



Only authoritarians love refugees

Just over a year before his death, Gaddafi was in Italy threatening the EU. In a breathtakingly racist speech, he warned that Europe could turn "black" and have its culture and civilisation overwhelmed by the "barbarian invasions" of migrants from across the Mediterranean. "We don't know what will be the reaction of the white and Christian Europeans faced with this influx of starving and ignorant Africans..." To stop this terrible fate, Gaddafi wanted the EU to pay Libya to keep down the flow of migrants.

The Europeans thought he was being ridiculous, as well they should. Not

because he was being blatantly racist, but because he was asking for USD 5 billion a year.

That was a high price, but the EU certainly seemed to value his services. He had already been cooperating with the EU and various member states — primarily Italy — in various operations to curb migration, and wanted to ratchet it up significantly.

Of course, by the end of 2011 he was dead and his country left in a mess that remains unresolved. Libya remained a transit zone for migrants throughout though, and the EU definitely felt its late friend's absence during the height of the "migrant crisis" in 2015. The Syrian war, plus the existing streams of African migrants, *plus* all the people who were in Libya and trying to get the hell out of there. The lack of a stable authority in the current Libyan Civil War hasn't stopped the EU and its member states trying to stem the flow, though.

That's how we got to a scenario where the EU mounted "rescue" operations that got more and more people drowned at sea on increasingly precarious boats, in partnership with the Libyan coast guard. Due to the new difficulties and dangers of the sea route, more and more of the people smuggled to Libya ended up stranded there. Guess what happens when a country wracked by civil war gets full of stranded migrants with an established smuggling network suddenly running out of business opportunities? The EU ended up creating a slave economy, but at least they stopped black people reaching Europe, which seems to



PHOTO: AFP

be considered a win.

The human rights violations by the Libyan coast guard, and abuses in the detention camps by the authorities on migration and the interior, all happen with the knowledge and partnership of the EU, in particular Italy. Far from slowing down cooperation with the Libyan government, the EU and its member states are consistently sending out the same message.

It matters little how repressive your regime is. The EU's main goal is the stemming of migrant flows, and they are willing to partner with practically anyone.

That's why the EU now has a deal with Turkey, where Turkey takes back all irregular migrants going to Greece from Turkey, and generally acts as the EU's border guard. In exchange? Erdoğan gets a host of perks such as easier Schengen visas for Turkish nationals, EU members cooperating to resettle Syrian refugees in Turkey, greater financial assistance for Turkish refugee programmes... and a promise to accelerate Turkey's accession to the EU. All of this is possible by declaring Turkey a safe third country for refugees. These important concessions legitimise Erdoğan's increasingly repressive, illiberal regime — and may have given him the clout to

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us on /Sandalina



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ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

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