



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Libya: Unending violations and rampant impunity

APRIL 2024



An independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation that was established in 2019 to fill the gap in monitoring and documenting human rights violations committed against civilians in Libya, especially in areas that are difficult to access. Through its work, the LCW seeks to promote accountability and reduce impunity to achieve justice for victims.

LCW relies on a network of field monitors in Libya who monitor the human rights situation and reach out to victims and survivors. It also cooperates with a growing network of activists, journalists, lawyers, and doctors to report on violations.

LCW works in coordination with local and international partners in advocacy efforts and in referring victims and survivors to receive the assistance and support they need.

LCW is an active member of several Libyan and international coalitions, including the Libyan Platform Coalition, the Libyan Anti-torture Network, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, the Advocacy Coalition, and the Universal Jurisdiction Coalition.

Index

•	Introduction	04
•	Methodology	06
•	Libyan Context in 2023	07
•	Human and Material Toll due to Military Operations	11
•	Crimes Committed against Migrants and Refugees	13
•	Mass Graves	17
•	Abductions and Subsequent Temporary Detentions	20
•	Arbitrary Arrests and Detention	24
•	Extrajudicial and Unlawful Killings	27
•	Forced Evictions	29
•	Gender-Based Violence	34
•	Silencing Civil Society	37
•	Derna Dams Collapse	41
•	Legal Review and Classification of Violations Committed in Libya 2023	45
	Violations of International Human Rights Law	46
	War Crimes	47
•	Statistics	49
•	Conclusion	50
•	Recommendations	53

Introduction

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the human rights situation in Libya throughout January to December 2023, documenting a total of **276 victims**. The cases include 125 unidentified individuals (12 unidentified bodies, believed to be of Libyans because they were found in mass graves. 99 other unidentified bodies believed to be of migrants because they were found on Libyan shores, and 14 also of migrants who died of hunger on the Libyan border with Egypt and Tunisia, all identities of these have not been identified), 33 migrants (16 of Asian origins, 11 Egyptians, and 6 from African countries), in addition to 118 Libyan citizens.

The report details a wide range of human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings, civilian casualties, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and ill treatment and is divided into sections, each addressing a category of a violation, with many victims subjected to more than one crime.

In total, the report identifies **337 crimes**, including the deaths of 20 civilians in military clashes within civilian areas, 148 incidents involving migrants found dead or targeted through kidnapping or arbitrary arrest, 12 discoveries of human remains in mass graves, 90 cases of enforced disappearances leading to short-term arbitrary detentions, 50 individuals detained without trial, and 13 cases of extrajudicial killings due to torture, medical neglect, or deliberate targeting in detention. Additionally, it highlights four instances of gender-based violence, encompassing sexual violence and other forms of abuse. The demographic breakdown of the victims includes 261 males, 14 females, and one migrant of unspecified gender.

The organization emphasizes that the documented numbers do not fully represent the extent of violations during the report period. The team faced challenges in accessing some victims and affected areas, and many crimes remained unreported due to security and/or social or cultural reasons.

The organization highlights that during March, April, and May 2023, the two governments carried out forced eviction operations, leading to numerous victims facing undocumented human rights violations.



Furthermore, the widespread forced deportation of migrants across Libyan borders and the indiscriminate arbitrary arrests of migrants near the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) premises, were collectively categorized as incidents rather than documented on a case-by-case basis.

LCW further observes that the violations chiefly criminalized political views or targeted civil activists, largely in relation to freedoms of opinion and expression.

Finally, with this report, LCW seeks to bring attention to the reality of human rights in Libya, urging the international community and INGOs to assume their mandates in safeguarding human rights in Libya. It also calls to address the prevailing ongoing impunity, which emboldens offenders to perpetuate further violations.

Methodology

Libya Crime Watch adheres to the highest standards of accuracy in its data collection, analysis, and annual reporting processes. This approach is designed to ensure the information's reliability and objectivity, offering a precise depiction of the human rights landscape in Libya.

The organization's extensively trained documentation team conducts interviews with victims and witnesses across Libya, utilizing secure virtual platforms. They gather information about critical incidents and diligently verify allegations, validating details through direct and efficient communications with local partners, trusted organizations, and open sources, in addition to drawing resources from international organizations and media sources.

Data for this annual report was compiled from mid-November 2023 to mid-February 2024, undergoing a thorough verification process. This process drew upon a wide array of first and secondhand sources, victims, witnesses but also activists, journalists, medical professionals, legal experts, and effected population.

Libya Crimes Watch is dedicated to maintaining the confidentiality of personal data for victims and witnesses. The organization enforces rigorous safeguards to protect the documentation team and all participants, steadfastly ensuring the information presented in the report is objective and free from any form of bias or distortion.

The information is categorized based on violation type, perpetrators, geographic location, age and gender, and other criteria. This data undergoes both quantitative and qualitative analysis to identify prevailing patterns, assess the effects of violations on individuals and communities, and outline key needs and recommendations.

The head of the documentation unit was tasked with the aggregation and initial verification of raw data. A team of four activists and international law experts conducted a comprehensive review to assess the data's accuracy, classification, and the ensuing analysis. A crucial part of this review process is the proofing of the legal classifications of documented violations and the authenticity of the information provided.





Libyan Context in 2023

2023 is a grim chapter in Libya's contemporary history. Set against a backdrop of intermittent clashes, persistent political split, widespread corruption, and deliberate governmental neglect and oppression, significant human and humanitarian tolls have been documented including deaths, displacement, and missing people. Particularly, the collapse of the two Derna dams exposed a profound failing in the government's ability to govern and manage crisis. This incident starkly highlighted a pattern of deliberate institutional neglect and widespread disregard for human rights within Libya. The administrations aligned with the two political fronts have consistently obscured data on casualties and infrastructural damages, thereby concealing the true scale of actual impacts. The human rights situation in Libya continually degraded, marked by ongoing impunity, including arbitrary arrests, abductions, enforced disappearances, forced evictions, mass expulsion of migrants, and other systematic abuses.

Libya Crime Watch observes that 2023 has been a year marred by widespread crimes, necessitating urgent work on accountability in order to underscore the evident failure of the two governments in the east and west. These authorities have deliberately and systematically provided financial, political, and logistical support to their allied armed factions, contributing to corruption and the continuity of such crimes. This complicity undoubtedly credits accountability and responsibility for crimes committed on its territories.

Juxtaposing the data on crimes documented by Libya Crime Watch (LCW) in its 2022 annual report with that of 2023 highlights a persistent increase in violations, targeting civil society and human rights defenders. The escalation of security operations, characterized by arrests and the abductions of activists in cities such as Zawiyah, Benghazi, Sabha, Al Bayda, Sirte, Tripoli, and Derna, signals an alarming situation.

The Internal Security Agency, the Anti-Terrorism and Organized Crime Deterrence Force, and factions under the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, including the Tarek Ben Ziyad Brigade, have intensified efforts in kidnapping and detaining civilians. Legislative bodies affiliated with both political fronts have intentionally supported and facilitated state agents' abductions by enacting restrictive laws and regulations that curtail freedom of expression and association. These include digital smear campaigns against human rights organizations and exerting undue pressure on international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and international mechanisms to limit their access to Libyan territories thus restricting their ability to document and investigate such crimes, also involving the implementation of convoluted administrative hurdles and, in certain instances, the denial of entry visas.

Libya Crime Watch expresses concern over the continued stagnation in Libya's human rights situation throughout 2022 and 2023, along with a noticeable lack of progress toward achieving judicial independence and establishing an effective governance framework respecting the rule of law.

Through deliberate actions aimed at obstructing political progress toward a unified government, the two key factions in Libya, the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), have significantly impeded crucial electoral milestones. These factions have exploited the international community's diplomatic endeavors, specifically the (6+6) plan endorsed by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

Through the strategic creation of repeated obstructions, they have intentionally brought about a deadlock in the electoral process, thereby halting any forward movement toward democratic governance. This pattern of behavior underscores a calculated effort to maintain the status quo, effectively derailing the prospects for a peaceful transition to a unified elected government.

The political discourse, largely overlooking crucial solutions to Libya's ongoing crisis, such as the implementation of transitional justice and national reconciliation measures. Efforts to enhance the judiciary's independence from governmental influence were lacking. Instead, both LAAF and GNU have engaged in the systematic obfuscation of human rights violations and war crimes, actively obstructing civil society and international organizations from documenting ongoing violations.

The expiration of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission's mandate also left a significant gap, devoid of any national or international mechanisms for ensuring accountability or facilitating redress.

Detention facilities in Libya, including DCIM centers, are plagued by severe overcrowding, harboring a huge number of arbitrarily detained individuals, many subjected to torture, humiliation, and ill-treatment. The majority of these detainees are held without charges, or accused of crimes they have not committed, all in the absence of due legal process or judicial guarantees. Access to detainees within state-operated facilities is restricted for lawyers, medical professionals, and family members.

In the west, facilities are under the management of the Ministries of Interior and Justice in Tripoli, the Internal Security Agency, and law enforcement and military units affiliated with the Presidential Council such as establishments run by the Support and Stability Apparatus and the Special Deterrence Force for Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime. While in the east, control shifts to segments of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), particularly the Tareq Ben Ziyad Brigade, which oversees detention centers like Qernada and Kuwaifiya. The restriction of access blocks the ability to verify living conditions inside these facilities, and further obstructs efforts to monitor detainees' welfare, and ensure their legal rights. This lack of transparency and accountability raises serious concerns about the treatment of detainees and underscores the urgent need for international pressure and intervention to safeguard human rights in Libya.

Through its monitoring, Libya Crime Watch (LCW) observes that the authorities responsible for these detentions persist in subjecting detainees to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment. Nearly all individuals released from these conditions – interviewed by LCW- emerge bearing both physical and psychological scars, with a significant number manifesting symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Additionally, the exploitation of a large number of migrants, facilitated by the complicity of detaining authorities and DCIM management, remains widespread. Secret detention centers and trafficking hubs, within which migrants suffer torture remain actively operational.

