



12.4.2017 - Hundreds of migrants along North African migrant routes are being bought and sold openly in modern day 'slave markets' in Libya, survivors have told the United Nations migration agency, which warned that these reports "can be added to a long list of outrages" in the country. [IOM](#) is sounding the alarm today after its staff in Niger and Libya documented shocking testimonies of trafficking victims from several African nations, including Nigeria, Ghana and the Gambia.

[Testimonials](#) include migrants who report seeing the remains of others abandoned by their drivers or smugglers in the desert; of trucks ransacked by bandits who siphon away their fuel; some testimonials resemble [torture techniques](#) from the Sinai desert, where kidnappers force their victims to call their families back home, often while suffering severe beatings or torture, while on the phone so that their family members can hear their screams. Women have been 'bought' by private individuals – Libyans, according to witnesses – and brought to homes where they are forced to be sex slaves, and migrants who fall into the hands of smugglers face systematic malnutrition, sexual abuse and even murder. Last year [14 migrants died](#) in a single month in a Libyan detention centre, just from disease and malnutrition.

“The situation is dire,” said Mohammed Abdiker, IOM’s Director of Operation and Emergencies, who recently returned from a visit to Tripoli. “The more IOM engages inside Libya, the more we learn that it is a vale of tears for many migrants. Some reports are truly horrifying and the latest reports of ‘slave markets’ for migrants can be added to a long list of outrages. We are hearing about mass graves in the desert.”

“Migrants who go to Libya while trying to get to Europe, have no idea of the torture archipelago that awaits them just over the border,” said Leonard Doyle, chief IOM spokesman in Geneva. “There they become commodities to be bought, sold and discarded when they have no more value.”

To get the message out across Africa about the dangers, testimonies of migrants who have suffered have been recorded and spread across social media and on local FM radio. Tragically the most credible messengers are migrants returning home with IOM help. But despite several information campaigns in many African countries, many still choose to embark on the journey towards Europe, estimating that the risk is worth taking, unaware of the true cost of the journey ahead.

The expression “ [Barca ou Barsakh](#) ” is still alive, and for many young men and women, family expectations, harsh living conditions, [stories of success](#) and peer pressure is a strong driving factor. It is estimated that there are almost 250 million migrants living outside their home countries.

### [Remittances](#)

– the money sent back to relatives – are believed to support an additional 750 million people worldwide.