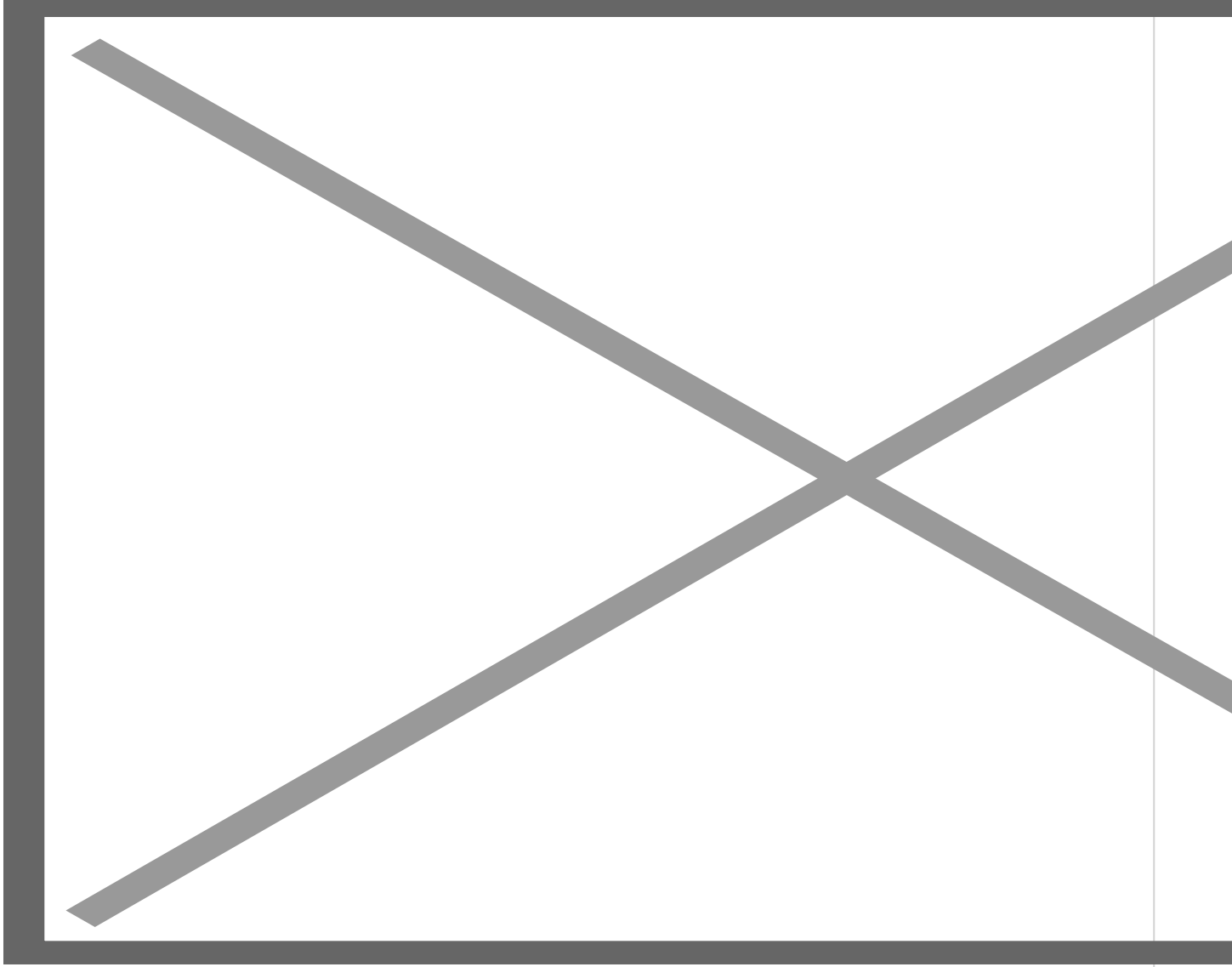


Libyan border guards apprehend asylum seekers abandoned by Tunisia in desert

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Tripoli, July 17 (RHC)-- Libyan border guards have apprehended at least 80 exhausted and dehydrated migrants after they were rounded up by authorities in neighboring Tunisia and abandoned in the desert without food, water or shelter.

The group was among hundreds of Black African asylum seekers forcibly expelled from the city of Sfax to Tunisia's heavily militarized border with Libya.

Refugees have faced abuse from authorities on both sides of the border, with accounts of rape and sexual assault.

On Sunday, Tunisia's government signed a "strategic partnership" with the European Union, pledging to crack down on migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe.

The agreement comes after the European Commission said it was considering an aid package for Tunisia worth over \$1 billion.

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