugee-office-in-rabat> (status: 04.09.2025)

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/mar/05/refugees-clashes-police-kakuma-camp-kenya-protests-cuts-wfp-unhcr-food-aid-us-freeze> (status: 04.09.2025)

²¹ <https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/northern-kenya/123332/curfew-imposed-at-kakuma-refugee-camp-as-protests-over-food-and-water-escalate> (status: 04.09.2025)

²² <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/109534-refugees-clash-police-kakuma>
<https://apnews.com/article/kenya-refugees-kakuma-dadaab-unhcr-fd-2618c92e22270e71c307b8e7ba2547> (status: 04.09.2025)

²³ <https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/northern-kenya/123332/curfew-imposed-at-kakuma-refugee-camp-as-protests-over-food-and-water-escalate> (status: 04.09.2025)

²⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1dew7zyg49o> (status: 04.09.2025)

OVERVIEW: RECENT REFUGEE PROTESTS AGAINST UNHCR (incomplete list!)

place	year	demands
Libya	2021 ongoing	Over 5000 people of different nationalities at a sit-in protest in front of UNHCR Tripoli demand human rights, protection, and justice. It is the beginning of Refugees in Libya.
Egypt	2005, 2011, 2016, 2020, 2021	Protesting the exclusion of Sudanese nationals from the asylum status; demand protection against violence and racism from Egyptian civil society; demand resettlement in safe countries.
Tunisia	2013, 2019, 2022, ongoing	Refugees in Tunisia organize and collectively demand evacuation, justice, protection, basic rights.
Morocco	2009, 2022	Demand protection from violence, access to healthcare and work, evacuation; protest against being represented by UNHCR; protesting against the massacre of Melilla.
Niger	2019, 2024, ongoing	Protest against unbearable living conditions and neglect in Agadez center; demand better healthcare, education, living standards and safety.
Kenya	2025, ongoing	Protest food and water shortages after severe cuts in food supplies.
Malaysia	2024, ongoing	Chin refugees demand end of physical violence through UNHCR security guards, denial of meetings with their caseworkers, and medical assessment by caseworkers to prioritise urgent cases.
India	2024, ongoing	Rohingya and Chin refugees demand release from detention without court order, basic rights, and resettlement by hunger strike.

Lebanon	2019, 2020 (+ several small protests in the last decade)	Mainly Sudanese and Ethiopian women and children demand to reopen their cases, resettlement, dignity, and protection.
Malawi	2022	Hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers demand no further delays in money distribution and food assistance.
South Africa	2019	Protest against increased xenophobia and demand protection from UNHCR.
Sri Lanka	2023/24	Rohingya refugees protest against the closure of the only UNHCR office in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the agency stopped supporting the mostly stateless refugees and even shut down all its activities in the country in 2024, leaving hundreds without any support and protection.
Ghana	2018	Sudanese refugees demand UNHCR to issue refugee documents to be able to get access to food, housing, and healthcare.
Indonesia	2019, 2022	Protest chronic waiting and arbitrary resettlement, demanding support, medical assistance, working rights for refugees and accelerated resettlement.

“THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH”: UNHCR AS A BORDER EXTERNALISATION ACTOR

The Best Conscience-Clean Solution for Global North Xenophobic States

After listening to all the testimonies from Libya, Tunisia and Niger, one begs the question why? Why is UNHCR neglecting those people they are supposed to protect and punishing them for their protests? How have they deviated so much from their protection mandate? And, if they are not doing their job, what are all the millions of funding for?

The UNHCR neglect and disregard towards refugees in Niger, Libya and Tunisia are not isolated incidents. They are the consequence of a change of policy that prioritizes donor states' migration deterrence objectives instead of refugee protection. Within UNHCR, this policy has been called “route-based” or “whole-of-route” approach.

This approach was presented in 2023 by UNHCR as a strategy to address mixed movements of refugees and migrants by engaging states along routes to presumably ensure their protection and rights, create legal and safe routes, combat smuggling and trafficking and reduce dangerous journeys. It pretends to be a holistic approach based on humanitarian principles.

But this new approach does not appear in a vacuum. It was first presented by the UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi in 2023 in a political context where anti-migrant rhetoric and policy is ramping up in Europe and the rest of the Global North. Reducing migration from the Global South – including refugees – is a priority goal to achieve by all means. And this is done mostly through border militarization and externalization – that is, to get other states to prevent migrants and refugees from arriving to ones' borders. European border externalization has been increasing since 2017 in the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan regions, with deadly consequences. UNHCR's route-based approach must be seen under this light of border externalization. To keep migrants and refugees away the EU uses a stick and carrot approach. The coercive element (the stick) involves border militarization and support to criminal actors like the so-called Libyan coast guard to violently push back human beings. The soft element (the carrot) is mostly led by UNHCR and IOM to try to convince refugees and other migrants to stay where they are – regardless of the violence they are subjected to – and not to move one inch closer to Europe, thus misleading them and exposing them to danger for longer.

This chapter aims to debunk the UNHCR misinformation around this approach, which is presented as good-willed and humanitarian, and to expose how it fits within the border externalization architecture on the EU's Southern border.

1) Whatever the Masters Say: UNHCR is Not Independent

UNHCR's deep dependence on donor governments in the Global North and the political permission of host states in the Global South has severely compromised its independence and eroded its protection mandate. With most of its global budget coming from a handful of wealthy states, the agency has little incentive to challenge European or North American agendas that prioritize containment and deterrence over protection and human rights.

In the specific countries covered by this book of shame, funding is mostly coming from the EU and its member states except in Niger, where the US is the major donor. The data for 2025 is shown below:

Niger¹: the biggest donor is the US, with \$8,400,000, with EU States paying for \$3,068,389, or a 19.9% of its budget

Tunisia²: the biggest donor by far is the EU and its member states, contributing \$5,590,170, which represents 63.3% of UNHCR's budget.

Libya³: Again, the EU and its member states are by far the biggest donors, contributing \$9,540,073, a 59.9% of its budget.

This budgetary dependency would not be such a significant issue if the donor states did not have a clear stake in the countries in which UNHCR operates. But the EU and its member states clearly made a political priority to “cooperate with third states” to prevent migration, and even the EU anti-migration Commissioner Magnus Brunner has repeatedly mentioned UNHCR's route-based approach as a way to legitimize and whitewash the EU's border externalisation ambitions.

At the same time, UNHCR operating in Libya, Niger, and Tunisia have also made it fully compliant with these states' harmful policies and actions. Their permission to operate seems to be conditional on not denouncing abuses or even on being complicit in them. In Niger, this seems to be most acute, where UNHCR has colluded with local authorities to repress peaceful refugee protests, cutting food aid to the Agadez camp and withdrawing refugee status to refugee human rights defenders as a reprisal for daring to speak up for their rights. In Tunisia, UNHCR has remained silent over the state-led racist anti-black violence in the country and the desert dumps. UNHCR even remained silent over the Tunisian govern-

1 <https://www.unhcr.org/media/niger-funding-update-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

2 <https://www.unhcr.org/media/tunisia-funding-update-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

3 <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-funding-update-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

ment's prohibition for them to register refugees – which also begs the question: if they can't register refugees nor protect them adequately, what exactly are their millions of budget there for? In Libya, UNHCR has historically colluded with local militias, collaborating with them to get rid of refugees at their doors when convenient. In Libya in particular, its cooperation with local actors perpetrating crimes against humanity is reminiscent of the Red Cross role in the Holocaust, which refrained from speaking up and reporting on the genocide in order to “remain neutral” and “keep access” to detention sites.

This double dependency and collaboration is morally questionable, but also proven to be counterproductive: Libyan and Tunisian authorities are starting to use the same xenophobic narratives as in Europe and accusing UNHCR of being part of an EU-led plot to demographically replace local populations with Black people. Just to be clear, this conspiracy theory is based on racist tropes, but it has one core element of truth: that the EU is funding UNHCR and other actors to prevent refugees from fleeing into Europe, using Tunisia and Libya as buffer states to contain them.

To this point, it is clear that UNHCR does NOT represent refugees' best interest, but that of its donors and host states. This double dependency has pushed UNHCR into a posture of accommodation, aligning itself with donor-driven strategies which ostensibly speaks the language of protection but in practice functions as an externalization tool to manage and immobilize people on the move. In doing so, UNHCR has drifted away from its protection mandate, effectively subordinating it to political interests. Which leads us to our second point.

2) Priority Shift: From Refugee Protection to “Mixed-Migration Management”

UNHCR's core mandate, based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, is to protect and assist refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and to help find durable solutions for their situations. The route-based approach has reframed this mandate and presented forced displacement as a cross-border management challenge. In its explainer, UNHCR says that:

“The perception of chaotic spontaneous arrivals, regardless of numbers, has raised public concern, fuelled in some contexts by anti-foreigner, anti-refugee rhetoric and populist narratives. Such anxiety may be exacerbated by the sense of a lack of control, order and fairness [...]. Mixed flows of refugees moving alongside migrants along routes fraught with risk, like the scourge of human trafficking, represent one of the biggest challenges we must face”

This reframing is not neutral nor positive for refugees and other migrants. First of all, it does not question the empirically false assumptions of this “perceived

public concern” (meaning only in the wealthy destination countries), nor it challenges the narrative of presenting arrivals as necessarily a challenge. The approach also aligns with states' externalization priorities, it conditions assistance on containment outcomes, and it legitimizes fear-mongering xenophobic narratives that presents arrivals of refugees as a problem to be prevented.

UNHCR portrays route-based work as a way to coordinate assistance, inform people on the move, and expand “safe and regular pathways” along journeys. But in practice, most of the actions on the field—especially where the approach has been operationalized in the EU context—have prioritized counter-smuggling, border control, readmission, and awareness campaigns designed to disincentivize movement of people, regardless of their security and their valid reasons to flee their country. This discrepancy between what UNHCR claims and what it actually does on the ground has been widely documented.

Furthermore, the route-based approach includes a new area of UNHCR action that is outside of its original mandate: to counter human smuggling and trafficking. It is unclear how UNHCR is acting on this. But framing human smuggling as a core challenge to be combatted without mentioning that it is often the only way for refugees to find protection due to the lack of safe and legal routes is deeply misleading.

Protection is not a logistics problem and refugees are not flows to be managed. Protection is a legal obligation stemming from the Geneva convention binding to signatory states and, specially, to UNHCR. It is grounded in non-refoulement, access to territory, fair procedures, and civil, socio-economic, and mobility rights. In the last years, UNHCR has been drifting away from its protection mandate to please its EU and US donors by presenting itself as a useful tool to serve the only goal that matters to these states: to keep refugees and other migrants as far away from their borders as possible. Instead of firmly countering anti-refugee policies, UNHCR decided to whitewash them and to twist its mandate to support states in their implementation.

3) “Safe Pathways” as an Empty Promise

UNHCR's pitch for a route-based model leans heavily on the promise of safe, regular pathways to balance its refugee containment elements. Yet the route-based implementation—presented as a global “best practice”—shows how thin this pillar often is. Legal pathway initiatives are fragmented and ridiculously small-scale and labour and protection admissions lack the predictability needed to truly substitute for dangerous journeys.

UNHCR often shields itself from responsibility claiming that resettlement, humanitarian corridors and visas are the responsibility of states, and that it cannot do much about it. Well, if that is the case it should not base its whole approach

to protection on route on a premise that is completely unrealistic and out of its control.

But the consequences of these empty promises for refugees are enormous. These extremely narrow legal avenues give them false hopes and a reason to register with UNHCR, to remain in a territory where they are not safe and to hopefully one day be resettled. As the testimonies of this book of shame testify, many of them spend years in this dangerous and cruel limbo, while UNHCR staff treat them like nuisances, ask them to have patience and discourage them from travelling onwards.

4) The Narrative Problem: UNHCR Adopting Xenophobic Tropes and Being Silent About Abuses

When humanitarians tap into fear of migration—even “for good reasons” such as fundraising or political leverage—they validate the very frames used to justify deterrence and externalization. Casting displacement as a looming threat to “secure and prosperous nations” trains publics to see refugees as risks to be managed, not rights-holders to be protected. And the route-based discourse, especially when tied to “stopping dangerous journeys,” too easily turns into an upstream containment sell: protect there (Tunisia, Libya, Niger) in order to prevent arrival here (Europe).

Point 2 already mentioned how UNHCR uncritically endorses the assumptions that “chaotic spontaneous arrivals” and “lack of control, order and fairness” are a challenge and that they must be prevented. And how its change from a protection mandate to a “mixed flows management” approach is not neutral and is designed to align with wealthy states’ externalisation policies and thus keep/attract more funding from them. Every time High Commissioner Grandi goes to member states to ask for funding for its operations in North Africa, he keeps using the same argument, which is not a humanitarian one. Paraphrasing him: if you don’t fund us refugees will suffer, and if they suffer they will try to move towards your borders. And you don’t want this to happen, do you?

That pitch recodes humanitarian assistance as an instrument of migration control. It mistakes proximity for problems: if violence, famine, or climate harm is intolerable only because it might push people toward our borders, then the underlying humanitarian claim is corrupted. Action driven by anxiety or xenophobia is neither sustainable nor humanitarian. Route-based communications that emphasize “don’t move” rather than “here are your rights and options” reproduce the very toxicity humanitarian actors claim to counter.

Statements matter. And the very few times UNHCR decides to speak up about human rights abuses it does so not as a call to perpetrators to stop the abuses, but as an opportunistic chance to pitch for more funding. UNHCR staff must

seriously reconsider whether they are serving anything beyond their own institutional self-preservation.

5) UNHCR’s Supervision Role: It Means Swimming Against the Tide, Not With It

UNHCR’s protection mandate is not to optimize state control strategies along routes; it is to supervise the application of the Convention and to defend access to rights when states balk. Article 35 codifies that supervisory role for a reason: left to their own devices, states predictably narrow protection space. UNHCR’s distinct value is precisely its capacity to anchor policy in non-refoulement, fair procedures, and inclusion—even when the political context runs toward enforcement. Absorbing the EU-inspired route logic uncritically has gotten UNHCR involved with policies that empirically shrink protection space and make UNHCR complicit in policing legitimate mobility.

This matters because UNHCR’s supervisory role, recognized in Article 35 of the 1951 Convention, is protection-first, not route-first: Contracting States undertake to cooperate with UNHCR “in the exercise of its functions” and “in particular [to] facilitate its duty of supervising the application of the provisions of this Convention.” When the yardstick is the Convention—not a state’s operational action plan—UNHCR’s priority must be non-refoulement, non-penalization for irregular entry, freedom of movement, fair procedures, and access to rights, rather than management of “flows.” A route-based approach that turns into containment-by-partnership dilutes that supervisory vocation.

