



**Peace process and legitimacy of elections
threatened by lack of accountability and rule of law**

**Semi-annual briefing
January – June 2021**

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies in cooperation with the organizations of the Libyan Platform Coalition

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This semi-annual briefing, authored by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) in collaboration with the organizations of the Libya Platform coalition, provides a general outlook of the human rights situation in Libya ahead of the upcoming December 2021 elections by examining different patterns of violations committed throughout the country, in the period between January and June 2021.

The non-exhaustive list of violations covered in the briefing include extrajudicial killing, torture and inhuman treatment; attacks against civilians and random civilian casualties; enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention; violations against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; restrictions on public freedoms, and attacks on civil society and journalists.

The report primarily used information shared by the sixteen member organisations of the Libya Platform and three other Libyan partner organisations.¹ Researchers at CIHRS and the Platform organisations relied on local primary sources, including first-hand accounts obtained from direct interviews. CIHRS and the Libya Platform verified information through relevant local contacts in Libya, including victims and/or members of their family, witnesses, hospital staff, lawyers, and local activists. A total of 523 interviews with local sources were carried out by CIHRS and the Libya Platform, including interviews with victims, victims' families or direct witnesses. All interviews were conducted online through secure messaging. The names of the victims were shared when identified, and when consent was obtained from the victim or their family.

The primary source information was buttressed by publications from United Nations institutions, Libyan institutions and international organisations such as Doctors without Borders (MSF) and Alarm Phone.

¹ The Libya Platform is a Libyan human rights coalition established in 2016 currently comprised of 16 human rights organisations.

It is worth noting that CIHRS, in cooperation with the Libya Platform coalition, previously published briefings in June 2020², November 2020,³ and March 2021⁴.

2 (2020) 'Libya: Human Rights Briefing (January – May 2020)' Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 10 June, [https://cihrs.org lang=en](https://cihrs.org/lang=en)

3 (2020) 'Libya: Human Rights Briefing (June – October 2020)' 24 November, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), <https://cihrs.org/libya-human-rights-briefing/?lang=en>

4 (2021) 'Libya: Human Rights Briefing (November – December 2020)' 8 March, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), <https://cihrs.org/libya-human-rights-briefing-november-december-2020/?lang=en>

Contents

Executive Summary -----	6
Recommendations -----	9
Grave human rights violations at the hands of state-affiliated armed groups continue to dominate Libya -----	12
1. Extrajudicial killing and inhuman treatment -----	12
2. Attacks against civilians and indiscriminate civilian casualties -----	17
3. Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detention -----	22
4. Violations against Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-seekers -----	26
5. Restrictions of public freedoms and attacks against civil society and journalists -----	37

Executive Summary

Less than four months before elections scheduled for December 2021, the human rights situation in Libya remains deeply problematic, most notably for migrants, amid a precariously fragile security situation.

Between January and June 2021, the Libya Platform monitored no less than 25 extrajudicial killings, 33 enforced disappearances, and 42 attacks against civilians or indiscriminate civilian casualties, including 16 children.

The situation for the 571,000 migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers is especially distressing, with violent attacks, abuse, and exploitation continuously reported. As a result, a significant increase in crossings of the central Mediterranean has been witnessed in 2021, coupled with a record-high number of illegal interceptions, reaching almost three times the total number of interceptions in 2020. In addition to illegal pushbacks and pullbacks coordinated by the Libyan Coast Guards and European states and institutions, delays and failures to launch search and rescue operations have led to a 249 per cent increase in the number of deaths at sea. This dramatic increase is a direct result of both Libyan and European authorities' failure to uphold their obligations, as highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁵.

Despite repeated condemnation of European externalisation policies,⁶ European Member States are reportedly discussing the use of the European Peace Facility,⁷ a

5 (2021) 'Act to protect migrants in central Mediterranean Sea, Bachelet urges Libya and EU', Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 26 May, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27113&LangID=E>

6 (2021) 'Libya: Horrific Violations in Detention Highlight Europe's Shameful Role in Forced Returns' Amnesty International, 15 July, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/libya-horrific-violations-in-detention-highlight-europes-shameful-role-in-forced-returns/>

7 Nielsen, Nikolaj (2021) 'EU Mulls Using New 'Peace' Fund to Help Libyan Coast Guard' EUobserver, 7 May, euobserver.com/migration/151727..

military and defence instrument previously criticised for fuelling conflict and human rights violations ,⁸ to further support the Libyan Coast Guards.

The death of Shuaib Ibrahim, a 19-year-old Somali, and the kidnapping of Samia Abdullah, a 14-year-old Yemeni, both registered with the UNHCR – among other incidents – have also led to strong criticism⁹ over the agency's negligence and inadequate support¹⁰ of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country.

In the same context, arbitrary restrictions on the work of civil society and journalists continue, notably from the Tripoli Civil Society Commission. The disappearance of human rights defender and journalist Mansour Mohamed Atti¹¹ on 3 June in Ajdabiya, who was working to raise awareness and mobilise citizens for the elections, is particularly disturbing. Despite pledges¹² made to promote press freedom, Decision No. 116 of 15 June¹³ has only resulted in the further distortion of public media into a power-sharing tool between political and armed factions.¹⁴

State-affiliated armed groups continue to operate without hindrance and hamper any structural change. The reopening of the Sirte-Misrata coastal road was a positive

8 (2020) 'Joint Statement: €5bn European "Peace" Facility Risks Fuelling Conflict and Human Rights Violations around the World', International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 18 November, <https://www.fidh.org/en/international-advocacy/european-union/joint-statement-eur5bn-european-peace-facility-risks-fuelling>

9 Ben Ibrahim, Abdullah (2021) '32 Libyan NGOs Blame UNHCR for the Death of Somali Refugee', Libya Observer, 14 January, <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/32-libyan-ngos-blame-unhcr-death-somali-refugee>

10 (2021) 'Libya: The Denial of Non-Libyan Citizens' Right to Health Must Be Investigated and Remedied' 2 February, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), <https://cihrs.org/libya-the-denial-of-non-libyan-citizens-right-to-health-must-be-investigated-and-remedied/?lang=en>

