

ORAL STATEMENT

UPR PRE-SESSION ON LIBYA

*Delivered by Ali Omar, Director of Libya Crimes Watch
Geneva, August 2025*

Thank you, Chair.

I speak on behalf of Libya Crimes Watch, a survivor-led organisation working across Libya to monitor and document serious human rights violations, including widespread patterns of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and other international crimes, while supporting victims and advocating for accountability and justice.

Since the last UPR in 2020, the human rights situation in Libya has severely collapsed. Fragmented authorities in the East and West and affiliated armed groups continue to commit grave violations with total impunity. Despite accepting 181 recommendations, the Libyan authorities have failed to deliver on key commitments, particularly regarding freedom of expression, belief, and the space for civil society.

I will address three areas of serious concern:

First, the persistent and deeply rooted practices of Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance, which remain systematic across Libya.

Armed groups and security agencies involved include the Internal Security Agency, Al-Radaa Force, and the Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade. These actors operate under both the Government of National Unity in the west and the eastern authorities, including the Libyan Arab Armed Forces under the General Command. They continue to detain individuals without due process, systematically targeting activists, journalists, and others who express dissent or independent views.

LCW documented over 290 cases of arbitrary detention, more than half of which were enforced disappearances, between 2022 and 2024, including children, women and elders. Many were held without contact with the outside world, denied access to lawyers, and never brought before a court. These patterns persist. Between March and June 2025 alone, LCW documented at least 50 cases of arbitrary arrest, more than half resulting in enforced disappearances. These cases reflect a clear pattern of systematic abuse and a complete absence of judicial oversight.

We urge States to recommend that Libya:

- Accede to the International Convention on Enforced Disappearances.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all those detained without a legal basis.
- Guarantee judicial oversight of all detention practices and ensure access to legal assistance.

Second, I would like to highlight the Repression of Civil Society and Freedom of Expression.

Human rights defenders, Journalists, and civil society actors face harassment, enforced disappearance, and unfair trials. State-affiliated forces systematically obtain coerced confessions under torture, prosecute civilians before military courts, and broadcast forced confessions to defame and intimidate others.

Repressive legislation, including the Counter-Terrorism Law, the Military Courts Law, and the law on combating Cybercrime, contains vague and overbroad provisions used to silence dissent. Despite commitments made in the last cycle, Libyan authorities continue to escalate their crackdown.

In recent months, several INGOs supporting migrants were shut down, with 13 offices closed and multiple staff members interrogated or detained. Libyan civil society actors who expressed solidarity with migrants faced threats and public smear campaigns, forcing some to suspend operations or flee the country.

We recommend that Libya:

- Urgently repeal all laws used to criminalise peaceful speech and association.
- End the use of military courts to try civilians.
- Protect civil society, journalists, and human rights defenders from harassment, detention, and reprisals.

Third, I would like to address the issue of Religious Persecution and Freedom of Belief.

Libyan authorities continue to criminalise apostasy and religious conversion. From 2021 to 2024, at least 30 individuals were detained on charges related to atheism or conversion. Many were subjected to degrading treatment, including public defamation and torture. Some remain in prolonged detention without charges; others have died in custody under suspicious circumstances.

In 2024, Law No. 6/2024 was passed under the pretext of criminalising “sorcery and witchcraft”. In practice, it has been used to target followers of Sufi orders, whose religious practices have been labelled as witchcraft. At least 10 Sufi adherents, including elderly individuals, were arbitrarily detained under this law. Two of them died in custody under suspicious circumstances. Some were forcibly disappeared and denied contact with their

families or access to legal representation. No investigations have been opened, and those responsible continue to enjoy full impunity.

We call on States to recommend that Libya:

- Repeal all laws used to criminalise religious belief and peaceful spiritual practices, including Law No. 6/2024 on 'sorcery'.
- Release all individuals detained for their religious beliefs.
- Investigate all cases of torture, enforced disappearance, and deaths in custody linked to religious persecution, and bring those responsible to justice.

In conclusion, Libya's persistent failure to implement its UPR commitments underscores the need for a new approach. We urge States to move beyond rhetoric and take bold and coordinated steps to deliver justice, end impunity, and protect those most at risk. With the UN Fact-Finding Mission now concluded and no successor mechanism in place, the creation of an independent international investigative mechanism is not only necessary, it is long overdue. Alongside this, we strongly urge the appointment of a dedicated Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Libya to provide ongoing monitoring, public reporting, and direct engagement with Libyan authorities and affected communities.

These steps are essential not just to ensure oversight but to send a clear message that systematic violations will not be met with silence and to restore hope for victims and their families.

Thank you.