As underscored in its 2022 report, Libya Crime Watch (LCW) emphasizes that impunity and corruption remain entrenched in Libya. This situation demands that international mechanisms with mandates concerning Libya take decisive action to hold perpetrators accountable for war crimes. Many of these systematic violations amount to crimes against humanity, committed with the State's knowledge in secret prisons, trafficking hubs, and warehouses exploited by human traffickers.

Finally, Libya Crimes Watch teams operating both inside and outside Libya amidst substantial psychological and societal pressure resulting from state-sponsored terrorization of activists, civilians, and notably human rights defenders, asserts that the pattern of systemic abuses against civilians and migrants persists. The organization emphasizes that the period under review witnessed a marked increase in the instances of mass forced deportations across Libyan borders. These actions have led to severe repercussions, including numerous deaths among migrants attributable to starvation, dehydration, and cruel treatment.





**Human and
Material Toll
due to Military
Operations**

Between January and December 2023, LCW documented a total of 20 fatalities and injuries resulting from military operations in civilian areas. This count includes 16 individuals wounded by random shootings and 10 injured by shrapnel from rockets impacting houses and residences amid hostilities. Additionally, 4 fatalities occurred due to direct shootings during exchanges of fire and from landmines. These incidents were reported in Tripoli, Zawiya, Tobruk, and Benghazi.

In Zawiya, one case involved a Libyan woman wounded by gunfire resulting from clashes between the Shahad Alnaser Brigade, aligned with the Ministry of Defense, and forces belonging to the Law Enforcement Directorate, which is under the Ministry of Interior of the Government of National Unity.

Another incident resulted in two fatalities when a residential property was hit by an artillery shell amid skirmishes initiated by unidentified armed factions in the city's eastern part.¹

14 civilians, all Libyan adult men, were also injured due to random shooting² and scattered shrapnel during violent clashes between the Special Deterrent Forces of the Libyan Presidential Council and Brigade 444 Brigade.³

In Tripoli's Bab Bin Ghashir neighborhood, a mine explosion on a farm resulted in the death of a minor. The mine is believed to have been emplaced during the 2019 conflict between the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) and the Government of National Unity (GNU).⁴

LCW documented the death of an Egyptian man, a passenger in a vehicle ferrying migrants, after the vehicle was internationally targeted with gunfire by the Libyan Arab Armed Forces in Tobruk, eastern Libya.⁵

LCW has also documented clashes instigated by a faction associated with the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, which led to the death of an individual from stray bullets in the Ard al-Salak area of the Salmani neighborhood, located in central Benghazi.⁶

[1] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [February 2023](#).

[2] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [May 2023](#).

[3] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [August 2023](#).

[4] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [January 2023](#).

[5] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [February 2023](#).

[6] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).

Crimes Committed against Migrants and Refugees



The Libyan Red Crescent Society (LRCS) has played a pivotal role in providing support to migrant survivors along the Libyan Mediterranean shores. Despite these efforts, migrants continue to confront significant and grave risks, especially from armed factions loyal to the governing bodies in both the eastern and western regions of Libya.

In the eastern part of Libya, even with the limited assistance offered by the Libyan Red Crescent and a select few law enforcement officers in Solouq, where the Libyan Civil War (LCW) reported approximately 197 migrants were supported following forced expulsion by the LRCS and Solouq agents. This expulsion was primarily executed by the Libyan Arab Armed Forces and the security services stationed in Tobruk. Subsequently, about 3,000 migrants were forced to undertake a perilous and life-threatening walk on foot, covering long distances from Libyan Emsaad to the Egyptian borders. They endured extreme and inhospitable conditions, marked by hunger and dehydration.

Over 1,000 survivors were later returned to detention centers characterized by extreme overcrowding and deplorable living conditions. In these facilities, detainees faced torture and were subjected to other forms of cruel and inhumane treatment. These individuals were confined in several locations, not limited to the facilities of Tobruk's criminal investigation department.⁷

LCW documented the indiscriminate and arbitrary mass arrest of approximately 200 Sudanese asylum seekers in the vicinity of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in the Sarraj area by agents of the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) of the Government of National Unity.

The individuals targeted included women and children who had been encamped outside the UNHCR headquarters, advocating for the commencement and acceleration of their resettlement processes. They were subsequently relocated to various detention centers in Tripoli.

Moreover, LCW notes that the predominant cause of migrant fatalities over the year has been due to interceptions at sea, leading

[7] "[Crimes against migrants and refugees continue in Libya in latest mass expulsion](#)." A joint statement by Libya Crimes Watch and other NGOs. June 13, 2023.

to drowning.

Of the 148 migrants with documented cases, 127 bodies were recovered from the shores of Libya. The majority of these recoveries occurred on the shores of Sabratha, with a tally of 51 bodies, followed by 11 bodies at Shatt al-Buddin in Benghazi, 19 at Qara Bouli beach, 14 at the shores of Khums, and 5 at al-Maqroun shores, west of Benghazi, 4 dead found on Bwanis shores. Further recoveries include 5 bodies at Tokra shore, 5 in Zawiya, 2 at Ras al-Tin north of Derna, 2 at Amsaad shores, and single bodies found at various other locations including near the Zawiya oil station, in Zawiya city shores, and at Zueitina shores in Ajdabiya city, among others.

The past year also witnessed the forcible expulsion of large groups of migrants across the desert dividing Tunisia and Libya, with 14 documented deaths due to dehydration and starvation. This figure includes a woman of African origin and her 9-year-old daughter, alongside 12 men, all expelled by Tunisian authorities into the Libyan desert.

In a separate incident, an Egyptian man was unlawfully killed by gunfire while in a vehicle transporting migrants near the Al-Mukhaili area in Tobruk, targeted by agents of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF). Additionally, 6 Egyptian nationals were abducted in Al-Zawiya, with their families being notified of their detention by agents of the Support and Stability Apparatus, who demanded a ransom for their release.⁸

An Egyptian young man, who escaped in July 2023 from a DCIM detention center in Tripoli, revealed details of his systematic torture and degrading treatment at the hands of captors who sold him into forced labor in various locations across Libya. He stated:



At the tender age of 19, I migrated to Libya from Egypt, driven by the aspiration for a better life. Unfortunately, upon arrival, I was subjected to a series of harrowing experiences and horrific abuse. In December 2022, I was apprehended and sold to human traffickers, enduring prolonged detention and torture at their hands. Subsequently, I was passed between three different traffickers, each inflicting unimaginable cruelty upon me. The brutal torture and subsequent death of a friend in a detention warehouse near Bani Walid remains a haunting memory. After negotiations with the final

[8] LCW reports, "[All months](#)". 2023.

trafficker, my family secured my release upon payment of a \$2,000 ransom. Believing Tripoli, the capital city, to offer greater safety, I fled there. However, a security officer detained in the Ghout al-Shaal Center, also known as the "Al-Mabani" Center. The deplorable conditions within the facility were a contrast to the life I sought. Basic needs were not provided, and insufficient food left me constantly hungry. Al-Mabani center was severely overcrowded, with a high number of sick migrants residing there. With no medical attention available, infectious diseases spread. In addition to the physical torture I endured, I also grappled with the debilitating effects of severe mental anguish. The guards treated everyone with utter contempt, resorting to the reprehensible practice of bartering with migrants for money in exchange for facilitating their escape through smuggling.

In July 2023, I hoped someone would get my out, even buy me! Hope emerged in the form of two individuals seeking forced labor. They informed the guards that they wanted a worker to carry heavy building materials. Chosen for the task, I was given to them. I managed to elicit their sympathy after the I told them my story. Upon completing the assigned work, they provided me with a sum of money and urged me to leave the area immediately. While I am currently free and employed in a safe environment, the emotional scars remain. The plight of the other migrants I left behind continues to weigh heavily on my conscience.



Mass Graves



In February 2023, media reports revealed that Libyan courts issued verdicts against 30 individuals, sentencing them to a range of penalties from life imprisonment to fifteen and six-year terms. These judgments were related to allegations of the defendants' involvement in extrajudicial killings of people buried in Tarhouna Mass Graves.⁹ Reports continued to reveal further grave discoveries through to the end of the year. The Tarhouna Victims Association also shared images of 70 missing Libyan citizens believed to be from the mass graves.¹⁰

In early January 2023, the Libyan Attorney General conducted a press conference to provide an update on the progress of investigations into allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture against civilians in Tarhouna, and into crimes associated with the discovery of mass graves in Tarhouna. Al-Sour reported that, over the past three years (2021-2023), 250 bodies were unearthed from mass graves, with 202 individuals successfully identified through DNA analysis matched with their relatives. However, 48 remains still unidentified. From 2020 to 2021, the Attorney General's Office received 231 formal complaints concerning the atrocities in Tarhouna. Of these, 53 cases have been moved to trial, with the remaining 178 under investigation.

In 2023 alone, 178 complaints were submitted to various state entities, including police and prosecutorial offices, with 107 case files being referred to the Tarhouna Investigation Committee, established by the Attorney General's Office in Tripoli. Al-Sour confirmed the arrest of eight suspects in Benghazi, in cooperation with authorities in eastern Libya. These individuals were then transferred to the interrogation units of the Special Deterrence Force.

By the end of 2023, Al-Sour's office had received a total of 521 complaints, 194 of which were processed and referred to the prosecutorial authorities, leaving 327 cases pending further investigation. He highlighted that 17 cases were excluded from the investigation due to insufficient evidence and lack of witness testimony and noted that 51 individuals are currently held in pretrial detention — 49 of whom are Libyan nationals and 2 foreigners. According to Al-Sour, six suspects were detained by Interpol in Cairo. This prompted the Egyptian Public Prosecutor's Office to request legal documentation from its Libyan counterpart to substantiate their involvement. The Egyptian judiciary is currently considering their extradition to Libya for trial.