11 (2021) 'Libya: The Kidnapping of a Human Rights Defender Raises Concerns and Threatens the Credibility of Scheduled Elections' Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 21 June, <https://cihrs.org/libya-the-kidnapping-of-a-human-rights-defender-raises-concerns-and-threatens-the-credibility-of-scheduled-elections/?lang=en>

12 Assad, Abdulkader (2021) 'Dbeibah: All Libyans have the right to criticize government performance' Libya Observer, 4 May, <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/dbeibah-all-libyans-have-right-criticize-government-performance>

13 (2021) 'Decision 116/2021', Government of National Union (GNU), 15 June, <https://gnu.gov.ly/uploads/2021/06>

14 (2021) 'Libya: Foundation's Dissolution Detrimental to Independent Media Required for Free and Fair Elections', Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 2 July, <https://cihrs.org/libya-foundations-dissolution-detrimental-to-independent-media-required-for-free-and-fair-elections/?lang=en>

development for the Joint Military Commission,¹⁵ but the lack of a concrete arrangement for the departure of foreign forces and much-needed security sector reform raises fears of a prolonged deadlock.

These violations continue to take place in complete impunity. As explained in an open letter to UN Member States signed by 28 Libyan,¹⁶ regional and international organisations, ensuring commitment to robust international accountability processes is critical in this fragile period in regards to deterring further violence and enabling the organisation of free and fair elections.

As a legal and constitutional basis for elections has yet to be adopted, notably due to the involvement of individuals imposing proposals deviating from the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) Roadmap, the organisation of legitimate elections on 24 December has never been more uncertain. These delays have increased the possibility of a return to armed conflict and further political fragmentation.¹⁷

15 United Nations Support Mission in Libya (2021) 'UNSMIL Welcomes the Opening of the Coastal Road, Praises the Efforts of 5+5 Joint Military Commission - Libya' ReliefWeb, 30 July, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/unsmil-welcomes-opening-coastal-road-praises-efforts-55-joint-military-commission>

16 (2021) 'States Urged to Ensure Renewal of UN Fact-Finding Mission on Libya at 48th Human Rights Council' Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 15 July, <https://cihrs.org/states-urged-to-ensure-renewal-of-un-fact-finding-mission-on-libya-at-48th-human-rights-council/?lang=en>

17 Elumami, Ahmed (2021) 'Worst Tripoli Fighting in a Year Shows Limits of Libya Peace Push' Reuters, 3 September, <http://www.reuters.com/world/africa/worst-tripoli-fighting-year-shows-limits-libya-peace-push-2021-09-03/>

Recommendations

- UN Member States should ensure that the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Libya, currently the only mechanism able to investigate human rights violations in the country and support accountability efforts, is renewed at the 48th UN Human Rights Council and has sufficient resources to carry out its mandate;
- Building on the Key Principles for human rights ,¹⁸ and on UN Security Council Resolution 2570 ,¹⁹ states in close coordination with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) must press Libyan authorities to urgently put in place a comprehensive strategy for security sector reform; it should establish a specialised technical committee for the vetting of members of armed groups and organise their disbandment and individual reintegration, disarmament and rehabilitation;
- Use all diplomatic, financial and economic leverage to deter spoilers of peace and to press foreign and Libyan actors to accept a withdrawal of foreign forces;
- EU Member States and institutions must review migration and border management policies and the way they are enabling grave human rights violations against tens of thousands of women, men and children exposed to appalling abuse, including by: halting any agreement that involves facilitating illegal pushbacks and pullbacks and supporting Libyan parties against which there are strong allegations of grave violations and involvement in human trafficking, and conditioning any co-operation with Libyan authorities on the implementation of concrete measures to protect the rights of refugees and migrants, such as adopting asylum legislation and ending unlawful detention for foreign citizens;

18 (2020) 'Key Principles for a Rights-Based Roadmap towards Sustainable Peace in Libya' United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), 6 November, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/civil_society_principles_doc_for_lpdf_eng_-_7_nov_2020.pdf

19 (2021) 'Resolution 2570 (2021)', United Nations Security Council, 16 April, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n2109656.pdf>

- States should review arms transfers and security cooperation with states with a military presence in Libya, to ensure there is no risk of contribution to violating the UN arms embargo, and condition such cooperation on the cessation of any direct or indirect military involvement in Libya, including the funding of foreign actors;
- States should press Libyan parties to adhere to the LPDF Roadmap²⁰ and to respect the Key Principles for human rights appended to the Roadmap to ensure that conditions are in place for free and fair elections to be held; ²¹
- Firmly denounce perpetrators of human rights violations and any attempts by Libyan actors and foreign forces to disrupt the political process, including attacks on journalists and civil society, and consider the use of targeted sanctions against individuals and groups responsible.
- In order to ensure free and fair elections, Libyan authorities must specifically:
 - Repeal arbitrary executive decisions and laws infringing on public freedoms, such as Decision 116/2021 and Decree 286/2019 and cease arbitrary restrictions and attacks against the press and civil society; ²²
 - Ensure that all Libyan citizens are able to register to vote and can safely access polling stations, especially internally-displaced people (IDPs);
 - Request an EU Election Observation Mission, and ensure the protection of local civil society actors deploying independent election monitoring initiatives;

20 (2020) ‘Roadmap “For the Preparatory Phase of a Comprehensive Solution”’, United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), 16 November, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/lpdf_-_roadmap_final_eng.pdf

21 (2020) ‘Key Principles for a Rights-Based Roadmap Towards Sustainable Peace in Libya’, United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), 6 November, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/civil_society_principles_doc_for_lpdf_eng_-_7_nov_2020.pdf

22 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/04/libya-draconian-decree-would-restrict-civic-groups>

- The Presidential Council and the House of Representatives must ensure the Supreme Judicial Council is able to safely and independently process appeals for review of any contested election results to ensure the integrity of the electoral process;
- Work with UNSMIL to establish a vetting system, within the framework of the electoral law, to exclude those from public office who have committed serious human rights violations, financial crimes and who are members of paramilitary groups. This system should also take into consideration strong and credible allegations and not only convictions, due to the lack of a functioning national judiciary;
- The Libyan Supreme Judicial Council must reverse the freezing of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, in place since 2016, in order to allow the Chamber to support the electoral and political transition process.

