



Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline

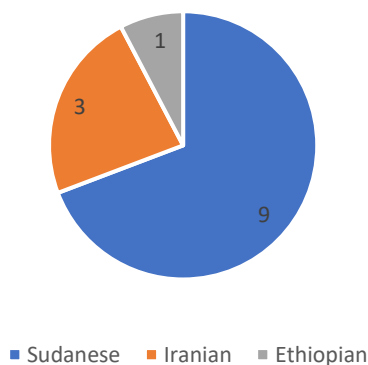
Report on potential modern slavery victims reporting the use of small boats to cross the English Channel

This report provides analysis on several cases reported to the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline between August 2020 and January 2021. It relates to individuals who had reported crossing the English Channel to reach the UK using a small boat or dinghy.

Although the Helpline deals with many varied instances of abuse and exploitation, historically the number of those reporting to the Helpline that their journey involved a channel crossing via a small vessel is very few. Vulnerable individuals targeted, encouraged or coerced to make the dangerous journey across the English Channel report exploitation having been a factor in their home country and en-route to the UK.

The cases outlined in this report are related to just a small subset of individuals likely to have made the treacherous journey across the channel, hoping for a better life. Unfortunately, some never make it to land and the safety of the UK.

Breakdown of Nationalities



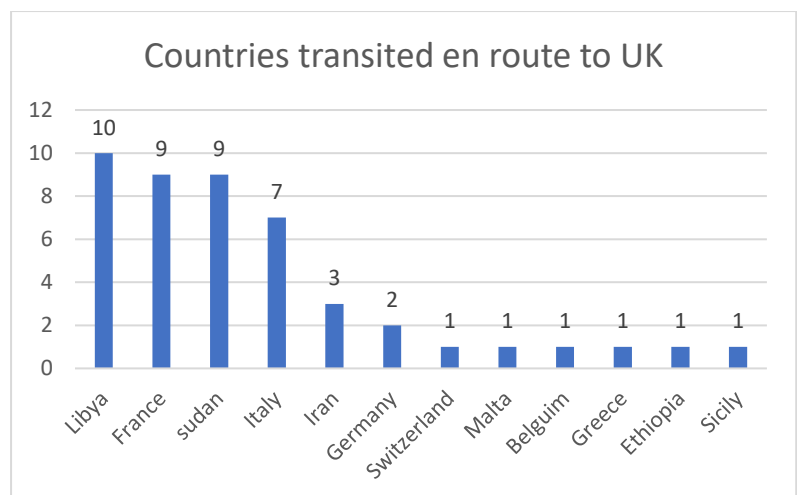
The use of force or physical violence, being plied with drugs or threatened with guns are commonplace for those involved and was reported in all 13 cases covered by this report. In two situations, sexual abuse or rape were also reportedly used to control the victims and ensure they complied. In two cases, potential victims reported being forced into the boat at gunpoint.

One element each case has in common is the complexity of the journeys they report having made. In some instances, their journey is either so chaotic or clandestine that they cannot recall the number of countries they have navigated.