[9] "[Prison Sentences Fail to Satisfy Families of Mass Grave Victims in Western Libya: Victims' Relatives Demand Death Penalty for Perpetrators](#)," Al-Arab News. August 15, 2023. Also See "[Families of Mass Grave Victims in Western Libya Demand Capital Punishments for Tarhouna Perpetrators](#)," Middle East Newspaper. August 14, 2023.

[10] See "[In Pictures: Over 70 people Still Missing in the graves](#)", Tarhouna Victims Association Facebook page, August 30, 2023.

In conclusion, the Attorney General has made several requests to Egypt for the arrest and extradition of suspects to Libya for legal proceedings.¹¹

Throughout 2023, LCW documented the recovery of 12 unidentified remains from mass graves in Tarhuna.¹² The General Authority for the Search and Identification of Missing Persons recovered eight bodies from a waste dump site in Tarhuna and four unidentified remains from a mass grave along Salem Bin Ali Road within the city. These discoveries are believed to be connected to victims who were tortured and executed by the Ninth Brigade, also known as “Al-Kaniyat,” in Tarhuna between 2016 and 2020. unidentified remains from a mass grave along Salem Bin Ali Road within the city. These discoveries are believed to be connected to victims who were tortured and executed by the Ninth Brigade, also known as “Al-Kaniyat,” in Tarhuna between 2016 and 2020.

Despite assertions from the Attorney General’s Office regarding ongoing investigations, critiques from international mechanisms and observations from the International Criminal Court indicate a significant shortfall in holding the responsible parties accountable.¹³ To date, neither Libyan authorities nor the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court have disclosed the names of individuals implicated in issued warrants. This omission underscores a profound lack of confidence in the investigation's transparency and accountability processes.

[11] See "[A Press Conference by the Libyan Attorney General Al-Siddiq Al-Sour in Tripoli on the Latest Developments in the Investigations into Violations Committed in Tarhuna and Mass Grave Crimes.](#)" Published on the Tarhuna Victims Association Facebook page about a live broadcast by Libya Al-Ahrar Channel. January 3, 2024.

[12] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [January 2023](#).

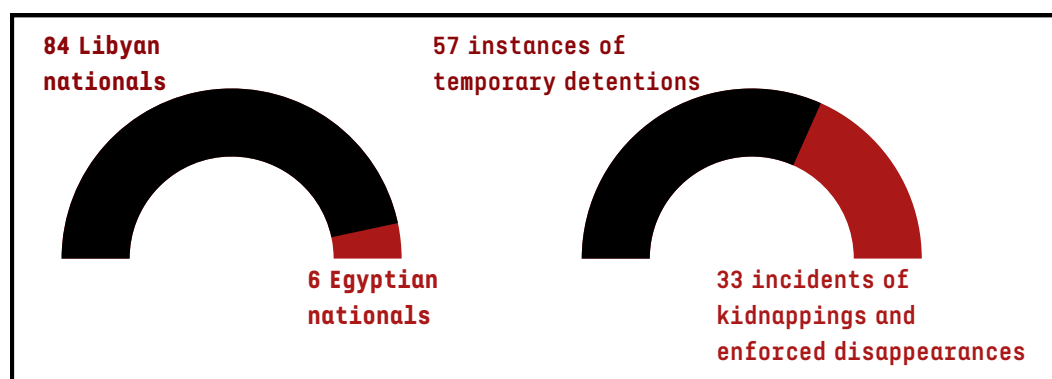
[13] At its fiftieth session at the HRC, the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya presented to the Human Rights Council a comprehensive report about the atrocities committed in Tarhuna by the Al-Kaniyat brigades. The mission's recommendations included the establishment of a special tribunal for Tarhuna specialized in trialling for war crimes, enhanced by the support of international expertise. It also called for the public disclosure of the identities of those responsible for the mass grave crimes, but the meeting was before the termination of the FFM mandate in March 2023. Despite these recommendations, the Libyan government has not yet released the names of individuals implicated in the Tarhuna atrocities. For further details, refer to "Detailed Conclusions on the Situation in Tarhuna," presented during the Fiftieth Session of the Human Rights Council, [A/HRC/50/CRP](#). From June 13 to July 8, 2022.

Abductions and Subsequent Temporary Detentions



The total tally of kidnappings, enforced disappearances, and subsequent temporary detentions in 2023 reached 90 cases. This figure encompasses 57 instances of temporary detentions following 33 incidents of kidnappings and enforced disappearances, targeting 84 Libyan and 6 Egyptian nationals. There emerges a disturbing trend of these kidnappings selectively targeting individuals involved in political or civil activism.

LCW draws attention to the challenge in documenting cases involving women and girls. Often, female victims are hesitant to seek assistance due to fear, highlighting a significant obstacle to their engagement in civil activities. This issue is particularly acute in the context of the ongoing targeted harassment of Libyan female activists in recent years. Consequently, women's participation in the civil sphere has significantly declined, driven by societal pressures. Notably, this includes a systematic campaign of defamation and the pronouncements from the Libyan Dar Al-Ifta. Such declarations critically assess the legality and morality of women activists, especially those advocating for gender rights, further inhibiting their active participation in the civil domain.



90 instances of kidnappings, enforced disappearances and temporary detentions

The majority of these abductions have occurred in urban cities, with Benghazi as the primary location for an escalated number of kidnappings, with a total of 18 documented abductions. A discernible pattern was observed wherein abductions frequently are followed with disappearance of individuals.

However, it has been established that these disappearances tend to be temporary, as the detained individuals are either located or their families are notified by the authorities responsible for the detention. The recurrent attribution of these actions to specific military units, such as Tariq bin Ziyad and the Internal Security Service, particularly in scenarios linked to political and civil activism, illustrates a systematic tactic employed to suppress oppositional voices against the Libyan Arab Armed Forces.

LCW documented 28 instances where activists were detained in areas under

the control of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces. Specifically, a former political activist was abducted near his residence in Benghazi and remains missing. The Internal Security Service arbitrarily arrested a civil society activist in Benghazi, later releasing him. A former government official was ambushed by three military vehicles in the Fuwayhat area of Benghazi and freed after two weeks. Similarly, a political activist was forcibly taken from his home in the Shabna neighbourhood of Benghazi and released after more than a month. Another political activist was abducted from his residence in the Al-Hadayek area of Benghazi. An election candidate in Derna was arrested following a smear campaign, accompanied by threats of displacement and death from the LAAF. After critiquing the political climate in eastern Libya via a public video on social media, a social activist was detained. The Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade arrested five civilians in Sirte, including a minor, for allegedly supporting the former regime after finding images of Muammar Gaddafi on their mobile phones. A government official was kidnapped in Al-Fuwayhat by a military unit and released a month later.

Additionally, LCW noted the mass arrest of 10 civilians, including an elderly person, in Sirte by agents of the Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade. Furthermore, the Internal Security Service arbitrarily detained nine men associated with international organizations after their workplaces in Sabha were raided by the General Department of Criminal Investigation, citing accusations related to their humanitarian work during interrogations; they were later released.¹⁴

LCW further reported the abduction of a military prosecutor by three armed assailants in the presence of his children, leaving his family without any information on his location. In a separate incident, a government official was abducted in Ghout al-Shaal by gunmen, only to be released after five days.¹⁵ An activist was abducted during the demonstrations against the Government of National Unity in the Dhahra area.¹⁶ Forces affiliated Tariq bin Ziyad abducted a local poet in the heart of Sirte city. Concurrently, a civilian was taken for posting a video on Facebook where he urged the eastern government to ensure justice and fair distribution of municipal positions in Ajdabiya. The civilian was subsequently released after 10 days.¹⁷

In a harrowing account, a Libyan activist details the brutality he endured from suspected HoR-affiliated forces and LAAF elements during his mid-2023 detention in Benghazi. He stated:

[14] LCW report. "[Monthly Reports](#)", May, August, September, October, November, and December 2023.

[15] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [June 2023](#).

[16] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [August 2023](#).

[17] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [November 2023](#).



In broad daylight, near my residence in Benghazi, three unmarked vehicles disgorged a group of armed men wearing masks. On a public street, they intercepted me, brandished their weapons, and forced me into one of the vehicles. They used a makeshift head covering to blind me.

After thirty minutes, I found myself within a security headquarters. A man in civilian clothing removed the head covering. The interrogation started with a stark threat: any change of facts would be met with death and torture. His inquiries focused on my online activity and social media posts. He questioned my opinions about the current political situation. My online discussions regarding the recent elections and my connections with individuals they deemed suspicious were scrutinized intensely.

Following my responses, the interrogator accused me of falsehood and demanded I unlock my phone using the passcode. My compliance did not prevent him from ordering two individuals to confine me in solitary confinement. The cell size was extremely small and it felt too tight, and it lacked proper ventilation. Food was withheld for two full days. Upon release, I discovered that this facility is Benghazi's Internal Security Prison.

On the third day, I was transferred to the interrogation office and subjected to physical torture. They beat me on my back and legs in an attempt to elicit confessions to fabricated crimes and to force me give information about individuals I have not met or even known before. Their intent was clear: to fabricate charges of conspiracy or treason. Despite repeated interrogations lacking legal basis, they were unable to substantiate their accusations. For two months, I remained in solitary confinement, effectively disappeared from the outside world. Any contact with my family or others was strictly prohibited.

My release was contingent upon signing a pledge to abstain from political activity and social media engagement. The physical and psychological effects of this ordeal persist even today. Reintegration into normal life remains a significant challenge.



Arbitrary Arrests and Detention



This section enumerates instances in which individuals were detained for prolonged periods in state-managed detention facilities without adherence to formal legal processes, such as the issuance of arrest warrants or judicial referrals, highlighting a breach of lawful due process.

