



Sale of migrants as slaves in Libya may be crime against humanity: U.N.



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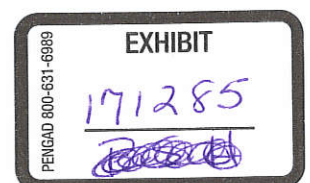
Sale of migrants as slaves in Libya may be crime against humanity: U.N.

Reuters Staff

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NEW YORK (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - The sale of migrants into slavery in Libya may amount to crimes against humanity, the United Nations Security Council said on Thursday, voicing “grave concern” after footage appearing to show Africans being auctioned there sparked global outrage.

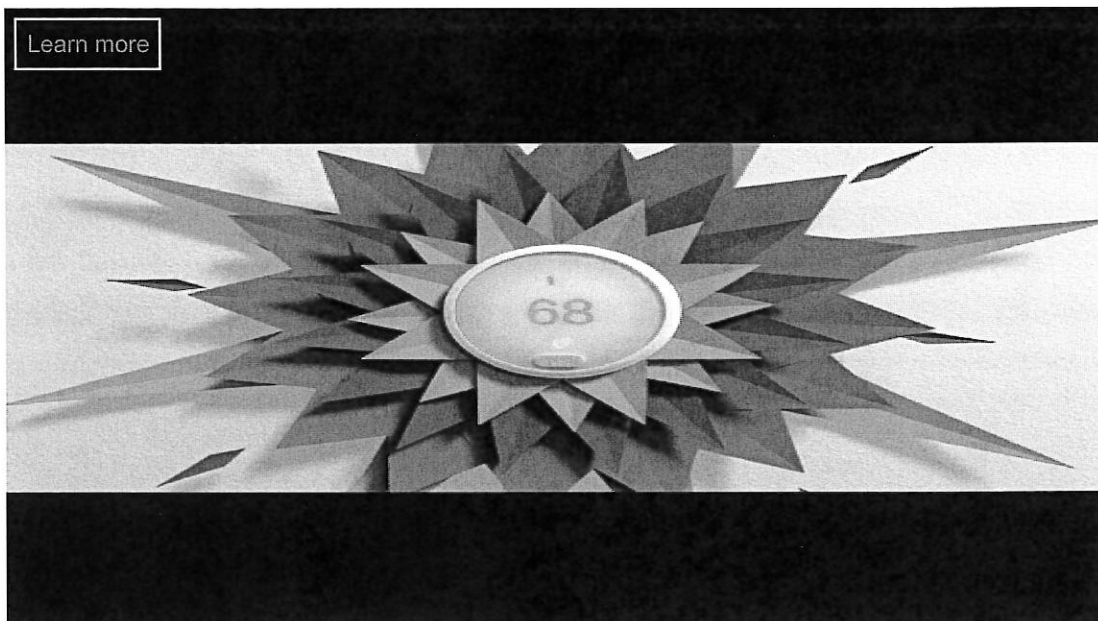


The 15-member council unanimously adopted a formal statement calling on Libyan authorities to investigate the reports of migrants being sold and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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Libya's U.N.-backed government last month said it would take action after a video broadcast by CNN, which appeared to show the auction of African migrants as farmhands for \$400, led to protests across Europe and Africa.

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“The Security Council expresses grave concern about reports of migrants being sold into slavery in Libya,” the statement said. “(It) condemns such actions as heinous abuses of human rights which may also amount to crimes against humanity.”

Young African men bound for Europe are frequently caught in trafficking networks and sold for labor in Libya, where many migrants are detained, tortured, and even killed, according to the U.N. International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The IOM said last week that it was working with partners to try to empty the detention centers, condemned as inhumane by rights groups and estimated to hold as many as 20,000 migrants.

The Security Council also said the Libyan authorities should work with international organizations and U.N. agencies to ensure humanitarian access to detention centers in the country.

Hundreds of thousands of other migrants are believed to be in lawless Libya, and many of them are being held by smugglers under lock-and-key in a country consumed by factional violence since strong man Muammar Gaddafi was ousted six years ago.

“Reports that people escaping violence are being sold into slavery in Libya are horrifying,” U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said in a statement. “All countries must do everything they can to end this barbaric practice.”

The statement was adopted weeks after the Security Council unanimously backed a resolution urging tougher action to crack down on trafficking and modern slavery worldwide.

The resolution called on countries to adopt anti-trafficking laws, ramp up efforts to investigate and dismantle criminal networks, and provide greater support for survivors of slavery.

Writing By Kieran Guilbert, Editing by Katy Migiro. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking, property rights, climate change and resilience. Visit news.trust.org

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