Conclusion

To conclude, UNHCR must start to acknowledge reality beyond its fairy tale route-based approach. Which is that:

- 1) Lawlessness, state racism and systematic mass violence against migrant and Black people in Tunisia and Libya mean that these are places where local solutions are not possible for refugees. Same applies for Niger and its extreme poverty.
- 2) UNHCR registration and Refugee Status Determination is not providing any sort of effective protection for refugees in Libya and Tunisia. And - even with increased funding - UNHCR material support is not enough to ensure lasting solutions for refugees in Libya, Tunisia and Niger
- 3) Legal and safe routes to seek protection are extremely limited, narrow, slow and insufficient. And labour mobility schemes are not valid replacements of protection-based evacuations. Global North states are not opening new pathways, but rather doing the opposite.

4) EU donors' political interests of border externalization are incompatible with UNHCR's Convention-based protection mandate. And route-based fantasies do not change that.

Having this in mind, UNHCR must stop treating routes as the unit of analysis and return to rights and protection as the units of accountability. The current route-based approach has developed into an operational framework instrumentalized by xenophobic states to whitewash containment policies with empty promises of protection along the routes and "safe pathways". UNHCR staff should listen less to its Global North masters and start listening to the refugees they are supposed to protect.

HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS TARGETED BY THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT

In March 2025, Libyan authorities shut down ten international humanitarian NGOs accusing them of "planning to settle migrants of African origin in Libya" and engaging in "hostile actions that undermine national security." Under Libya's Internal Security Agency (ISA), the provision of life-saving aid – food, clothing, and essential medical care – was paradoxically deemed "hostile," because it might encourage migrants to remain in the country⁴. This latest escalation of hostility towards NGOs by the Libyan Government of National Unity happened in the course of the government spreading racist conspiracy theories about Black migrants in the country. The eviction of these organizations leaves refugees in Libya without their support, which – even though it was never enough – did mean a relief to some people in dire situations.

These closures targeted organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, CARE, Terre des Hommes, the Danish Refugee Council, International Medical Corps, Intersos, Acted, Cesvi, and even UNHCR itself. The NGOs faced not only office closures but also frozen bank accounts, staff harassment, interrogation, and the confiscation of passports.

Only seventeen ambassadors and one UN official took the rare step of writing to the ISA – calling the action an "ongoing crackdown" on humanitarian actors in Libya⁵.

Meanwhile, UNHCR did not publicly condemn the shutdowns. Instead, their operational update from April offered a very different tone, stating that: "UNHCR has taken on increased case management responsibilities, assisting and referring vulnerable individuals as necessary, and has completely taken over conducting protection needs (PNAs) and Best Interest (BIAs) assessments, providing psychological first aid (PFA), and counselling and supporting the Community Based Care Arrangement programme."⁶

Chapter 2 of "Voices From the Hotline" offers detailed testimonies that dismantle the claim that UNHCR 'completely' took over the work of the NGOs. On the contrary, UNHCR continued to abandon people in need.

4 <https://www.sosmediterranee.org/libya-shuts-down-10-ngos-claiming-hostile-actions/> (status: 04.09.2025)

5 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/63780/libya-ten-ngos-suspended-due-to-hostile-support-of-migrants> (status: 04.09.2025)

6 <https://www.unhcr.org/media/libya-operational-update-april-2025> (status: 04.09.2025)

APPENDIX OF TESTIMONIES

2. The System Controlling Asylum Seekers in Libya

14.11.2024 Abukar: Regarding the protection I need from the UNHCR, I am a refugee who fled war and is registered with the UNHCR. I am ill, so I believe I meet the requirements to receive protection or be part of the protection rooms. I cannot escape the prisons and arrests in Libya.... As for the assistance I need now, any type of assistance that UNHCR can provide.

•

06.12.2024 Mudathir: The UNHCR employee did not write my name correctly in the file. I have called them more than 300 times and there is no response at all.

•

29.11.2024 Even the complaint number 1404 doesn't answer my calls.

•

01.04.2024 Abdul: We've sent messages to the Commission, but they haven't responded. I am extremely anxious and distressed. If you can communicate with the Commission and explain my problem, I would be grateful. My situation is devastating, and I'm sending messages to the Commission, but they don't reply.

•

06.08.2024 Abd: I was detained on October 27, 2023. I informed the staff during the initial interview, and they said they would contact us. After some time, my younger brother, Mohannad Abbas Dinqas, was also detained in May 2024.

•

05.07.2024 Halima: I have two children,

and my husband and I have been registered with the UNHCR in Libya since September 9... Until now, I have not received a call from the UNHCR. I went to prison and stayed there for a month.

•

03.09.2024 Afrah: I have been registered for a year, and I have been calling the complaints department to tell them what is happening to me in Libya. They keep asking me, "What do you want from the UNHCR? What is it that you need?"

•

09.12.2024 Omarjali: I have had a file for a year now, but there has been no protection, no assistance, and no contact. Since the time I submitted the file until today, there has been nothing.

•

21.12.2024 Israa: I have been registered since January, but I haven't received any call or anything until now. The place I'm in is not safe. My children are at risk, and I haven't received any assistance. I need an appointment to add a new birth and renew my file.

•

23.04.2024 Nizar: I registered with the Commission on 1/10/2023; they told me they'd call me back, but they never asked about my situation or what happened to me. No one ever called me back. (...) 27.04.2024: After reaching Kufra, we were imprisoned for illegal migration, despite being war refugees. After being released from prison, we arrived in Tripoli and registered with the commission on October 1, 2023. They have not contacted me or given me a chance to hear my complaint (...) Despite calling 1404, there was no response. The (UNHCR) commission didn't give me a chance. I have tried

every means, but no one has listened to me so far.

•

26.04.2025 Sawsan: I informed the Commission about my situation. They told me to gather the money and go to Tripoli, but I can't gather the money.

•

20.04.2025 Ahmed: I have been registered with the UNHCR for a year and a half. Currently, I am in Libya, in the city of Tripoli, with my family, and we are facing many problems. There are issues related to illegal immigration. Right now, there is no proper work, and going outside involves many problems. Sometimes, when I try to work, young men rob me—they take my phone and my money (...) I have young children who need care and are always running around, and now, even just going outside is dangerous. I have been imprisoned multiple times. The police mistreated me.

•

15.01.2025 Ina: I have not been able to register until now.

•

22.01.2025 Taysir: Honestly, after registering, no organization has contacted me except for you.

•

07.04.2025 Zainab: They said the commission will contact you, but honestly, since 2024, they've been saying the same thing, and there has been no result.

•

04.08.2024 Saleh: This is always the case, there are so many incidents. Even

when reporting, we call and send messages to the numbers but no one answers. Until 2024/5/5, I was detained in Bir Al-Ghanam prison. I spent a week there and was released. I contacted and sent messages but there has been no response so far.

•

09.04.2025 Omar: I couldn't find a way to register with UNHCR.

•

09.04.2025 Mustafa: We need help from UNHCR. I have been registered for a long time, the commissioner's office did not do anything to me until the call was silent, but I did not hear from them and I am very tired of my situation,

•

17.04.2025 (Anonymous): I have been in Libya for more than four years, registered with the UNHCR. No service has been provided to me.

•

16.04.2025 Mohammed: I called and sent messages many times to renew my files, and requested a protection meeting but no answer.

•

19.04.2025 Abkar: I have been registered with UNHCR Tripoli for a long time and have not received any assistance, so I ask UNHCR for immediate assistance and protection, as well as resettlement to which country.

•

20.04.2025 (Anonymous): We sent all the identification documents we have, but we haven't received a response.

•

16.12.2024 Wayam: Please help me to take a second interview at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or International Migration, as this will greatly facilitate the resolution of my issue.

•

6.12.2024 Huweda: 0927095385 091002771 0917872725 0922767166 0927095385 0910011491– Even my questions go unanswered

•

19.12.2024 Mujahid: I applied many times but I was not accepted. They did not respond to me even to set an appointment (with UNHCR). Please help me through you

•

21.12.2024 Ibrahim: Unfortunately, I have tried all communication channels with the UNHCR and partner organizations, but I have not received any response. For your information, the registration began on 23/6/2020.

•

21.12.2024 Mohamed: I came now to Tripoli to find help but UNHCR don't receive calls; I registered to UNHCR but I can't reach them,

•

11.12.2024 Hassa: The numbers I tried to contact, whether via WhatsApp, calls, or SMS, are (...) Protection, UNHCR: 00218917127644 (list continues..)

•

01.12.2024 Rehab: I have been in Libya for

about a year and have not been contacted by the (UNHCR) organization. I have gone through many difficulties. I am calling, but they are not answering. I am sending complaints via WhatsApp, but there is no response.

•

21.11.2024 Saleh: The reason for my contact is to schedule an appointment for a replacement document, update my lost document, and change my telephone number (...) Yes, I tried the organizations in Tripoli, the International Organization for Migration and the Cesvi organization, and I contacted the Commission, but there was no response.

•

01.12.2024 Ina: I am still sending to the Commission but have not received a response regarding scheduling an appointment for registration.

•

05.12.2024 Haroun: I want you to deliver my letter to Geneva and to the UNHCR offices in Libya and Tunisia to look into my case, and even the UNHCR has not contacted me about my file since 2022.

•

03.11.2024 Nadia: Since the beginning of July, I've been calling them and there's no call, no text message, and no WhatsApp either. What can I do next?

•

03.11.2024 Abdulhamid: I have partial paralysis in my hand and leg. I have been sending messages to the UNHCR for two years, and I went to the house but was attacked, and shots were fired at me. (...) 21.04.2025: I am trying to call the phone number, but the number is not working.

•

10.04.2024 Awatif: I received text messages from IOM (International Organization for Migration) requesting to schedule a protection appointment. I've been sending daily messages (...) but haven't received any response.

•

13.05.2024 Wijdan: I am Sudanese, pregnant, and I have two children. I also have diabetes and I need surgery. My husband is sick too. I've been contacting people at the commission, but I haven't been given an appointment yet.

•

07.11.2024 Adam: By God, I was hoping for a call from any party through the UNHCR or the International Organisation, and I tried a lot, whether it was a call or a message, but so far I have not received any result.

•

08.11.2024 Muhammad: I did not find support from all organisations. In Libya I was imprisoned twice, and I was beaten, and I was exposed to racism, and I am now exposed to several things, please help, this is the music of the UNHCR (on the phone), please help, thank you.

•

17.10.2024 Ibrahim: Every time or year, the document was renewed for a year or valid for a year, except this time it was renewed for two years from 9/1/2024 to 2024 to 2026 (...) As for the aid a year or more ago, I took detergent + 20 dinars once + another 20 dinars only, I don't know what happened in the file.

•

26.10.2024 Adam: I have been registered with UNHCR for a year and four months, yet I have not received any protection or had any interview with UNHCR since arriving in Libya.

23.09.2024 Ibrahim: Every year or so, I go to Seraj to renew the document for a year, but this time it was renewed for two years, from 1/9/2024 until 2026.

•

02.09.2024 Mawadda: No, there was no response. I called him many times and sent many text messages. (...) 09.09.2024: I'm in front of the UNHCR headquarters and I'm not allowed to enter. Every day I search by writing and calling, but there is no entry. (...) 11.09.2024: I have not received a response from the Commission yet. 04.10.2024: Thank God I registered with the UNHCR. It was a nice interview, and the staff were very kind. I registered yesterday, on Tuesday.

•

07.05.2024 (Anonymous): I've been trying to register with the (UNHCR) commission for six years now in Libya. I've tried by sea, and the last time I was imprisoned by the sea. It's a series of stories. Now I'm going to register with the commission, but I don't have a number, I don't have anyone who can help me. (...) These numbers I have, I've tried calling them, but they didn't answer for almost a month now. I even tried texting them on WhatsApp, but they don't seem to have WhatsApp. I've tried many times, but the number doesn't connect with me.

•

17.05.2024 (Anonymous): I registered with the UNHCR in November 2024,

seeking protection. The registration officer did not allow me to explain my situation, stating that protection was not his responsibility. I then faced further violations in Libya, leading to deteriorating health and mental state. Due to difficulties in communicating with the UNHCR, my condition worsened until I got an appointment with Dr. Hanan, who followed up with me for four months and improved my health significantly. This humane treatment was something I had not experienced since entering Libya. Two weeks ago, my home was attacked, and everything, including my UNHCR document, was stolen. I contacted the UNHCR and went to get a new document, asking for protection, but the officer again refused for the same reasons. However, he told me that my file was missing a fingerprint, which I then provided. I also informed him of the violations I had faced in Libya.

23.05.2024 Inas: We suffer from a shortage of food supplies, and we inform you that we have not received any assistance since registering with the (UNHCR) commission.

27.05.2024 Ahmad: In March 2023, I was detained in Gharyan upon my arrival here. After spending 3 months in prison, I was released and registered with the UNHCR. However, the UNHCR has not contacted us, not even with a phone call. In October 2023, I went to Tunisia, but I was only able to get out after paying the required amounts. I have not been able to get in touch with the UNHCR, and they have not reached out to me either.

24.06.2024 Sami: Yes, there is no re-

sponse from the Commission's numbers. Here the situation is very difficult. I have been registered with UNHCR in Libya since 2017. There is no response. This is very bad.

27.06.2024 Faisal: I called all the numbers of the commission, but there was no response at all. Even the complaints number does not respond. I am completely lost and don't know what to do.

09.07.2024 Masrah: We came to the UNHCR for assistance and shelter, seeking protection. But neither has the UNHCR protected us nor has the document. I have lost my children and husband, and I do not know whether they are alive or dead. Here, I am losing my daughters and my son. How long will we suffer? Even the (UNHCR) document does not protect us.

05.04.2025 Emad: At the beginning, at the gate, I entered after filling out the form through the link and then entered the reception. I encountered many nationalities being registered for voluntary return (...) I entered the protection office and (...) explained my situation and asked them to evacuate us to any place other than Libya. They refused and said that they cannot do that, despite knowing that the Libyan government has closed all partner organisations like Cesvi and others and there are no organisations that function except the UNHCR. I told them that if I am not evacuated anywhere I will risk the children across the sea or across the desert to get out of Libya, I cannot live in Libya, we are dying in Libya slowly.

