

Treasury Sanctions Six Migrant Smugglers for Threatening Libya's Peace, Security, or Stability

June 11, 2018

Action Taken Concurrently with the United Nations Security Council

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), concurrently with the United Nations, sanctioned six individuals for threatening the peace, security, or stability of Libya through their involvement in the smuggling of migrants. Migrant smuggling has become a lucrative business in Libya and fuels instability by providing funding for rogue militias and criminal networks. As a result of today's action, all of the designated persons' assets in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and reported to OFAC. Additionally, U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with blocked persons, including entities owned by designated persons.

"Treasury is taking action to combat migrant smuggling and abuse by rogue militias and criminal networks in Libya who are exploiting vulnerable populations for their own personal financial gain," said Sigal Mandelker, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. "These brutal smuggling groups have tortured, robbed, and enslaved migrants seeking a better life. The United States is isolating these callous individuals from the U.S. financial system."

OFAC designated the six individuals – Ermias Ghermay, Musab Abu Grein, Abd al-Rahman Milad, Mohamed Koshlaf, Abd al-Razzak Fitwi, and Ahmed Dabbashi – pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13726, which targets actions threatening the peace, security, or stability of Libya.

This action, taken today concurrently with new UN sanctions, underscores the United States' resolve to work with our international partners to target individuals threatening the peace, security, or stability of Libya through their involvement in the smuggling of migrants.

ERMIAS GHERMAY

Ermias Ghermay (Ghermay) has been the head of an international migrant smuggling ring that stretches from East Africa to Europe via Libya for at least ten years. Ghermay reportedly

organized the voyage of the wooden boat carrying migrants that sank off Lampedusa, Italy, on October 3, 2013, resulting in the drowning deaths of 366 people, and in the aftermath Ghermay admitted that he did not give the migrants lifejackets. In addition, Ghermay reportedly locked migrants in warehouses where they were repeatedly tortured and extorted for more money. Ghermay has been living in Libya, and is a wanted person for his involvement in migrant smuggling and other illicit activities both in Libya and abroad.

MUSAB ABU GREIN

Musab Abu Grein (Abu Grein) is the leader of a powerful migrant smuggling organization in Sabratha, Libya, and has been called the “Libyan king of migrant smuggling.” Also known as “The Doctor,” Abu Grein reportedly smuggled 45,000 people to Europe in 2015 alone. Abu Grein has been accused of using boats unsuitable for crossing the sea and that cannot stay afloat more than a few miles off the coast.

MOHAMED KOSHLAF and ABD AL-RAHMAN MILAD

Mohamed Koshlaf (Koshlaf) is the commander of the al-Nasr Brigade and collaborates with Abd al-Rahman Milad (Milad). The al-Nasr Brigade controlled a detention center in Zawiya, Libya used to house migrants, where conditions were reportedly inhumane, with severe overcrowding, shortages of food and other basic necessities, and no access to medical care. On April 1, 2016, at least four African migrants were killed and 20 injured at the detention center after guards opened fire during a mass escape attempt.

Milad is the leader of a local coast guard unit headquartered in Zawiya, Libya. Milad and other coast guard members have been directly involved in the sinking of migrant boats using firearms, some reportedly in an attempt to undermine the smuggling business of Koshlaf's competitors. Milad's unit has reportedly confiscated the boat engines of some smugglers who did not pay Milad, leaving them stranded at sea. The unit has also reportedly transferred migrants recovered at sea to the al-Nasr Brigade's detention center in Zawiya. In addition, a member of Milad's local coast guard unit has been video recorded striking migrants on a small rubber dinghy with a bullwhip.

ABD AL-RAZZAK FITWI

Abd al-Razzak Fitwi (Fitwi) is the leader of one of the largest migrant smuggling operations in Libya and has cultivated, over a multi-year period, extensive political connections to various security forces that control the management of detention centers once administered by the Libyan state. Fitwi has operated a migrant smuggling route connecting Sudan, Libya, and Europe. He has an extensive network of associates who provide logistical and financial services, including money laundering. In addition to collecting money for the transfer of migrants across Libya and the Mediterranean, Fitwi has been accused of extracting payments for the release of migrants from detention centers.

AHMED DABBASHI

Ahmed Dabbashi (Dabbashi) has been the leader of one of two powerful migrant smuggling organizations in Sabratha, Libya. Dabbashi used his organization to rob and enslave migrants before allowing them to leave for Italy. In October 2017, when forces opposed to Dabbashi ousted him from Sabratha after 19 days of fighting, they found malnourished migrants locked inside his operations center, which had been turned into a makeshift jail. The fighting that ousted Dabbashi killed migrants in crossfires, caused thousands more to flee the city, and resulted in the destruction of schools, hospitals, and municipal buildings. Dabbashi has threatened to return to Sabratha by force.

[Identifying information on the individuals designated today.](#)

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