LCW has documented the arbitrary arrest and detention of 50 men in total, all of Libyan nationality, including one man arrested at Benina International Airport¹⁸ and another in central Benghazi,¹⁹ while another man was detained in Al-Kuifiya Prison, a man was also arrested at Tripoli Airport.²⁰ All were arrested by the Internal Security forces.

2023 witnessed a significant increase in the detention of political activists and political party members, particularly in eastern Libya.

LCW highlighted the arbitrary arrest of five political party members who were taken from their party's headquarters in Sirte by armed forces linked to the Department of Criminal Investigation. The arrests were made on the pretext of attempting to secure a permit for organizing an election-related seminar.²¹ LCW also documented the arrest of another political activist at Benina Airport by the Internal Security in Benghazi, followed by his release and subsequent detainment a week later.²²

A mass arrest campaign targeted 13 civilians in the wake of clashes with armed individuals affiliated with the former Defense Minister, Mahdi Al-Barghathi.²³

LCW reported the arrest of the Dean and four faculty members at the University of Tripoli by Tripoli's Internal Security Forces, in response to their protest demanding their salaries from the Government of National Unity.²⁴

By the last quarter of 2023, a significant increase in the arbitrary detention of four political activists in Benghazi was observed. These detentions were executed by the Internal Security Agency and the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade as components of a widespread arrest campaign, coinciding with a military operation in the Al-Salmani district of central Benghazi. This operation saw confrontations between a faction of the Libyan Armed Forces and the Mahdi Al-Barghathi group.²⁵

[18] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [December 2023](#).

[19] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).

[20] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [March 2023](#).

[21] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [April 2023](#).

[22] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [August 2023](#).

[23] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).

[24] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [November 2023](#).

[25] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).

Six other political activists were kidnapped by the Internal Security reportedly based on complaints filed against them concerning their meetings discussing the political situation in Libya. They all remain in detention at the Internal Security prison in Benghazi.²⁶

Worth noting, the section about migrants and refugees details the arbitrary detention of 200 Sudanese asylum seekers near the United Nations Refugee Agency in the Sarraj area, carried out by DCIM agents, with the majority still being held in detention.

[26] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).



Extrajudicial and Unlawful Killings

LCW documented the extrajudicial killings of 23 civilians across Libya including 11 documented killings in Tarhuna mass graves section of this report.

In Zawiya, four civilians perished as a result of indiscriminate shelling by unidentified armed groups during clashes east of the city. In addition, a 14-year-old Libyan child was tragically killed by armed groups affiliated with the LAAF during an exchange of fire with suspected drug smugglers on the border.²⁷

A political detainee held by the Special Deterrence Forces (SDF) in Tripoli died in custody due to alleged medical neglect at the SDF's Deterrence facility in Tripoli.²⁸

A civilian was killed in Derna by the Internal Security Agency two days after a group of civilians were arbitrarily detained by the ISA.²⁹

LCW also documented a shooting death of an Egyptian civilian at a security checkpoint in the Makhili area south of Tobruk by the Libyan Arab Armed Forces. The victim was riding in a vehicle carrying migrants when they were fired upon indiscriminately, the hail of gunfire resulted in the migrant's immediate death and ejection from the vehicle.³⁰

Another civilian was unlawfully killed due to targeted gun shooting during a military operation in the Salmani neighbourhood of central Benghazi by a group affiliated with the Libyan Armed Forces.³¹

LCW documented the death of a civilian in Tariq bin Ziyad prison in Benghazi. Informants about the case confirmed that he had been arbitrarily detained for seven years. His family was contacted to receive the body from the Benghazi Aljala Medical Centre for Accidents and Emergency. Doctors there confirmed the body showed signs of torture following performed autopsy. Another civilian was shot by unknown assailants. He died of his wounds one day after being shot by the armed men riding in a civilian car on a public street in the Al-Saberiy neighbourhood.³²

[27] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [June 2023](#).

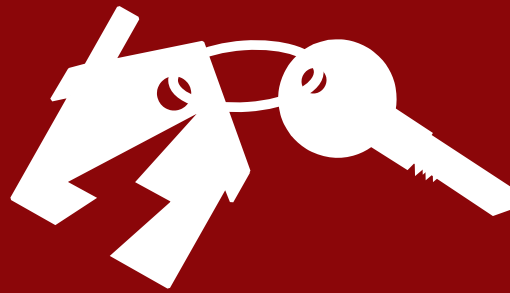
[28] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [February 2023](#).

[29] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [May 2023](#).

[30] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [February 2023](#).

[31] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [October 2023](#).

[32] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [December 2023](#).



Forced Evictions

Following the Government of National Unity's announcement of the "Return to Life" project on August 27, 2021, media reports indicated a hefty allocation of 8.5 billion dinars, representing 52% of the 2021 total development budget, to fund the alleged reconstructions.³³

The eastern House of Representatives stalled approval of the roughly 111 billion Libyan dinar in general budget. The delay stemmed from concerns over highly increased public spendings and the controversy surrounding expenditures amidst Libya's volatile currency exchange rate. The budget was eventually revised down to 89 billion dinars and approved in 2023.³⁴

The so-called "reconstruction" file within the "Return to Life" project has become a feeding trough for both political factions and their allied local companies. These companies, led by major capital owners with ties to government leaders in both factions, exploit the reconstruction to line their pockets through inflated costs, further entrenching the existing web of corruption.³⁵

Instead of aiding displaced families who lost homes in war-torn areas like Tawargha, Ubari, Sirte, Derna, Marzuk, and Benghazi, the eastern and western Libyan governments prioritize reconstruction. Their projects involve demolishing and forcibly evicting residents from low-income housing in vital city areas like Benghazi, Tripoli, and Misrata, with no announced plans to compensate legal property owners.

In March 2023, Libyan Armed Forces swiftly sealed off targeted areas in central Benghazi with imposing blue hoarding fences. LAAF vehicles and personnel controlled access through narrow entry points.³⁶ In early April, the Reconstruction Committee of Libya's eastern government issued a brutal eviction order, giving residents only 3 days to vacate their homes.

While some of the evicted families received only verbal promises of compensation, at least none of the 12 evicted families that became homeless interviewed by LCW have received any. Throughout eastern and western Libya, various entities under government control are accelerating the demolition of homes through sudden forced evictions carried out by

[33] ["A staggering 8.5 billion dinars allocated to fund Al-Dbeibah government's projects, bypassing official budget."](#) Bawabat Alwasat News. August 28, 2023.

[34] See Table 2, Public Budget Resources for Year 2023, presented in "[Law No. 29 of 2023 AD on Approving the State's General Budget for 2023](#)". October 12, 2023.

[35] ["Harvesting Corruption in Libya 2023 funds: Transnational Plunder and What Lies Beneath."](#) Bawabat Al-Wasat. December 30, 2023.

Also see, ["Head of the Libyan Constitutional Drafting Body Arrested and Detained on Corruption Charges."](#) Asharq Al-Awsat. November 2, 2023.

[36] ["Libya: Entire Families Evicted from Their Homes"](#). Joint Statement by the World Organisation Against Torture and the Libyan Anti-Torture Network. April 2023.

aggressive armed groups where agents from the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade in Benghazi, the Joint Force in Misrata, and several security forces in Tripoli received orders to resort to excessive force and violence and have evidently employed humiliating and inhumane tactics.³⁷

Similarly, the Government of National Unity forcibly evicted residents of apartment buildings in the Qushi area of Misrata city. The eviction was carried out by elements of Misrata Joint Forces, who suddenly notified the residents via loudspeakers to immediately evacuate all 68 buildings based on a demolition order issued by the Libyan Attorney General's Office in Tripoli. The Joint Forces agents used the same practices as the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade, threatening and intimidating civilian residents with force of arms, insulting families, and treating them in a humiliating and inhumane manner.³⁸

Identical patterns of March evictions appeared in Misrata too, Libyan partner civil society organizations and media reports confirmed that several civilians became homeless due to the forced evictions in Misrata. Reliable sources have confirmed that there were 447 families living in the Al-Qoushi buildings of which 16 families were evicted during the first week of Ramadan due to the demolition of the four buildings.³⁹

In May and June of 2023, Benghazi witnessed a surge in demolitions forced using excessive forces against residents who were inhumanely dragged out by Tarek Ben Ziyad agents. Operations went beyond homes, impacting public and private properties and leaving many residents scrambling for shelter with no clear relocation options or compensation. The destruction view of Benghazi's landscape following the demolitions sparked public outrage as the demolitions significantly damaged historical landmarks and cultural sites, dismantling the city's identity.⁴⁰ The demolitions targeted historical buildings, abandoned houses of people displaced earlier by war, and even inhabited houses. Testimonies from Benghazi residents and

[37] "Letter to the Government of Libya." [A/HRC/OTH/63/2023](#) (June 2023). The communication was jointly authored by a group of UN Special Rapporteurs, including SR on arbitrary detention, SR of cultural rights, SR on freedom of expression, SR on peaceful assembly, SR of adequate housing, SR human rights defenders, and SR on internally displaced persons. It expresses concern about the demolitions of cultural property and forced evictions occurring in Libya.

[38] "[2023 Facts and Figures](#)". UNICEF. The sheet mentions forcibly evicted persons, including families with adults or children with disabilities or chronic diseases, and the special needs of households headed by women; in addition to the victims of long-term displacement in Libya.

[39] "[Libya: Entire Families Evicted from Their Homes.](#)" Joint statement by the World Organization Against Torture and the Libyan Network Against Torture. April 2023.

[40] "[Removal of Damaged Historical Buildings in Downtown Benghazi sparks outrage](#)" Alwasat Gate. 29 March, 2023.

and sources confirm threats and a complete ban on filming and media coverage imposed by Tarek Ben Ziyad agents.