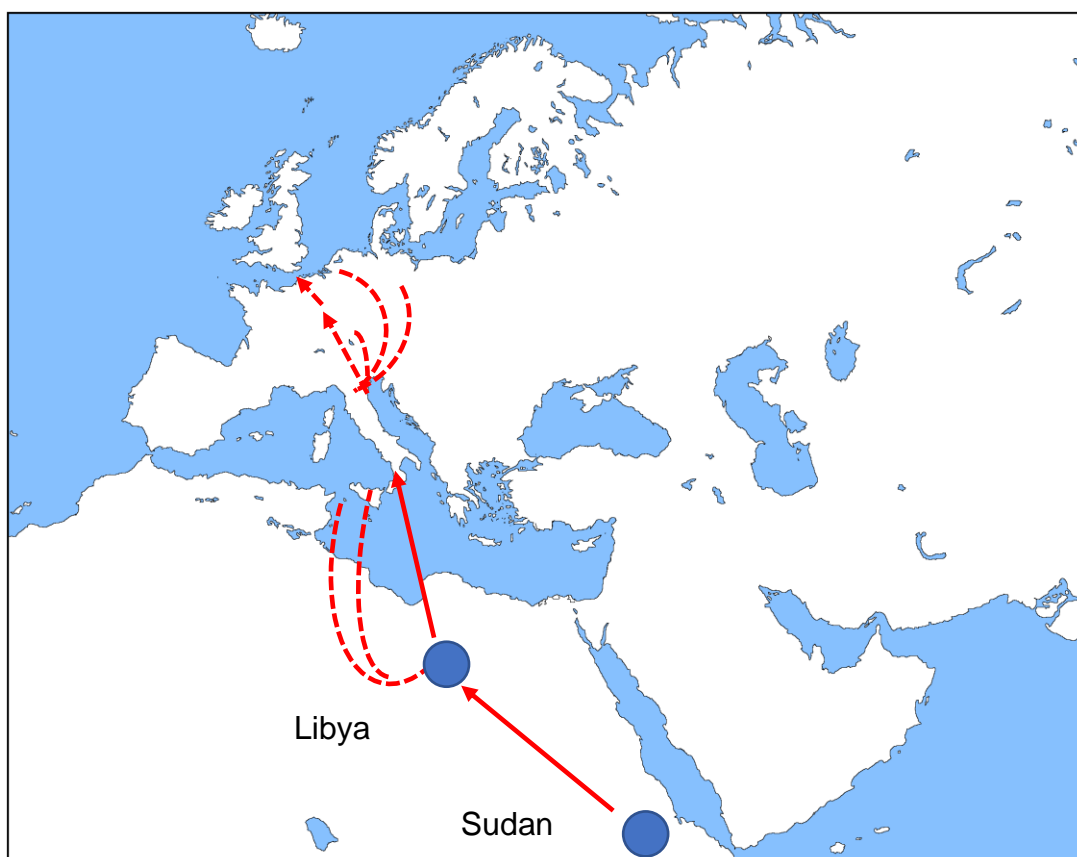
In most cases reviewed, the potential victims cite journeys that both involve land and sea travel, often through at least four different countries. All victims report having travelled by boat to the UK, nine reference through France, with five reporting specifically through Calais.

In nine cases Sudanese nationals report making their way through Sudan to Libya, and in three cases through the capital Tripoli, before making their way across the Mediterranean Sea via either Malta, Sicily or directly to Italy.

In three cases, travel across Europe to other countries (Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium) was also reported with exploitation occurring in each of those countries.



Common route(s) of travel reported to the Helpline by potential victims



Although this report relates to the situation of 13 individuals, each small boat used to transport people from Calais to the UK will no doubt have had significantly more people onboard. It is not clear from the calls or contacts received, the situation or outcome of those who travelled with the potential victims referred to in this report. Those making the journey across the English Channel, if not intercepted by Border Force, will no doubt be extremely vulnerable to ongoing exploitation as they try and find some way of surviving under the radar with no regularised status.

As the UK continues its extraction from the EU, there are concerns that more and more individuals will seek access through clandestine routes and more perpetrators will target those who are desperate and vulnerable.

Many of the individuals the Helpline deals with will have been destined or have taken work in low skilled, low paid jobs such as agriculture, food processing and packaging or working in warehouses or distribution centres. With the cessation of low paid, low skilled immigration routes and free movement from Europe to the UK the growing concern is that, in order to fulfil the labour requirements of these industries, (often fulfilled by those from Eastern European countries), more vulnerable people will be targeted. This may include UK nationals who may be vulnerable because of economic or social pressures or those outside of the UK who are desperate to leave their home country because of lack of opportunity, social unrest or persecution.

The Helpline will continue to monitor the number of cases indicating situations where clandestine entry to the UK has been a factor in the potential exploitation of individuals. We are working closely with colleagues in Border Force to ensure awareness of the potential plight of those entering the UK clandestinely are factored into any conversations or actions taken as a result of their arrival into the UK.

**Unseen UK
Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline
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