

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 10, 2020

Her Excellency Wafa Bughaighis
Ambassador of the State of Libya to the United States
1460 Dahlia St, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012

Dear Ambassador Bughaighis,

We write to express concern regarding the need for international humanitarian workers to receive visas in a timely manner and of sufficient length to work in Libya. According to the United Nations, an estimated 1.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Libya. In addition to the 425,000 Libyans who have been displaced from their homes due to the conflict, Libya also hosts more than 650,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, many of whom fall prey to criminal human trafficking networks, perish in the deadly Mediterranean crossing, or face grave human rights abuses in Libya. In addition to the crisis caused by conflict, Libya is also dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is spreading with alarming speed within the country.

We have heard from multiple international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) providing humanitarian services in Libya that they are having difficulties obtaining visas for their work. According to a recent report by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, INGOs continue to face delays and difficulties in obtaining Libyan visas for international staff, and those who do get visas are provided with a validity of only three months, increasing requirements for visa renewals. As a result, over 95 per cent of INGO staff do not have valid Libyan visas.

The conflict and the increasingly devastating pandemic have combined to put vulnerable groups inside Libya at greater risk than ever before. INGOs are essential to provide lifesaving support to millions inside Libya, and your embassy's consular services are necessary to ensure that INGO staff are able to travel to and remain working inside Libya without having to worry about their visa status. You are in the unique position of being able to address this concern for American staff who are applying for visas from within the United States, and we ask that you exercise your power to do so. We also ask that you use your influence with the Government of National Accord (GNA) to press for an acceleration of visa approvals, ease restrictions on international humanitarian staff, and ensure that lifesaving aid reaches the people most in need.

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Thank you for your continued attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C.A. Booker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator