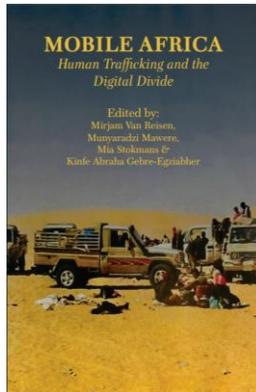


Lawless Libya: Unprotected Refugees Kept Powerless and Silenced

Mirjam Van Reisen, Klara Smits & Morgane Wirtz

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Lawless Libya: Unprotected Refugees Kept Powerless and Silent

Mirjam Van Reisen, Klara Smits & Morgane Wirtz

Introduction

Libya has long been a destination for migrants and refugees, mainly as a place to work, but also a transit country for those seeking to go to Europe (Hamood, 2008).

In 2008, the Italian Government and then President Gaddafi arranged a special deal to push migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea back to Libya. This coincided with a new form of human trafficking for ransom – Sinai trafficking – which emerged in 2008 and came into full swing in 2009 (Van Reisen & Rijken, 2015). In this new form of human trafficking, migrants and refugees, many of whom were Eritrean, were locked up in torture warehouses in the Sinai. The human traffickers extorted

the victims by calling their family and friends and forcing them to listen to the sounds and screams of their loved ones being tortured. After 2012, this new form of human trafficking for ransom migrated west to Libya and the broader region (including Sudan and Chad),

After the legitimisation of some militias as enforcers and coast guards, the landscape of human smuggling and trafficking in Libya has changed drastically. The trafficking networks have gone underground and profit-making has become less about moving people across the Mediterranean Sea and more about human trafficking for ransom and forced labour. Refugees are kept in warehouse, abused and commoditised, sold and extorted for ransom. The almost total control of digital technology by 'gatekeepers' keeps the refugees in a 'black hole', which plays a vital role in the repression and human trafficking of refugees in Libya.

after routes through the Sinai were stopped by a high-tech fence constructed on the border between Israel and the Sinai, as well as anti-terrorism activity in the Sinai dessert (Van Reisen *et al.*, 2017).

But how are such inhumane practices able to take root and flourish in today's modern world? Surprisingly, this practice emerged at a time when digital connectivity, in particular, the use of mobile phones, hit a global level (Van Reisen *et al.*, 2018; Van Reisen & Rijken, 2015; Van Reisen & Mawere, 2017). Although, often assumed to be positive, developments in technology do not benefit everyone equally. While information is distributed to some, it fails to reach others, creating 'black holes' in the socio-digital landscape (Castells, 2000). In Africa, where inequality is pronounced and access to connectivity and digital technology is unequal, the effect of these black holes is distinct. Within these black holes, information exchange is limited due low connectivity and high levels of control. In this communication structure, people in black holes rely on gatekeepers of information, who keep a tight hold over the information exchanges that take place (Van Reisen, Smits, Stokmans, & Mawere, forthcoming, 2019).

Libya can be described as a black hole in the information landscape, especially in places that are under the control of fragmented militia. In 2018, Freedom House (2018) analysed Internet freedom in Libya and noted that the country suffers from both physical obstacles (such as power outages), as well as restrictions on freedom of the press. There is limited access to the Internet and access is controlled. This is especially the case where migrants and refugees are held in captivity, as will emerge later in this chapter.

This chapter looks at the relationship between the gatekeepers and 'the gated' in Libya. These gatekeepers range from human smugglers and traffickers, to police, detention centre guards, and workers from humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The chapter explores how the evolution and spread of information communication technology (ICT) relates to the emergence of human trafficking for ransom and its development into a full-blown criminal trade. The focus of the

research is on Eritrean refugees who are or were held in Libya. It is difficult to give an estimate of the number of refugees in Libya, as presence on the ground is challenging. Of the refugees registered by UNHCR currently in detention in Libya, Eritreans form the largest majority by far – 2,589 individuals as at June 2019, which is 66% of the total number of refugees registered with (UNHCR, 2019b). However, this does not include unregistered refugees. The closest realistic estimate is that over 11,000 Eritrean refugees are held involuntarily in camps and detention centres in Libya at the time of writing (Melicherová, 2019). This large number of generally young Eritrean refugees, many of whom are unaccompanied and separated minors, is of great concern. Eritrean refugees have the right to protection under international law and the European member states regard around 90% of Eritreans as entitled to asylum (Eurostat, 2018). Many Eritrean refugees have been held in captivity in Libya for long periods of time. In addition, since 2009, they have constituted a high percentage of the people who have fallen victim to human trafficking for ransom (Van Reisen & Mawere, 2017), first in the Sinai desert of Egypt, and currently in Libya and other countries, such as Sudan. This chapter zooms in on how their situation has evolved in Libya. The main research question is: *What is the role of the gatekeepers and the situation of Eritrean refugees as a gated community living in a black hole in the digital landscape in Libya?*

Methodology

This study was conducted as a literature review and an explorative ethnographic case study. The case study consisted of interviews with refugees and resource person, focus group discussions and observations. The document and literature review includes reports, news articles and policy documents that have covered the situation of human trafficking in Libya in the past years. The research was conducted over a period of three years, from 2016 to 2019.

The focus on Eritrean refugees was chosen given that this group forms an ‘extreme case’. An extreme case methodology is justified for a particular problem to emerge more clearly (Jahnukainen, 2010). The

group of Eritrean refugees in Libya are distinct because of their reason for moving to Libya, their composition, and their proportional presence among victims of human trafficking. What sets Eritrean refugees apart is that this group is generally accepted for protection under international law – and they are, therefore, clearly refugees, even if they are denied such protection – and the group comprises many young refugees, unaccompanied and separated children, and pregnant girls and young women. It also seems that human trafficking for ransom specifically affects Eritrean refugees.