Grave human rights violations at the hands of state-affiliated armed groups continue to dominate Libya

1. Extrajudicial killing and inhuman treatment

Between January and June 2021, the Libya Platform documented at least 25 cases of extrajudicial killing and inhuman treatment. The search and recovery of the bodies of deceased civilians and combatants around Tripoli and Tarhuna has been ongoing, with at least 22 bodies exhumed in that period, in addition to 12 bodies found in Tripoli, Benghazi and Derna, related to cases of disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

On 12 January, the killers of 16-year-old **Musab Jum'a Daw bin Messaoud** were identified. Musab was killed while leaving school on 2 December, and two other students were injured. Although an arrest warrant was issued against them from the Al-Ajilat Police Station directed by the Criminal Investigation Department, the warrant has not yet been implemented and they are known to roam freely inside Tripoli.

On 25 January, **Mahmoud Sassi Shioh**, 47 years of age and head of endowment affairs at the municipality, was assassinated by unidentified gunmen in front of his house in Al-Zawiya, west of Tripoli. A man not affiliated with any known armed group was arrested for the murder.

On 28 January, **Zaidan Mustafa al-Awjali**, 37 years old, was shot dead by gunmen in a white Toyota in the university district of Benghazi. Neither the cause of the killing nor the perpetrators were identified. Southern Benghazi, where the university district is located, has several camps belonging to the General Command of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), according to witnesses.

On 8 February, a member of the 189th Infantry Brigade, known as the Al-Zawiya Martyrs Brigade, an armed group affiliated with one of the military battalions present in Benghazi, shot and killed **Youssef Abdel Baset Al-Jatlawi**, 26 years old.

On 19 February, **Sufian Muhammad Mukhtar Al-Senussi**, 24 years of age, was killed after he was shot by Siraj Saeed, "Al-Musfah", a militia leader affiliated with the Stabilization Support Apparatus in the Al-Hadba project area of Tripoli. The motive for the killing is unclear. The victim was stopped while passing through a security checkpoint operated by Al-Musfah, taken to their headquarters and shot in the chest.

On 27 February, **Abdul Qadir al-Kilani al-Hatmani**, 70 years old, was killed by gunmen of the 116th -Brigade, led by Messaoud Jedi of the General Command of the LAAF, after they raided his home in Sabha and wounded him with a bullet to the head.

On 18 March, Navy Captain **Mohammed Abdel Hakim Biala** was assassinated by members of the "Stability Support Apparatus" militia led by Abdelghani "Ghaniwa" al-Kikli, following a dispute between al-Kikli and a brother of the captain.

On 25 March, **Mahmoud Al-Werfalli**, a commander in the LAAF wanted by the International Criminal Court for his responsibility in war crimes, was assassinated after his car was shot with rounds of gunfire near the Arab Medical University in Benghazi, an area controlled by the local Security Directorate of the LAAF.

On 28 March, **Osama Kuku**, member of a local militia in Al-Zawyia, was killed by an armed group that shot him in front of his house.

On 1 April, **Amjad Miloud Al-Ma'ati**, 37 years of age, was killed after he was shot at a security checkpoint of the 444th Brigade – an armed group affiliated with the Radaa Special Deterrence Forces and the GNU - near his home in the Al-Swani area, south of Tripoli.

On 21 May, **Ziad Al-Sadiq Buhaih** was killed by a bullet to the chest, and his father, Al-Sadiq Buhaih, was shot in the leg, following an attack on their house in Janzour, west of Tripoli, by Ayoub Sahab, member of the Fursan Janzour militia.

On 21 May, 22-year-old **Ali Muhammad Juma'a Al-Jama'i** was killed after being shot in front of a café in the southern Libyan city of Sokna, by a member of the 77th

Brigade of the 128th Battalion of the LAAF, who then fled into the battalion's headquarters.

On 30 June, **Ishtiwi Shaha Qiya**, 27 years old, succumbed to his injuries in the Sabha Medical Center after he was shot while passing through a security checkpoint of the Sabha branch of the Tariq bin Ziad Brigade, a militia affiliated to the LAAF, in the centre of Sabha. The Sabha branch is led by Omar Amraj al-Megrahi. The checkpoint was recently established following a request from the Al-Sahban Brigade, affiliated with the Southern Operations Force of the General Command of the LAAF.

Search and recovery of mass graves and bodies

■ Tripoli and Tarhuna

On 9 January, search teams in the city of Tarhuna exhumed four unidentified bodies from a mass grave in the Mashrou El Rabt neighbourhood. The deaths date back to the 2019-2020 civil war.

On 20 January, a team searching for mass graves in the city of Tarhuna exhumed ten unidentified bodies from a mass grave in the Mashrou El Rabt neighbourhood, assassinated by the Kaniyat militia during the 2019-2020 civil war.

On 3 February, the body of **Hamza Ahmed Al-Radani Al-Zayani**, 33 years old, was found with bullet wounds and traces of burning in his car, in the Al-Zayaina forest in Garabolli, east of Tripoli, after he had been kidnapped on 31 January from the Al-Zayaina area.

On 7 March, search teams recovered an unidentified body in an individual grave in the Qasr Bin Ghashir area in Tripoli. The death dates back to the 2019-2020 civil war.

On 10 March, an unidentified body was exhumed from an individual grave in the Mashrou El Rabt neighbourhood by search teams in the city of Tarhuna.

On 1 April, an unidentified body was exhumed in the Khallet Al-Furjan area, Tripoli, by search teams in the city of Tripoli.

On 1 June, **Wissam Nuri bin Yahya**, 26 years of age, was kidnapped by unknown gunmen in the Al-Bifi area, in the centre of Tripoli, which is controlled by members of the Al-Baqara militia, affiliated with the Government of National Unity (GNU)'s Ministry of Defence. His body was found only hours later.

On 2 June, four unidentified bodies were exhumed from an individual grave in the "5 Kilo Project" by teams searching for mass graves in Tarhuna.

On 16 June, an unidentified body dating back to the 2019-2020 civil war was recovered from an individual cemetery in the "5 Kilo Project" by teams searching for mass graves in Tarhuna.

On 27 June, the body of **Ali Salem Al-Rahoumi**, 24 years of age, was found bearing signs of torture in the Qasr Al-Akhyar Hospital, east of Tripoli, a day after he was kidnapped from the Garabolli area by gunmen of the Al-Dhaman Battalion, affiliated with the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces of the GNU.