05.01.2025 Fakhruddin: All of Libya is not safe, even if I go to the Danish Refugee Council : We just want to leave Libya, that's it. If there is no way, we will try to cross the Mediterranean Sea. If I make it, that's good. If I don't make it, it's better to die in the Mediterranean Sea than live in Libya. There is no other option, just death in the sea.

02.04.2025 Adam: Even now, we still don't know where to go. (...) we can't escape to Tunisia, neither by the sea. And even through the road to Morocco, we can't escape. We don't know what to do. The commission is not helping us, it's not working for us. Even today, I saw the news of their press conference, they said that partner organizations have closed their offices. So, the situation is getting worse every day(...) A while ago, they said it's impossible to resettle migrants, and even if there were resettlement in Libya, no one wants their country. (...) I swear by God, if they open the sea, within 42 hours, they won't find anyone..

14.11.2024 Abukar : Regarding the protection I need from the UNHCR, I am a refugee who fled war and is registered with the UNHCR. I am ill, so I believe I meet the requirements to receive protection or be part of the protection rooms. I cannot escape the prisons and arrests in Libya.... As for the assistance I need now, any type of assistance that UNHCR can provide.

06.12.2024 Mudathir: The UNHCR employee did not write my name correctly in the file. I have called them more than 300 times and there is no response at all. (...) 29.11.2024: Even the complaint number 1404 doesn't answer my calls. (...) 02.01.2025: I've had my file for a year

and four months, and I haven't received a single call or any help. I called recently to renew my file, but it's been months and no response.

01.04.2024 Abdul: We've sent messages to the Commission, but they haven't responded. I am extremely anxious and distressed. If you can communicate with the Commission and explain my problem, I would be grateful. My situation is devastating, and I'm sending messages to the Commission, but they don't reply.

06.08.2024 Abd: I was detained on October 27, 2023. I informed the staff during the initial interview, and they said they would contact us. After some time, my younger brother, Mohannad Abbas Din-qas, was also detained in May 2024.

05.07.2024 Halima: I have two children, and my husband and I have been registered with the UNHCR in Libya since September 9 (...) Until now, I have not received a call from the UNHCR. I went to prison and stayed there for a month.

03.09.2024 Afrah: I have been registered for a year, and I have been calling the complaints department to tell them what is happening to me in Libya. They keep asking me, 'What do you want from the UNHCR? What is it that you need?'

21.04.2025 Mohammed: No, I haven't even received a response regarding the renewal of my document, which expired in July 2024

•			
05.09.2024 A. (a raped young woman, sends screenshots of no answer)	to harassment, theft, physical assault, and repeated attacks. I have been registered with the UNHCR for a year, but I haven't been contacted, and I am unable to reach the protection numbers.	06.05.2025 Fatima: I called the number ending with 44 (UNHCR protection). I told my story, they said they would call me back but they haven't done so until now.	15.05.2025 Samia: My husband has been missing since the morning of June 5th, around 9:00 AM. I asked around in the nearby square, but no one had seen him. I don't know what to do. I called UNHCR but got no response.
•	•	•	•
12.09.2024 Mona (sent 3 videos of missing calls): I contacted the people at Cesvi, the UNHCR complaints team, and 1404, and all of them responded, but no appointment for an interview has been set.	03.09.2024 Salma: Since I registered with the UNHCR on 20/2/2022, there has been no protection, no calls, and no assistance. We are living our lives in constant fear, worry, and anxiety due to the lack of security.	03.05.2025 Zainab: I will try once again. (...)06.05.2025: The protection hotline is not working for me.(...)12.05.2025: (screenshots of no answer)	
•	•	•	•
12.09.2024 Qismah: I am requesting an appointment to renew my file, and they are responding to me (...) Yes, from the UNHCR. They didn't reply to me.	02.09.2024 (Anonymous): I have sent numerous messages and made many calls to the protection team, but there has been no response.	10.05.2025 Bahja: I was subjected to an attack on my way to work. They took my document and a small amount of money from me. We reported this to the Commission, and we obtained another document. Also, my husband was forced to leave the service without pay, and the service owner forced him to work to the point that he reached the house. We are still trying to report this to the Commission without success.	16.05.2025 Saleh: I have contacted UNHCR, but there has been no response, even though I am registered with the UNHCR office in Tripoli.
•	•	•	•
12.09.2024 Fatima: I submitted complaints to UNHCR. They said the protection team would contact me, but it's been five months, and they haven't called me.	03.09.2024 Amna: We registered with the organization in October 2023, but until today, we haven't heard back or received any assistance.		16.05.2025 Muhammad: Since I registered with the (UNHCR) Commission on 18/7/2024, I have been calling and complaining about the conditions I am going through, but my complaints have not been raised, and I do not know what has happened. No employee has called me, and I have not received any assistance. I hope you will raise this complaint on my behalf.
•	•	•	•
11.09.2024 Abu Al-Qasim: I contacted the commission but received no response. I need a doctor's appointment urgently.	03.09.2024 Sona: (screenshots with different numbers) They contact the partner organizations and even the commission, but still no response.	10.05.2025 Badria: (screenshots of no answer)	07.05.2024 (Anonymous): I've been trying to register with the (UNHCR) commission for six years now in Libya. I've tried by sea, and the last time I was imprisoned by the sea. It's a series of stories. Now I'm going to register with the commission, but I don't have a number, I don't have anyone who can help me. (...) These numbers I have, I've tried calling them, but they didn't answer for almost a month now. I even tried texting them on WhatsApp, but they don't seem to have WhatsApp. I've tried many times, but the number doesn't connect with me.
•	•	•	•
11.09.2024 Mohammed: I have a child until now. I have not get a birth certificate for her because of the financial situation. My wife's passport and the girl's papers are for months, still held in the hospital because they ask for payment (for the birth). The organizations here did not do anything for us, what do they do for us? (...) frankly we are psychologically and morally tired. We look for safety, since 2018.	02.05.2025 Al-Raida (many screenshots of the calls): All the communications with the numbers and the name.	12.05.2025 Abdulaziz: I have been registered for four years and have not received any contact from them. I have not been placed in protection and have renewed my file twice. I have called all the numbers provided to me to ask for help, but they have not offered me any assistance. (...)	
•	•	•	•
	03.05.2025 Namarq: I am sick, and I have tried many times to call UNHCR staff to find a solution, but there has been no result. I kindly ask for your help.	15.05.2025 Nisreen: We are trying to contact UNHCR, but it (the line) is closed. What should we do now?	
•	•	•	•
03.09.2024 Nasra: I am being subjected			21.05.2024 Mohamed: It has been three months since I have been requesting a protection interview from UNHCR, and there has been no response from the

Commission.		more. Since registration on 19.10.2023, we have not found any assistance from the Commission, whether cash or in-kind assistance, to date, not even protection, and we have not found anyone to guide us, or answer our inquiries. A family loses its fatherssion multiple times, but they have not responded.	07.05.2025 Ibrahim: After 7 months of fleeing, we found ourselves in an unknown future in a country where no one knows you, and we can't even get answers from the commission about our fate.	age of food supplies, and we inform you that we have not received any assistance since registering with the (UNHCR) commission.
•			•	•
22.05.2025 Ayman: (...) I arrived in Libya through Kufra, and now I am in Benghazi, after facing serious threats in Sudan. Unfortunately, there has been no response from the UNHCR, despite trying through all means.				
•			•	
28.05.2025 Jamal: For three months, I've been sending messages to the Commission, but there has been no response regarding a new registration.		17.04.2024 Maryam: Recently, my husband was raided, beaten, and they took his belongings and our file. I contacted the commission, but there was no response. We went to renew our file, but instead, they gave us a replacement. Even when we filed a complaint, they told us to file for protection, but still, no response.	07.05.2025 K.: I have only registered in Libya UNHCR last year until now without calling me back again and I don't know what is going on.	27.05.2024 Ahmad: In March 2023, I was detained in Gharyan upon my arrival here. After spending 3 months in prison, I was released and registered with the UNHCR. However, the UNHCR has not contacted us, not even with a phone call. In October 2023, I went to Tunisia, but I was only able to get out after paying the required amounts. I have not been able to get in touch with the UNHCR, and they have not reached out to me either.
•			•	•
13.07.2024 Nasraddin: But I did not find any response from them. Commander sends a message every day via WhatsApp. But I didn't get a response from them.				
•		23.04.2024 Sami: I have been registered with UNHCR in Libya since 2017. There is no response. This is very bad.		24.06.2024 Sami: Yes, there is no response from the Commission's numbers. Here the situation is very difficult. I have been registered with UNHCR in Libya since 2017. There is no response. This is very bad.
•			•	•
28.05.2025 Jamal: For three months, I've been sending messages to the Commission, but there has been no response regarding a new registration.		23.04.2024 Nasreddin: I need your support. I swear, since I registered with the UNHCR, I haven't received any assistance, protection, or even a call from them. No one answers when I call. What should I do? I'm exhausted.	17.05.2024 (Anonymous): I registered with the UNHCR in November 2024, seeking protection. The registration officer did not allow me to explain my situation, stating that protection was not his responsibility. I then faced further violations in Libya, leading to deteriorating health and mental state. Due to difficulties in communicating with the UNHCR, my condition worsened until I got an appointment with Dr. Hanan, who followed up with me for four months and improved my health significantly. This humane treatment was something I had not experienced since entering Libya. Two weeks ago, my home was attacked, and everything, including my UNHCR document, was stolen. I contacted the UNHCR and went to get a new document, asking for protection, but the officer again refused for the same reasons. However, he told me that my file was missing a fingerprint, which I then provided. I also informed him of the violations I had faced in Libya.	27.06.2024 Faisal: I called all the numbers of the commission, but there was no response at all. Even the complaints number does not respond. I am completely lost and don't know what to do.
•			•	•
07.02.2024 (Anonymous): We presented and recorded all these circumstances and the suffering that we faced in Sudan from the day of the death of the children's father due to the war until our arrival at the Commission. We requested asylum legally through original and complete documents. The registration took place 19.10.2023. We did not get any service from the (UNHCR) Commission or any assistance, not even from any national or foreign organization, and we are still in the most difficult circumstances, and our suffering has increased even		02.05.2024 Amina: I tried to reschedule an appointment, but after they gave me the date, it turned out to be wrong. I went on the 24th, but the appointment was on the 23rd, six months ago. I'm trying to reschedule the appointment, and my children are facing many problems. I don't feel safe. Please find a solution for me because the Commission is evicting me and not providing a solution.		01.07.2024 Arfa: The UNHCR received us, but we didn't get any protection or assistance. Now, I am in my eighth month of pregnancy and will be in my ninth month on June 9th. I am anemic, and our financial situation is extremely difficult.
			•	•
			•	01.07.2024 Abdullah: I have been registered since January 8th, and until now I
			23.05.2024 Inas: We suffer from a short-	

haven't received support from any organization.

08.07.2024 (Anonymous): I registered with the UNHCR, but I still suffer from a lack of security. I have encountered many problems from armed Libyans, and despite informing the UNHCR about these incidents, I have not received any protection from them.

08.07.2024 Hamed: I am in a very scary situation, but my papers expired close to December, and until today, I haven't received an appointment. The UNHCR's phone number is always busy. We have many problems, and we are not getting any protection.

08.07.2024 Masoud: I registered in UNHCR in 2023/11/27 I was imprisoned in Ain Zara prison 2024/3/21 and we escaped from prison in 2024/5/25. We were 5 Sudanese, and there were three of us who escaped. The rest are still in prison. I tried to make an appointment, but I could not, because there was no response from them. I also received a death threat in the call from militias. I have all the evidence and now I am hiding what I will do?

09.07.2024 Moussa: I live in Tripoli, in Ain Zara. Here, there are no aids from the UNHCR or partner organizations. I have been registered with the UNHCR for about a year, and I have not received any assistance, neither financial nor medical.

11.07.2024 (Anonymous): As for the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, they called me in the month of 4 for less than a minute. They asked me for the file number and that was it.

04.2.2024 Abubakar: I need an appointment to get a lost document and change my number.

22.07.2024 Abdel: My circumstances are very difficult, and I will not yet find any help from the (UNHCR) Commission or the partner organizations or all. I send messages and calls, but I have not received any response yet.

25.07.2024 Iman: I have not received any response from the (UNHCR) organization so far. Currently, I have no housing and cannot get an appointment with the organization. The International Organization for Migration has contacted me only once.

29.07.2024 Ahmed: I contacted the UNHCR again, and I was given another appointment. I went and told them everything that had happened to me, explaining that I had fled Sudan because my life was at risk. During all this time, I received threats from Sudan because I had worked as a cook for the Rapid Support Forces before the war. However, there was no response from the UNHCR.

25.07.2024 Mohammed: I swear, it has been 6 months without anyone contacting me. I was told that my file was transferred. My situation in Libya is very difficult; no one gives you anything, and I

have children.

03.08.2024 Luqman: I was imprisoned and now I am out of prison, but there is still no shelter. I have requested help from the commission several times, but nothing has happened.

14.08.2024 Abulqasim: I have been registered since 2/5/2023, but they haven't contacted me. I submitted an addition on 2/11/2024.

01.11.2024 Amina: I registered with the UNHCR on December 20, 2023, but have yet to receive any assistance, whether medical, food, or any other type. I wonder why I am not eligible for help or protection, especially as Libya is no longer safe for us.

13.11.2024 Heba (4screenshots of no answer): I have contacted the UNHCR and other organizations, but the situation remains the same and they still say they cannot protect me.

04.08.2024 Abubakar: Since 2020 until now, I have been filing complaints requesting protection to ensure my safety. I have been submitting complaints every week, but there has been no response to my complaints.

23.08.2024 Abbas: After arriving, we registered with the UNHCR, but they have never contacted us.

25.08.2024 Abdu: I don't know how these people respond, but I've tried everything, and nothing has worked for me. Honestly, I'm really frustrated, but I don't know how to reach them. I've been sharing all the numbers and links, but I don't know what's going on.

25.08.2024 Omaima: We have been registered for ten months, and we are seeking help from you, but we have not received any assistance.

28.08.2024 (Anonymous): I submitted my application to the UNHCR a long time ago, and there has been no resettlement or evacuation to a safer country than Libya. It has been almost four years since I applied to this organization.

29.08.2024 Nisreen: Yes, I contacted the UNHCR, but they did not help me. I also visited the sister organizations, but they did not assist me either.

27.08.2024 Salim: I have called several times, and honestly, I don't know what is going on. I have been providing the information about my situation but haven't received any response. Since the 26th, I've been trying to reach them, but the line has been busy.

29.08.2024 Sakinah: They did not respond. I have sent 5 screenshots of missing calls. I tried so many times and have sent messages on WhatsApp. Still, no response.

30.08.2024 Samah: I contacted them, and they responded and registered my request, but I still haven't been able to get any assistance. I am very tired, my situation is difficult, and I am close to giving birth.

30.08.2024 (Anonymous): I tried all the numbers, but to no avail. There was no response, and my situation is very, very difficult.

31.08.2024 (Anonymous): Regarding my issue, I haven't received any response from the organization so far. I tried contacting them directly by phone and sending messages via WhatsApp, but I haven't received any response yet.

14.11.2024 Abukar: Regarding the protection I need from the UNHCR, I am a refugee who fled war and is registered with the UNHCR. I am ill, so I believe I meet the requirements to receive protection or be part of the protection rooms. I cannot escape the prisons and arrests in Libya (...). As for the assistance I need now, any type of assistance that UNHCR can provide.

06.12.2024 Mudathir: The UNHCR employee did not write my name correctly in the file. I have called them more than 300 times and there is no response at all. (...)29.11.2024 Even the complaint number 1404 doesn't answer my calls.

01.04.2024 Abdul: We've sent messages to the Commission, but they haven't responded. I am extremely anxious and

distressed. If you can communicate with the Commission and explain my problem, I would be grateful. My situation is devastating, and I'm sending messages to the Commission, but they don't reply.

06.08.2024 Abd: I was detained on October 27, 2023. I informed the staff during the initial interview, and they said they would contact us. After some time, my younger brother, Mohannad Abbas Din-qas, was also detained in May 2024.

05.07.2024 Halima: I have two children, and my husband and I have been registered with the UNHCR in Libya since September 9 (...) Until now, I have not received a call from the UNHCR. I went to prison and stayed there for a month.

03.09.2024 Afrah: I have been registered for a year, and I have been calling the complaints department to tell them what is happening to me in Libya. They keep asking me, 'What do you want from the UNHCR? What is it that you need?' and until now we have not found any help and are waiting and do not know what will happen to us?

09.12.2024 Mohammed: We have previously applied to the (UNHCR) organization and they told us to contact them, but unfortunately, luck was not on our side, as none of the numbers responded to us.

15.04.2024 Mahmoud: Alhamdulillah, we reached Libya, but unfortunately, Libya is not safe. Every other day, we face problems. I have requested assistance from

the commission

3. Protection and Emergency Hotline

23.01.2025 Hala (single with a child): I registered with the UNHCR in 2020 in Egypt. I was subjected to a rape incident in Egypt, and every day in Egypt my son faces the same issue. I moved to Libya, and now my son is facing the same problem here.... We are sitting in front of the UNHCR office in Serraj. I have no place to go. A woman provided me with daily support for my son who is involuntarily defecating, but she then told us to leave the house because of my son.

30.04.2025 Howaida: I lived in my country as a displaced person and refugee in Egypt and Libya. I have been subjected to all kinds of human rights violations. In Libya, I was also raped and reported this to the (UNHCR) Commission. I received treatment in Zawiya al-Dahmani and am suffering from severe psychological and financial hardship.

28.05.2024 Nasra: I am Nasra, a Sudanese refugee in Libya. I have been subjected to rape multiple times and torture. My 13-year-old daughter was also assaulted by the farm owner and his sons on 20th April. My 9-year-old son was kidnapped, tortured, and raped by a Libyan man, and now his health and mental state are in danger as he cannot defecate and has been threatened with murder.

07.08.2024 Islam: Two men entered our

yard, beat my husband, and took his phone and some money meant for the rent. I have contacted all the numbers, but there is no response.

23.08.2024 Asar: No, no one has called me. I have even lost hope. I have lost the strength to take responsibility (...). I wish for death a thousand times. The man who raped me five months ago knows where our house is, and he knows that we don't have anyone, no father or mother. I am scared all the time.

07.04,2025 Zahra: The number 1404 used to be toll-free, but it has been deactivated and replaced with 1504. I have tried repeatedly to contact the commission, but there has been no response. We need help.

16.04.2024 Nazifa: We cannot raise children due to the lack of money and security. Return the help and pressure on the UNHCR in Libya. The UNHCR does not care about us and does not answer calls. I try to call every day and there is no response from them. I do not know what the reason is for ignoring me.

16.04.2025 S. (whose wife was beaten by strangers causing abortion): I called 1404 7,8 time and nobody answered...

11.09.2024 Feryal: I filed complaints (of harassment) with the Al-Sarraj Protection, at 1404, and with INTERSOS, but no one has responded to my request for protection.

•	(...) 27.04.2024: After reaching Kufra, we were imprisoned for illegal migration, despite being war refugees. After being released from prison, we arrived in Tripoli and registered with the commission on October 1, 2023. They have not contacted me or given me a chance to hear my complaint (...) Despite calling 1404, there was no response. The commission didn't give me a chance. I have tried every means, but no one has listened to me so far.	them. UNHCR Norway, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and we place our hope in God.(...)31.03.20 (screenshots of no answer): 1\ I tried a lot and I'm still trying. 2\ The dates are many, but I will attach screenshots for you. I hope you can file a complaint and thank you very much.	given us a solution
23.09.2024: I called 1404 and explained what happened to me and there is no help for me.	•	•	•
25.07.2024 Mukhles: Once I had been in prison and I even talked to the UN hotline and they said that they will come back to me. (...) I have contacted all the numbers, but there is no response.(...) 13.08.2024: (...) every time I call 1404 nothing happens, they just give me fake promises. This is not a life of human beings actually.	•	05.05.2025 Amira (screenshots of missed calls): I'm trying to tell you that it's closed or out of coverage. I swear, there's still no answer. I've been trying all day.	03.01.2025 Fairouz (threatend:) Even the complaints number 1404, I called them and they told me that the commission cannot help you. In your opinion, what should I do? Who is responsible? Who can help me? I don't know, just tell me.
•	29.07.2024 Safa: We are registered with the UNHCR for a year, no protection, no aid, we are subjected to harassment and bullying, and an armed group took my husband several times a month, I don't know his whereabouts, and I am a woman with young children.	•	•
31.08.2024 Halima: I was treated very poorly by 1404. I am requesting that my complaint be registered with the commission.	•	04.05.2025 Al-Raida (screenshots of missed calls): No response.	05.01.2025 Malika: Yes, I tried to contact them, but I was not able to get a response to my calls.
•	•	•	•
31.08.2024 (Anonymous): 1404,They responded, but to no avail.	04.09.2024 Marwa (threatened mother): I haven't received any response: I always call them	13.09.2024 Qismah (screenshots of unanswered calls): I called this number about 20 times, and they didn't answer.	30.05.2024 Asmaa: I have been contacting them for a month and there has been no response yet (referred to1404).
•	•	•	•
06.08.2024 Ibtisam: Alright, I contacted the protection people, but there was no response. (...) I keep trying, but there is no response. (...) Sometimes it says the line is busy. (...)07.08.2024 (screenshots of answering numbers): There is no response. It seems like the Libyan who threatens us might come and shoot us with a weapon, or maybe it's just talk. Honestly, we're really scared. When I talk about my problem with you, I feel a bit better.	25.04.2025 Al-Badri: I have contacted all the organizations, but received no response.	14.01.2025 Nasra: By God Almighty, I have sent messages many times without receiving any response, until it reached [reference number] 1404. Regarding the renewal appointments, there has been no response for 4 months. I have been sending messages, and there is no reply. Now, my wife has given birth to a child, and I called again, but still no answer.	18.07.2024 Hwaida: I have been trying since February 2nd. I acknowledge that I called them about three times before this month and this month, but they haven't done anything.(...) 25.01.2025 (screenshots of unanswered calls): I tried every number, but they didn't reply to me.
•	12.09.2024 Hanwa (screenshots of missed calls): They haven't answered the phone since I registered in August 2023 and only once have they answered the phone.	04.05.2025 Salma: sorry – I didn't get any response from these numbers not even one.	•
•	•	•	•
23.04.2024 Nizar: I called 1404, but no one responded. The UNHCR did not give me a chance. I have tried everything, but no one has listened to me until now.	30.04.2025 Zainab (screenshots of missed calls): This (1504) is the only working number.(...)26.03.2025: I have tried all these organizations, but so far, we have not received any response from	01.01.2025 Nosyba: I contacted them, but there was no response, god help us.(...) 02.01.2025: All the UNHCR numbers are unanswered. 1404 says to raise your complaint. No one has contacted us or	25.01.2025 Heba: we have not received any psychological, material, or moral support since I registered with the UNHCR. I have tried contacting the UNHCR protection hotline, and I called the number 1404. They said they would forward my complaint, but as of now, since November 2023, I have not received any response.
			23.01.2025 Hamida: I complained a lot 1404. But there was no help even when I asked for diabetes medication, but unfortunately no one helped me.

•	ment. I can't make an appointment.	•	done anything for me.	•	17.10.2024 Heba: we have not found psychological, material or moral assistance since I registered with UNHCR, we call the UNHCR protection number and I call it on the number. 1404. They told me to transfer your complaint until now from 11/2023
24.01.2025 Nosyba: I have not received any response from any party, and I have continued to call and file complaints on a daily basis, but I have not received a response from any party that has contacted me.	•	14.05.2024 Nesiba: The UNHCR people haven't responded to me. I've been calling them more than a hundred times to help me.	•	26.02.2025 Kame's wife: I submitted complaints to 1404, but no assistance has been received from them. (...)02.03.2025: By God, I use the phones, but there is no response to any of my calls.	•
•	•	•	•	•	•
24.11.2024 Mudathir: I called the complaint number, but there is no result, unfortunately.(...)26.01.2025 (screenshots of no answer): They never reply to me. (...)18.02.2025: I called the complaints department at 1404. I told them I was robbed, and they said they can't do anything for me except forward my complaint to the commission. This is the third time I've been robbed. I told them I need protection because I'm being threatened, but they said they can't do anything for me.	23.05.2024 Iman: Yes, I called many times and there was no answer at all. I call 20 times a day and they never respond. Every time it's busy, busy.27.05.2024 (Video documenting 20 phone calls): Hello, today I contacted 1404, and no answer.	•	16.04.2025 Aziza: Yes, I've called them, but to no avail (IOM, UNHCR)	•	17.10.2024 Jamila: I called 1404 and complained over and over again and they still haven't lifted my complaint.
•	•	•	•	•	•
13.2.2025 Hanan: I called the hotline, and they told me they registered a complaint. I contacted the volunteers, and they told me they would schedule a doctor's appointment, but until now, I haven't received any response.	08.06.2024 (Anonymous): Yes, I called the protection number more than 100 times, but no one answered. I even called Norway more than 70 or 80 times, but the number was closed. I call 1404 every morning and evening 20 or 30 times for two days	•	17.04.2025 Qisma: I contacted the complaints at UNHCR on 29 December, 9 February, 27 August 8 and 7 August, and worked as a protection worker at MSF on 23 march 2025.	•	30.09.2024 Arafa: Yes, I called this number (Tawasul) several times.
•	•	•	•	•	•
21.02.2025 Mona: Yes, I have contacted them several times, but I did not receive a response. I have been requesting help for about 4 years and have not received any answers.(...) 24.02.2025: This number from May 2022 hasn't responded. And this number (UNHCR) I called more than 100 times in one day, but no response.	24.06.2024 Buthaina: I've called many people, 1404, but there has been no response for five months. Calling doesn't solve anything.(...)25.08.2024: After the incident of rape that happened to me, about two weeks later I had a miscarriage. I tried to contact many complaint channels, but I haven't received any response.	•	29.01.2025 Taysir: These are the organizations I sent to, but they didn't respond at all. Even the numbers you sent me, they didn't respond.	•	05.10.2024 Amina: I tried to contact all the authorities affiliated with the Commission, but there was no response. (...)21.04.2025: I called all the numbers, but none of them answer except for the psychological support line – it rings but there's no response.
•	•	•	•	•	•
26.09.2024 Sabrinah (after rape case): The numbers don't respond to calls and UNHCR organization requires appoint-	25.02.2025 Safia: I'll send you screenshots of the messages now. I also called 1404, but they didn't do anything for me. I swear to God, I've messaged all the protection.(...)04.03.2025: I haven't received a response from the organizations, and 1404 didn't do anything for me. I've been calling for two weeks, but they haven't	•	12.08.2024 Noura: I contacted the 1404 hotline, and they told me that this is a family matter and that they are unable to help. If the organization itself says it can't assist, please. (...) 11.09.2024: (shot screen of no answer): Contact number for Tawasul Organization: 1404. There has been no response from either organization. Tawasul has received 987 missed calls, and INTERSOS has received 754 missed calls, but no one is answering.	•	17.10.2024 Maha: I contacted them, and they told me that the UNHCR can't help me or provide protection.
•	•	•	•	•	•
			10.02.2025 Salma: I contacted all organizations, and they are responding	•	08.11.2024 Hamada: 1404 is the only one who responded and told me to file a complaint and it hasn't been filed yet.
			•	•	•
					21.10.2024 Rehab: when we call the commission, they do not respond. I called 1404, and they told me to file a complaint, but there is no hope. I tried calling the protection numbers, but they did not respond. We have contacted all these organizations, and nothing comes out of it.

I am asking for your help. Thank you very much to all of you.

•

15.10.2024 Jamila (screenshots of protection number): This number is always busy and I may have been blocked and I couldn't raise my issue.

•

26.10.2024. I called 1404 and complained over and over again and they never lifted my complaint.

•

08.09.2024 Suad: Yes, I called 3 times (1404) answer - register your complaint...

•

09.09.2024: I haven't heard back from UNHCR, and every time I've been told to file a complaint, I haven't heard back yet.(...)11.09.2024: I contacted all the numbers: I called 1404, I called them a lot, they replied to me three times, they heard my complaint and there was no response, and then I called 0910027716 from 14 August, they sent me a message that your application has been registered again (...) IOM 0910028462 the same thing, there was no response, and again, I have sent many messages to 0910021631, 0917127644, 0924701185. Since the day my husband disappeared, I have been emailing these numbers, but only one number called me and took my data, and again there was no response. (...)19.10.2024: (15 screenshots of no answer 1404).