Interviews were conducted with 35 Eritreans between February and July 2019. The interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. Two Eritreans were interviewed twice, with follow up questions focused on details relevant to the research. The interviewees had all been held in Libya between 2014 and 2019 and spent anywhere from 40 days to 3 years there. Most of the interviews were done in Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ethiopia and Niger. Several interviews were conducted via WhatsApp with three refugees in various camps in Libya. One refugee was later interviewed face-to-face in Niger. Three testimonies presented in public by Eritrean refugees between December 2018 and April 2019 were also included. In addition, in-depth interviews were held with resource persons. Most of the interviews were done individually, although three were conducted with two people at once, one of which was a family with two children (the children were not interviewed). The interviews were extensive and carried out over several months while the respondents resided in different locations. All interviews were conducted in English, Tigrinya (with translation) or Dutch. They were recorded and transcribed and analysed through open coding-labelling. In addition to the interviews, a focus group discussion was held in the Netherlands with six refugees on 27 March 2019. During this meeting, experiences were extensively shared. The conversations were translated from Tigrinya to English.

Given the researchers' work on human trafficking among Eritrean refugees, they were able to build trust among the community, which helped facilitate access. The second and third researchers carried out

site visits and interviews in Niger. In the setting, the first and third researchers had direct or indirect contact with human smugglers and traffickers to help understand the way they saw their work. Research on human trafficking is sensitive and it requires trust among respondents and researchers, especially given the sensitivity of the stories. The researchers took time and prepared for the interviews over two years, by conducting document reviews and engaging with the community. Being well embedded in the community and present in different countries relevant to the research, the researchers were able to enter the community through trusted persons.

In order to ensure the safety of the participants in the research, all names are withheld (but known to the researchers) and all information is provided such that it cannot lead to a particular person. In the citations of WhatsApp messages, the language is adapted, without changing the meaning, to make the messages accessible to the reader. The names of people provided in the interviews in relation to smuggling and human trafficking have not been anonymised because these names have been published on earlier occasions and emerge often, consistently and regularly in the interviews. The authors deem it in the public interest that these names are made available. Although this is the case, this is an ethnographic study and is based on observations, as they have been provided by the participants in the study; the chapter does not contain legal analysis or make any legal accusations.

Theory of gatekeeping

The concept of gatekeepers is used to describe the individuals or processes in control over the filtration, cutting down and selecting of information (Shoemaker, Vos & Reese, 2009). This filtered information then reaches the target audience, the gated (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). The concept is most often used to describe the process of selection and editing in traditional media such as newspapers, but it has also been used more generally to mean people who mediate between different isolated groups. The term gatekeeper has been widely used in other areas of study as well, for example, to describe

those who control access to information and relations (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Network gatekeepers are those who perform the role of information guardian in any form of network (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). In the case of refugees on the move, many different actors, including smugglers and traffickers of people, authorities, refugee organisations, friends and relatives, can act as gatekeepers.

The role of gatekeepers is especially powerful in the context of black holes in the information architecture. Digital innovations can create power imbalances, which are used by those with (full) access to technology and information to exploit those who do not have (full) access (Castells, 2000). Castells argues that technology creates a new social structure from which the elite profit, but others become trapped in 'black holes' of informational capitalism. Van Reisen, Smits, Stokmans and Mawere (Chapter 2, *Network Gatekeepers in Human Trafficking: Profiting from the Misery of Eritreans in the Digital Era*) explain how this new digital social structure bears close resemblance to the information society created during the colonial era. This structure facilitates the flow of data to certain areas, while leaving other places disconnected, as 'black holes' in the information landscape. This is particularly pertinent in Africa, given the vast size of the continent, extreme differences in wealth, and low physical connectivity to the Internet.

In order to describe the role of gatekeepers and the situation of the gated with regard to Eritrean refugees in Libya, the theoretical framework on network gatekeeping proposed by Barzilai-Nahon (2008) is used. In order to assess the relation between gatekeepers and gated, as well as the mechanisms of gatekeeping, Barzilai-Nahon looks at the *salience* of the gated with regard to the gatekeepers. In other words, the theory assesses the degree to which the gated are controlled by the gatekeepers. Barzilai-Nahon states that the gatekeeper-gated relationship relies on four attributes: 1) the autonomy and alternative information sources available to the gated; 2) the ability of the gated to produce and distribute information freely; 3) the relationship between the gated and the gatekeeper, considering that a direct and enduring relationship can produce a platform of

negotiation between the gated and the gatekeeper; and 4) the political power involved in the gated-gatekeeper relation. The gated can possess attributes in any number of those four categories, including none at all – the lower the score, the more information control the gatekeepers can exert over the gated. Following these distinctions, this chapter investigates the human trafficking of Eritreans in Libya from the perspective of the relationship between the gated and the gatekeeper.

Situation in Libya

In 2017, the world was shocked by a CNN video of people being sold as slaves in Libyan markets (Elbagir, Razek, Platt & Jones, 2017). Other videos emerged showing migrants and refugees being held in captivity, tortured and forced to beg for ransom from family members (Elbagir, Razek, Platt & Jones, 2018). After the legitimisation of some militias in Libya as enforcers and coast guards, the landscape of human smuggling and trafficking in Libya has changed drastically. Micallef (2019) argues that it is not so much the work of the Libyan coast guards, but the change on Libyan soil that led to the drastic drop in migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Starting in the Libyan city of Sabratha, militias that were involved in the smuggling and trafficking of people changed their tactic overnight and became the security outfits tasked with stopping smuggling and trafficking. In response, the trafficking networks went underground and profit-making became less about moving people through Libya and pushing them out to sea, and more about forced labour and human trafficking for ransom.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018) remark in their report, *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrants and Refugees in Libya*, that Libyan authorities are either unwilling or unable to tackle the human rights abuses in Libya. In addition, UNSMIL states that it:

[...] continues to receive credible information on the complicity of some State actors, including local officials, members of armed groups formally integrated into State institutions, and representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence, in the smuggling or trafficking of migrants and refugees. (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018, p. 6)

In July 2018, the UN Security Council, in the first resolution of its kind, added six individuals to its Libya sanctions list for their complicity in human trafficking (UN Security Council, 2018). Four of these were Libyan nationals and two were Eritreans, Ermias Ghermay and Fitiwi Abdelrazak (Jaura, 2018), who had been earlier identified by Van Reisen & Mawere (2017). One of the Libyans named in the resolution was the head of a regional arm of the Libyan Coast Guard. The report by UNSMIL remarks that despite overwhelming evidence of abuse, the Libyan authorities seem unwilling to take action against or even acknowledge the violence taking place in trafficking warehouses in Libya.