■ **Benghazi**

On 2 January, the body of **Abdul Hakim Masoud Muhammad al-Majbri**, 50 years old, was found in al-Jalaa Hospital, Benghazi, a week after he was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen.

On 13 January, the Red Crescent recovered an unidentified body in the "Chinese buildings" in the Ganfouda area, west of Benghazi, and it was handed over to Al-Jalaa Hospital, Benghazi.

On 15 January, an unidentified body was found with handcuffs and bullet wounds to the head on the seashore in the Qar Younes area, west of Benghazi, where the 106th Brigade Legion is present. It had been thrown into the sea and the waves took it out. The body was transported to the Benghazi Medical Center. The time of death was

estimated to be between 10-12 January. Several bodies were discovered in the same way around Benghazi in the following days (see below).

On 20 January, two bodies, handcuffed and with bullet wounds to the head, were found on Al-Zayt Street in central Benghazi. One of them was identified as **Al-Sherif Amjali Abdullah Balrouen**, 21 years old, who was disappeared 40 days prior.

On 21 January, two bodies were found on Al-Zayt Street in central Benghazi. One of them, with bullet wounds, was identified as **Khaled Mukhtar bin Omran**, 45 years old, who was kidnapped near his house by gunmen on 18 January (see below).

On 23 January, the body of **Milad Muhammad Al-Haddad Al-Werfalli**, 25 years of age, was found with signs of torture and bullets to the head, in the mortuary at Al-Jalaa Hospital, Benghazi, after his family lost contact with him in mid-December 2020.

On 30 January, the body of **Al-Hassan Abdel-Sayed Ali Ramadan**, 23 years old, was found in the mortuary in Al-Jalaa Hospital, Benghazi, after he disappeared in mid-December 2020, with his friend Milad Muhammad Al-Haddad (see above).

On 13 February, the body of **Abdel-Rahim Oudh Al-A'ma**, 28 years of age, was found in the Hawari area in Benghazi, with bullet wounds. Al-A'ma is a fighter in the 106th Brigade ("Awliya al-Dam"), affiliated with the LAAF.

■ Derna

On 17 March, an unidentified decomposing body was exhumed by the local Red Crescent in the city of Derna, in the Wadi El Naga area. The death dates back to when the city was under the control of Daesh and other terrorist groups.

On 18 April, the body of **Ismail Al-Sheikh** was found dumped in the Waterfall Valley in the city of Derna, after he had been arrested by the 166th Brigade of the LAAF.

On 22 April, two unidentified bodies were recovered by the Red Crescent in the city of Derna.

2. Attacks against civilians and indiscriminate civilian casualties

In the first six months of 2021, the Libya Platform documented at least 22 attacks against civilians or indiscriminate civilian casualties, including four children, attributed in majority to armed groups affiliated with the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), the current Government of National Unity (GNU), the former Government of National Accord (GNA), with ten attacks, three attacks, and one attack respectively. In six instances, civilians fell victim to random gunfire or indiscriminate shots fired at them during clashes between armed groups. This is in addition to at least twenty individuals, including twelve children, who were killed or injured by landmine explosions.

On 23 January, **Musab al-Shibani al-Gaddafi** was beaten and shot by gunmen of the General Command of the LAAF after they stormed his farm in Wadi Jarif, south of Sirte. The victim believes that they were accompanied by members of the Wagner Group paramilitary company. The groups controlling the area are the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade and the 106th Battalion. This area has witnessed similar incidents whereby these groups have stormed homes, lands, and government offices to establish a military presence.

On 25 January, a shell fell on an apartment in the gardens buildings in Benghazi, causing material damage.

On 26 January, the house of the **Qaid al-Werfalli** family was stormed in the Surti area in Benghazi, by elements affiliated with Lieutenant-Colonel Jamal al-Ammami, head of the rescue department in the Benghazi Security Directorate, who vandalised and stole from the home.

On 26 January, armed men affiliated with the 3rd Infantry Division of the former GNA broke into the Al-Tahadi Mills and Feed Company in Warshafana, south of Tripoli, and stole sums of money.

On 13 February, members of the Awliya al-Dam militia attacked **Abrik Michael Al-Faydi** and his son Michael in front of his house in the Al-Bukhariah neighbourhood in the city of Derna following a drunken dispute. Al-Faydi was seriously injured in the head and was admitted into intensive care.

On 13 February, **Farj Jum'a Al-Badri** was shot by patrol members of the Criminal Investigation Department, Division of Al-Marj, while they were chasing another suspect's car.

On 17 February, an unknown individual threw an explosive in the midst of a gathering of people celebrating the anniversary of the 2011 February Revolution, in the Manshiya neighbourhood in the centre of Sebha, killing a 10-year-old child, **Abderrahmane Abed Al-Tamami**, and wounding three others, including two children.

On 18 February, a 6-year-old child, **Abdelbaset Fawzi Shalabi**, was killed by a random bullet in the city centre of Gharyan.

On 3 March, Al-Saiqa, an armed group affiliated with the LAAF, led by Commander Mahmoud Al-Werfalli, destroyed the contents of a Toyota dealership in Benghazi following an increase in the prices of some car equipment, and attacked employees who suffered minor injuries.

On 7 March, members of the Al-Baqara militia, affiliated with the GNU's Ministry of Defence, shot at lawyer Hassan Amara in the Tajoura region, wounding him with a bullet to the shoulder and one in the leg. Amara had returned from Tunisia after obtaining guarantees that he would not be attacked because of his previous support for the LAAF.

On 9 March, masked gunmen stormed the home of the Al-Shaf'i family in Benghazi, shooting and wounding three women, who were taken to the hospital, and terrorizing the children. The family holds the LAAF General Command and Benghazi Security

Directorate responsible, and believes they came to arrest a family member who was not in the house.

On 11 March, armed men in military vehicles bearing the logo of the 106th Brigade of the General Command of the LAAF opened fire at a gathering of citizens at the Buhadi gas station in Sirte. Two civilians were injured - **Omar Abdel-Wahab Kneesh Al-Gaddafi and Muhammad Ali Ashkal Gaddafi** - and they were taken to the Ibn Sina hospital for treatment. The gunmen also kidnapped **Ramadan Salem Abdel-Rahim Al-Gaddafi**, whose fate is still unknown.