•

11.09.2024 Muzdalifah (videos of no answer calls): I called the number 1404, but there was no response. I haven't received

a reply from the commission. Every time I contact them, they tell me that they have escalated my complaint and will get back to me, but I still haven't received a response. (...) the people of 1404 replied to me and said that they will raise my complaint to the organization.

•

11.09.2024 Hanaa (screenshots of no answer): Calls to 1404(...)17.09.2024 (screenshots of no answer).

•

22.09.2024 Aisha: I'm trying to talk about my issue with the Commission, we call and send to these numbers, but there is no response from them.

•

15.09.2024 Fida: Yes, I called 1404. I called them more than 10 times, and I submitted complaints to them. They told me they had forwarded them to the UNHCR, and that the agency would contact me. By God, I've been waiting for their call for a long time. I also requested protection from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), but they didn't offer me protection or assistance.

•

11.09.2024 Awatif: They don't respond, especially to the UN protection numbers. I called more than 200 times in a day, and they always respond with 'busy'.

•

09.09.2024 Aish: we called the number 1404 and they said to call you back until now there is no one to call.

•

23.01.2025 Yusra (threatened by drug

traffickers with whom her husband refuses to collaborate): There is no response or reply at all. I went to the entire organization, and there was no response. Please reply, I am truly in danger along with my children and husband.(...) 11.02.2025: A few days ago, the same people came to our house, threatened us, and beat my husband's brother and my husband. We contacted the UNHCR and filed a complaint, but their response was that they cannot offer us any help, and we should leave the house.

•

05.01.2025 Samia (Single with a small child): Reason for my complaint: I am sick with continuous bleeding for 34 days today. I have been trying to contact, but no employee is responding to my urgent situation.

•

06.01.2025 Maram: Yes I tried but I didn't get any answer from any organization?? I went to Norwegian, Intersos, Danish and International Migration. I also called 1404 and told them everything that happened to me but I didn't get any support or assistance.

•

16.07.2024 Sabah: I am without a provider; my children are in my care. We are repeatedly evicted from rentals, and my children face bullying. Their psychological well-being is affected. I tried calling 1404 but received no response from the Commission.

•

03.08.2024 Amira: I called the number 1404 but there was no response. Please help us. We are always scared and alone with the girls. We have no father or mother; they all died in the war.

•

20.01.2025 Hajar: Every day I call 1404 Every day and there is no reply and every day I am exposed to no bullying and harassment

•

19.04.2025 Tahany: Yes, I called the number 1504 - it was changed from 1404 - and they said they would file my complaint and call me back, but until now there has been no call from them. And I'm scared - I called them two weeks

•

21.04.2025 (Anonymous mother of children and violent psychotic husband): I called the hotline 1504 many times - at first it rings, and sometimes it's busy. And I called the international immigration number 0910028462, which is closed.

•

23.04.2025 (Anonymous): I called 1504, they responded but said, "These are family problems, not within our jurisdiction."

•

04.10.2024 Hamida: I went to the Commission at the same time, but they did not do anything for me, and now that person is on the street with us and I have witnesses to that. I called the people of 1404, but they did not do anything for me, not to mention the illness we suffer from.

•

15.11.2024 Hadi: Yes, I called 1404 but they didn't find any solution to my problem.

•

12.09.2024 Fatima: Yes, I called 1404

many times, but there was no response. Every time I submitted a complaint, nothing happened.

18.03.2025 Heba: I contacted the protection hotline, but there was no response—no calls, no WhatsApp messages. I also sent a WhatsApp message to someone named Cesvi, where I explained all my problems. They told me that my request had been recorded, and if I met the criteria, they would contact me.

03.09.2024 (Anonymous) (screenshots of no answer of 1404 and +218918361136): There is no response from the complaint and contact numbers. (...). Sent 4 screenshots of missing calls of 1404. There is no response from the complaint and contact numbers.

06.07.2024 Ahmed: (...) it's been a year and seven months and nothing has been done for me. I received a survey in August and until today I haven't received any call. (...) I desperately need help. When I go to Al-Nasr Street, they don't let us stay; they tell us to send messages. We send messages, but there's no response. I file complaints, but there's no response. Many times, I've called, and sometimes they open the line but don't speak. I don't know what to do. When I go to Al-Sarraj, they don't allow anyone to stand by their door. I want them to check my file because I haven't received any help or anything for a whole year.

04.05.2025 Ahmed: We've been calling the international aid number, but they're not answering.

12.09.2024 Ali: These numbers I have, but even if you call them, they don't answer.

04.12.2024 Fathi: Yes, I contacted the number 1404 more than 60 times, but no one answered.

22.05.2024 Aisha: On the 11th, I was released in the Tajoura area. I filed a report on the date of his disappearance and informed the UNHCR. Upon his return, I also informed the UNHCR, but until now, no one has contacted me. My son is now in a poor psychological state, has left his job, and his health is deteriorating. I went to the UNHCR but was unable to get in. I went to all the partner organizations but to no avail. Please help my son.

17.10.2024 Hamza: The number is 218917127644. I tried to call her on 12 call operators, but sometimes she gives me the line is busy, and sometimes she disconnects directly without reaching the call. :The number is 1404. I made 12 calls, but she always gives me a response with the words 'the line is busy.' The number is 218910011491. I called it 16 times, but it was not reached. I do not know what the problem is with my calls. And all the clear numbers in the screenshot are clear. The number of attempts to call, the Arabic language, and the response are the same as previous responses to calls while the line is busy, or the call is disconnected without receiving the call with the word "Call has ended.

10.12.2024 Omar: Yes, I called 1404 only to be told that the complaint was regis-

tered.

02.09.2024 Salem (screenshots of 1404): This is the number I've been dialing. Before that, I've been calling and calling and calling, but the line has been busy since day. I've been trying for 24 hours, but the line is busy. I'm on the phone with the second person who responded at the same time. I must try to get through to the (UNHCR) commission. This is the number I've been dialling. I've been calling and calling and calling, but the line's been busy since the 24th. 24 hours I've been trying to get through, the line is busy. I have a phone number with my rightful owner. If I don't answer at the same time, I have to try to contact the UNHCR.

17.01.2025 Hamza: I have not received anything else from UNHCR, partner organisations or any other party, not even a call since 11/2/2024 until today. All the numbers below did not respond. 0910027716, 0922767166 CESVI, 0917127644 UNHCR Protection Line, 1404 Complaint Hotline.

09.2.2024 Adam: Even when I call the UNHCR about security protection issues, they say, 'The UNHCR doesn't protect you'.

06.05.2024 Ibrahim: Call not answered(...) Protection Department Commission continues. (...) calls remain answered.

09.04.2025 Aish: The UNHCR is not helping us either, it is not finding a solution

for us, it is not informing us about what our condition will be. They do not respond to complaints and calls from people, they do not provide solutions. I hope you can make my voice heard by the UNHCR so that they can find a solution for us.

12.05.2025 Abdulaziz: Yes, I called the previous hotline number 1404 and the new hotline number 1504, but they did not provide me with any assistance and did not forward my complaint to the organisation. All they said was that they would forward my complaint.

12.08.2024 Ahmed: I called all the numbers for the commission. And the aid organizations. And I did not receive any response or guidance. I sent text messages and WhatsApp messages and there was no reply.

10.12.2024 Omar: Yes, I called 1404 only to be told that the complaint was registered

04.12.2024 Fathi: Yes, I contacted the number 1404 more than 60 times, but no one answered.

15.11.2024 Yasser (screenshot of 1404 no answer): When we arrived in Tripoli and registered at the UNHCR, I was given a document and numbers, we call the numbers of the UNHCR and partner organisations and no one responds to me.

10.03.2025 Mohamed (screenshots): I

call them with this app because contacting them directly takes a lot of time, so I call them with this app. I made about 185 calls with this app, but this app doesn't show missed calls, but I wanted to tell you just out of interest.

•

01.01.2025 Mustafa: I called all the numbers but they don't answer

•

10.01.2025 Abdulrahman: I contacted the (UNHCR) organization through the contact numbers, but there was no response.

•

01.04.2024 Abdul: We've sent messages to the (UNHCR) Commission, but they haven't responded. I am extremely anxious and distressed. If you can communicate with the Commission and explain my problem, I would be grateful. My situation is devastating, and I'm sending messages to the Commission, but they don't reply.

•

16.05.2024 Ibrahim: Call not answered. (...) Protection Department (...) (UNHCR) Commission continues (...) call not answered.

•

21.05.2024 Mohamed: Honestly, I'm exhausted from trying to reach out to the UNHCR numbers, and it has become very difficult for me.

•

25.06.2024 Faisal: I request immediate protection today I am targeted by militias in the city of Zliten (...) We need to talk the UNHCR office but it does not answer me.

•
16.10.2024 Abu Al-Qasim: I swear, I've been sending messages to this number for three months, but there has been no response. I've been contacting different numbers but all I hear is 'Your request has been registered,' and nothing more. I don't know (...).

•

02.10.2024 Heba: Hello, I called all these numbers for the UNHCR protection line. The UNHCR protection line responded with a questionnaire that I filled out, sent the data and sent it to Migration Assistance and did not receive a response.

•

31.12.2024 Safaa: I tried calling International Rescue, but I received a response saying the number is not in use. Please save my son, I beg you. (...) 15.01.2025: 1404, I called a lot, and they told me that we raised the complaint to the commissioner. I called the medical emergency service and requested an ambulance, but none came (...). Except for 1404, they still say they've raised the complaint, but there's no result.

•

26.12.2024 (Anonymous): I have repeatedly reported my complaint to organizations, especially to the Cesvii organization, through WhatsApp, seeking their protection. I explained my situation to them but received no response. When I called the protection hotline, they did not answer either.

•

19.01.2025 Youssef: I tried contacting the protection people, but they did not respond. (...) 04.02.2025: The numbers I called are: 094868836 (first number,

I tried it) 0917127644 (second number) 1404 (third number) 0800800800 (fourth number) 0910021631 (fifth number, I tried it several times, more than 7000 calls, 10000 messages). These are the numbers I tried and no one responded. I have been trying every day from Sunday to Thursday, but no response. (...) 09.02.2025: I have tried contacting the UNHCR, but they didn't respond. I have made several calls and sent messages, but there has been no answer (...). I have tried every number you gave me, including the protection number, the assistance number, the complaint number, and I have tried to contact doctors. I have made countless attempts, but there has been no response. I have a lot of messages and calls, but I haven't received an answer. Please, we need evacuation, and we would be grateful for any African country that can help us leave this situation. Thank you for your support, and we hope you won't stop helping us. (...) 26.02.2025: Protection UNHCR, and this number calls more than 100 times a day and does not answer.

•

24.02.2025 Bakr (father of small children, liberated from Abu Salim): I have filed a complaint with UNHCR many times, but there has been no response.

•

02.03.2025 Mohamed: I tried calling the UNHCR today, but they did not answer.

•

17.03.2025 Mazahar: Yes, I have contacted the protection hotlines, but unfortunately, I couldn't reach them. I also contacted 1404.

•

27.03.2025 Awatif: I filed a complaint in

1404 and they told me we filed a complaint, but there was no result.

•

16.02.2025 Mohamed: I called the number 1404 many times and they didn't reply. The number I was calling them with was stolen with my old phone and I was trying to call them with my new number every day but without any success and I called this number as well 0917127644.

•

06.04.2025 (Anonymous): I called all these numbers and they didn't answer, even 1404 also didn't answer.

•

19.04.2025 Suhair: I called him in the number and I did not find any hope we suffered many, I and we did not know what to do all partner organizations closed

•

20.04.2025 Ikram: I called 1404 and there was no answer. I am now threatened,

•

21.04.2025 Hassan: I called this number 1504 more than once, but the UNHCR did not solve my problem. (...) 23.04.2025 : UNHCR interview failed: Only asked 'When did you leave Sudan?'—no chance to explain fully. Phone lines for help are always closed.

•

23.04.2025 Sawsan: I tried to contact them (UNHCR, IOM), but I did not receive any response.

•

24.11.2024 (Anonymous): registered with the UNHCR for asylum. I have been trying to contact them, but there is no response. I ask for humanitarian assistance.

12.11.2024 Shahrzad: People in 1404 said that the Commission does not provide personal protection, people.

15.11.2024 Amina: On September 22, 2024, my husband was attacked by unknown individuals who beat him on the head, eyes, and hands. We contacted the hotline (1404) and reached out to organizations like CESVI. They told us it was a security issue beyond their capacity to resolve. We know we are registered with the UNHCR, but we have no other refuge.

22.09.2024 Adam: When you call the hotline 14040, the commissioner says there is no help available. I mean 1404.

23.09.2024 Ibrahim (screenshots of Tawasul): The above number belongs to number 1404. This number above belongs to number 1404. The number above belongs to number 1404.

02.10.2024 Nazik: I have been calling the protection people at the commissioner's office from morning to evening, but there is no response. 091727644 and I have been calling the humanitarian organization more than a few times, but there is no response 0910011491. I didn't leave a number to call, but there was no response. We have been registered since two months, but the commissioner did

not call us to protect us (...).

02.10.2024 Ibrahim: This number above is 1404 (...). I call every day on all communication channels of the Commission and its partners. There is no final response.

24.09.2024 Abu Al-Qasim: We call and do not send text messages (UNHCR hotline)

23.09.2024 (Anonymous): UNHCR says there is no help available, how can we avoid the problems of this one, he says contact the Norwegian Refugee Council, he says we don't have a solution, he says, 'Don't worry about it, it's the solution.

12.09.2024 Abbas (screenshot of missed 1404 calls): I took my children and my last 20 dinars and took a taxi to the International Migration Centre.

24.09.2024: My calls and messages did not receive any positive response from either the Commission or the partner organizations.

24.09.2024 Bashair: We contacted the 1404 Communication Center with the aim of transferring us to the commission to tell our story.. We always find them responding by answering the phone. But they tell us that we have filed your complaint with the commission and they will contact you.

18.09.2024 Saleh (screenshots of no

answer): 1404 No one is answering it. No appointments.

12.09.2024 (Anonymous): And people 1404 did not respond to me and I filed many complaints, but they did not raise a single one.

09.09.2024 Wessal: Yes, I called the complaints number 1404 and found no solutions, nor did any organization call me back. I called all the numbers, but no one answered. I also contacted the Norwegian Council, and they told me that they could not provide a solution or assistance.

12.09.2024 Ahmed: We try calling the numbers but there's never any response. We send messages on WhatsApp, and they just say, 'Your request has been registered'.