UNSMIL received consistent testimonies from migrants and refugees about horrific treatment, degrading conditions, and frequent rapes in captivity [...] Despite the well documented patterns of abuse against migrants and refugees by smugglers and traffickers and the frequent recovery, across Libya, of bodies of unidentified Sub-Saharan migrants and refugees bearing gunshot wounds, torture and burn marks, the Libyan authorities have appeared largely unable and unwilling to address or even recognize crimes committed against migrants and refugees. As Libyan law criminalizes irregular migration and lacks any measures to protect victims of trafficking, migrants and refugees are reluctant to report abuse to Libyan authorities. (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018, pp. 26–27)

According to the Head of the Presidential Council in Libya, Fayed al-Sirraj, 800,000 migrants and refugees are residing in Libya, as of January 2019 (Assad, 2019). Only a fraction of these are housed in official detention centres. The vast majority are stuck in human trafficking warehouses or on the streets of Libya. It is estimated by human rights activists that there are several thousand Eritreans stuck in situations of human trafficking in Libya (Human rights defender 11, interview, face-to-face, Italy, 18/19 March 2019). The UNHCR

states that as of July 2019, there are 50,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Libya (UNHCR, 2019a).

Of the refugees and migrants stuck in Libya, the OHCHR and UNSMIL have reported that Somali and Eritrean individuals seem most likely to be held in captivity for prolonged periods of time (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018). UNSMIL commented that this appears to be the case because smugglers and traffickers think that these communities can pay more, due to the likelihood of them being granted refugee status in Europe and the disposition of the diaspora communities. According to estimates by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM's), there are some detention centres where there are almost exclusively Eritreans, such as Abusliem (793 Eritreans out of a total of 838), Al Zintan (700 Eritreans out of a total of 915) and Alkhums (310 Eritreans out of a total of 438) (Human rights defender 11, interview, face-to-face, Italy, 18/19 March 2019).

UN agencies described the scope of the abuses against migrants and refugees in Libya as including death, detention, abuse, sexual violence and rape, exploitation and starvation (UNSMIL & OHCHR, 2018). Degrading treatment includes the lack of hygiene, adequate food and water, and lack of access to health care for (seriously) ill people. Tuberculosis is rampant in the centres and the direct cause of death for many. In addition, many detention centres have been the scene of violence, most prominent among which is the shooting of detainees in Qasr bin Ghashir detention centre in April 2019 (Médicins sans Frontières, n.d.) and the airstrike on Tajoura detention centre in July 2019 (Wintour, 2019). Organisations such as IOM and UNHCR, as well as the African Union (African Union, 2019), have called for the release of all migrants and refugees from detention centres, replacing them instead with open facilities. When refugees and migrants are trapped in detention, the only options for escape are through IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme or evacuation through the Emergency Transit Mechanism by UNHCR to Niger, from where refugees can be resettled to other countries (IOM, 2018). The UNHCR emphasises that more places for

relocation are needed as the capacity in Niger is limited (UNHCR, 2019c).

Gatekeeping in Libya and the situation of refugees as a gated community

In order to look at gatekeeping in Libya, it should first be established who are the gatekeepers in relation to the gated, in this case the Eritrean refugees in Libya. Whereas gatekeeping theory refers to the control of information, every aspect of the lives of Eritrean refugees in Libya is controlled by the gatekeepers. From the interviews, three main categories of gatekeepers emerged: human traffickers and smugglers, who form a single category as the distinction is blurred in the context of Libya; Libyan authorities, such as militias working with the Government of National Accord, guards and chiefs of detention centres; and international organisations and actors such as UNHCR, IOM and international delegations. When looking at the four attributes of the gated in relation to the gatekeepers, these three categories will be included in this order.

Autonomy and alternative information sources

The first attribute in the theory of gatekeeping set out by Barzilai-Nahon (2008) is the autonomy and alternative information sources available to the gated. In Libya, access to information is severely restricted for Eritrean refugees. Many of them enter Libya via the town of Kufra, which lies relatively close to the border with Sudan, from where they are transported to warehouses in places such as Bani Walid. All of the refugees interviewed were held by human traffickers at some point, often multiple times, for weeks to years, while they arrangement for the payment of their journey and/or ransom. Many Eritrean refugees do not carry a phone with them on the journey, but if they do carry a phone, it is both dangerous and difficult to keep possession of it. One Eritrean refugee explained the difficulty of keeping a phone on the journey from Sudan to Libya: “You hide the phone inside your clothes or anything. Because it is so hard to pass the telephone. If the smugglers see the phone, they take it” (Refugee 13, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 July 2019).

The unofficial places of detention run by human traffickers are described as warehouses with as many as 1,000 or more people crowded under one roof. Locations include Bani Walid, Shwerif, Kufra and Sabratha, among others.

We know that the town is Bani Walid, but we don't know the town. We are in the side of the town. We are in a big house. People are crowded together there. [...] Women, children, all nationalities, put together. (Refugee 10, interview, face-to-face in Niger, 9 July 2019)

The refugees shared that they are not viewed as human beings in these places, but only as a marketable source of income. In these warehouses, even speaking to each other is strictly forbidden by the guards: “There were Libyans with guns. If someone speaks loudly, they say, please stop talking. And one was shooting at a guy for talking. Only the Libyan people are speaking with the Eritrean smugglers (Refugee 1, interview, face-to-face, the Netherlands, 17 March 2019).

In such situations, the inflow of information is fully controlled by the guards and the traffickers, who do not provide information to the refugees. One refugee spoke of the fearful experience of being caught in the middle of heavy fighting between militias in Sabratha, which started around September 2017. Despite the fighting, the refugees who were trapped received no information and were often left alone by their guards for days as the fighting worsened: “We are locked. We see only some holes – we see some soldiers shooting. They come to us. The heavy tanks are coming. Our lives are going from bad to worse” (Refugee 10, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 9 July 2019). Another refugee caught in the same fighting confirmed: “You just listen to the arms [gunshots] – they tell you nothing” (Refugee 13, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 July 2019).