A journalist who was preparing a report on the evictions and demolitions carried out by the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade was arrested from his home and taken to an unknown location. He was forcibly disappeared for a week, and it later emerged that he had been interrogated by the Internal Security Agency before being released. Days later, outrage over the demolitions intensified when the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade arrested an activist protesting the evictions. He was held incommunicado for a week, subjected to interrogation by Internal Security, before finally being released.⁴¹ A journalist's camera memory card was confiscated while photographing eviction and demolition sites for a media report. Additionally, a protest in central Al-Sabri district was met with violence; security forces also beat and forcibly dispersed the demonstrators.

Local residents reported that frustrated civilians attempted to stage another peaceful protest against the demolitions. However, for the second time, authorities prevented the gathering. Some protest organizers were then arrested and interrogated by the Internal Security Agency before being released after a few hours. Residents met with a Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade military figure named Ali Al-Mashay to discuss the evictions. Al-Mashay promised to investigate their concerns, but ultimately took no action.⁴²

On May 29, the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade arrested a civil society activist and Al-Sabri official working for the municipality following the municipality's announcement of the establishment of a committee to identify those affected by the demolition and removal of homes. The two were held captive in the Brigade's quarters for two weeks before being released.

A climate of fear has gripped Benghazi as a result of the relentless security crackdown on activists and civilians speaking out against the demolitions. LCW reports that residents are terrified to share information due to the constant surveillance of anyone discussing the evictions. Frustrated and unable to file legal complaints, many feel utterly powerless. One witness claims LAAF ultimately controls the evictions, with the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade serving as the 'iron hand' for these illegal evictions.

A Libyan woman fights a relentless battle with authorities in eastern Libya to reclaim her family's home, taken from them under the guise of demolition. Her story recounts the harrowing events of March 2023:

[41] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [April 2023](#).

[42] LCW report. "Monthly Reports", [May 2023](#).



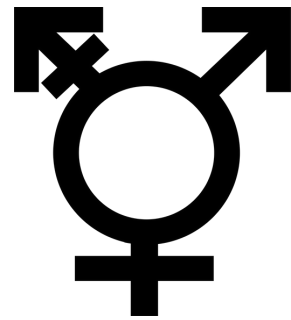
My family legally owned an apartment in the center of Benghazi, documented ownership of the property readily available. The violent clashes between armed factions in 2014 forced us to flee the area, leaving our apartment behind. When we returned, the damage caused by the war was still visible, but the house was still standing. It had only a few holes and cracks; the foundation remained strong, and the cracks could be repaired. We had even secured a court order for compensation to restore it upon our return.

Then, at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, a month traditionally dedicated to peace and family reunion, Tariq Ben Ziyad vehicles surrounded the area where we lived. We then heard the roar of bulldozers. Agents from the 20/20 Brigade arrived to oversee and supervise the demolition operations, without giving a single warning or any form of notification.

In a scene of utter humiliation, residents, including helpless women, were dragged out from their homes by female officers. Their property, their memories, were reduced to rubble in plain sight, an act designed to instill terror. I pleaded with the armed men. One tried to justify it with an unfounded excuse, claiming our home was 'uninhabitable.' The other man did not care to reply, and he went on to shout out loud threats and insults. 'Go to the police,' he said. 'See if they care. Just five minutes away, carrying the documents that confirmed our ownership and the home's viability, I ran to the police station. But even a basic complaint was denied. Their response was that the issue applied to everyone, and like all others, we had to accept that our house would be destroyed by the government. Now, we're forced to rent, with no state support or compensation. Fear has silenced many, but not my family.

We refuse to be silenced in the face of injustice. They took our home, destroyed the community we cherished, the place where we had memories. They stole our dignity, the walls that held our childhood paints. I still hold a glimmer of hope and I refuse to be silenced. This fight is far from over.





Gender-Based Violence

2023 ushered in a wave of oppressive gender-based restrictions in Libya, aimed at stifling the freedoms of women and girls. These restrictions target both their ability to engage in civil society activities and their fundamental right to freedom of movement. Travel restrictions now make it difficult for women to move freely.

In March 2023, the Internal Security Agency in Tripoli implemented a particularly egregious policy where female passengers traveling through Mitiga, Misrata airports, or crossing land borders to Tunisia, are until now forced to complete a mandatory application form. This form, presented as a "legal regulation" can prevent travel if not filled out or if the reasons provided do not satisfy officers, compels women to justify traveling alone without a male companion.⁴³ The implemented regulation impacted all female travelers, including both women and girls. The Internal Security Agency, border officials, and airport staff did not ever provide any explanation for how the mandatory questionnaire data will be used. These ongoing restrictions on solo female travel have significantly disrupted civil activities for many women and girls. Businesswomen and mothers were particularly impacted, facing hurdles to travel even for emergencies.⁴⁴

The policies of Tripoli's ruling Government of National Unity (GNU) are widely seen as intensifying social restrictions on women and girls. This is achieved through social stigma and smear campaigns targeting female activists, particularly those in leadership roles.⁴⁵

We observed a concerning trend throughout the year: the use of spurious criminal charges, including accusations of homosexuality, alcohol abuse, and atheism, to silence and impede women engaged in civil activism.⁴⁶ Fueled by the government's incendiary pronouncements on social media platforms, coordinated harassment campaigns against female activists have intensified and now encompass explicit threats and cyberbullying directed at them through their personal social media accounts.

LCW was able to document four cases of female civil society and media activists arrested in Libya. These women were subjected to torture and sexual violence in detention, along with intrusive questioning about their sexual orientation. False accusations of prostitution, drug use, and traveling without a male guardian were used to intimidate them.

[43] "[Security Procedures enforced on Libyan Women travelling without a Male Companion ... Between Freedom and Restriction](#)" Abaad News. May 2023.

[44] "[CRUSHING LIBERTY: RELENTLESS RESTRICTIONS ON LIBYAN WOMEN AND ENFORCED MALE GUARDIANSHIP](#)" Lawyers for Justice in Libya. 1 June 2023.

[45] "[Libyan Women Protest Decision to Restrict Their Travel Abroad](#)" Middle East News. May 2023.

[46] "[Could Libya Become Africa's Afghanistan?](#)" Fikra Forum. 26 July 2023.

LCW's ongoing work reveals a disturbing pattern where internal security forces in both eastern and western Libya, along with the Presidential Council's Deterrence Force and the Ministry of Interior's Criminal Investigation Department systematically targeting these women. Women who do not conform to what is referred to as 'conservative' dress codes also face abuse. LCW documented cases of humiliation and pressure to wear hijabs inside detention facilities, with one case involving a horrific sexual assault at a one of Tripoli's police departments.⁴⁷

Leveraging Libya's social and cultural norms, these abuses are strategically deployed to silence women's voices in both political and civil spheres. Survivors, often targeted by vicious smear campaigns after release, face severe psychological and social repercussions. These ripple outwards, fracturing relationships with families and communities, and creating a hostile environment that restricts their freedoms. Movement, work, communication, education, and even marriage become battlegrounds, all within the suffocating grip of domestic violence.

The story of a Libyan woman, who was a humanitarian and charity activist who helped victims of the Derna flood disaster, revealed the harsh reality of intimidation and harassment faced by female activists in the country:



I was assisting Derna flood survivors, and that was a good reason for them to target me. LAAF agents threatened and even harassed me. At some point, they started denying me access to Derna city and I could no longer reach displaced families in need. On social media, I posted and spoke about financial manipulation of Derna fund and I talked about corruption and stealing public money. I said that the money should go to the affected families because they deserve it. I also dared to demand accountability from officials regarding the Derna dam collapse, a disaster that claimed the lives of some of my own family members. But my actions triggered threats of imprisonment. The constant fear for my safety and the safety of those around me ultimately forced me to abandon my humanitarian work and silence my voice. This chilling effect is a reality for many women who dare to speak out in Libya.



[47] LCW chose not to include the details and the exact locations of 4 documented cases in its public monthly reports due to the precarious security situation and victims' fear of reprisal.

Silencing Civil Society



In March 2023, the Legal Department of the Supreme Judicial Council issued a legal opinion stating that all non-governmental civil society organizations registered after 2011 are illegal,⁴⁸ and claimed that CSOs are not in compliance with Law No. 19 of 2001.⁴⁹

A firestorm of criticism erupted in Libya following a controversial legal opinion issued by the Supreme Judicial Council. Activists, human rights defenders, and international organizations have all expressed disapproval of the opinion. While such an opinion lacks legal force, it has a chilling effect on public confidence and trust in the essence of Libyan civil society's work. This blatant disregard for the 2011 Constitutional Declaration further sows seeds of doubt about the Supreme Judicial Council's independence from the Government of National Unity. Despite the passage of Law No. 7 of 2023, offering a supposed lifeline to registered organizations, Libyan CSOs face a battle to gain public acceptance specially with the persistent crack between Benghazi and Tripoli Civil Society Commissions that further hampers the work of Libyan activists and erodes public trust in civil society organizations.⁵⁰

Civil society actors in also face persistent pattern of violence. Throughout the year, human rights defenders, journalists, and activists were subjected to threats, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and kidnappings. In eastern and western Libya, the Internal Security Forces targeted at least 32 civil society actors. Among these cases, a disturbing 28 cases were mentioned in enforced disappearances and short-term detention section. LCW documented a particularly concerning incident in Sabha. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) unlawfully arrested and interrogated nine individuals employed by international and local organizations working in the humanitarian and human rights fields. The interrogations were reportedly based on the organizations' legal status and the nature of their operational activities, however all 9 were released hours following the arrest.

The organization also documented the arrests of five political activists for trying to obtain a security permit to hold an awareness seminar about elections and rights from the political party headquarters in Sirte.

LCW also documented the abduction of a member of a well-known political party from the city of Benghazi by armed men affiliated with the Internal Security Forces. He was later detained in Al-Kuwaifiya prison. It is believed

[48] ["LIBYAN ORGANISATIONS CALL ON AUTHORITIES TO STOP DRACONIAN LAWS AND CIVIL SOCIETY CRACKDOWN."](#) Lawyers for Justice in Libya. April 2023.