On 26 March, **Mohammed Ahmed Bakir**, 34 years old, was killed by a random bullet from a gunfight in the centre of Al-Zawiya.

On 14 April, one person was killed and four others wounded by clashes between elements affiliated with the LAAF in the city of Sirte.

On 17 April, **Mohamed Fathi** was killed as a result of clashes between armed groups affiliated with the GNU in Al-Madar street, Tripoli. The clashes erupted when the Stabilization Support Apparatus attacked the headquarters of the Judicial Security Apparatus after the latter arrested a member of the former.

On 27 April, the residents of the Girls' Care Home in Benghazi said that a security body came to the home and asked them to vacate the building within 72 hours.

On 6 May, **Hamed Saleh Amraj al-Sheikhi**, 24 years of age, succumbed to his injuries after being shot while passing by a clash between armed groups in the Shebna neighbourhood of Benghazi on 3 May.

On 9 May, the Tariq bin Ziad Brigade of the LAAF attacked and set fire to private shops on Phoenicia Street in Benghazi.

On 11 June, **Shefa Al-Mukhtar Qarouz, Fatima Faraj Al-Suwaii, and Mansour Muhammad Al-Bab** were shot dead and three others were wounded, following clashes

that erupted in the city of Ajilat between a group affiliated with Muhammad Salem Bahrun, head of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Zawiya Security Directorate of GNU's Ministry of Interior, and another affiliated with Muhammad Baraka from the Stability Support Apparatus militia, led by Abdelghani 'Ghaniwa' al-Kikli, affiliated with the GNU. These clashes also resulted in the death of a number of armed militants and some material damage.

On 11 June, **Hamad Misbah Al-Khatari** was injured by a bullet of unknown origin, and was transferred to Sabha Medical Center.

On 12 June, **Abdel Moneim Omar Abu Uzan**, 48 years old, was killed by a bullet of unknown origin in the centre of Benghazi. Reportedly, random bullets are fired into the air on occasions such as weddings, which could be the origin of the bullet.

On 26 June, a female student was seriously injured by gunfire, following shots fired between two families inside the "New Shuhada Secondary School" in the city of Ajilat.

On 29 June, three civilians were shot dead inside their house, as a result of random gunfire from the 166th Infantry Brigade of the LAAF, while they were chasing another person in neighbourhood No. 3 in Sirte.

Deaths and injuries from explosive remnants

On 20 January, **Al-Siddiq Salem Al-Jaafari** was killed by the explosion of a landmine left behind, while he was passing by a car in the Al-Sayeh area, south of Tripoli.

On 31 January, **Saleh Hussein al-Farsi**, 46 years old, was killed by the explosion of a mine, leftover from the war in the Benina area, south of Benghazi.

On 18 March, two children died and two others were injured in a mine explosion in the Ain Zara area, south of Tripoli.

On 20 March, eight children were injured by the explosion of a mine leftover from the war, in the Zamzam neighbourhood, downtown Benghazi.

On 25 March, **Youssef El-Nour El-Zam**, a Chadian migrant worker, died from a landmine explosion while he was tending a herd of sheep on the outskirts of Sirte.

On 26 March, **Youssef Amara Mar'i Al-Swi'i** was killed by a landmine explosion in the Al-Ahyaa Al-Bariya area, south of Tripoli.

On 26 March, three civilians, aged between 50 and 70, were injured to varying degrees by a landmine explosion on the outskirts of Sirte.

On 29 March, an African migrant – his exact country of origin could not be identified – was seriously injured in the legs by a landmine explosion while he was working in the Ain Zara area, south of Tripoli, according to the local emergency services.

3. Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detention

The Libya Platform documented at least 33 enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention. Thirteen of these were attributed to the LAAF and affiliated armed groups, four to the GNU or affiliated armed groups, two were attributed to the Daesh organisation, while fourteen could not be clearly attributed to a specific group. Two civilians were arbitrarily arrested or sentenced by a military court in eastern Libya on unfounded terrorism-related charges.

On 18 January, **Khaled Mukhtar** bin Omran, 45 years old, was kidnapped near his home in the Dollar neighbourhood in Benghazi by unidentified gunmen. His body was recovered on 21 January (see above). The victim was displaced in Misrata and had returned to Benghazi less than a year before his disappearance and murder.

On 21 January, 18-year-old **Talib Musa Juma'a Al-Wadi** was kidnapped after his car was intercepted by masked gunmen in the city of Al-Marj. He was released after four days from the Internal Security prison of the LAAF without the reasons for his kidnapping revealed.

On 25 January, **Abdul Rahim Muhammad Khamis al-Gaddafi and Faraj Hamid Muhammad al-Gaddafi** were kidnapped from a farm in the Ghadwa area, south of Sabha, by unknown gunmen reportedly affiliated to the Daesh organisation.

On 4 February, **Abdullah Youssef al-Biju** and his brother **Muhammad Yusuf al-Biju** were kidnapped and taken to an unknown location after their house was stormed by masked gunmen in the Ganfouda area, west of Benghazi. In the same area, **Abdul Mawli Saad al-Tira** and his son **Ahmed Abdul Mawli al-Tira** were kidnapped after their house was raided in Ganfouda by the same armed group.

On 7 February, **Mohammed Farj Saad Allah Al-S'iti**, 34 years of age, was kidnapped from his workplace in the Al-Laithi neighbourhood in Benghazi by unknown gunmen in two white Toyota cars and taken to an unknown location.

On 9 February, **Abdul-Khaleq Misbah**, an employee at the Libyan Foreign Bank, was kidnapped in the city of Tripoli after leaving his work, in front of the parking lot of Bab Al Bahr Hotel in the centre of Tripoli.

On 17 February, singer **Ramadan Salem Balrahim** was kidnapped by members of the Nawasi militia, affiliated with the GNU, in the centre of Tripoli, after he arrived from Benghazi to participate in the celebration of the anniversary of the 2011 February Revolution. He was released the next day. The singer stated in a video he published several days after his release that he was beaten and that his personal belongings were stolen.

On 28 February, **Rabi' Ashour Al-Aqili**, 31, was kidnapped in the centre of Benghazi by gunmen of the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade, affiliated with the LAAF, and taken to an unknown location.