Information exchange starts to be possible only when the refugees are captured by the Libyan police or coast guard, or report to UNHCR. After that, they are taken to detention centres. The conditions in the detention centres varies, with the worst conditions

reported in the more isolated centres. The autonomy and access to information varies based on the detention centre where the refugee is located and relies mostly on the ability of the refugees and migrants inside to obtain and hold onto a phone, which they are then able to use for sparse communication. In Gharyan detention centre, for example, one refugee described only one phone being available and hidden carefully: “In Gharyan [...] they remove all the clothes from your body then they collect money and phones, also documents” (Refugee 23, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 18 March 2019).

Refugees state that, in some instances, obtaining a phone is possible by bribing the guards. Other things, such as credit, can also be obtained by paying the guards or other workers: “They are entering the money in the phone” (Refugee 10, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 9 July 2019).

The UNHCR faces severe challenges in guaranteeing the rights of refugees in detention centres in Libya, by their own admission (UNHCR, n.d.). Especially in detention centres that are not easy to reach, this leads to a sense of abandonment by the refugees. Many also state that UNHCR does not give them sufficient information about their situation, refugee status determination or evacuation.

We are dying slowly. Why the world is killing us slowly? Where is UNHCR?
(Refugee 10, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 11 January 2019)

Sometimes in the prison they give us clothes, shoes, blanket, soap from UNHCR. But the policemen take it. (Refugee 24, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019)

Through limited access to phones, refugees in Libya are in touch with other Eritreans and, in some cases, journalists or activists outside the country. Pictures, information and posts on social media are shared in this way, which for many is the only alternative source of information available. Lack of information also means that the Eritrean refugees are often unsure of who to trust in detention centres. The guards, although they are officials, are often abusive.

Therefore, staff of international organisations – especially when also Libyan – may arouse suspicion.

[...] when the Red Cross was coming there, some people were afraid. Maybe they are dressed like Red Cross, but it is not them. We cannot believe them. The Red Cross said: “Me I am working for Red Cross. If you believe me, I will make contact with someone from Eritrea”. They called someone from Eritrea. One that someone knows. He said: “Yes these people are from Red Cross”. (Refugee 32, interview, face-to-face in Niger, 4 April 2019)

This shows that at every stage of their captivity in Libya, Eritrean refugees are unable to obtain information; information comes mostly from their social network via the few and shared mobile phones available (see below). They do not have access to independent information and they do not understand the situation in which they find themselves and what the future may hold. This results in mental health problems such as anxiety, stress and post-traumatic stress, depression and mistrust, including of international organisations, which are there to protect refugees.

It can be concluded that Eritrean refugees have no significant autonomy and alternative information sources in Libya than the three categories of gatekeepers. In the hands of smugglers and traffickers, the refugees have no access to information sources such as phones – the traffickers do not provide them with information on what happens outside of the warehouses. Libyan authorities also severely repress access to information in detention, although through smuggled and hidden phones, very limited contact via social networks is possible for some. International actors and organisations face mistrust from the refugees and refugees state that they feel abandoned and uninformed by international organisations, mainly UNHCR. Hence, Eritrean refugees score low on this attribute.

Information production and distribution

The second attribute in the theory of gatekeeping is the ability of the gated to produce and distribute information freely. The previous section remarked on the difficulty for refugees to obtain and keep a

phone, which is one of the few links to the outside that they possess. The information that the refugees produce is, in many cases, extracted by force. In human trafficking warehouses, refugees are forced to pay ransoms – often multiple times. The amounts usually range from between USD 3,000 to 7,000 for every trafficker the refugee encounters. After paying the amount that was agreed for the journey from Sudan to Libya (‘the desert’) and from Libya to Europe (‘the sea’), many are told the amount they owe is higher than what was agreed. Even after paying, many end up in the hands of other traffickers, either because they are sold or as a result of fighting between different groups of traffickers over control of territory.

The extortion of ransom happens through mobile phones. Family and friends are forced to listen to the cries of their loved ones as they are tortured:

Every morning he comes. He puts the people in a line. Every person he gave telephone. Family, friends, he asked you to call them to ask them to send money. Me I don't have anybody to pay money. I will hold the line, but who will I call? They beat you when you call your family or your friends. They have sticks. Also, in the cold time they throw cold water on us. It's cold. He beats. When you hold the telephone, he beats. When he hears your family voice, he will beat you. (Refugee 25, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019)

In addition to phone calls, pictures and videos are also circulated (Hayden, 2019). Often, refugees reported have access to the same pictures and videos, which are circulated on social media, serving both as extortion mechanisms and to put fear into other (future) victims. This modus operandi of using digital technology is highly effective:

They try to give you a phone and beat you, to cry, to shout, so that your family will sell things in their house, like gold. Gather money, like in church. That's why they can pay. If you can't pay, sometimes they kill you. If they don't kill you, they sell you. (Refugee 15, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 6 July 2019)

Most refugees stated that during their trip, they had sparse or no contact with family. For some families, the extortion calls from Libya were the first sign that their loved one was still alive: “I am not in touch with them, but I call to my family [when I was] in Libya. Even now, I’m not in touch. Only in Libya” (Refugee 17, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 8 July 2019).

This shows that, rather than the classic definition of a gatekeeper, who is someone who dictates what information the gated receive, human traffickers also decide what information the refugees are able to produce and distribute. This creates widespread fear in the Eritrean community, which leads to compliance and payments, which in turn reinforces the lucrative profits generated by the traffickers.

In the official detention centres, there are severe restrictions on the information that refugees are able to send out: “Now in Gharyan only one phone is there. Only after 10:00 pm is it turned on” (Refugee 23, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 18 March 2019). Some refugees maintain contact with the outside through journalists or human rights defenders, but they are highly cautious of the information they send out. If they are caught sending out information that could be damaging, the guards will arbitrarily punish them. In the example below, a refugee wanted to take a picture to communicate about the bad meal they received for lunch:

A: There is open war here between my friend and the Libyan police

MR: Why?

A: Today our lunch is very bad.

MR: What happened?

A: I told you to wait for me to take a picture.

MR: I want to take a picture to send you.

A: But the police took my phone, they made me delete the picture and gave me a warning. (Refugee 23, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 28 April 2019).