[49] ["Libya: Amendment to draconian Law 19/2001 on civil society offers no solution"](#) Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. 23 March 2023.

[50] See Legal Commentary titled ["New law urgently required to protect freedom of association Libya: Nothing can be gained by turning back to Gaddafi-era law"](#). Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. March 2023.

that the reason for his abduction was his criticism of the incidents of kidnapping and illegal arrests on the "Clubhouse" platform.

In response to public outcry over the dams collapse in Derna, five activists who participated in the September 18th demonstrations⁵¹ demanding reconstruction and accountability were arrested by the Tariq bin Ziyad agents and the Internal Security Forces. All five activists were eventually released.

After the demonstrations in Derna, LAAF forces imposed strict security measures. These measures included isolating some areas from public and media access, and a total cut off of the internet and phone networks. Later, Al-Awqaf bodies in the east, west launched incitement campaigns against the demonstrators. In Sirte, Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade arrested 14 other civilians with accusations of supporting the former regime and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi. While targeting of activists seemed to decrease in the second half of 2023, a surge in arrests coincided with a military operation in Benghazi's Al-Salamani neighborhood where combined force of Internal Security Forces and the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade arbitrarily arrested four political activists. This pattern continued with a mass arrest campaign in Benghazi targeting 13 civilians following clashes with Barghathi forces. Notably, this campaign included a political activist and a journalist, who were both later released.

In the west, LCW documented the arrest of members and the dean of Tripoli Faculty of Arts the Dean from the University premises by Internal Security Forces following their sit-in strikes demanding the improvement of their salaries by the Government of National Unity, but they were released later same day.

In a compelling testimony, a Libyan journalist detailed the treatment of individuals who participate in peaceful demonstrations. These individuals are often arrested with no legal basis:



In August 2023, I joined a demonstration in the streets of Tripoli. During the protest, I captured photos and videos that I later posted on my Facebook account. The next day, as I left for university, a group of armed men in black military uniforms and carrying weapons arrested me. They threw me into the back of a Toyota Hilux used for transporting prisoners and transferred me to the headquarters of

[51] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [September 2023](#).

the Internal Security Agency in Tripoli. There, I was placed in a cell with others for five days without being referred to prosecution. I was not even charged. On the sixth day, I was brought before an interrogating agent who investigated me. The officer demanded that I sign a pledge to refrain from participating in any future demonstrations or gatherings. After I signed it, they let me go.



Derna Dams Collapse



On September 11, 2023, Hurricane Daniel slammed into Libya's eastern coast after battering Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey's Mediterranean shores. The storm brought torrential rain and winds. On the morning of September 12th, news broke on social media platforms that the two primary dams of Derna, Derna and Abu Mansour, had suffered a structural failure. The resulting surge of water flowed down Derna valley, significantly damaging thousands of homes, and businesses along its path.

The disaster obliterated an estimated 25% of the city's total area. The Government of National Unity reported that the affected zone spanned six square kilometers. Despite weather warnings issued by international navigation agencies 72 hours before the storm, Libyan authorities failed to implement critical measures that could have included issuing public warnings or initiating evacuations from high-risk areas. This apparent lack of preparedness is particularly concerning in light of reports that the Libyan Armed Forces had imposed a curfew⁵² in the hours leading up to the disaster. Reported from residents, the curfew has inadvertently hindered residents' ability to take necessary precautions or leave the valley.⁵³

Initial reports offered a horrifying glimpse of the disaster, estimating a death toll exceeding 11,300 and over 10,100 missing. These figures were later revised to a confirmed 3,252 deaths. The true number of missing remains unclear, with various governmental sources providing conflicting information. A joint assessment by the UN Development Program and the Libyan government revealed widespread infrastructure damage in Derna, with 876 buildings completely destroyed and a further 3,100 rendered uninhabitable. The devastation extended to nearby cities like Sousse and Al Bayda, with estimates suggesting a total of 20,000 potentially damaged buildings across the east region.

The most recent government figures, compiled by the end of November 2023 indicate a revised death toll of 4,300, alongside 3,777 missing persons, 43,421 displaced individuals, and widespread destruction impacting over 6,400 buildings and 5 bridges. These numbers paint a sobering picture of the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the immense task of reconstruction that lies ahead.⁵⁴

The Libyan Attorney General's Office published different figures in a statement on the official Facebook page, confirming that the total number of

[52] "[Security Directorate of Derna announces a curfew due to bad weather](#)" Libyan News Agency. 10 September 2023.

[53] "[Curfew announced in Derna](#)" Bawabat Al-Wasat News. 10 September 2023.

[54] See a research by Mousa Al-Gounaidi titled "[The collapse of the Derna dams during Hurricane Daniel: Did the Political challenges and undisciplined flow of information contribute to increase losses that could have been avoided?](#)". Nidaa Organization for Development and Human Rights. November 2023.

documented deaths is 4,540, including 3,566 unidentified individuals. Of these, 3,146 are Libyan citizens and 420 are migrants and foreign workers.⁵⁵

The Attorney General also confirmed that the identities of only 974 have been identified, of whom 818 are Libyans and 156 are of other nationalities.⁵⁶

Libyan specialists, activists, and residents who witnessed the incident highlight deficiencies in government preparedness and a lack of robust crisis management and leadership during and after the dam collapse. Public opinion in Libya suggests that these political divides have significantly hampered the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to affected populations. Concerns have been raised regarding the actions of both governments in the lead-up to the disaster. Specifically, questions have been raised about their failure to implement all possible preventative measures, despite reported knowledge of the dams' weak infrastructure and prior warnings issued by weather agencies regarding potential consequences. The allegations go further, claiming both governments bungled the decision-making process and deliberately concealed crucial information that could have calmed public anxieties during the crisis.⁵⁷

Derna civilians have endured systematic discrimination and forced displacement since 2014. In light of this, the collapse of the dams has raised concerns about the role of the authorities under the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) in the east. Allegations of corruption and deliberate neglect are contributing to these concerns. The Libyan Arab Armed Forces' implementation of restrictions on public demonstrations and limitations on access of media and movement within disaster zones further exacerbates the situation. This includes the arrests of a group of Derna protestors who demanded an investigation, accountability, national unity, and an end to corruption on September 18, 2023 calling for an investigation and accountability of those responsible.⁵⁸

A critical failing of official entities was the lack of effort to comprehensively document and disseminate accurate information on the number of regular migrants, including those working in vital sectors like healthcare and education, in Derna. This negligence extended to irregular migrants and asylum seekers, with hundreds reportedly dead, missing, or injured, yet no official monitoring or aid provided.

[55] See the statistics published on the face book [page of the General Attorney office](#). 5 January 2024.

[56] "[General Attorney Office announces Investigations Results of Derna Crisis](#)" Bawabat Al-Wasat. January 2024.

[57] "[Libya: Addressing the Derna dams disaster in Eastern Libya](#)" Joint Statement by the World Organization Against Torture and the Libyan Anti-Torture Network. 6 October 2023.

[58] LCW report, "Monthly Reports", [September 2023](#).

Adding to the human cost, testimonies gathered by the organization post-disaster revealed material damage to Qarnada prison. Furthermore, authorities inhumanely denied visitation rights to families of detainees, preventing them from verifying the well-being of their loved ones. This egregious violation of basic rights persisted until the end of 2023.

Legal Review and Classification of Violations Committed in Libya 2023



Violations of International Human Rights Law

The 1990 International Convention on Migrant Worker Rights,⁵⁹ ratified by Libya, appears to have limited practical application. Both the Government of National Unity in Tripoli and the eastern House of Representatives government have been implicated in actions affecting migrants.

These actions include but not limited to mass expulsions, such as the documented case of 3,000 Egyptians sent to the Egyptian border, and the detention of hundreds of Sudanese asylum seekers in Tripoli.⁶⁰

Additionally, reports suggest involvement by entities linked to both Libyan governments in expelling migrants across the desert, resulting in deaths from harsh conditions.

Despite ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the year saw a disturbing surge in arbitrary arrests targeting activists.⁶¹ Disappearances and suppression of free speech plagued cities like Zawiya, Benghazi, and Darna.

The Libyan government, as well as military forces and armed groups that exercise actual authority in certain areas, bear full responsibility under the ratified Geneva Conventions for civilians who died during or after military operations.⁶²

This responsibility includes searching for missing persons and using all possible means to identify bodies found in mass graves. It also includes

[59] Article 22 of [the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#) prohibits the collective expulsion of migrant workers and their families. It emphasizes the need to consider each case individually and on its own merits.

[60] [“UNHCR Calls for the Release of Sudanese Nationals from a Migrant Detention Centre in Tripoli.”](#) Bawabat Al-Wasat News. 7 November 2023.

[61] Articles 9 and 10 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), which Libya ratified in 1970, prohibit arbitrary arrest and emphasize the need to inform detainees of the reasons for their arrest and to charge them promptly. The ICCPR also requires that detainees be brought before a judge for trial within a reasonable time or be released. It also provides the right to judicial review of the legality of detention and to claim compensation for unlawful detention. The ICCPR also emphasizes the importance of humane treatment for those deprived of liberty, requiring that detainees be separated from convicted prisoners and juveniles from adults, and that they be provided with treatment that is appropriate to their unconvicted status.

[62] Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocol II of 1977 prohibits discrimination in the treatment of civilians and those no longer actively engaged in hostilities during non-international armed conflicts. It mandates humane treatment for all protected persons, regardless of race, religion, gender, or any other similar factor. This protection encompasses civilians, as well as those who have ceased hostilities.

completing searches for those who have gone missing.⁶³

War Crimes

Multiple international bodies consistently emphasize the Libyan government's responsibility to investigate allegations of human rights abuses and criminal acts occurring within its territorial jurisdiction. These reports, however, reveal a persistent pattern of serious and systematic violations.

