



# Libya

**Contribution to the Call for input  
for the report on trafficking in persons  
and gender, peace and security  
of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking  
in persons, especially women and girls**

**Mist, 2024**

Mist is a French NGO created in 2020 by women who have been victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and who mobilize to participate in an inclusive process allowing them to help other victims, speak for themselves and empower themselves by taking part into action and governance, working on recommendations, fighting for a better access to right and justice for victims and against violence and coercion among peer groups.

On May 2024, Mist received the information from La Strada International (LSI) about the Call for input issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, for the report on trafficking in persons and gender, peace and security. We would like to use this opportunity to highlight the situation of **Nigerian women and girls victims of trafficking in Libya during and after the conflict** and answer to one of the topics chosen by the UN Special Rapporteur;

- **Trafficking in persons, enslavement and sexual slavery and transitional justice processes**

**Justice is strongly connected to memory and recognition.**

Without acknowledgement of the crimes, victims cannot access justice because crimes are denied. Without memory of the crimes, victims cannot access justice because crimes are forgotten. This is why memory is a collective duty. During conflict times and afterwards, memory and acknowledgement are challenged: information are hard to get and victims want to forget, and so do the stakeholders. We need to address this issue and all the interconnected challenges, such as trauma, stigma of sexual crimes, racism or political inequalities, to build access to justice for the numerous Nigerian women and girls who have been victims of atrocities in Libya during the conflict and since then.

**We want to draw your attention to the case study of our podcast “True talk” as a way to collect testimonies and foster debate about memory duties among victims.**

**Our conclusions are, so far:**

1. Even if we all know that numerous Nigerian and girls were victims of trafficking in Libya during the conflict and after, that the majority of them were raped, tortured, sexually enslaved, kidnapped or killed, in brothels or jails ; that many of them died in the Mediterranean Sea as they were forced by their traffickers to reach Italy to be sold, **there is no official sourced data about the number or profile of victims of the crimes against humanity that were committed<sup>1</sup>.**
2. Even if those victims were trafficked by Nigerian networks, it is known (and documented by Mist) that Libyan soldiers, armed groups and militias’ members took part to this as they raped, kidnapped, tortured, enslaved, sold, transported or killed them. all in the name of the fact that they were black sub-Saharan women without any access to justice and were, thus, denied basic human rights. **There is no acknowledgement by Libya about these crimes against humanity.**
3. In 2017, the French President Emmanuel Macron declared that what has happened in Libya was human trafficking and was a crime against humanity. In 2021, he said: “France has a debt to Libya and to the Libyan people which is a decade of disorder”. What about the debt France has towards the

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<sup>1</sup> The last report of the Independent Facts-Finding Mission on Libya (United Nation, Human Rights Council) outlines repeated human rights violations against migrants in Libya, including rape and sexual enslavement, perpetrated in detention centers, but does not provide details on numbers or profiles of victims. (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/libya/index>)

victims of this crime of humanity, sold and exploited during this decade of disorder? **There is no official acknowledgement by France of its responsibility.** On the contrary, Nigerian victims who live in France are struggling to get helped.

4. Majority of the Nigerian victims of trafficking assisted by dedicated programs in France, were trafficked through Libya where they were victims of atrocities and suffered of a deep trauma. Most of them refused to talk about it for years and are dealing with PTSD. **However, the French anti-trafficking National Plan is not including PTSD treatments as a priority.**
5. Duty of memory can be handled by people who are safe enough to address their personal trauma such as the community taboo. Rapes committed in Libya represent a social taboo among the Nigerian community as it can lead to rejection, stigma and wedding obstacle, and this is especially true if children were born out of those rapes. This stigma is trapping victims in silence. **Community work is necessary to conduct educational psychological programs needed to address meaningfully duty of memory and transitional justice.**

Since 2020, Mist members are leading a **podcast program called “True talk”**. In small groups, Mist members organize workshops and produce podcasts out of collective discussions. They freely discuss subjects chosen collectively and record themselves using the radio equipment owned by the association. They are all responsible for the discussions and the content of the podcasts they produce. At the end of the sessions, they decide together which extracts are to be broadcasted.

The second season was dedicated to “Life after Trafficking” and five episodes addressed the topic of “Libya road”. Those testimonies are very important to build a collective memory of the atrocities that occurred.

It is a challenging experience for many social workers who accompany Nigerian victims of trafficking all over Europe to deal with these testimonies; they question themselves about what they should do with these narratives. The level of violence is indeed extremely high and shocking. Building a safe space to collect data is very challenging.

However, memory duties are at stake.

You will find, here attached, the transcript of the five episodes (translation from Nigerian pidgin to English follow each episode). Here is the link to the audio podcasts that have been broadcasted: <https://mist-association.org/en/podcast-uk/> or on our You Tube channel : @associationmist5930

Mission d'intervention et de sensibilisation contre la traite des êtres humains (Mist)

France

[www.mist-association.org](http://www.mist-association.org)