Visitors to detention centres, in addition to UNHCR, are Médecins Sans Frontières, Red Cross, international delegations that visit to obtain information, and delegations that visit for the repatriation of

individuals locked up there. However, during these visits, several methods are used by the Libyan authorities in charge to minimise their access to information produced by refugees:

When the UNHCR come, the Libyan policemen will take all Eritreans outside. They will say that these people are free. Understand? There are many Europeans who will come to see you in that place. When they leave, all the people will enter the store [detention holding centre]. When they have finish their work, they start beat us. "Go!" "Enter!" When you are praying, they beat you! When you need to sleep, they beat you! (Refugee 25, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019)

The conditions repeatedly reported in detention centres include lack of food, water, hygiene, and medical treatment; lack of light; punishment; isolated detention in harsh conditions; lack of clothing; and severe beating. One journalist describes her experiences of witnessing a foreign delegation in Libya speaking to a refugee who told them frankly about the situation. Afterwards, his friends contacted her to explain that he was severely beaten.

[...] right now, this person is beaten, so the information was collected by speaking with this fellow's friends in Tajoura, by hidden phone; they are all extremely scared to speak about this, because they are afraid of what could happen to them. They told me "he was beaten in front of us, like a snake". And he could not even stand up after they had beaten him, and then he was brought to this separate cell, where he is now staying with other guys who either have tried to escape from the centre or so on. (Journalist 12, interview, face-to-face, Belgium, 1 April 2019)

A statement by an Eritrean refugee describes a similar situation, which happened after talking to representatives of IOM.

One day, IOM came to visit the centre and us and the two Eritrean people explained what was happening in the centre, but when IOM left, the police took the two persons who spoke and testified about the living conditions, and now we do not know where they are. (M., public presentation, Brussels, 13 December 2018)

Refugees who protest about the conditions also face consequences and may even be shot at. One refugee recounted how he was shot after 20 refugees were taken from his detention centre and sold.

When another 20 were threatened to be sold, the refugees protested and the interviewee was shot:

We fight with the police there. They tried to sell us, many times. They take a lot of people. After that, we ask "why did you take them?" So, they tried to beat us. After that, one police, he shot two people. Me and another... (Refugee 13, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 July 2019)

General punishments for speaking out serve as a warning to others:

People are beaten, in front of the others, in order to tell "ok, do it again and this will be the treatment". They put them in a different room, or they lock them, or they say we won't give you food or we won't give you water, or just harassment. So just to make people afraid of speaking out. (Journalist 12, interview, face-to-face, Belgium, 1 April 2019)

Furthermore, access for civil society organisations and journalists is impossible in human trafficking warehouses and very difficult in detention centres. This makes information on what is going on in the holding places difficult to obtain, as described by a journalist who went to Libya:

So as a foreign media person, if you want to report, you have to register at the foreign ministry department that is under the Sarraj – the recognised government. There, you need to specify why and so on. And then, if they want, they will give you an authorisation and you will be followed by someone from the department. So, this means that all your work is followed by someone who is telling you what to do and what not to do. I mean, you are not really freely able to collect what you want without putting people at risk. And, also, let's not forget that even if you have access and you are able to enter those detention centres, the people who have the courage to speak with you because they are fed up with the situation, they may face consequences. (Journalist 12, interview, face-to-face, Belgium, 1 April 2019)

There was a situation where they were giving food. [...] Then he was saying, "film, film!". I don't want to film, you know. I want to film and I want to ask to the people if they are ok to be filmed. So even this treating people as objects or just saying "we have the right over them and we decide how you film about them or what you

do". That's not the kind of work I like to do. I like to sit with someone and discuss and then film. (Journalist 12, interview, face-to-face in Belgium, 1 April 2019)

The tight control over information means that any attempt to raise awareness about the situation carries severe risks. Even so, refugees in detention centres organise protests where they sit with crossed arms – pictures and videos of such protests are shared on Facebook, in hope of wide circulation.

UNHCR and IOM, as well as other organisations, have limited access to Eritrean refugees and do report on their situation, however, those communications are not under the control of the refugees. Therefore, the organisations – by necessity – play the role of gatekeeper, when it comes to the production and distribution of information. Part of the control of information comes from the dependency of the refugees on UNHCR and other organisations. Even outside of Libya, Eritrean refugees who have been evacuated, but remain under UNHCR protection, express fear that any information they give may compromise their case with UNHCR. Therefore, respondents are difficult to find and those willing to speak often seek repeated assurances from the researchers that they are not part of UNHCR and that their interviews will remain anonymous.

In conclusion, information production and distribution by refugees is affected by all three categories of gatekeepers. The human traffickers and smugglers fully control the use of mobile phones and other digital media, using it to force Eritrean refugees to ask for ransom from family and friends, while their images and sounds of torture are used to increase pressure. Libyan authorities in detention centres also strictly control information outflows, handing out severe punishments for unauthorised phone use or speaking to foreign visitors. Journalists face severe restrictions on free reporting, while authorities attempt to present a positive image of the detention centres. UNHCR and other international actors have limited access to collect and distribute information from refugees, beyond their own mandate. Hence, Eritrean refugees also, score low on this attribute.

Relationship between refugees and the gatekeepers

The essence of this attribute is whether an exchange is able to take place between the gated and the gatekeepers – for this, a relationship that can form a platform of negotiation has to exist. Most Eritrean refugees who were interviewed knew at least a nickname of the person who was overall in charge of their trafficking and/or smuggling. However, the relationship and any chance of negotiation usually did not go any further than that. The traffickers and smugglers are often only known to the Eritreans because of conversations via the phone or because they have overheard the name being mentioned by people who work for the smuggler or trafficker. For example, when payment needs to be made, the people who work for the traffickers often specify the trafficker who the payment is destined for. However, most do not know prior to arriving in Libya that a major trafficker is the one in charge of their travel and payment. Smaller actors, posing as smugglers, do not mention this information when negotiating over the phone or in person in Sudan. Finding people to take you to Libya is not a challenge:

It's difficult to identify who collects us. "Oh, you want to go to Libya." "Yes, I am not accepting to live in Khartoum, thus I want to go to Libya". Ok, so someone comes and collects everyone in one car. (Refugee 1, interview, face-to-face, the Netherlands, 17 March 2019)

In Libya, the passengers are distributed to warehouses belonging to different traffickers: "When you enter Libya, the first city after the border is called Kufra. There all the connection men are waiting for their different passengers. For me, my smuggler was A. He is Eritrean" (Refugee 32, interview, face-to-face in Niger, 4 April 2019).

