



## Daily Message by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Hon. Evarist Bartolo

**14<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

The biggest influx of irregular immigrants to our shores was in 2018 and 2019. They made up a total of three quarters of those who arrived in the six years between 2013 and 2019.

In those six years people smugglers sent 8,819 migrants from Libya to Malta. The leanest year was 2014: 569 migrants and in 2017: 794 migrants.

But then in 2018, 2,657 migrants arrived in Malta, triple the amount who arrived the year before.

The number continued to rise the following year to reach a total of 3,625.

The number of migrants traffickers manage to put on boats bound for Europe on the Malta -Italy route depends on the situation in Africa, Libya especially and Europe and how these impact on each other.

The greater the number of Africans who succeed in crossing the southern border into Libya by paying local people smugglers, the greater the number of people the traffickers in Libya -who work in the heart of Libya and facing Malta, on the coast on either side of Tripoli - are able to send to Europe. The more money they will rake in.

The more these traffickers in different parts of Libya are left to organise their trade on land and by sea, the more they will send migrants to Europe at enormous profit.

Trade will expand or shrink depending on whether steps are taken against human traffickers and they are arrested. Alternatively, they can be provided with other ways of making money so they will not need to traffic people.

The longer the fighting lasts in Libya, the more difficult it will be for the Libyan government to stop people smugglers plying their trade on land and sea.

Human trafficking certainly isn't government's priority in the circumstances.

The more the fighting and now Covid-19 create havoc in the society and the economy, the more organised crime will flourish, only part of which is concerned with people trafficking.

The sooner the fighting ceases and the Libyans find a way to build trust in each other and rebuild their country, the better it will be for the Libyans themselves and their neighbours in Africa, in the Mediterranean and Europe.

The more trust grows in a stronger Libyan leadership, the weaker will be the power of the criminals who traffic in oil, drugs, arms and people

Above all united and in control of its own destiny, Libya will get a new lease of life, as a country whose natural wealth should make it one of the richest in the Mediterranean.

**Evarist Bartolo**

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Malta