

EU-Libya relations: No blank cheque for Tripoli

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Libya must improve the protection of migrants crossing its territory and recognise the status of refugees before Parliament can give its green light to any future cooperation agreement with Tripoli, the European Parliament warned on Thursday. In addition, EU states should only return migrants to Libya if certain standards are met.

The planned framework agreement with Libya would cover political relations, immigration and energy, and could pave the way for a free trade area in the long run. Negotiations began in November 2008 and the accord would, if concluded, be the first bilateral contractual relationship between the EU and Libya.

In its recommendation to the Council on the ongoing negotiations, MEPs back the idea of stepping up EU-Libya relations and opening an EU delegation office in Tripoli. However, they call for stricter conditions to ensure basic freedoms.

Readmission of illegal immigrants

The Council and Commission must obtain guarantees from Libya before signing a readmission agreement with this country, which has a record of constant human rights violations, says Parliament. It also argues that any readmission agreement with Libya should exclude migrants who declare themselves to be asylum-seekers, refugees or persons in need of protection. MEPs also want "collective expulsions" to be ruled out.

Refugees in a limbo

Libya has become a major transit country for sub-Saharan migrants heading north to Europe, especially to Malta and Italy. Many are asylum-seekers coming from African conflict zones such as Somalia, Eritrea, Darfur and western Africa.

According to MEPs, it is crucial that Tripoli guarantees the protection of these migrants, recognises the status of refugees and grants the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNCHR) a legal presence in the country. The UNCHR office in Tripoli was closed in June 2010.

Finally, Libya should also impose a moratorium on death penalty. The EP campaigned strongly for the death sentences on five Bulgarian nurses in 2007 to be revoked.

Further information:

[Draft recommendation](#)

[Adopted text will be available here](#) (click on 20.1.2011)

[Profile of rapporteur Ana Gomes \(PES, PT\)](#)

[Legislative Observatory file](#)