This process leaves the Eritrean refugees mostly in the dark as to the identity of their traffickers until they are already locked up. Even then, they know few details. In one case, an interviewee stated that the top trafficker had visited the place where he was detained: "It was at night time. Speakers say "Medhanie, Medhanie"... we heard this. He was loudly announced" (Refugee 1, Interview, face-to-face, the Netherlands, 17 March 2019). However, the Eritrean refugees have no chance to

engage in conversation or negotiate with the high-level smugglers and traffickers:

I know only the names, I didn't see them. Only the people who organised us: "Oh, this is from Welid and this is from Medbanie". They separated us – but where is Welid, where is Medbanie, I don't know. No one knows. (Refugee 1, interview, face-to-face, the Netherlands, 17 March 2019)

Negotiations over price usually take place in Khartoum, Sudan, with middlemen before departure. However, the prices that were originally agreed upon before departure to Libya often suddenly increased upon arrival: "In Sudan, the connection man said, me, I pay USD 3,800. But when I entered in Bani Walid, he asked me for USD 5,500" (Refugee 25, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019).

After arriving in Libya, the situation often switches from apparent facilitation of transportation to human trafficking, due to the increase in price or because people are sold after paying the agreed amount. Phones are used to extort ransoms from the Eritreans, but the numbers of the smugglers and traffickers often change: But I will never call him. I am afraid [...]. This is the phone number for Abduselam. But they change phone numbers from hour to hour" (Refugee 23, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 4 April 2019).

A platform of negotiation is not present. If a refugee or his/her family and friends are unable to pay, torture will follow until the money is found. If the money is paid, this is communicated through the trafficking network by sending codes, after which the refugees are released for the next phase of transport, or sold to other traffickers. If the money is not paid, two options remain: either the refugee is killed or sold to another trafficker who repeats the process. Some traffickers have a bad reputation – this is sometime used by other traffickers, who often cooperate, to threaten victims:

They tried to scare us, to take us to Abdella Sini [translator noted the man was notorious for violence]. So we stay for a week or two weeks [with Abdella Sini] and he beat us. He tried to force us to pay. So, after two weeks or one week, they returned

us to our place. And then another time, he did that. But we have no money. (Refugee 17, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 8 July 2019)

The traffickers in charge of the network are often not located in Libya:

The boss is in Dubai. [...] sometimes he calls us. Because if you don't pay money, bad things will happen to you. [...] He says, "If you don't pay the money, I will sell you". If they sell you, the ransom increases. (Refugee 17, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 8 July 2019)

Family and friends of the Eritrean refugees who pay the ransoms and fees are also unable to form any relationship with the smugglers. When they are able to pay, they do not meet with the smugglers. In all cases, the family is told to leave the money in a location, mostly in either Sudan or Eritrea.

Some of the traffickers are paid in Eritrea, so they have a branch there. Many people have paid there. Especially in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Now it happens less. In Eritrea, the family paid – they were told to leave the money in the house, in the shop... They think it is normal. Some people get told where to leave the money. They never see the person who collects the money. They just get told where to leave it and go. (Human rights defender 11, interview, face-to-face, Italy, 18/19 March 2019)

Payments for Eritreans held in Libya are also done in Tel Aviv, in fact Eritreans in Tel Aviv pay for the entire trip from Eritrea to Europe from Tel Aviv, and they also pay there for ransoms when relatives are extorted:

When I was in Tel Aviv, we paid for everyone from there. I paid USD 24,000 for three boys, one was my cousin, the other my nephew and then my brother. As we were living close to the border, they could cross to Ethiopia, then I paid in Tel Aviv for them to go from Hitsats refugee camp to Khartoum (USD 1,700 each), then from Khartoum to Libya, that was the same price and then from Tripoli to Italy, in 2015, that was USD 2,000. I paid for the food and everything else, it was USD 24,000. Then you get a code, you give that to the person for whom you pay. Then

they know you have paid. I paid it in Tel Aviv. I knew them, they are Eritreans, some from my own village. They receive the money, then it is sent to Dubai. They try to hide they are working with 09 Red Sea Corporation [owned by People's Front for Democracy and Justice, the ruling party in Eritrea]. They give you a representative to pay the money to. We all pay it in cash in an open shop, they were receiving some USD 20,000 a day. We call them the 'receiver of money', in Tigrinya it is: 'tekebali hawala'. (Refugee 39, interview, face-to-face, Ethiopia, 24 July 2019)

The payment system is secret and inaccessible:

They open a small shop, but on the other side they do the hawala [traditional system of transferring money]. So, the shop is to hide the hawala. You can also pay in Asmara or Khartoum, or Tel Aviv or any city, and they can receive the money for your travel. You can pay anywhere for the ransom of people held in Sudan or Libya. They have links with the smugglers and traffickers in Sudan and Libya. Hegdef [Tigrinya name for the People's Front for Democracy and Justice] is collecting the people and the money for the trafficking. (Refugee 39, interview, face-to-face, Ethiopia, 24 July 2019)

Eritreans comment on the dehumanisation they face during the process of trafficking in Libya. They describe being treated like commodities that are valued according to their perceived worth in terms of ransom or sale. They state that persons of different origin are treated differently:

Eritreans and Somali have money. They think like that. Ethiopians, they have no money. Sudan... they pay USD 500 for everything, from Sudan to Libya, by plain [desert] and sea. But for Eritrean, it is USD 1,200, 1,600. Even Somalis – more from us. Even more. So, everybody is not the same. (Refugee 13, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 July 2019)

When they see people from Eritrea, what they see is money. That is why they want to have us. (Refugee 24, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019)

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are all placed under detention when arrested or returned from Mediterranean Sea. The NGO

Global Detention Project (2018) considers this detention arbitrary, as it is not part of a clear legal framework or process. All are placed in the category ‘illegal migrants’ for illegally entering and residing in the country. Some guards in the detention centres are available for some negotiation, for example, to obtain a phone, phone credit or other materials, as described earlier in the chapter. However, the interviewees expressed a general mistrust towards the Libyan guards and detention centre chiefs and described frequent beatings.

