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## **Fears grow for Libya migrants as thousands flee**

Amnesty International has warned of a growing humanitarian crisis as thousands of migrants flee Libya during continuing unrest.

The UNHCR warned on Tuesday that Tunisia would need help to deal with up to 75,000 people who had fled Libya since February 20. It said many thousands remained stuck at the border between the two countries in freezing conditions.

The UN refugee agency said 69,000 people had also crossed into Egypt from Libya since 19 February.

“All Libya’s neighbouring states must keep their borders open and provide assistance to all those fleeing violence. They are obliged to do this under international law,” said Michael Bochenek, Amnesty International’s Director of Law and Policy.

“The international community must also do all it can to offer urgent support and assistance to the Tunisian authorities and other states accepting those fleeing the violence, and help migrants return safely to their home countries as quickly as possible if they desire,”

Amnesty International also said it was concerned by a report from UNHCR that migrants in Libya who originate from countries in sub-Saharan Africa were being turned back at the Tunisian border.

“All those fleeing the chaos in Libya must be given sanctuary by neighbouring states without discrimination – not refused entry and put at risk of falling victim to further violence.”

About 14,000 Filipinos are trapped in Libya, according to the Philippines Labour Department. The Labour Department estimated that there were 30,000 Filipinos working in Libya before the crisis began there though the Philippine group Migrante-ME has estimated that they totalled nearer 150,000.

Migrante-ME has said that some workers have been hiding in Tripoli while many others are stuck in Libya's oil production areas.

Other foreign migrants workers include an estimated 60,000 Bangladeshis and between 2,000 and 5,000 Nepalis with many struggling to find a way out.

It is estimated that there were more than a million refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Libya before the current crisis, most of them from sub-Saharan Africa.

"The international community must also provide aid to the UNHCR and other bodies struggling to deal with this crisis. They must also act quickly, before the problem gets even worse," said Michael Bochenek.

Amnesty International is also calling for:

- Neighbouring countries to allow entry to all arrivals from Libya - of Libyan nationals as well as nationals of other states.
- Receiving countries to address the immediate needs of arrivals (shelter and accommodation, food, medical services) pending their referral to appropriate services and procedures that address their situation more directly.
- The international community should assist countries receiving those fleeing Libya with their immediate needs and should assist with resources necessary to ensure that people can reach a place of safety.
- Allow Libyan nationals temporary protection to allow time for the situation in Libya to be clarified and possible longer-term solutions for them to be identified.
- States to screen, separate, and respond appropriately to those who are implicated in serious criminal acts, notably crimes under international law.
- For the referral of those who have been recognized as refugees or are asylum seekers to national asylum procedures or to UNHCR.
- Provide assistance to those third-country nationals who do not claim international protection with assistance to enable them to return in safety to their homes.