04.03.2025 (Anonymous): Yes, I called 1404, and the response was, We will forward your complaint to the IRC.

4.
How the Lack of Health Assistance Affects Refugees' Lives

05.03.2024 Awadiah: I submitted my passport to them on the 6th day of month 1, along with the required fees. Then I experienced bleeding after childbirth. I called the number 1404, and they told me to contact your number, saying that you would help me because my situation is very difficult. I plead for your

assistance for myself and my parents.

17.01.2025 Adam: Even medical treatment isn't readily available. When you call to book an appointment to see a doctor, they don't even respond. (...) 27.02.2025: I contacted the numbers with the Johurtin Center and the Red Crescent, and I also tried calling the emergency number and the Norwegian Council at 09200011670. They gave me a number that was either out of range or turned off. I also contacted 1404, and they told me to try again, but no one answered. They told me they would try to resolve it, but they said they would contact the commission to see if they would follow up with me. I also called the emergency line, and they told me to contact 1404. Everyone is trying to pass me on to another organization. When I contact 1404, they tell me to contact others, and no one is responding. I've been trying for two weeks, and no one is answering me. This is my third week, and they say they have no solution for me, whether it takes one or two years. They told me to try contacting them again, and they cut my line without any solution. Now, I no longer intend to call any organizations. They all promise support without delivering anything. I tried calling them, and when I go to centers or clinics, they tell me there's no appointment. All doctors arrive after 10 AM, and when I go, they give me a referral to a hospital. They try to avoid me because of my race, and the whole situation is becoming frustrating.....

19.1.2024 Safiya: I used to work in UNAMID and the Red Crescent. I call on the UNHCR to protect me, my daughter and my husband from fear, insecurity and racism and to help us.

•

02.01.2025 Taysir: I contacted all the numbers at Cesvi, kept sending messages, and even went to the partner organizations. I left nothing untried and God, I'm tired, I'm 6 months pregnant. Even the Norwegian, Intersos, Hope in God and International Migration have not left a single one.

•

26.01.2025 Hamida (screenshots of 'no answer'): Yes, I contacted the doctor from the commission and also went there, but they say, 'We can't provide you with insulin for diabetes.' They told me to go to diabetes specialists. I've lost hope in the doctor from the commission because they said, 'We can't offer you protection or safety.' But as a woman without any support, where can we go? I've been raising complaints for ten months, but no one has helped me.

•

22.02.2025 Mudathir: I am in urgent need of aid and protection, but they never respond to me. I am extremely distressed and don't know who else can help me. My mother is sick and has special needs, my father is sick, and my sister is sick. There is no organization I haven't contacted, but they never answer me at all.

•

26.02.2025 Osman: I received assistance from the International Organization for Migration, which included a bag and a cleaning pack, but the market management and the cleaning crew thought it was trash and took it away in the trash truck, I swear to God. (...) 02.03.2025: I swear to God I have tried a lot, but there is no response at all, not even from all the organizations like the Norwegian Council

and International Migration. Unfortunately, I have to say this. So, I am asking for your help with anything. You are the only ones who listen to me and understand what is inside me. Please, I request your help. Ramadan is approaching, and my financial situation is difficult. I am sick, I have no shelter, and I am a Muslim fasting, but I don't even have enough money for food.

•

10.03.2025 Zainab: So far I have not received any medical services, neither I nor my husband, meaning that I have been walking for two years, using herbs as an analgesic and painkiller, while my husband is a little better than me, walking one day serving, one day tired, one day serving, and not really giving him his right, we are currently suffering a very tragic suffering in all respects, we suffer every day from fear, panic, insecurity and a difficult health condition We do not have any ability to treat me from these diseases, knowing that I walked to all UNHCR hospitals, yet they wrote me a set of analyses and treatments to be taken from the road, and I as a refugee, my circumstances did not allow me to afford these medical costs due to the poor services of our UNHCR, we have the right as refugees to demand our rights, but we write and call and there is no response from them.

•

17.05.2025 Hassan (screenshots of 'no answer'): It's the place that handles doctor's appointments, security, and complaints.

•

27.05.2024 Ibrahim: I feel unsafe, facing daily challenges from brothers, and I have chronic illnesses. I haven't received

any medication, nor have we received any assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Libya. I sleep on the streets, not knowing anything, and Libyan organizations do not care about refugees in Libya, and I don't feel safe.

•

16.05.2025 Faiza: I came here to seek help from the UNHCR. I got an appointment, but they never listened to my case – they only registered me. Now I am staying in someone else's house. I became pregnant again and started working in homes to earn a living. I began bleeding and contacted UNHCR and emergency services, but no one cared about me. I had no money for the hospital. I endured the situation until I eventually had a miscarriage. I have received nothing from UNHCR – no assistance, no calls, no one cares about my situation. There is no safety here. I want security. I want to build my future. I have no shelter now. What should I do?

•

29.08.2024 Abbas: I also tried to reach the UNHCR doctor with no response.

•

24.05.2024 Abdulmajid: On April 19, I was kidnapped by the same people who threatened me. They beat and tortured me, but thankfully, I managed to escape on April 25. Now, I have injuries to my heart, right side of my face, and legs, and I am ill and unable to walk. I tried to report to partner organizations, but there has been no response. I have suffered from all kinds of torture, and now I cannot walk.

•

29.07.2025 Fatima: Unfortunately, I was very ill and my young daughter sent the messages above. I apologise for any inconvenience. Regarding international immigration, they gave me appointments for psychological sessions for my daughter, but I cannot go to the appointments because my financial situation is poor. I do not have the money to go to Tripoli. I am now in the city of Zliten and my health is poor. Thank God for everything.

•

17.03.2025 Al-Shafi: December: double support – two blankets, toothpaste, and bath soap. Two bottles of cooking oil, expired tomato paste, expired shampoo, Vaseline, and the rest of the food supplies are not suitable for use.

•

25.03.2025 Awatif: By God, my son suffers from frequent convulsions until it affects his health, and medical aid people hit and did not respond, and I need a neurologist or my son will be lost from me, please help and extend a helping hand. I have been looking for a doctor since 8/12/2024. Neurologist, please.

•

25.03.2025 Khalil: I have called the UNHCR numbers in Libya, but there is no response, and I have been calling the 1404 number 24 hours a day to complain to the UNHCR, so far I have no shelter, no home, I am 8 months pregnant and my husband travelled from Tripoli to Sebha.

•

25.03.2025 Mousa: I tried to call all these numbers, but there is no response other than Chizvi's organisation, they answered me once and did not offer me anything.

27.03.2025 F. (Child with Muscle dys-trophy): These are the numbers I contacted and they responded to me. (...)
01.04.2025 (screenshot of 'no answer'): I have contacted them several times but there is no response.

•

08.04.2025 Omar: I submitted a request to UNHCR and until now they have not responded to the medicine.

•

13.04.2025 Fatima (mother of an invalid child): Today, the International Organization for Migration in Bani Walid contacted me, but unfortunately, they can't do anything for my son because they don't have the available treatments, nor can they provide physical therapy either. (...)
16.04.2025 : Yes, I have been in contact with the International Organization for Migration in Tripoli. I even went to them in person, but unfortunately, they didn't offer me anything. (...) 21.04.2025: Even today, I was at the UNHCR to renew my son's file. I spoke about my son's health and my daughters' suffering and the security issue, but unfortunately, the employee did not give me a chance to speak even though I need a solution and help,

•

13.05.2024 Wijdan: I am Sudanese, pregnant, and I have two children. I also have diabetes and I need surgery. My husband is sick too. I've been contacting people at the commission, but I haven't been given an appointment yet..

22.04.2025 Mustafa: After the medical appointment was made and I paid the appointment fee, they told me that foreigners are not allowed. I called the immigra-

tion office, but no one answered.

•

24.12.2025 Magdy: I have been imprisoned several times, subjected to torture and beatings. (...) I contacted the UNHCR and visited the doctor several times, but to no avail.

•

28.12.2024 Alhadi: Yes, I contacted the hotline with the organization, but there was no answer. The doctor referred me to the government hospital and decided to operate on me, but I didn't have the means to do so, so I got a cast, but for more than five months we have been suffering and I can't walk. They tortured me in prison and beat me under my legs and told me not to have children again.

•

29.12.2024(Anonymous): I urge you to advocate for my case, defend my rights, and put pressure on Cesvi or the protection number included in this message, or on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Libya. Please put pressure on them. I am suffering in my life and health.

•

15.04.2024 Abukar: I have been sick for three years suffering from urinary tract problems, and the commission is not responding to my communications. That's why I'm asking for your help.

•

15.04.2024 Mahmoud: I have faced displacement, harassment, and physical assault, resulting in gunshot wounds and eye injuries. I arrived in Libya seeking refuge. I registered with the commission on

August 31, 2023, but I have not received any medical treatment, assistance, or housing. We are a family of five.

•

21.04.2024 Qasim: I went to the UN headquarters four times, complained, and they said, 'We have no solution, take care of it yourself.'

•

22.04.2024 Hamad. :I contacted the commission and registered. I knocked on many job doors, but success and luck did not come my way. I suffered from illness for a long time, in addition to the arrival of my children from Sudan suffering from difficult health conditions. I added them to my file with the commission, but according to them, they have nothing to offer.

•

06.05.2024 Arefa: I met with the commission and found no assistance from them. Due to my severe difficult circumstances, I couldn't find proper housing, food, or drink because I am in the eighth month of pregnancy and suffer from anemia. Commission personnel did not respond to calls or messages, and I received no help or protection from them.

•

08.07.2024 Islam: My daughter is suffering from kidney stones. She underwent three surgeries but the pain persists, and we haven't found a solution from UNHCR. Due to the war in Sudan, I lost my right ear and I need a hearing aid. My husband was killed in Sudan by the army, and his two brothers were also killed. My circumstances are very difficult; I face bullying on the road and two people entered our yard, stole our phone and money, and

beat my husband. (...) By God, I call but they don't answer. Especially the complaints department, 1404.

•

26.07.2024 Aisha: Three months ago, UNHCR contacted me at 0910021614 and said they would contact me soon regarding my son Mohammed to meet the doctor, and so far there has been no contact and my son is in a difficult health and psychological situation.

•

08.08.2024 Hwaida: I was kidnapped in May by a group of young men while doing my work in street cleaning and garbage collection. I resisted them, which led to them beating me all over my body until I lost consciousness and remained in a coma for an entire day. When I woke up, I found myself in the hospital, having been rescued by an unknown woman. I contacted the UNHCR emergency department and also filed complaints, visiting the Dahmani Corner and speaking with the doctor. They all said they would put forward the issue of protection, but I received no assistance.

•

26.08.2024 Qasima: My son is suffering from cerebral palsy. When I registered with the (UNHCR) Commission, I didn't get any help. Yes I called a lot on this number but there is no help and my number is working around the clock

•

27.08.2024 Bahja : I called the UN protection number to ask for protection but the employee told me to wait. I tried to look for a service to provide my children with the requirements of life, but I did not have.

•

14.11.2024 Hadi: My husband has been registered since 2022 and was imprisoned for two weeks. (...) I was working in the yard and the owner of the yard was trying to assault me until I fell down the stairs. I was 3 months pregnant and had bleeding and went to the hospital and was given a mixing injection and the fetus was aborted. I called the commission and there was no response until a day later. Then they said go to the doctor. We did not receive any care from the organization organization or partner organizations How long will our rights be lost?

•

15.11.2024 Zainab (single mother of 3): Regrettably, despite my repeated attempts to contact the UNHCR, I have not received any assistance. When I reached out to the International Organization for Migration regarding my son's suffering, they informed me that it was not within their scope.

•

15.11.2024 Sona: My son, who is 4 months old, is sick. His bladder came out and I contacted the UNHCR people and they did the first operation and the operation came back the same as before and we went back to the UNHCR doctor and he referred us to Cesvi. We met a consultant who referred us to a private hospital for a specialist (...). The specialist told her that the operation was complicated and difficult to perform in Libya. She said that they could not do it (...) and that the UNHCR people will contact us, but we were not contacted. And the baby is in a difficult condition (...) and then a hernia appeared in the front of the penis, and God Almighty, his condition is difficult, and I am afraid of losing my son. Every time I call the complaints people, they tell

me to raise your words, and to this day the UNHCR people have not returned to me again. (...)

•

17.10.2024 Maha: Two weeks ago, my daughter, who is 11 months old, had surgery. They discharged me from the hospital without the discharge papers because they wanted money. We don't have money. We don't have documents. I swear I don't even have money for food. They evicted me from the house. What should we do now? I have the medical tests, but the hospital wants more, and I have nothing.

•

03.11.2024 Musa: I tried to contact the organization Belady for Human Rights, but the number I found was based in Tunisia, and I couldn't reach them. The number doesn't connect, and there's no WhatsApp associated with it. Up until now, I have been trying to contact all the organizations in Libya, but unfortunately, I have not received any response despite the difficult health condition I am suffering from.

•

05.11.202 Muhammad: I've gone to them several times and tried calling the commission, but they won't let me in, saying they'll only admit me if I'm near death. I'm struggling severely, and I've endured a lot. I've been through two surgeries, and I'm also experiencing abuse from certain people and extremely poor treatment from neighbors. My financial situation is extremely dire.

•

08.11.2024 Amna (screenshots with various call to different organizations): We

have tried all the adapters but they are not responding. I'm afraid he (my son) is going to die in my hands.

•

05.11.2024 Wayam : My condition kept getting worse, and even the way people treated me, laughing in my face, affected me. When we met with the commission, they told me I needed to follow up with a psychiatrist. They gave me the contact information of organizations with psychiatrists. But since then, my mother has been calling, and I have been calling to get an appointment with a doctor, but no one answers us. Every time, my condition gets worse than the day before.

•

15.10.2024 Jamila: I'm sick, I can't serve because of my illness, and I can't get a health certificate. When I called the protection officer, she told me that the UNHCR can't help you, so how can the UNHCR help you if you are sick or not?

•

14.10.2024 Abdulhamid: You may know that I am disabled, I have partial paralysis and we suffer very much from movement and I cannot do business in order to provide myself with food (...) and with all that suffering, the Commission did not stand with me to help me financially and did not seek to evacuate me abroad at least we are treated, not to mention what is called dreams and delusions (...). There were promises to look into my case regarding the cost of the surgery, but unfortunately, I did not receive anything from the Commission.

•

17.10.2024 (Anonymous): I called the emergency service again and told them that my son's condition had worsened.