The United Nations Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya (FFM) issued its final report in March 2023, urging the Libyan government to fulfill its investigative obligations regarding alleged human rights violations and war crimes. The FFM further warned that the entrenched pattern of abuses and the deteriorating human rights situation, particularly for migrants, creates a climate of impunity.⁶⁴

The report documented horrific abuses in Libya, including rape, slavery, and forced labor, which constitute crimes against humanity. Despite this, accountability remains elusive.

In May 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued four arrest warrants under seal, keeping the identities of the suspected war criminals' secret. The UN additionally requested two more warrants, but their status remains undisclosed. The ICC investigators conducted a thorough investigation, gathering over 4,000 pieces of evidence, including video and photographic proof, and interviewing numerous witnesses. However, the Libyan government has yet to demonstrate a serious commitment to investigating these alleged crimes.

A damning report by the UN Panel of Experts on Libya, released in September 2023, exposed a web of human rights violations in detention centers across the country. The report identified facilities in Tripoli and other armed group-controlled areas as hotspots for systematic abuses, including

[63] Articles 32 to 34 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions emphasize the right of families to know the fate of their loved ones who have gone missing during or after non-international armed conflicts. They stress the need to record the data of detainees and prisoners and to facilitate access to information about those who have gone missing. They also call for arrangements to allow for the search and identification of the dead, the protection of their remains and their burial places, and the facilitation of access for the families of the dead and the permanent maintenance of the burial places. They also provide for the possibility of the return of the remains and personal belongings of the dead to their home countries.

[64] See "Report of the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya". Human Rights Council, Fifty-second session. [A/HRC/52/83](#), 3 March 2023.

arbitrary detention, torture, and denial of fair trials. The Panel documented a disturbing pattern: elements within both governing authorities appear to use these detentions to silence political dissent, control civilians, and fuel illicit economic activities.

The report specifically highlights the role of the Special Deterrent Forces in Tripoli, as well as Libyan Arab Armed Forces facilities, in perpetrating these abuses. Detainees face a harrowing reality, subjected to inhumane treatment such as brutal beatings and psychological torture. The report points to the direct involvement – or at least tacit approval – of facility administrators in these violations, with specific individuals repeatedly identified as perpetrators.

Despite LAAF's denials regarding unofficial detention sites, abuse incidents, and the culpability of their personnel, the Panel stands firm on its findings, backed by substantial evidence. The report goes beyond detention centers, shedding light on attacks targeting civil society activists and journalists, and suppressing freedom of expression through violence and intimidation. The Internal Security Service is implicated in these attacks.

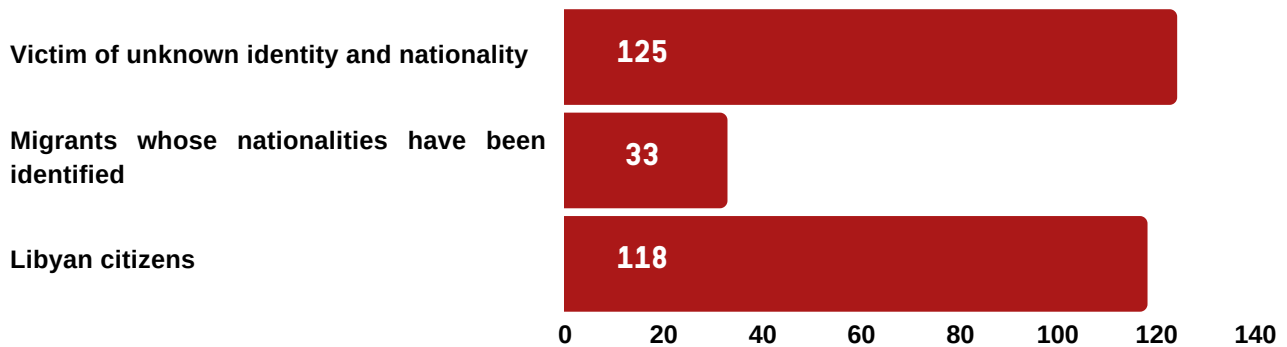
Furthermore, the Panel documented a serious violation of international law – the arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of UN personnel by LAAF members at Benghazi airport. The report investigates human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Libya. Networks involving Libyan nationals collaborate with foreign traffickers, establishing smuggling routes that expose migrants, including children, to violence. Slavery, sexual assault, and other severe abuses are commonplace at various detention centers used by traffickers.⁶⁵

[65] Letter addressed to the President of the Security Council from the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1973 (2011) [S/2023/673](#). 15 September 2023.

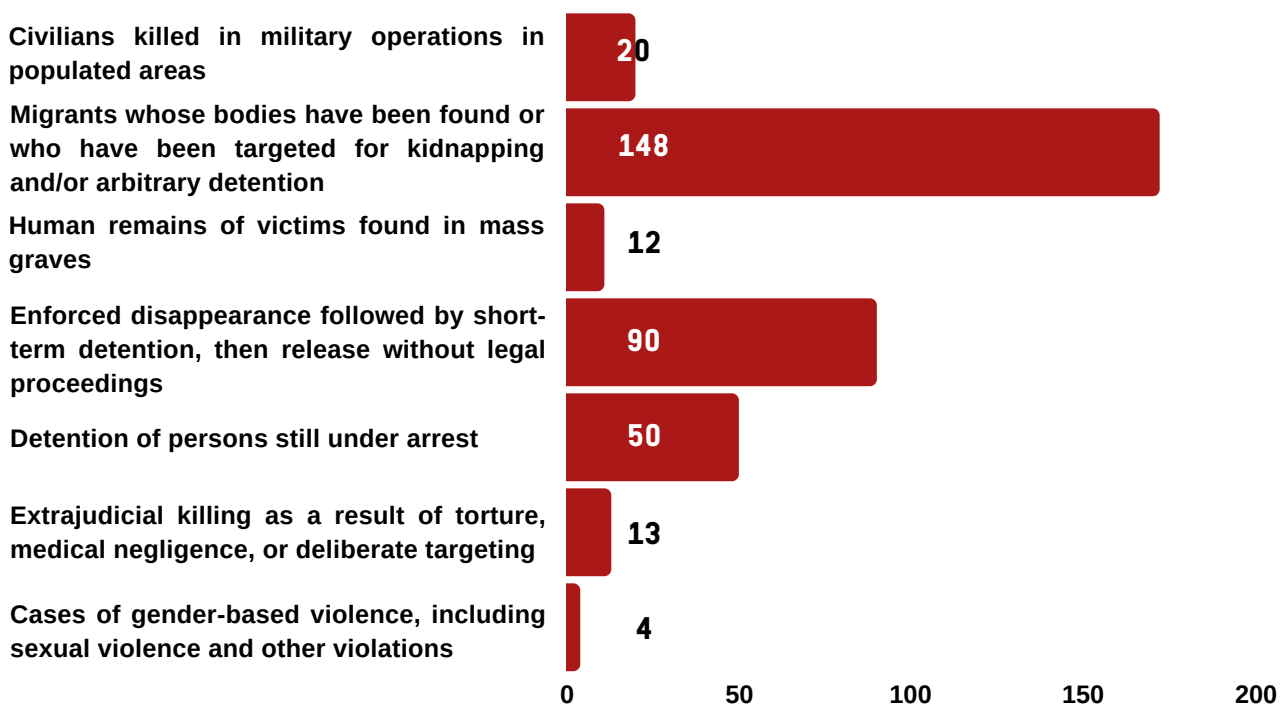
Statistics

Number of documented victims and crimes monitored by LCW during 2023:

276 victims



337 crimes*



*Many people have been subjected to more than one violation. Therefore, the number of crimes observed is higher than the number of victims.

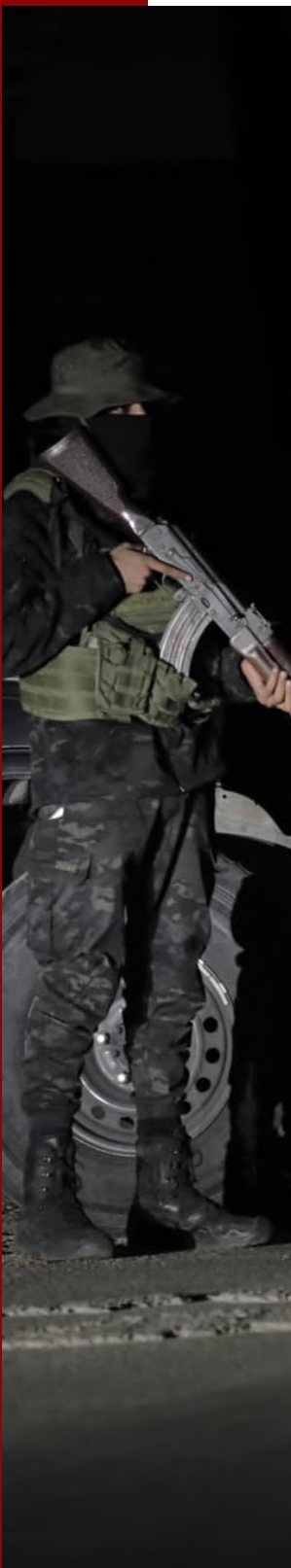
Conclusion

As 2023 closed, a disturbing pattern emerged: political and military actors throughout Libya displayed a blatant disregard for international law. Both eastern and western governments demonstrably failed to implement the plans proposed by the UN and the recommendations issued by established diplomatic and international mechanisms and missions. These comprehensive initiatives aimed to achieve justice for victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, while also paving the way for a fair and inclusive election. However, both political fronts prioritized self-promotion and potential financial gain. These so-called "reconstruction projects" appear to be a facade, motivated by self-serving political agendas and the potential for exploitation. Billions of dollars in contracts for these opaque projects, often awarded to companies facing allegations of financial misconduct, both Libyan and foreign, have depleted state resources.

