

# Deadly Disinformation: War, the Mainstream Media and the Tragic Death of African Refugees

## Selected Articles

By [Julie Lévesque](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

*The tragic death of hundreds of refugees last week in the Mediterranean Sea has once again brought to light the deadly hypocrisy of Western leaders and their mainstream press. Omissions and distortions are disconnecting the catastrophic event from its roots, preventing the real culprits from being publicly exposed. Were the victims Libyan “migrants seeking a better life in Europe,” or rather refugees fleeing a war zone created and fueled by Western powers?*

The way the story is told and the wording are deceptive. Danish scholar Jan Oberg explains:

In various media reports and political statements the word “refugee” is increasingly being replaced by “migrant”... A migrant, according to the UN, is a person who is engaged in (seeking) a remunerative activity in a state of which he or she is not a national. A refugee is an entirely different person who is outside his or her home country because of having suffered (or feared) persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; because he or she is a member of a persecuted social category of persons; or because they are fleeing a war... **Using “migrants” instead of “refugees” takes away our attention from why they flee, from our own complicity in all this and it reduces our responsibility to protect refugees....**

Because most of these refugees come from zones where Western military interventions and arms exports have failed miserably their officially stated purposes and caused only more problems.

Like with so many other problems these years, there is a **psycho-political denial of the fact that Western militarism is the single most important cause of the problems we are facing**. (Jan Oberg, [Behind Every Refugee Stands an Arms Trader](#), TFF Associates & Themes Blog, April 28, 2015)

Johannes Stern and Bill Van Auken add:

The American press, led by the New York Times, writes of refugees fleeing poverty and violence in the Middle East and North Africa without so much as mentioning the actions of the United States and its European allies that have caused the humanitarian catastrophe. **What is unfolding in the Mediterranean is not a tragedy; it is an imperialist war crime**. (Johannes Stern and Bill Van Auken [Blood on their Hands: Libya’s Boat Refugees and “Humanitarian” Imperialism](#), World Socialist Web Site, April 21, 2015)

Robert Parry blames the media itself for its key role in selling the war:

The mainstream U.S. news media is lambasting the Europeans for failing to stop the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Mediterranean Sea as desperate Libyans flee their war-torn country in overloaded boats that are sinking as hundreds drown. **But the MSM forgets how this Libyan crisis began, including its own key role along with that of “liberal interventionists” such as Hillary Clinton and Samantha Power.** (Robert Parry, [The US Hand in Libya’s Tragedy](#), Consortium News April 21, 2015)

Since the 2011 French-led NATO intervention destroyed Libya, the most prosperous African state, the number of people literally dying to reach Europe has exploded:

Although there was outmigration from Africa and the Middle East prior to 2011, **the crisis has recently surpassed anything seen in modern history.** Just since the beginning of 2015, it is estimated that **over 1,800 people have died in the Mediterranean in route to southern Europe.** (Abayomi Azikiwe, [African, Asian Migrants Dying in Mass in the Mediterranean](#), Global Research, April 28, 2015)

According to the IOM [International Organization for Migration], **the number of people dying in the attempt to reach the shores of Europe rose by more than 500 percent between 2011 and 2014.**

Of course, 2011 was the year that the US and its NATO allies, principally France and Britain, launched their war for regime change in Libya, under the fabricated pretext that they were intervening to prevent a massacre by the government of Muammar Gaddafi in the eastern city of Benghazi. (Stern, Van Auken, op. cit.)

This military intervention in support of Al-Qaeda militias is intrinsically linked to the misfortune of these people and the mainstream media failure to connect the dots can only be voluntary. In fact, their coverage of the situation in Libya ended with the “victory of the Libyan people” and the end of a “brutal dictatorship.” The reality on the ground is far from the manufactured success story we were fed. What happened, however, after the fall of Gaddafi, once NATO left the country in the hands of terrorists, was not considered newsworthy:

This “humanitarian” mission initiated a six-month US-NATO bombing campaign that killed at least 10 times the number who died in the scattered fighting between government troops and armed rebels that had preceded it...