On 7 March, journalist **Mohamed Al-Rajhi** was arrested by the Anti-Sorcery Unit of the Ministry of Interior in Tripoli for practicing alternative medicine. He was released the following day, on 8 March.

On 11 March, armed men in military vehicles bearing the logo of the 106th Brigade of the General Command of the LAAF opened fire at a gathering of citizens at the Buhadi gas station in Sirte. Two civilians were injured and the gunmen kidnapped **Ramadan Salem Abdel-Rahim Al-Gaddafi**, whose fate is still unknown.

On 11 March, activist **Zakaria Al-Zawi** was kidnapped after his house was stormed by armed men from the Internal Security Service of the LAAF in Benghazi. He was taken to the Al-Kuwaitiyah prison for unclear reasons and his family was prevented from communicating with him. He was released after two days.

On 20 March, **Alaa Abdullah Al-Shibani**, 35 years old, was kidnapped near his home in Benghazi by unknown gunmen, and his fate remains unknown to this day.

On 25 March, **Haneen Al-Abdali**, daughter of assassinated lawyer Hanan Al-Barassi, was kidnapped in Pepsi Street in Benghazi. On 27 March, the Benghazi Joint Security Chamber of the LAAF announced that they had arrested her for the assassination of ICC-fugitive Mahmoud Al-Werfalli (see above). She was released on 28 June.

On 25 March, **Salem Saleh Al-Sha'ri, and his wife and children**, were kidnapped after gunmen belonging to the General Command of the LAAF attacked his house in the Gardens neighbourhood in Benghazi, vandalized it and stole from it.

On 27 March, **Jamal Muhammad Adas**, human rights defender and head of the Civil Society Commission of Tripoli, was kidnapped in the Zenata area of the capital. He was released ten days later.

On 29 March, **Ayman Al-Abdali**, son of assassinated lawyer Hanan Al-Barassi, was arrested from Benina Airport in Benghazi, days after the arrest of his sister Haneen (see above). He remains in detention.

On 12 April, **Abd al-Raziq Hamd al-Fakhri**, 22 years of age, was kidnapped from the streets of Ajdabiya in eastern Libya, by gunmen in two white Toyota FJ cars. He was taken to an unknown location.

On 3 June, **Mansour Mohamed Atti**, human rights defender and journalist, head of the Red Crescent branch in Ajdabiya, and the Ajdabiya branch of the Civil Society Commission, was kidnapped near his workplace in Ajdabiya by unidentified gunmen in two white Toyota cars and taken to the east part of the city, according to eyewitnesses. While as of now unconfirmed, the circumstances of Mansour's abduction and the continued control of Ajdabiya by the LAAF point to the strong likelihood that he is being held by the Internal Security Services of Benghazi. His disappearance was the subject of a communication from UN Special Procedures.

On 5 June, the military court in Qarnada (eastern Libya) arbitrarily sentenced civilian **Talal Al-Hanshir**, director of the public utility company, to 16 years in prison on terrorism-related charges.

4. Violations against Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-seekers

On 21 June,²³ the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that about 571,000 migrants and refugees were currently in Libya, in addition to 278,000 displaced people. As of 21 June, an estimated 6,377 migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers were arbitrarily held in official detention centres across the country,²⁴ a 550 per cent increase since January 2021.

Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers continue to be the subject of mass human rights and humanitarian law violations, trapped in an inhumane system of unlawful detention, exploitation and abuse supported by Libyan authorities and enabled by European externalisation policies seeking to prevent human beings from reaching European shores at any cost.

According to the IOM Missing Migrants Project,²⁵ migrant deaths on maritime routes to Europe have more than doubled in the first six months of 2021, compared to the same period in 2020, while migrant interceptions at sea by North African authorities have also sharply increased. Illegal interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guards tripled between January and June 2021, reaching a record-high number of 15,330, compared to 5,476 interceptions in the same period in 2020 and 11,891 in total in 2020.

At least 454 people have lost their lives off the coast of Libya between January and June 2021, a dramatic increase from 130 deaths in the equivalent period of 2020. Delays and failures to launch search and rescue operations, in addition to illegal pushbacks and pullbacks, continue to be common. In the period under review, the

23 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2021) ('OCHA Libya Humanitarian Bulletin (May 2021) [EN/AR] - Libya', ReliefWeb, 22 June, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/ocha-libya-l-humanitarian-bulletin-may-2021-enar>

24 (2021) 'Remarks to the Security Council by Ján Kubiš, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Libya, and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya', United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), 15 July, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/remarks-security-council-j%C3%A1n-kubi%C5%A1-special-envoy-secretary-general-libya-and-head-united-nations>

25 International Organization for Migration (2021) 'Migrant Deaths on Maritime Routes to Europe in 2021', ReliefWeb, 14 July, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/migrant-deaths-maritime-routes-europe-2021>

Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre illegally deported at least 532 migrants, potential asylum-seekers, to Sudan and Chad.

On 14 January, thirty-two Libyan organisations denounced the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s negligence and inadequate support with regards to the death of Shuaib Ibrahim, a 19-year-old Somali asylum seeker registered with the UNHCR.²⁶ The agency was also lambasted by the organisations for its lack of reactivity and capacity in aiding victims of human rights violations and vulnerable groups, and for the dearth of support provided to refugees in need, notably the unresponsive hotline service and the limited medical care provided.

On 14 January, two unidentified and decomposing bodies of foreign citizens were found buried south of Ajdabiya, a city under the control of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF). They were transferred by the Red Crescent to the Mohammed Al-Maqrif Hospital in Ajdabiya.

On 14 January, the body of an Egyptian migrant, **Adel Sami Ahmed Abdel Mohsen**, 21 years old, was found on the side of the road in the Al-Qara area, 30 km east of Tobruk, bearing signs of torture and burning in his hands and feet. The victim was detained in one of the smugglers' prisons in the area. According to local witnesses, he was killed on 11 January.

On 14 January, fourteen irregular migrants who were being held in a prison controlled by human traffickers were released by the Criminal Investigation Department in El-Bardy, north of Tobruk.

On the same day, the body of an unidentified Egyptian migrant, was found handcuffed and hanged on a tree in Tarsha, south of Tobruk, and was transferred to Tobruk Medical Centre.