Furthermore, these dubious initiatives raise serious concerns about the potential for the illegal seizure of Libya's strategic geographical assets. Project funds seem to be facilitating the unauthorized transfer of government-owned properties to officials and their allies under the guise of "real estate privatization," further fueling the militaristic ambitions of those controlling the funds. To compound these transgressions, both administrations have exhibited a callous disregard for the plight of civilians and migrants. Their continued displacement and expulsion in the relentless pursuit of these purported reconstruction projects.

While efforts should now be focused on disarmament programs, military restructuring, strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, and eradicating violence, killings, torture, and corruption, entities and elements affiliated with both governments have persisted in threatening and intimidating civilians. These entities have also engaged in forced evictions, arbitrary detention, and obstructing civil society efforts to document violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

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While the number of documented human rights violations in 2023 appears lower than in 2022, this decline masks a disturbing reality. Libyan authorities under LAAF and GNU have pursued a systematic campaign of suppression, enacting repressive legislation that criminalizes civil society work and empowers them to restrict and monitor everyone, particularly activists, defenders, and journalists. Armed groups affiliated with both governments employ torture, degrading treatment, and threats to intimidate activists and silence dissent. They aim to create an atmosphere of fear, crippling civil society's ability to document abuses and advocate for human rights.

Neither government has taken any meaningful steps to uphold public freedoms or respect human rights. Humanitarian and human rights work has been criminalized, fostering a climate of impunity with no effective international efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.

The recent collapse of the two Derna dams exemplifies the catastrophic consequences of this dysfunction. The disaster exposed the authorities' utter disregard for public safety, their mismanagement of any crisis, and their rampant corruption. Following protests demanding a unified, impartial investigation, the authorities responded with arrests, further demonstrating their contempt for basic rights.

Migrants continue to face horrific abuses, targeted by the Libyan Coast Guard at sea and subjected to torture, forced labor, and inhumane detention conditions. Many foreigners are also arbitrarily deported or expelled, with no regard for vulnerable groups like women and children.

Arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, and enforced disappearances are commonplace tools used to silence dissent and suppress peaceful expression and political activity. This report underscores the urgent need for coordinated action between civil society actors and international mechanisms. LCW documented cases paint a grim picture, revealing the systematic violation of human rights faced by all in Libya. The failure of the players to protect individuals and uphold their basic rights is undeniable.

LCW emphasizes the urgent need for immediate and concrete action to halt these violations and ensure accountability for perpetrators. All Libyan actors, including both the eastern and western governments and their affiliated armed groups, must demonstrably comply with international humanitarian law.

This requires immediate steps to incorporate its provisions into national legislation and ensure its effective implementation. Additionally, all laws, regulations, and ordinances that criminalize civil society work must be repealed. Only then can everyone in Libya safely report the violations they experience.

In conclusion, this report urges a renewed commitment to tackling the Libyan crisis, both domestically and internationally. Promoting dialogue and national reconciliation is essential for establishing a foundation for peace and stability. Furthermore, providing necessary support and care for victims, alongside dedicated efforts to end the vicious cycle of violence, violations, and impunity, is crucial for a better future for all Libyans.

Recommendations



Urgent Action by the Libyan Governments

Upholding and Ensuring Respect to International Humanitarian Law:

- LCW stress that all Libyan actors, including the Government of National Unity, affiliated military bodies, the Libyan HoR, and the Libyan Armed Forces, must demonstrably comply with international humanitarian law. This entails prioritizing the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure before, during, and after military operations, as outlined in the four Geneva Conventions. De-mining efforts in populated areas must be prioritized. Parties using prohibited methods or weapons according to the rules of war must be held accountable.
- LCW emphasize that the Libyan government should integrate the provisions of international humanitarian law into national legislation and ensure its effective implementation. This may involve creating a special protocol or a law to codify protection of civilians in times of war. This enhanced legal framework will facilitate the prosecution of war criminals according to international standards and ensure fair and just trials.

Eradicating Human Rights Violations and Supporting Victims:

- LCW call for the immediate cease of all serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, sexual and gender-based violence, and degrading treatment in detention centers.
- LCW demands to immediately launch independent and effective investigations into all documented human rights violations. All perpetrators must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. Both Libyan governments should actively facilitate the involvement of international mechanisms to investigate systematic crimes until the national judiciary achieves independence to handle such cases effectively.
- LCW calls for the Libyan government and authorities exercising de facto control to provide necessary protection, rehabilitation, awareness, and support for all those impacted by these crimes, or those involved in addressing them including victims, witnesses, lawyers, healthcare professionals, forensic doctors, judges, documentation officers, journalists, and humanitarian workers. Long-term support programs for victims, encompassing psychological, physical, and social rehabilitation, must be established, and adequately funded.

Ending Impunity and Ensuring Accountability:

- LCW calls for an immediate to carry out investigations effectively and independently into all crimes committed in Libya. To achieve this, the independence of the judiciary be encouraged and ensured in order to prosecute perpetrators fairly and impartially.
- LCW calls to the placement of national mechanisms to secure confidential reporting of violations must be established. International mechanisms should be allowed to investigate these crimes and hold those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law accountable. If existing mechanisms prove inadequate, support for real initiatives to establish a special international tribunal for Libya to address crimes stemming from the ongoing conflict should be provided.
- LCW reminded that all Government officials, leaders, and influential figures must be held accountable by the Libyan State. Public trials are essential to ensure fairness and transparency in the judicial process.

Respecting Civil and Political Rights:

Freedom of Expression and Association:

- LCW calls for an immediate cessation of harassment, smear campaigns targeting human rights defenders, and systematic violence against activists and protesters.
- LCW stresses the need to immediately repeal all local laws and regulations that restrict freedom of expression and the right to assembly and freedom of association. Any regulations governing civil society organizations must comply with international standards and respect rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Freedom of Assembly:

- LCW calls for both governments to guarantee freedom of expression and opinion, and that must entail providing a safe environment and protection for peaceful protesters. With an Immediate end to the suppression of peaceful demonstrations and protests.

Ensuring Minimum Standards for deprived of liberty:

- LCW recalls obligations to protect people in detention. Libyan authorities must provide humane conditions of detention for prisoners and detainees, respecting their basic rights to medical care, adequate food, and a safe and healthy living environment.

- LCW reminds that Legal safeguards and the right to legal representation for all detainees must be guaranteed. Legal procedures must be followed without discrimination, and all those unlawfully detained must be released immediately. Guarantee prisoners' right to communicate with their families and disclose the whereabouts of those forcibly disappeared. With an Immediate cessation of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, kidnapping, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests.

Respect for Migrant and Refugee Rights:

- LCW demand an immediate cessation of torture and ill-treatment, and exploitation of migrants. Robust efforts to coordinate migrant rescue operations, search for missing migrants, notify embassies and families and repatriate deceased migrants, and respect for their dignity during burial for those in Libya.
- LCW stresses that cooperation between Libya and neighboring countries must be put in place to coordinate migrant rescue in the Mediterranean Sea. Immediate end to targeting and expulsion of migrants across borders.
- The Libyan state has a duty to investigate human trafficking, slavery, and all violations against migrants. This requires continuous cooperation with the International Criminal Court and other relevant mechanisms to facilitate prosecution and arrest of perpetrators.

Improving Conditions for Refugees and Asylum Seekers:

- LCW demands that the Libyan government ensures Humane treatment for refugees and UNHCR cardholders unable to return to their home countries. An Immediate cessation of arbitrary arrests and mass forced deportations targeting refugees, particularly those of Sudanese, Syrian, and Palestinian nationality due to their special humanitarian status.
- LCW emphasizes that refugees have equal access to basic rights like education, health, and work until circumstances in their home countries improve.

Urgent Action by the International Community

Exerting pressure on political fronts in Libya:

- LCW calls for more pressure on Libyan actors. The international community must exert significant pressure on all Libyan parties to demonstrably respect human rights and immediately cease serious violations. This includes imposing targeted sanctions, such as asset

freezes and travel bans, on individuals proven to be involved in grave human rights abuses, war crimes, or crimes against humanity. Continued support for the critical work of the Security Council's Panel of Experts on Libya is also essential to document and punish for these systematic crimes.

- LCW calls for a serious addressing to end Political Impasse: To achieve lasting stability, Libya requires an end to the current political division. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya UNSMIL must urgently explore new and effective approaches to facilitate a genuine political dialogue. This reformed process should include a broader range of stakeholders, especially civil society organizations, to exert pressure on Libyan authorities for meaningful reform. Respect for human rights, accountability for perpetrators, and a commitment to justice must be the core principles underpinning any future political solution and the recognition of a legitimate Libyan government.

Protecting the Rights of Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers:

- LCW stresses the need for an increased support for Migrants: The international community must significantly increase efforts to protect the rights of migrants and refugees in Libya. Given the current economic situation, the organization emphasizes the need to secure additional funds of financial, material, humanitarian, and technical assistance in order to provide legal, psychological, medical, and social support programs for migrant victims in Libya.
- LCW calls for a constructive dialogue with the European Union: The international community must pursue a constructive dialogue with European Union (EU) member states that continue to support the migrant file in Libya without the ability to monitor how financial expenditures are disbursed to Libyan institutions, particularly the Libyan Ministry of Interior and the Department for Combating Illegal Immigration.
- LCW calls for a reevaluation of EU funding to Libyan governments: The organization urges EU member states to seriously consider the recommendations presented by Libyan civil society organizations, which have warned for many years about the continued use of EU funds granted to Libya under bilateral agreements to support the targeting and interception of migrants by the Libyan Coast Guard and other security elements.
- LCW recommends UNHCR presence in eastern and southern Libya: The organization calls on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to establish offices in eastern and southern Libya to allow migrants to apply for asylum and receive humanitarian assistance.





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