

Libya: Foreign nationals face abuse and exploitation Amnesty International 13 November 2012 [Undo](#)

documented foreign nationals in Libya are at risk of exploitation, arbitrary and indefinite detention, as well as beatings, sometimes amounting to torture, Amnesty International said in a new briefing today.

The briefing *"We are foreigners, we have no rights"* is based on fact-finding visits to Libya between May and September 2012, and examines the plight of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Libya.

During Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi's 42-year rule, foreign nationals –particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa–lived with the uncertainty of shifting policies and fear of arbitrary arrest, indefinite detention, torture and other abuses.

Following the 2011 conflict, their situation has worsened amid the general climate of lawlessness, with powerful armed militias continuing to act outside the law, and the failure of the authorities to tackle racism and xenophobia, further fuelled by the widespread belief amongst Libyans that "African mercenaries" had been used by the ousted government to crush the 2011 uprising.

"It is shameful that Gaddafi-era abuses against foreigners, especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa, have not only continued but worsened. The Libyan authorities must acknowledge the extent of the abuse by militias and put in place measures to protect all foreign nationals from violence and abuse, regardless of their origin or immigration status," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International.

"Amnesty International has repeatedly and consistently warned the Libyan authorities of the threat posed by the militias in Libya. We again urge them to rein in these militias, and hold them accountable. The authorities must also take concrete measures to tackle racism and xenophobia head-on, especially considering how heavily Libya relies on migrant labour."

Migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in Libya are at risk of being arrested and detained in the streets, markets, checkpoints or their homes. Some are intercepted while trying to board boats to Europe or crossing the desert or sea.

Some foreign nationals are arrested by the Libyan police, but most are apprehended by armed militiamen. Militia members carrying out such arrests are sometimes violent, confiscating mobile phones, money and other valuables.

Foreign nationals are also vulnerable to financial extortion, exploitation and forced labour both inside and outside detention. Their fate is very dependent on luck and the goodwill of the Libyans they come across. (...)

The detainees told Amnesty International that they had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings. Most frequently, detainees are beaten for prolonged periods with various objects such as metal wires, rubber hoses, sticks and water pipes. Many showed

their scars or bruises corroborating their testimonies. (...)

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