²⁶ Ben Ibrahim, Abdullah (2021) '32 Libyan NGOs Blame UNHCR for the Death of Somali Refugee', Libya Observer, 14 January, <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/32-libyan-ngos-blame-unhcr-death-somali-refugee>

On 15 January, the body of a Sudanese national identified as **Ahmed Al-Awad**, 37 years old, was found in the industrial district of Bani Walid and transferred to the Bani Walid General Hospital.

On 16 January, the body of an immigrant was found in eastern Bani Walid and was transferred by the Salaam Association's Exhumation Office to the Bani Walid General Hospital.

On 16 January, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 120 migrants, including potential asylum-seekers, to Sudan.

On 21 January, Ocean Viking, one of the only remaining NGO rescue boats operational in the Mediterranean, rescued about 120 migrants, including four children, during an operation off the Libyan coast. ²⁷

On 1 February, four bodies of migrants, including two men, a woman and a child, were found on the shores of the Garabulli, west of Tripoli.

On 2 February, the body of **Abdullah Quddus**, a 24-year-old Bengali migrant, was found on the seashore in the Ras Al-Manqar area, east of Benghazi, an area controlled by the LAAF.

On 2 February, CIHRS and the Libya Platform denounced the denial of Libyan migrants' right to health and called for an urgent investigation following the death of **Shuaib Ibrahim**, a 19-year-old Somali asylum seeker registered with UNHCR, on 6 January in Tripoli, as result of inadequate health care (see above). ²⁸

²⁷ Twitter.com (2021) 'SOS Méditerranée' .<https://mobile.twitter.com/SOSMedIntl/status/1352236752044437506>

²⁸ (2021) 'Libya: The Denial of Non-Libyan Citizens' Right to Health Must Be Investigated and Remedied', Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 2 February, <https://cihrs.org/libya-the-denial-of-non-libyan-citizens-right-to-health-must-be-investigated-and-remedied/?lang=en>

On 4 February, the Ocean Viking crew rescued about 121 migrants, including nineteen women and two children, from an overcrowded rubber boat in the middle of the sea 30 miles away from the city of Al-Khums .²⁹

On 6 February, the Libyan Coast Guards returned 49 migrants of different nationalities, including thirteen women and two children, in addition to two bodies, after they were found at sea 30 miles north of the city of Al-Zawiya.

On 7 February, fourteen Egyptian migrants, three of them dead, arrived at the Al-Marj Teaching Hospital, east of Benghazi, because of an accident.

On 10 February, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 121 immigrants to Sudan.

On 14 February, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 130 immigrants to Sudan.

On 21 February, the Kufra Security Directorate raided a house on the outskirts of the city of Kufra, and released 156 people of Somali, Eritrean and Sudanese nationalities, including 15 women and 5 children, who were detained there. Six human traffickers were arrested and referred to the Kufra Public Prosecution.

On 1 March, the GNU's Ministry of Interior announced the arrest in Gharyan of one of the alleged killers of about 30 Bangladeshi and African migrants in Mezdah in May 2020.

On 6 March, the body of an Egyptian migrant was found near Gate 200, east of the city of Ajdabiya, eastern Libya.

²⁹ Wallis, Emma (2021) 'Ocean Viking Crew Rescues 121 Migrants, 140 Returned to Libya by Coast Guards', InfoMigrants, 4 February, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/30072/ocean-viking-crew-rescues-121-migrants-140-returned-to-libya-by-coast-guards>

On 10 March, military forces affiliated with the GNU in Bani Walid managed to free 120 Egyptian migrants who were being held hostage, extorted and tortured in warehouses belonging to human traffickers in the city.

On 11 March, two Syrian citizens, including a child, were kidnapped near the Shwerif municipality in southwestern Libya.

On 13 March, the Kufra Security Directorate raided a smuggler's farm where 47 Sudanese migrants were detained, extorted and tortured.

On 13 March, the bodies of two migrants were found near the Al-Shweref area in southwestern Libya, an area under the control of the LAAF.

On 13 March, the 444th Brigade, affiliated with the Tripoli Military District, stormed several sites for human trafficking and smugglers in the city of Bani Walid and its suburbs, as part of a plan that seeks to impose security inside the city, and a number of migrants who were in the hands of smugglers were liberated.

On 19 March, a Sudanese minor, registered with the UNHCR, died because he had not received adequate medical care.

On 24 March, an armed group stormed the residence of refugees registered with the UNHCR, some of whom were among the survivors of the bombing of the Tajoura detention centre, and the gunmen seized the belongings and money of the migrants.

On 29 March, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 24 migrants to Sudan.

On 31 March, thirty asylum-seeking or refugee Sudanese families sent a complaint to embassies and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, denouncing persistent failure and negligence on the part of the UNHCR to fulfil its mandate, with very difficult access to asylum registration, and a lack of provision of basic medical and

humanitarian support. The families highlighted that they were under threats of expulsion despite being registered with the UNHCR for several years.

In March and April, dozens of refugees and asylum seekers organised protests in front of the headquarters of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Tripoli to denounce racial discrimination, and to demand an end to all forms of violence committed against them. They also denounced the UNHCR's repeated negligence and failure to support asylum seekers and refugees, even though some of them have been registered with the UNHCR since 2017.

On 31 March, the Khaled Ibn Al-Walid Brigade ("73rd Brigade"), affiliated to the LAAF, raided a building used by human traffickers in the city of Umm El Arnab and freed 56 Chadian migrants, most of whom were between 14 and 17 years old. According to the children, they were released in exchange of a ransom of 2,600 Libyan dinars for each of them, paid by their families. During the operation, a gang member who was guarding the hostages was arrested.

On 6 April, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 23 migrants to Sudan.

On 8 April, one person was killed and two others injured after a shooting in the early hours of the day at the Al-Mabani Collection and Return Centre, in Tripoli. Among them were two wounded teenagers, aged 17 and 18. Tensions within the overcrowded centre had escalated on the night of the incident, according to Doctors without Borders (MSF),³⁰ culminating in this indiscriminate shooting. According to MSF, detention centres have become increasingly overcrowded since early February, due to a rise in interceptions at sea by the EU-funded Libyan Coast Guard, which contributed to an unmanageable surge in the numbers of people held in detention centres in Tripoli and a rapid deterioration in living conditions. A local unidentified armed group,

30 (2021) 'People Dead and Injured Following Libya Detention Centre Shooting', Doctors without Borders (MSF), 9 April, <https://www.msf.org/people-dead-and-injured-following-libya-detention-centre-shooting>

members of the police and members of the local criminal investigation unit are reportedly responsible for the shooting.