Nearly two million Libyan refugees—more than a quarter of the population—have been forced to flee to Tunisia to escape an unending civil war between rival Islamist militias and two competing governments... According to the web site Libya Body Count, some 3,500 people have been killed just since the beginning of 2014—three years after the US-NATO intervention.

The escalating barbarism in Libya has included mass executions... There were no such mass sectarian murders in Libya before the US-NATO war for regime change, nor for that matter did Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias exist as any more than a marginal force. These elements were promoted, armed and backed by massive airpower after the major imperialist powers decided to topple and murder Gaddafi and carry out a new rape of Libya.

The disastrous consequences of this predatory neocolonial intervention are now undeniable. It is only one in a growing number of imperialist wars and interventions in the oil-rich Middle East and North Africa that have destroyed entire societies and turned millions into refugees...

According to Amnesty International, **the escalating conflicts in Africa and the Middle East have “led to the largest refugee disaster since the Second World War.”** (Ibid)

Sadly, an atrocious fate awaits thousands of others. The Western “humanitarian intervention” in Libya has created the monster we now call ISIS and which is used as a pretext for more military interventions in the Middle East and North Africa. ISIS terrorists are being used to wreck havoc and bring down regimes the same way they did when they were NATO terrorists in Libya, but were branded as pro-democracy rebels and used to overthrow Gaddafi.

“Who are you?” the late Muammar Gaddafi once rhetorically asked in a famous speech of his towards the end of his reign; (rightly) questioning the legitimacy of those seeking to over-throw his government at the time, calling them extremists, foreign agents, rats and drug-addicts. He was laughed at, unfairly caricatured, ridiculed and incessantly demonized;

Gaddafi knew what he was talking about; right from the get-go, he accused the so-called Libyan rebels of being influenced by Al-Qaeda ideology and Ben Laden’s school of thought; no one had taken his word for it of course, not even a little bit.

Gaddafi called them drug-addicted, Islamic fundamentalists; we know them as ISIS... it doesn’t seem much of a joke now, does it? And ISIS is what had been in store for us all along; the “revolutionary” lynching and sodomization of Muammar Gaddafi amid manic chants of “Allahu Akbar”, lauded by many at the time as some sort of a warped triumph of the good of popular will (read: NATO-sponsored mob rule) over the evil of dictatorship (sovereign state), was nothing but a gory precursor for the future of the country and the region; mass lynching of entire populations in Libya, Syria and Iraq and the breakup of key Arab states into feuding mini-statelets. (Ahmad Barqawi, [Libya, ISIS and the Unaffordable Luxury of Hindsight](#), Counter Punch, March 12, 2015)

As incredible as it seems, Western leaders can use the same terrorists for treachery over and over and over again, just by changing their name. The media will repeat the state propaganda and people will invariably be fooled into wars. Gaddafi was laughed at when he claimed he was fighting terrorists. But the ones laughing were the real fools. Abdelhakim Belhadj, the Al Qaeda commander in Libya and NATO’s ally, is now leading ISIS in Libya:



According to recent [reports](#), Abdelhakim Belhadj (picture, holding frame with McCain) has now firmly ensconced himself as the organizational commander of the ISIS presence inside Libya.

The information comes from an unnamed US intelligence official who has confirmed that Belhadj is supporting and coordinating the efforts of the ISIS training centers in eastern Libya around the city of Derna, an area long known as a hotbed of jihadi militancy.

While it may not seem to be a major story – Al Qaeda terrorist turns ISIS commander – the reality is that **since 2011 the US and its NATO allies have held up Belhadj as a “freedom fighter.”** They portrayed him as a man who courageously led his fellow freedom-lovers against the “tyrannical despot” Gaddafi whose security forces at one time captured and imprisoned many members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), including Belhadj. (Eric Draitser, [Washington’s Al Qaeda Ally Now Leading ISIS in Libya](#), [New Eastern Outlook](#), March 10, 2015)

The mainstream media can no longer be trusted. They have proven time and time again to be nothing but propaganda outlets for the military-industrial complex. The only way we can stop this flow of deadly disinformation is with the truth. Please share this article.



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