

# BRIEFING ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

## OMCT GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX LAUNCH

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**Dear Colleagues,**

My name is Ahmed Mustafa, Head of the Documentation Office at Libya Crimes Watch (LCW). I extend my sincere thanks for the opportunity to address you today, on an occasion that reminds us of our shared commitment to confronting one of the gravest violations of human dignity: torture.

Despite more than a decade having passed since the fall of the former regime in Libya, the practice of torture remains widespread, systematic, and persistent. It continues to be perpetrated by security forces and armed groups across the country—east, west, and south—under a prevailing climate of impunity, institutional fragmentation, ongoing conflict, and a national justice system that has largely failed to fulfil its obligations.

In the past year alone, LCW has documented over 100 cases of torture, occurring in both official and unofficial detention facilities. Detainees are most vulnerable in the early days of their detention, often subjected to torture to extract confessions under duress, mete out retaliation or humiliation, or due to their tribal, political, or ideological affiliations. Some victims died as a direct result of torture or were left to succumb to their injuries without access to medical care.

Torture is also systematically used as a tool to silence civil society and human rights defenders. Coordinated campaigns target local and international rights organisations, shrinking the space for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In some cases, forced confessions obtained under torture are publicly disseminated on social media to smear activists and instil fear in civil society.

Among those most gravely affected are society's most vulnerable—particularly migrant women and girls, and individuals from the LGBTQI+ community—who are subjected to severe forms of torture, including sexual violence, rape, and physical and psychological degradation. Their bodies are often weaponised as tools for extortion, punishment, or so-called "moral cleansing." Migrants also face torture in the context of human trafficking and ransom demands, yet many refrain from reporting these violations due to fear of arrest or deportation, given the absence of safe and accessible reporting mechanisms.

**The methods of torture we document are diverse and harrowing:** electric shocks, beatings with sticks and chains, prolonged suspension from limbs, removal of fingernails, and threats—or acts—of sexual violence. In most cases, victims are denied access to medical examinations or forensic documentation. Physicians themselves are often threatened, and judicial investigations are rarely initiated without specific court orders, which are seldom issued.

Authorities in charge of detention facilities frequently delay referring detainees to prosecution or court until visible signs of torture have faded, or they hold them in prolonged detention for months or years until the injuries heal. Even post-release, fear of retaliation and a profound lack of trust in justice institutions prevent victims from filing complaints or seeking redress.

International mechanisms, including the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT), remain underutilised in the Libyan context. Legal illiteracy, procedural complexity, and the weakened capacity of civil society—operating under severe restrictions—make access to these mechanisms a daunting challenge. Unsurprisingly, Libya is notably absent from most international complaint databases.

**Dear participants,**

Torture is a heinous crime that is never subject to a statute of limitations. Its victims do not simply need justice; they need reparations, rehabilitation, and dignity. Yet access to medical, psychological, and social support remains extremely limited. Few organisations offer trauma-informed services that are tailored to the specific needs of torture survivors, especially among migrant populations. This vacuum not only deepens their suffering but also reinforces feelings of abandonment, isolation, and hopelessness.

**From this platform, we issue a clear call to the international organisations, civil society actors, and partners:**

- **First**, to exert sustained and meaningful pressure on Libyan authorities in all regions to immediately end the use of torture and ensure accountability for those responsible.
- **Second**, to support the work of independent organisations that continue to document violations and provide critical support to victims, often at great personal and professional risk.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we are not merely asking for solidarity; we are demanding action. Because silence, in the face of such atrocities, is complicity.

**Thank you,**