They asked me where I lived, and I told them. They told me to take him to Al-Rabea, but it was far. Then they asked for the nearest hospital, and I told them it was four streets away. They said, 'Okay, we will check the system and get back to you.' They made me wait for an hour, and no one called until I called again. I told them I was the mother of the child, but they hung up on me. When I tried calling again, they didn't answer, and my son was crying in pain (...) 18.10.2024: This is my son, who suffers from brain and nerve atrophy. My son has been sick – this video shows his condition. I called the emergency number and explained that my son had a high fever. They told me to take him to Tripoli Hospital near Furnaj, so I went there. I found four female doctors who examined him and gave me some medicine, but it didn't help him at all. I called the emergency services again, and they told me to go to Tripoli Hospital in Qataa Alif. I went there, and they treated me well and told me they would open a medical file for my son, but only if I had his passport. My son's passport is with my husband, who is being held at Mitiga Military Hospital. They are asking for 1,450 dinars to release the passport, and it has been held for about five months now.

•

06.05.2024 Nizar: I have already tried to contact UNHCR and partner organizations, but they did not respond to me.

•

04.10.202 Samia: Mental support number gave me an appointment in the September. I went to the office and they told me to transfer your file to the protection department, but I still haven't received any response. I've called them more than 20 times in a day, but they never responded to me.

•

08.09.2024 Ramah: I had previously contacted 1404 regarding my son's illness. One time they told me, 'We will raise your complaint with the UNHCR,' and another time they said, 'We are fully responsible for your son.' After that, they didn't follow up regarding my son, but I did reach out to several organizations, like the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and there was a hospital on Fornita Island and Dr. Mahmoud. However, I never received any clear response. Everyone just tells me, 'Ma'am, we don't have the treatment available,' or, 'We don't have the medication.' The UNHCR doesn't provide services like physiotherapy, speech therapy, or external hospital tests. When I was called in for an interview with the UNHCR, I spoke with the doctor, and he told me to try and bring a medical report. I submitted the report, but it only included two tests out of the required ones. The doctor from Tripoli University Hospital told me that if I don't complete the tests and begin treatment, there's no point in continuing the case or bringing my son again. So, I stopped following up with her since September. But my son's condition keeps getting worse every time. I'm trying to reach out to the UNHCR so they can find me a solution as soon as possible.

•

16.09.2024 Hanaa: I contacted UNHCR to provide some assistance, but there is no response to the calls, but there is no response to the calls. My husband is very sick, and when I called the emergency line, they answered and said that they have been trying to reach them since 10 am, but they haven't arrived and my husband is very tired.

•

17.09.2024 Howaida: I have reported this

to all organizations, but no one has contacted me. I have all the necessary documentation and evidence due to the legal and humanitarian nature of this case.

•

19.09.2024 Noura: Cesvi Organization, Intersos Organization, and Tawasul organization and the Danish organization all of them either busy or no one picks up the phone.

•

19.09.2024 (Anonymous, a single woman): I complained to the protection number and Cesvi and they did not even reply to me. I complained to 1404 and they told me we will deliver your complaint and I am still waiting and I asked the number of international migration (IOM) to take an appointment for protection and waiting for their reply; I wrote to Intersos and they said they do not provide protection or financial aid only legal advice and psychological support. I asked them for an appointment with a psychiatrist. They gave me a number and told me to make an appointment. I called the number and it did not answer. I am confused, (...) Every day I am subjected to sexual harassment in transportation, in the market, on the road, and in my workplace (domestic service).

•

09.09.2024 Wesal: Around last December, people from the International Migration Organization contacted me. I and my children suffered greatly, and I was even ill. They transferred me to Salam Hospital, where the doctor diagnosed me with early-stage blockage. He was supposed to contact the UNHCR because the scan is expensive, but until now, nothing has happened.

•

09.09.2024 Marwa: I consulted a doctor from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and he was referred to Dr. Salem Al-Atrash for psychological support. He then referred him to the urology hospital, where tests showed an infection in his urinary tract. We visited Dr. Salem Al-Atrash again at IOM, and he referred Ahmed to Al-Dahmani Hospital on June 27, 2024. From there, he was referred to Cesvi Organization to see a psychological support doctor via their system. They told us they would contact us, but we haven't received any communication from Cesvi.

•

08.09.2024 (Anonymous): I requested appointments from IOM for a doctor but got no response. I also contacted Cesvi but still haven't received any reply. The IRC number that UNHCR gave us for a doctor's appointment—there's been no response either. We're overwhelmed and don't know what else to do. We've completely run out of patience.

•

11.09.2024 (Anonymous)(suffering of breast cancer): Peace be upon you. I tried calling the complaints number and got a response, but they told me that the UNHCR does not support cancer treatment, and I am not safe either. I have no one to support us, and my children are young.

•

02.09.2024 Masrah: I'm afraid of losing my mother just like I lost my father and my brothers. I called the ambulance, but it didn't come. Why do some staff members not respond to us refugees? I've been calling all the UNHCR numbers, but no one is answering. How long will it take

for them to respond, until my mother loses her life? I sent messages to the IRC (International Rescue Committee), but they did not reply. I called the complaints number 1404, but no one responded to me. I sent a message to the NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council), but they also did not reply. The emergency number I called is the same one where the staff member told me the ambulance was far away and would arrive in an hour. I waited an hour, but it didn't come. I tried calling again, but the line opened, and no one answered. Why do they treat us this way? Do they want a person to die before they come?

•

04.05.2025 Safaa: (...) The water broke and the baby's placenta dried up and the umbilical cord was wrapped around the baby. I was exhausted and went into labour. They told me to go back home because they were tired and had nothing to give me. My husband borrowed some money and we went to a private clinic. We agreed on 2,500 dinars, but they increased the amount. We told them we didn't have it, and they threatened us and told us that they will not give us the baby. My husband went back and borrowed more money, and they gave us the baby. (...) We are now in dire straits. I swear to God, my husband goes out to work in the fields and they don't pay him. I am pregnant and my husband has been gone for 10 days. I don't know where he is. He said he would come back 10 days ago, but he hasn't come back. He told me he was afraid because he was being threatened by a group of armed men.

•

06.05.2025 Abker: Honestly, I was in urgent need of help. However, the short-

coming was from the UNHCR. But thank God, I underwent the surgery, though not through the UNHCR. My friends gathered some money for me, and I underwent the surgery. Now, thank God, I am fine.

06.05.2025 Yasmin: I am sick, I have a toothache, and my daughter is wearing a mask. My little son hasn't slept all night, and I don't have money to go to a clinic. The medical services from the UNHCR are not functioning as a humanitarian organization. I am hoping you can help me if possible. (...) The number ends with 91; I called today, but there was no answer. They replied to me a little while ago and gave me the International Migration number. They told me to send a message.

09.05.2025 Mohammed: I notified them of (my broken legs) six months ago, but I have not received a reply or assistance, sorry.

12.05.2025 Anwar: My son was involved in a traffic accident and was not given first aid by the person who hit him. I took him to the government hospital, but they refused to admit him, saying that they do not accept foreigners. Now, in addition to his external injuries, my son is complaining of pain in his kidneys, heart and pelvic area as a result of the severe blow. My financial situation is difficult and I cannot take him to a private hospital.

15.05.2025 Abdelwahid: I have been suffering from a slipped disc since July 30, 2023. I have a medical report from Tripoli Central Hospital, which I submitted to UNHCR, but I have not received any

treatment yet.

03.02.2025 Shaimaa: I was stabbed on the street and my phone was stolen. Yes, I called 1404 and they told me they couldn't do anything but would raise my complaint. I went to check because at the time of the attack, they asked for an X-ray picture, and the doctor told me they didn't have an orthopedic doctor.

02.01.2025 Taysir: I contacted all the numbers at Cesvi, kept sending messages, and even went to the partner organizations. I left nothing untried, even the Norwegian (NRC) and Intersos, and God, I'm tired. I am 6 months pregnant. (...)

4.
**What Is the Role
of UNHCR in Libya?**

20.04.2025 Amina: Every time we file a complaint to the UNHCR, they tell us that it is a security matter, and they don't intervene. What should we do?

24.11.2024 Anwar: I have been imprisoned multiple times by militias and subjected to theft and looting. I am requesting assistance and protection from UNHCR.

22.05.2024 (Anonymous student): The employee who registered me (...) explained me that my issues are related to the protection and gave me their numbers, and I started calling them hundreds of times since the 11th of last year until today, and I did not stop and did not find a response from them.

29.05.2025 Hassan: I was registered in UNHCR on 9-9-2024. On 2nd of September 2024, I was attacked at home by some militias, they beat me and took all I had, it was in Abu Salim area. On 16th of October 2024, I was kidnapped and got locked in a private prison and started torturing me until I had to pay ransom and they released me. On 18th of November 2024, I was kidnapped again, and they were taking me somewhere, on our way I managed to kick the car door, jumped and ran away. My life is all about suffering over suffering, I have passed through difficult situations. And I tried to contact UNHCR many times so they can do something for me, but they never reply to my calls and text messages.

21.04.2025 Mohammed: We would like to move forward our file in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Libya. My wife was beaten and it caused an abortion.

26.04.2025: Request for Assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Libya, Protection Section.

19.01.2025 Hajar: I was arrested on the road inside Libya. It was a case of sexual assault. I went to the UNHCR, they offered me financial assistance, but they didn't do anything for me. It's been a year, and there's no response from them. My daughter and I are on the street.

05.09.2024 (3 young orphans of war): Today my brothers and I went to the UNHCR and told them about our situation and

that our landlord evicted us, and we have no one to turn to, but they told us that they only rent once a year. We are scared on the street, and at night we can't sleep (...).

29.12.2024 Mohammed: Life in the prison was extremely tough. We were tortured brutally to force us to pay ransom. Sometimes, water was cut off for an entire day, or even two days. The conditions were harsh that two young men died in this prison –one from hunger and thirst, and the other from severe torture. I stayed in this prison for three months, with no one knowing where I was. Those were some of the most difficult days of my life in Libya. I had no organization or authority to whom I could report this suffering. On the day I registered with UNHCR, the staff didn't give me the chance to tell them everything that happened to me in Libya. They said they would call me, but I have not received any response from the organization.

20.04.2025 Zakaria: I am registration with UNHCR in 2018 in Abu Salim prison but no interview (was conceded) to me. Now I am tired I am afraid for my two baby girls and my wife.

06.05 2025 Salah: I arrived in Libya and registered with UNHCR in May 2023, but I have not received any assistance or protection since then. In Libya, I have been detained multiple times in both immigration detention centers and militia prisons: Al-Mayah Prison – 2023. Osama Prison – 2024. Al-Assa Prison – 2023. Al-Sikka Prison – 2024. Ain Zara Prison – 2024. Detention at the Directorate Support Unit in Janzour – 2024. Ain Zara Prison (again)

– 2025. My mental health is severely deteriorating, and due to the stress, I sometimes even forget my own name. I have been threatened again, and I have contacted UNHCR requesting protection, but I have not received any response.

25.04.2025 Hassan (whose wife died recently during the birth of their 8th child): It was a normal interview (AT UNHCR), just a recording. He asked me where I was from – Sudan – and a few other questions, then they told me to call these numbers and explain my problem to the protection department (...), but the numbers were always busy or out of service. He didn't give me a chance to explain my whole situation. At the same time, my wife was pregnant, but unfortunately, she died during childbirth. Unfortunately, she did not receive medical care. The important thing is that I did not receive any support from the organization other than the document (of asylum seeker). After the new baby was born, I still did not have the opportunity to talk about my problems. I just added my daughter, and we went back to living in very difficult circumstances. I did not receive any protection for myself or my family.

09.05.2025 Zeinab: I can't find a job and even travelling in the streets of Libya is difficult, we don't even find freedom of movement because we don't have passports, I tried to call these numbers to no avail, I called the complaints number many times without success, I used to live in a good rental house but the landlord harassed me and I didn't respond to him so he kicked me out of his house.

18.03.2025 Sarah: my ex-husband's

brother (...) would bring along a personal friend named (...) to help him assault me. He severely beat me. I reported the incident to the police and filed a complaint with the UNHCR, but no action was taken.

23.09.2024 (Anonymous): UNHCR says there is no help available (...) he said contact the Norwegian Refugee Council, 'we don't have a solution', he says, 'Don't worry about it, this is the solution'.

06.05.2025 Najat: I lost my brother and my son, who was kidnapped in front of my eyes, and I am unable to do anything. Now I am afraid of losing my second son. I tried to file a report, but they said I had to be registered with the Commission. I have been registered for over a year, but they have not listened to my problem. Even after renewing my file, the same employee refused to listen to me and told me to complain to 1404. I am now helpless. (...)

22.12.2024 Musa: As for the organizations that I tried to ask for support, there was no response, and even at the beginning of my registration, we wanted to tell them my story, and no employee gave me any opportunity to tell all my concerns and filed many complaints, but I did not receive any response.

16.10.2024 (Anonymous): We have always tried to make our voices heard by UNHCR without seriousness. Many staff members treat refugees harshly without mercy. We have not received any support from UNHCR. Medical, psychological, financial and educational support for children We are forgotten.

29.12.2024 Al-Jaffer: Unfortunately, none of the local numbers respond, and when we are received, they do not believe us and the numbers...

24.11.2024 Muadh: I am a political refugee, and my life is in danger at any moment (...). I fled Sudan, traveling to Libya through smuggling routes and arriving in Kufra on October 9, 2023. When I reached Kufra, I was very ill. (...) Now, I am homeless in Tripoli, and my health is in a very poor state. On top of everything, the situation in Libya is unstable and unsafe, with numerous militias present in the country. I fear encountering Sudanese individuals linked to Omar al-Bashir's government or militias, as they may identify me while I'm on the street and abduct me. I am terrified they might smuggle me back to Sudan. My Appeal: My life is in danger. I urge the UNHCR, or anyone with a humanitarian or legal mandate, to save my life. I am ill and living under constant threat both in my homeland and here in Libya. Thank you.

31.12.2024 Mohamad: By the way, Incidentally, I understood from the automated response on 1404 that files are not reviewed before six months from the date of registration. This does not align with our circumstances as victims of a war that has lasted for more than 20 months. God help us.

19.04.2024 Abdul: what worries me the most is that Libya has become more systemic in its insecurity and racism, and the Commission (UNHCR) hasn't guaranteed my safety.

