

IN CASE OF LOSS
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March 2011/Ras al-Jedir, Libya-Tunisia border checkpoint

Nearly 70,000 Bangladeshi nationals were residing in Libya as migrant workers when violence erupted in February 2011. As the conflict intensified, thousands fled to neighboring countries, facing congested borders and overcrowded refugee camps and airports where they are waiting to return home. 20,000 migrants have been able to return to Bangladesh – most of them heavily in debt and with no ready means of earning a living. The unintended consequences of this unfolding tragedy in Libya underscore the evacuees' desperation and the severe poverty they may face upon their return to Bangladesh; many have sold their homes and mortgaged their own lives for the opportunity to provide for their families by earning income overseas. All of them are male migrant workers who were employed in Chinese, South Korean, European or Libyan construction companies like HANIL, SHINHAN, SARAYA, EREN or CGCG for a very low income (about 150\$ per month) and in most cases they are forced to work some months without being paid before receiving a salary. There are also reports of their being harassed, while crossing Libya, by pro-Gheddafi forces who oblige them to pay bribes and yield their few possessions. When passing the border, all they own is a bag with few clothes, some food and beverage, sometimes a blanket. Many of them put their ID photos on their bags to recognize them among all the others and in the unlikely hope to find them again in case of loss.