In the detention centres, the gated are again unable to establish platforms of negotiation for information or their personal status. There is a risk in some detention centres of being sold back to the human traffickers. This is often disguised as an opportunity to cross the Mediterranean Sea. As the Eritrean refugees lack information on who to trust, it becomes a one-sided negotiation:

The Libyan asks us: “If you want to cross the sea, just give us the money, we will send you”. But we say no. Because we are afraid that when we pay the money they [will] try to sell us. (Refugee 18, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 8 July 2019)

UNHCR and other international organisations are not able to establish relationships with the gated beyond what their mandate states. Although they can provide some materials, such as clothes or medical care, the conditions are set by those in charge of the detention centres: “They [the UNHCR] cannot come for us, but we see them from afar. Because we are locked up” (Refugee 17, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 8 July 2019).

In conclusion, Eritrean refugees in Libya have hardly any ability to establish a direct relationship with the gatekeepers controlling the information flows. As for the human traffickers and smugglers, they do not know them directly and have no direct contact with them; payments are arranged far away and to extensions of networks that they have no knowledge of and no relationship with or control over. The gated see their gatekeepers as operating from a long distance away, and they lack access to them, which makes it virtually impossible to negotiate their situation. Agreements made outside of

Libya are often not kept. Eritrean refugees are locked up in detention centres arbitrarily and are in no position to negotiate their freedom or conditions. In some cases, Libyan authorities cooperate with human traffickers and sell the refugees to them. The relationship between international actors and the Eritrean refugees is also fully controlled by the Libyan authorities. Hence, Eritrean refugees score low on the third attribute, as well.

Political power

The fourth attribute of gatekeeping theory, political power, is expressed in three dimensions: control of actions; control of the policy agenda; and control over the shaping of preferences. Especially relevant to the political power of the gated, in this case the Eritrean refugees, is how much agency they are able to exercise over their situation in Libya and to what extent they are able to make choices. To a large extent, this relates strongly to the lack of ability to produce, distribute and receive the information described above. In Libya, the line between authorities and human traffickers is blurred, and with the inability of Eritreans to protest their situation, they feel powerless over their destination, the amount of money they have to pay and who they can turn to. The testimonies of refugees show that Libyan authorities are often directly benefiting from, and, therefore, involved in, the smuggling and trafficking of human beings. The authorities who in other contexts might be the ones protecting them, therefore, become the oppressors:

We were arrested by the policemen. They have communication with the connection man. They took me to Misrata's police station. Another connection man knew this place. His name is Abduselam. He is Eritrean. He has a good communication with the police. He asked the police to catch the people so that he could take them afterwards in exchange for money. (Refugee 24, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 April 2019)

In such situations, the actions of the refugees are fully under the control of the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers – authorities and human traffickers – have free communication and know who they can trust. The relationship between the smugglers and traffickers and the police

enables them to freely travel around in Libya: “Every police is working under that [the system of cooperation with the traffickers]. If we travel from Shwerif to Tarabulus [Tripoli], there are posts – but the posts don't ask anything. Why?” (Refugee 13, interview, face-to-face, Niger, 4 July 2019).

Although most refugees say that they intended to go to Libya in order to cross into Europe, not all of them go willingly. The kidnapping of refugees from Sudan to Libya also happens, so refugees are not always in control of their arrival in the first place:

Refugee 4: *Some of them are smugglers, but some force you and take you to Libya.*

Interviewer: *How do they kidnap people?*

Refugee 4: *The police stop you and they take you. But the Eritreans made an agreement with them before and then they take you. From the police station, they bring you to the cars. The traffickers have their own police officers that they work with. (Refugee 4, interview, face-to-face, Italy, 19 March 2019)*

In the detention centres, the Libyan authorities remain mostly in full control of the policy agenda by constricting the outflow and content of the information. Even the access of UNHCR to the detention centres is restricted. As Libya has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not consider itself a country of asylum, Eritrean refugees have limited rights. One interviewee said that UNHCR used to have status, but the authorities quickly realised that UNHCR could not do anything:

They [the guards] tried to sell us [to human traffickers], but we fought with them. At that time, UNHCR took our names, they just register us – so they were afraid of us. Because the guards tried for the first time to deal with UNHCR. After 2 months, 3 months, the guards know everything about UNHCR. Because UNHCR is so afraid of the Libyans. (Refugee 14, interview, face-to-face in Niger, 4 July 2019)

This is exemplified by the fact that UNHCR has long been aware of the situation in refugee camps in Libya and advocates for change, but

the situation remains unchanged (UNHCR, 2018). Some refugees attempt direct communication with UNHCR or others, such as the European Union, but are often frustrated by the perceived lack of impact their testimonies have:

In this place where I am today, there is no sufficient food or water, no clothes for the winter. Where are our human rights? There are many pregnant women and children. I contacted the EU and UNHCR on Twitter and by email, they didn't respond to my claims. This is a very dangerous place. We are suffering more than anything. And nobody takes responsibility. This is a shame on the EU. (Refugee 10, interview, WhatsApp, Libya, 11 January 2019)

In other words, their ability to contribute to agenda-setting, the second dimension of political power, is limited. On the other hand, the European Union and UNHCR work together and are dependent on the Libyan authorities, which makes their political power significantly larger. Through their ties with authorities, the human traffickers and smugglers also enjoy a measure of protection.

The refugees lack the power to determine how, where to and when they should exit Libya. The UNHCR evacuates refugees from Libya through the Emergency Transit Mechanism; due to the desperate situation in Libya, most refugees interviewed in Niger said that they are relieved to be outside of the country, but also emphasise that they did not expect to stay in Niger for long. Some, however, have remained there over a year and a half, since the evacuations started. IOM operates in cooperation with the UNHCR on voluntary returns; this also includes Eritreans, despite the UNHCR's classification of Eritrea as a country where people cannot safely be returned. According to IOM, the returns are voluntary; however, in the AVRR guidelines, one condition mentioned is "the absence of physical or psychological pressure to enrol in an AVRR programme" (IOM, 2018, p. 6). The testimonies reveal that the Eritrean refugees are under severe physical and psychological pressure due to the prolonged and traumatising stay in Libya, and, therefore, the returns cannot be considered voluntary.

Examples of the third aspect of power, the shaping of awareness and preferences, will not be further elaborated on, as the refugees are unable to act on their awareness and preferences. As shown in the case of ‘voluntary’ returns, the overall oppression in Libya is such that little choice of any kind remains for the refugees. Therefore, it is irrelevant to discuss this aspect of power.

In conclusion, the Eritrean refugees have almost no ability to exert political power in relation to all three categories of gatekeepers: the traffickers, Libyan authorities and international organisations. The refugees perceive that they have very little control over their actions or over the policy agenda, they also have no control over their choices or preferences. The refugees reported feeling that they have no ability to exercise any influence on agenda setting. Their complaints, when they were able to communicate them, remain unanswered and their protests are not seen or registered anywhere. In the perception of the refugees, the dependency of the international community on the Libyan authorities gives the latter an almost uncontrolled free hand and the Libyan authorities are perceived as providing a free place for smugglers and human traffickers, who are able to exploit the refugees without any restrictions. Hence, Eritrean refugees score low on the fourth attribute.

Conclusion

This research looked at the role of the gatekeepers and the situation of Eritrean refugees as a gated community living in a black hole in the digital landscape in Libya. It found that access to information in Libya is nearly fully controlled by gatekeepers. The gatekeepers form the bridge between the gated, acting as vital sources of information. This research investigated at the situation of Eritrean refugees in Libya by examining the four attributes of their relationship with gatekeepers, as set out by gatekeepers theory (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008): the autonomy and alternatives available to the refugees as the gated, information production and distribution by the gated, the relationship between the gated and the gatekeepers, and the political power of the gated. The gatekeepers identified were the human traffickers and

smugglers, the Libyan authorities, and the international organisations and delegations operating in Libya.

In relation to the first attribute, the analysis revealed that Eritreans have very little alternative sources of information, as access to mobile phones is severely restricted. All three categories of gatekeepers have little need to keep the refugees informed of what is going on. Also, in relation to international organisations such as UNHCR, the refugees feel there is a lack of information on their cases and expressed a sense of abandonment.

Analysis of the second attribute, information production and distribution, showed that not only do the human traffickers control whether the refugees can produce and distribute information, but they also force the refugees to distribute information beneficial to them, including threats, ransom requests, and sounds and images of torture. The Libyan authorities mainly repress information, but also force the refugees to present a positive image to foreign visitors, through threats and reprisals. International organisations also decide what information they do and do not share about refugees in relation to what they see and hear. In both the production and distribution of information, as well as the alternative information sources available, the refugees rely heavily on mobile phones. However, access to mobile phones is controlled by the human traffickers and the guards at detention centres, and unauthorised use of phones carries heavy penalties.

The third attribute relates to whether or not there is a platform for negotiation between the gated and the gatekeepers, which was found to be mostly absent in Libya. Human traffickers hide themselves by positioning themselves at the top of an extensive network, known only by their nicknames, and communicating only through mobile phones, thereby, negating any possibility for negotiation. The guards, representing the Libyan authority, may facilitate some things for the refugees (such as airtime) for bribes or payment, but otherwise do not form relationships with the refugees. International organisations face

both restricted access and the knowledge that refugees who share information with them may face reprisals.

The fourth attribute, political power, was examined by looking at the dimensions of control of actions, control of the political agenda, and control of awareness and preferences. The gatekeepers in the first two categories have been shown to collude with one another, so that the refugees' actions are almost fully controlled by them. In addition, the political agenda in Libya is also in control of the first two categories of gatekeepers. Although the international organisations and delegations that visit Libya do influence the overall political situation in Libya, they have no direct control over what happens to the refugees. As there is full control of the refugees' actions and the political agenda by gatekeepers, the third category of awareness and preferences becomes irrelevant.

International organisations such as UNHCR and IOM perform a role as gatekeepers, but can at the same time be seen as gated. Their access to refugees and migrants in detention centres is tightly controlled and, due to fear of reprisals and as a result of the influence of the human traffickers, the information they receive from refugees may also be distorted. Therefore, the organisations are trapped in a delicate balance, where they are both critical of Libyan authorities, but at the same time depend on the relationship with them to operate.

Through the analysis of the four attributes, it can be seen how control over digital technology, through the lack of access to technology and use of mobile phones, videos and social media to extort the Eritrean refugees, plays a vital role in the repression and human trafficking of refugees in Libya. It can be concluded from the analysis that the Eritrean refugees do not score on any of the four attributes of gatekeeping theory. This means that they can be classified as 'traditional gated' (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008), as they are mere 'receivers' in gatekeeping theory. However, in the case of Eritrean refugees, rather than just passive receivers of information, they are in fact forced to distribute information on the conditions specified by the gatekeepers. In the case of the human traffickers, the Eritreans are forced to send messages to family and friends to beg for ransom.

Their videos and pictures are also used and distributed to put pressure on the wider Eritrean community to pay ransoms. In the detention centres, refugees' means of communication are tightly controlled, so that they do not reveal the extent of the abuse in the centres. Even foreign journalists face pressure to record only positive aspects and their work is tightly controlled. Refugees who have been evacuated from Libya also clearly fear that revealing any information to researchers may compromise their case with UNHCR. Therefore, they are more than 'traditional gated', but can be considered 'exploited gated', as the content and means of their information distribution also is controlled by gatekeepers. In addition, due to the fact that not only do the gatekeepers have control over information, but also over the situation and indeed the very lives of the refugees in Libya, the Eritrean refugees can be seen as a particularly repressed gated community.

The new slavery in Africa today is located in the black holes in the digital landscape, where people are extorted without any control over their situation, lacking information about their situation and incapable of communicating about their fate. Eritrean refugees in black holes in Libya depend entirely on gatekeepers to get information out and to receive information. Human traffickers exploit this situation and the gatekeeping power they hold. Not only do they restrict what information is received, sent and distributed, but they force the refugees to send information by mobile phone and social media for their own financial benefit. Human trafficking for ransom relies on the black holes in the digital infrastructure, in which the powerlessness of those in the black holes is increased, while the power of those controlling the information streams in and out is nearly absolute.

The fight against human trafficking requires recognition of the gated and slave-like conditions of those held in captivity, a focus on the protection of the victims and a determination to persecute the perpetrators of such crimes.

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