17.07.2025 Fatima (whose son is very ill): So yes, I will try to take him across the sea. If we die, then so be it. But staying here is a slow death. If he's arrested, help him. He won't survive prison. I might survive. If he reaches safety, I can stay here. But now, there is no help. The only way to help him is to get him out of here. I lost my job. I can't survive anymore. I've run out of options. Patience isn't enough anymore – staying in Libya is like killing my brother with my own hands. Even the way UNHCR staff treat people is terrible. They don't listen. They don't care. They spread negativity. One staff member treated me like I was his enemy. I don't know why. This is why I've lost all hope. The only thing I can do now is try to cross the sea. Please, help him if you can. If we're arrested, please get him out of prison. He can't survive that. I might. I'm sorry this message is long, and I might not reply quickly because of my phone. It's old, and I may not even find someone to lend me theirs. But this is the decision I've come to after long thought. Either we die in the sea, or I take this weight off my chest. Because I can't continue like this – there is no support, no job, not even a little hope. The only possible rescue is the sea.

18.11.2024 Ihsan: I have been in prison for 9 months and no organization helped us or contacted us. I am 7 months pregnant now. There is no security in Libya (...). The Commission should be responsible for me. The most important thing is that I want protection.

26.06.2024 (a Mother): I have contacted the United Nations and partner organizations, but I have not received any results

regarding my complaint about the lack of security. I ask for protection. Nobody listens to me. I went to the UNHCR. They just wrote that I am From Sudan. Nobody listen I need an interview.

•

20.07.2025 N.: I was harassed for the first time on the road from Sabha to Tripoli in June, and the second time in the city of Al-Zawiya. I worked as a cleaner in a house and was harassed by the woman I was cleaning for. She threatened me and said she would throw my child out of the window on 15 September 2024.(... Then) we were attacked in our home. Armed men looted us, beat us and left us with my husband. My husband was kidnapped for ten days. (...) and on 2 June 2025. I was sexually assaulted in the yard....

•

20.07.2025 (To the question: What did the UN High Commissioner for Refugees tell you? The answer was) 'They didn't tell me anything '.

•

26.11.2024 Aaliyah: I met with UNHCR on April 21, 2024. The staff member told me they would contact me within a week, but now, seven months later, I have received no calls, support, or assistance. I have tried to reach UNHCR through every means, but there is no response (...). I made an appointment at the International Immigration (IOM) applied for protection and assistance and I have not been contacted.

•

16.04.2025 Mustafa: I have been registered for a long time, but the UNHCR has not contacted me or provided any assistance. (...) 18.04.2025: I have been

a refugee for 5 years in Libya. I Have two baby girls(...) We are on the road. We do not have anything from UNHCR. We are Registered (..) But UNHCR did not help me.

•

20.04.2025 Abkar: The subject is that I have been registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a long time, but I have not received any assistance.

•

05.03.2025 Tehani: We ask you to share my story with the organizations assisting refugees in Tripoli. I have contacted 1404 regarding complaints and assistance, and they told me to communicate with partner organizations. However, the partner organizations do not respond to calls or messages. I visited some of their offices, including: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 8/1/2025. They said they would call me for assistance, but I'm still waiting. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC). I visited their office, but I'm still waiting. CESVI (Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues): They do not respond to calls or messages. When I visited their office, they refused to let me in without an appointment. I have tried so many times, but nothing has changed. Thank you for clarifying that you cannot provide financial support. I kindly ask you to share my story with the relevant organizations. I also ask for your help in appealing to organizations that offer training and rehabilitation.

•

16.04.2025 Sawsan: I am registered with UNHCR in Libya and have made several attempts to reach them to request protection, but I have not received any re-

sponse. Request for Protection Interview and Case Follow-up – Libya. Dear UNHCR Representative, I hope this message finds you well. My name is Sawsan and I am currently residing in Tripoli, Libya. I am a registered asylum seeker with UNHCR (...) Despite several attempts to reach UNHCR Libya and its partners through the available contact numbers and email addresses, I have not received any response regarding my request for a protection interview and further assistance. Given the urgency and vulnerability of my current situation, I kindly request your support in helping to move my case forward or directing my request to the appropriate team. I would be very grateful for any guidance or assistance you can provide. Thank you in advance for your attention and support. Sincerely, (signature)

•

11.07.2025 Mohamed M.: Subject: Request for assistance from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Peace be upon you. With reference to the above subject, I am requesting assistance. I have been registered with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Libya since 6 August 2023. We have been through very difficult circumstances. I was kidnapped, tortured and abused in the Zuwara area on 27 April 2024. I filed a complaint with the Office requesting that my psychological condition be examined and asking for support and protection. The Commission did not respond. I tried to leave Libya on 25 April 2025, crossing the Mediterranean towards a safe and desirable area, but we were stopped. Our people drowned. Some died, others survived.

•

13.07.2025 Yusra: We are in Libya, in the city of Sirte, and the situation is unsafe. The police are conducting raids and have

arrested my brother several times.... After a long search, we found out that he was at the police station. They took his phone and did not allow him to answer or inform his family of his whereabouts. He is being treated like an animal, with no human rights, and is being held in a dark room with no food or bathroom, only a bucket for his needs. We, his parents, are sick and crying for our son who disappeared suddenly without committing any crime. We are heartbroken for our son who should be receiving an education at his age, but instead he went to work to support his family, who are suffering from all the harsh conditions in Libya. We called 1504 and filed a complaint, but we did not receive any response from the Commission. This is a recurring issue and we do not know what to do. We appeal to you to find a solution for my vulnerable family, who have suffered greatly in Sudan and continue to suffer in Libya without any solution in sight. We ask you to urgently consider our request so that we do not lose any more members of our family, who are already scattered and suffering from displacement in Libya in search of a livelihood. We are simply seeking safety, stability, and a future for my brothers and myself. Please consider our case.

•

10.12.2024 Shadia: I did not receive any assistance from any party. I am only registered with the commission. No services were provided to me.

•

09.12.2024 Abkar: I wonder what the meaning of UNHCR in Libya is.

•

21.04.2025 (Anonymous): I was kept in prison for 5 months for nothing just because of I am refugee after that I send

my message to all organizations blogging to the UNHCR and UNHCR itself but unfortunately no answer.

.

09.12.2024 Ibrahim: there is the difficulty in obtaining appointments for registration, additions, or medical consultations. There is a general failure and neglect of files, as well as clear shortcomings from the UNHCR and its partner organizations in Libya in responding to our needs.

.

08.04.2025 Muazah: I came 11 months ago. I was living at the UNHCR door in Seraj, (...) the UNHCR people said they will call me, but they have not called me until now..

.

20.11.2024 (adolescents): A woman found us in front of the UNHCR office, and we went with her to her home. She said we could share the rent with her...

.

13.11.2024 A.: Even when calling the hotline 1404, there's no courtesy when you try to explain the issues. I told them to come and see what's happening in Karimia, but they disconnect the call. The UNHCR claims to assist refugees but provides no medical or legal protection. (...) Someone from my country was accused and imprisoned for six months under torture, given injections and pills that caused hallucinations. After release, they came to his home to apologize, saying it was a case of mistaken identity. In Libya, it's the same fate. What did we do to deserve this just because we were born in Africa? Some of us regret being born.

.

10.03.2025 Zainab: We registered at the Commission on 14/1/2024 and until now I have not received any assistance from any of the partner agencies or any communication from the Commission (...) We went to the Seraj Commission (UNHCR) on November 21, 2024, and had an interview with an officer in room 26. After adding the newborn, when we told him about our suffering, he refused to listen to us.

.

20.04.2025 (Anonymous): I have been registered since 14/01/2024, and until now we have not received any contact or support from the UNHCR. As I have previously explained, I am suffering greatly. Even when I went to register my newborn, I have faced problems.

.

10.12.2024 (Anonymous): I contacted the complaints line 1404. Every time I call, they tell me they transferred your case. Something comes back to the commission to contact you. Or we don't understand how it is. What services are you talking about and where? The line immediately disconnects.

.

04.03.2025 Zaher: I want to know why I have not received any call from UNHCR until now, nor have I received a call for an interview, nor have I received a call for assistance, nor have I received a call regarding my human rights, nor have I received a call for protection, always complaining, but there is no response. We want to know what happened, where are the rights of refugees and where are the rights of Sudanese and thank you

MANIFESTO

by Refugees in Libya, Refugees in Tunisia & Refugees in Niger

UNHCR IS UNFAIR

MANIFESTO OF THE UNFAIR-CAMPAIGN

by REFUGEES IN LIBYA, REFUGEES IN TUNISIA and REFUGEES IN NIGER with solidarity from the ALLIANCE WITH REFUGEES IN LIBYA

September 2025



UNFAIR
The UN Refusal Agency

Refugees and migrants who find themselves in Libya, Tunisia and Niger are experiencing all kind of abuses and deprivations including crimes against humanity. In this dire situation, many of us put our hope and trust into an agency that promises safety, human rights, and assistance to those seeking protection: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since 2021 we, refugees, have been protesting against UNHCR in Tripoli, Tunis and Agadez, calling the agency to recognize our humanity, to listen to our voices and to provide us real protection. But instead of understanding we found denial and paternalistic contempt. Since 2021, UNHCR's negligence and disrespect towards refugees has all but increased. We denounce lack of basic support, a system of appointments and hotlines that is utterly broken and humiliating treatment and threats from UNHCR staff towards refugees. We also denounce the UNHCR so-called "route-based approach" as nothing more than an attempt to whitewash border externalisation policies with the only aim to keep refugees away from Europe on behalf of the EU. The list of cases of neglect and disrespect is long, and we are determined to expose them all for the world to see that the UNHCR is UNFAIR.

We are not silent victims of our situation. We raise our voices against injustices. We demand the rights that are ours. We are human rights defenders. We are Refugees in Libya, Refugees in Tunisia and Refugees in Niger, three self-organized refugee movements demanding our basic human rights and struggling against injustices experienced in the treatment by UNHCR. And we do not stand alone. We are launching this campaign with the Alliance with Refugees in Libya, European supporters of the movement. We are part of a whole network of anti-racist movements and activists in Europe and North Africa. In the upcoming months, we will bring our accusations and demands against UNHCR to everyone who needs to hear them. We will publish hundreds of testimonies on social media and through the UNHCR Book of Shame. We will make sure our voices are heard and our demands are met- online and in the streets. And we will not stop until our demands are met.

Here are our DEMANDS to UNHCR: RECOGNITION - DENUNCIATION OF ABUSES
- IMPROVED SERVICES - RESPECT AND TRANSPARENCY

1. We demand that Refugees in Libya and other self-organized refugee collectives are recognized as interlocutors to the UNHCR. We want both symbolic recognition and meaningful participation of refugee-led movements in UNHCR actions. This means in particular:

- Regular meetings of UNHCR officials with refugee representatives as equals, refraining from paternalistic attitudes.
- Consultation of refugee representatives for key changes and new programmes
- Involvement of refugee representatives in UNHCR communication strategy and advocacy: Don't advocate for our rights without our voices

2. We demand that UNHCR end its complicit silence and to publicly denounce abuses against refugees. This means in particular:

- Condemning collective expulsions to the deserts of Libya and Tunisia when these are documented and reported
- Calling out the Tunisian government to allow for UNHCR refugee registration and to stop harassing refugees
- Denouncing Libyan, Nigerien and Tunisian abuses against refugees and asylum seekers and call for their immediate evacuation to safe third countries
- Condemning the threats, arbitrary arrests, refugee status withdrawal and physical attacks against refugee human rights defenders, particularly in Niger
- Oppose and denounce any Geneva Convention violation from the host states, and do not cooperate with said violations.
- Advocating publicly for more resettlement spots with safe third countries
- Denounce the European Union's support to criminal forces in Tunisia and Libya
- Supporting and encouraging the creation of safe and legal ways to seek protection

3. We demand that services for refugees on the ground in Libya, Tunisia and

Niger are improved. We demand a reliable and sufficient provision of material aid (food, medicines, shelter, etc.), but also services like education and health-care. This means in particular:

- Opening new UNHCR offices outside of Tunis, Tripoli and Niamey, to ensure that refugees can register, renew their documents and submit complaints without having to travel to the capital. Establishing an office in Agadez is particularly urgent.
- Provide rescue services in the desert border areas to save refugees deported from Tunisia and Algeria to Niger
- Strongly advocate in front of the Tunisian, Nigerien and Libyan governments to make them recognize and respect UNHCR-delivered documents to ensure freedom of movement within each state.
- Providing enough material or financial assistance to meet at least the minimum standards for a dignified life
- Ensuring that food assistance is given either in cash or with food packages to avoid abuse by local merchants
- Open educational opportunities for refugees in Libya, Tunisia and Niger

4. Finally, we demand a more respectful and transparent treatment of refugees in UNHCR offices. This means in particular:

- Stop the violence against refugees in UNHCR and their partners' offices.
- Refrain from withholding ration cards as a tool to punish refugee protests
- Refrain from threatening refugees by UNHCR staff in an attempt to silence criticism or to use degrading and paternalising language against them.
- Hiring more international and properly qualified staff rather than local staff, ensuring that local staff are not involved in the evaluation of refugee files Addressing corruption and negligence among UNHCR staff, including refugee files being "lost" from the database.
- Abolish appointment-only access at UNHCR offices, which does not respond adequately to situations of distress
- Providing transparent timelines to refugees and asylum seekers with realistic expectations about waiting times for documents and evacuations.

- Improving responsiveness, stopping administrative silence and responding to emergency phone lines.
- Establish an independent complaints office accessible to refugees that has the power to change things

We call UNHCR to listen to refugees, to fulfill its mandate and to implement our demands. We also call all UNHCR donors to take note of the UNHCR's negligence and disrespectful practices and to urge them to change course.. Finally, we call to allied African and European human rights activists and NGOs to join and amplify our campaign.

Twitter:

@RefugeesinLibya

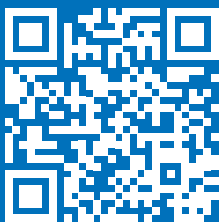
@RefugeesNiger

@RefugeesTunisia

Contact:

info@refugeesinlibya.org





donate here



**Book
of
Shame**

“Where there’s the will,
mountains cease to exist,
monsters hold to account
and victims find justice and compassion”

- David Yambio

Reflecting not only the collective experiences and protests by and for refugees in Libya, but now also in Tunisia, Niger, and beyond, this book is not a book of data. It is not a book of policy reform proposals, nor of polished success stories. This is a Book of Shame. It is not just a condemnation. It is a record. A witness. A call to account.

