



Stranded Migrants Evacuated from Libya

IOM Libya arranges for transportation assistance for migrants caught in recent surge of conflict

15 March—As Libya continues to be rocked by instability and violence, [IOM Libya has been facilitating evacuations and returns](#) of vulnerable migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

The first flight out of Djerba, Tunisia on 27 February evacuated 133 Senegalese men stranded at the Karareem Reception Centre in Misrata. A second flight holding 138 individuals reached Senegal in the early morning hours of 6 March, and the approximately 130 Senegalese migrants remaining will receive travel documents shortly and are set to leave within the coming weeks.

Ongoing security challenges and infrastructure limitations have put constraints on IOM's ability to evacuate migrants using public airlines departing from Libya—only five to fifteen seats are available every two weeks—forcing the multi-stage evacuation via Tunisia. In previous evacuations, migrants have endured lengthy bus trips to the Libya/Tunisia border and extended transit times at various airports before getting on a flight to their home country. Using Tunisia as the designated Port of Departure requires organizing land transportation with the support of the Libyan Red Crescent and Libyan migration authorities first, before migrants can receive further assistance upon arrival at the Tunisian border in Ras Jdir.

There are still over four hundred migrants of other nationalities stranded inside Libya, mainly from Burkina Faso, Gambia, Kenya, Sudan, Togo and Yemen, who have turned to IOM for return assistance. A major challenge to these evacuations is most migrants' lack of proper travel documentation. With almost all foreign representation having left Libya, the renewal or issuance of travel documents needs to be organized via consular services in neighbouring countries.

The current political and security situation in Libya continues to be fluid and perilous. Without a cohesive central government, militias and other armed terrorist groups have gained a



Stranded Senegalese migrants arrive at Djerba airport in Tunisia to take charter flight back to Senegal. ©IOM 2015

foothold, crippling the oil sector which brings in the majority of Libya's income and rendering migrants particularly vulnerable, prompting them to seek a variety of means to flee.

Some of the estimated one million Egyptian migrant workers have returned to Egypt on flights chartered by the Egyptian government out of Djerba, Tunisia in order to escape the increasing violence against foreigners in the eastern part of Libya. There has also been a sharp increase in the number of migrants risking a Mediterranean crossing from Libya during the stormy winter months; over 8,000 people arrived in Italy in January and February of 2015, with nearly 1,000 coming from Senegal and Gambia. Over 600 lives have been lost at sea so far this year, far exceeding the 100 deaths during the same period in 2014.

The evacuation operation is funded by the European Union

under the "Stabilizing at risk communities and enhancing migration management to enable smooth transition in Egypt Libya and Tunisia" (START) project and by the Government of Norway. IOM Libya is coordinating the departures with Libya's Ministry of Interior, the Libyan Red Crescent, International Committee of the Red Cross, the Senegalese Embassy in Tunisia and Libya's Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM).

The plight of migrants caught in countries in crises, such as Libya, is increasingly gaining international attention and is the subject of an [inter-governmental initiative](#) led by the Philippines and the United States, and supported by IOM.



For more on the evacuations please contact Joel Millman at jmillman@iom.int or Franz Prutsch at fprutsch@iom.int

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Tel: +20 2 273 651 40/1 • Fax: +20 2 273 651 39 • iommenanews@iom.int • <http://www.iom.int>

