



# SLAVERY & FORCED LABOUR IN LIBYA

*CUPE Ontario strongly condemns the enslavement of African migrants in Libya and calls for an immediate end to all forms of slavery in Libya and around the world.*

## FACTS

Migrants and refugees in Libyan detention centres, the majority of them Black Africans, are routinely exposed to torture, extortion, and rape.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reports that Libya “has become a hub for smuggling and trafficking of migrants and refugees from Africa and the Middle East to Europe and elsewhere. Over 3,000 people died attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2017, while the slave traders continued to amass huge wealth, sustaining criminal enterprises and fueling armed conflicts.” [www.ituc-csi.org/libya](http://www.ituc-csi.org/libya)

According to Amnesty International, “Cruel policies by EU states to stop people arriving on European shores, coupled with their woefully insufficient support to help refugees reach safety through regular routes, means that **thousands of men, women and children are trapped in Libya facing horrific abuses with no way out.**” [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

Amnesty International further stresses that “**Torture, detention, exploitation, and rape are daily horrors for many refugees** and migrants in Libya. Instead of stopping these abuses, Europe is helping Libya to trap people in slave-like conditions. By training and providing the Libyan coastguard with ships to transport migrants back to the country, **European leaders are complicit in the tragic fate of migrants and refugees seeking to leave Libya.**” [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) has reported appalling harm, including torture, rape, sexual exploitation, slavery and other forms of forced labour in Libya. However, many refugees in Libya have been expressing frustration and protest that the UNHCR is not doing enough to address the inhumane conditions they are facing.



# WHY NOW?

The Western powers, including USA, Britain, France, Italy, and Canada, violently intervened in Libya under the pretext of supporting the Libyan people. They engaged in another imperialist bombing of a politically vulnerable country in the Global South. Their horrific war against Libya led to a complete breakdown of Libyan civil society. This caused Libya to disintegrate into separate power centres with formal and informal authorities in different parts of the country.

Regardless of our judgement about the Libyan government under Gadhafi, this country has turned into one of the most dangerous places in the world with growing militarism, fundamentalism, tribalism, racism, and poverty. The situation in Libya since the 2011 Western military intervention has become so unbearable that many Libyans have left the country and reactionary militias and bandits have taken over the country with the complicity of the current Libyan government.

**European states' racist, xenophobic and anti-refugee policies** especially against Africans and their collaboration with different factions, and even with traffickers, in Libya **have been one of the main causes of African migrants being trapped in Libya.** In fact, Amnesty International has reported that "European governments are knowingly complicit in the torture and abuse of tens of thousands of refugees and migrants detained by Libyan immigration authorities in appalling conditions in Libya". [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

**CUPE Ontario strongly condemns all forms of slavery around the world and calls for an end to these abhorrent practices particularly by tackling their root causes.**

The 2018 CUPE Ontario Convention adopted a resolution submitted by International Solidarity Committee, which provides direction to CUPE Ontario to work with other labour and human rights organizations in holding all Western powers, including the Canadian government, and institutions like UN, accountable for the current political, economic, and humanitarian crisis in Libya.

## ABOUT CONTEMPORARY SLAVERY

Contemporary forms of slavery include, but are not limited to , chattel slavery, forced labour, debt bondage, serfdom, children working in slavery or slavery-like conditions, domestic servitude, sexual slavery, and servile forms of marriage. [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that **more than 40 million men, women, and children were victims of "modern slavery" in 2017**, being forced to work against their will under threat or who were living in a forced marriage that they had not agreed to. Of these 40.3 million victims, 24.9 million people were in forced labour

**LEARN MORE AT [CUPE.ON.CA/ISC](http://CUPE.ON.CA/ISC)**