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America's Responsibility for the Global Refugee Crisis

By Margaret Kimberley

May 02, 2015



When refugees from the Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America and other places risk their lives for a chance at low-wage precarious labor in Europe or the US, it's because of decisions taken at the center of global economic and political power, places like Washington D, London, Brussels and New York.

All over the world people risk and sometimes lose their lives escaping poverty or war fare in their native lands. Throughout human history migrants have sought out places that are safer or more prosperous but they are seldom greeted with open arms. Xenophobia, racism, and fears of scarcity prevent desperate people from being integrated into societies that might accept them. However, the urge to escape violence or hunger never abates.

The most visible of the world's refugee crises today is taking place in the Mediterranean sea. Thus far in 2015, it is estimated that 1,724 people have died on unseaworthy vessels as they try to reach southern Europe from Libya. These refugees come from many African nations, from Syria and from countries as far away as Bangladesh. On April 18, 2015 a vessel holding an estimated 850 people capsized with only 28 survivors.

This humanitarian crisis is the direct result of the United States and NATO decision to effect regime change in Libya in 2011. Presumptive democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton infamously said of Libyan president Gaddafi, "We came, we saw, he died." Not only was Gaddafi killed by the conspiracy between NATO and jihadists in his country, but Libya never recovered from the intervention.

The most well known individual victim was the American ambassador, killed in Benghazi by the same forces which the United States supported. Very few people in this country are aware of their government's complicity and those who do know don't want to discuss it. The republicans who were as eager to intervene as the Obama administration want to make embarrassing political hay but don't want to talk about the ongoing humanitarian crisis which the United States created.

Citizens of many African nations routinely went to work in Libya, an oil rich nation which had jobs for migrants. Libya was an example of the prosperity all Africa nations might be able to experience before it was turned to rubble by NATO's machinations. Internecine warfare has turned it into a failed state. There is no legitimate government and it is so dangerous that there are no international flights going into that country. Libya can't even effectively extract or sell the oil resources that it has.

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This chaos makes it a perfect place for human traffickers to do business. Africans make a dangerous journey across the Sahara desert from Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, Niger and Mali. Further east from the horn of Africa come the Ethiopians, Somalians and Eritreans, all of whom suffer from American instigated destruction in their lands. So many Syrians have fled the NATO attack on their nation that neighboring countries Lebanon and Jordan prevent them from entering. Now Syrians fly first to the Sudan and wait to be smuggled into Europe through Libya, whose long coast is a magnet for smugglers and would-be migrants hoping to enter European nations as refugees. (*link maps)

The hand wringing among the Americans and the European Union countries is entirely hypocritical and ought to be pointed out as such. Thousands of Libyans were killed or displaced by the NATO intervention and a brutal race war was directed at black Libyans and African

migrants. Libya would not be the point embarkation point for so much misery had it been left alone.

The world's corporate media have a seemingly infinite capacity to produce hours of footage and thousands of words without ever getting to the inconvenient truth. In this case the truth is that the United States and its allies lied to the world when they claimed a dubious responsibility to protect Libyans. They were interested in nothing of the sort. The only goal was to attack yet another country too weak to thwart their plans for imperial expansion. They succeeded in getting rid of Gaddafi and in creating another crisis for humanity.

Then again Libya isn't much different from Central American countries like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. US backed coups, interventions, and drug policing have created violence and chaos in those countries. When unaccompanied children began arriving in the United States there was little discussion of our government's culpability. Political discourse, such as it was, was focused on political battles in congress about immigration policy and not about how this particular crisis was American made.

We now see another sorry spectacle of suffering people and powerful nations who could help but refuse to do so. It is all the more disgraceful because those countries created the problem in the first place. Let the NATO nations take in every refugee fleeing on a leaky boat. It is the least they could do to make restitution for the suffering they created.