On 11 April, Libyan authorities released Abdel-Rahman Milad "Bija", head of a Libyan Coast Guard unit in Zawiya and alleged human trafficker under UN sanctions, without a trial. He had been arrested on 14 October 2020 on charges of human trafficking and smuggling of fuel. The former Government of National Accord reportedly promoted him in March 2021 .³¹

On 16 April, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 23 migrants to Chad.

On 21 April, a rubber boat sank, carrying 130 migrants, most of them Sudanese. According to crew members of the Ocean Viking, neither Libyan or Italian authorities nor Frontex agreed to help the boat, last located in the Libyan search and rescue (SAR) zone ³²

On 2 May, Alarm Phone documented the pullback of 95 people trying to leave Libya, captured and returned from international waters by the Libyan Coast Guards, with the support of two merchant vessels called in by Italian authorities, despite continuously requesting help from European authorities.³³ According to Alarm Phone, this pullback "is a clear example of the complex system of human rights violations of the EU Member States (Italy and Malta) and the EU border agency Frontex (...) cooperating and de facto coordinating the activities of the Libyan authorities, who carry out undeclared and illegal border police operations rather than search and rescue activities at sea".

31 Magdy, Samy (2021) 'Libyan Officials Say UN-Sanctioned Human Trafficker Freed', The Associated Press, 20 April, <https://apnews.com/article/libya-middle-east-tripoli-united-nations-83ad345278cc4d6add49ad01f420c3f5>

32 Chaze, Emmanuelle (2021) 'A Mayday Call, a Dash across the Mediterranean ... and 130 Souls Lost at Sea', The Guardian, 25 April, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/25/a-mayday-call-a-dash-across-the-ocean-and-130-souls-lost-at-sea>

33 (2021) '95 People Returned to Torture and Abuse', Alarm Phone, 8 May, https://alarmphone.org/en/2021/05/08/95-people-returned-to-torture-and-abuse/?post_type_release_type=post

On 5 May, an analysis from The Guardian revealed that EU member states, supported by EU's border agency Frontex, have used illegal operations to push back at least 40,000 asylum seekers from Europe's borders during the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the death of more than 2,000 people.³⁴ The publication quotes Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, professor of asylum law at the University of Palermo: "Recent reports suggest an increase of deaths of migrants attempting to reach Europe and, at the same time, an increase of the collaboration between EU countries with non-EU countries such as Libya, which has led to the failure of several rescue operations".

On 9 May, four bodies of foreign citizens were found on the shores of Garabulli, east of Tripoli, including a woman and a child. They were recovered by the local Red Crescent branch, and 40 other people who were on a boat trying to leave the country were rescued in the same area.

On 13 May, the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 99 migrants who were on their way to European shores on a rubber boat and transferred them to the Al-Mabani detention centre (Tripoli).

On 22 May, Egyptian migrants were freed by local authorities. They had been kidnapped on 20 May in Bani Walid by the 444 Battalion of the Radaa Special Deterrence Forces, affiliated with the GNU.

On 26 May, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the Libyan Government and the European Union and its Member States to urgently reform their search and rescue policies and practices in the Central Mediterranean,³⁵ in order to stop what she called a preventable tragedy. According to a new report published by her

34 Tondo, Lorenzo (2021) 'Revealed: 2,000 Refugee Deaths Linked to Illegal EU Pushbacks,' The Guardian, 5 May, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/05/revealed-2000-refugee-deaths-linked-to-eu-pushbacks>

35 (2021) 'Act to protect migrants in central Mediterranean Sea, Bachelet urges Libya and EU', Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 26 May, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27113&LangID=E>

office,³⁶ the lack of human rights protection for migrants at sea "is not a tragic anomaly, but rather a consequence of concrete policy decisions and practices by the Libyan authorities, the European Union (EU) Member States and institutions, and other actors that have combined to create an environment where the dignity and human rights of migrants are at risk".

On 11 June, **Samia Abdullah**, a 14-year-old Yemeni national registered with the UNHCR, was kidnapped by armed men in military uniform, in a market where she was working in the Al-Krimiya area, south of Tripoli, which is under the control of the Central Support Unit led by Emad Trabelsi, former Chief of Intelligence under the Government of National Accord (GNA). Other armed groups are present in the area, such as Battalion 301 of the Tripoli Military District, Battalion 177 Zintan of the Western Military District and Battalion 166 of the Central Military District. Samia's mother has yet to hear back from local authorities despite filing a complaint. A statement from 43 Libyan civil society organisations on 15 June decried a lack of action and support from the UNHCR and UNICEF, which they claim were aware of the risks faced by Samia and minor refugees and asylum-seekers.³⁷

On 14 June, after being rescued by a Dutch merchant vessel in international waters, about 170 people were handed over to the Libyan Coast Guard and returned to Libya in what a report from organisations Mediterranea Saving Humans, Sea Watch and Watch the Med - Alarm Phone called a 'pushback by proxy'. They were placed in detention upon arrival. ³⁸

36 (2021) 'Lethal Disregard Search and Rescue and the Protection of Migrants in the Central Mediterranean Sea', Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 25 May, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/OHCHR-thematic-report-SAR-protection-at-sea.pdf>

37 (2021) 'Libyan Crimes Watch and 42 Other Libyan Organisations Issue Statement Regarding the Kidnapping of an Underage Girl from Tripoli', Libyan Crimes Watch, 5 June, <https://libyancrimeswatch.org/>

38 (2021) 'Shipping Company Vroon Complicit in Forced Return: The Vos Triton Returns 170 People to Libya in an Illegal Pushback by Proxy', Alarm Phone, 29 June, <https://alarmphone.org/en/2021/06/29/shipping-company-vroon-complicit-in-forced-return/>

On 20 June, Associated Press reported allegations that minors were being sexually assaulted by guards at the Shara al-Zawiya detention centre in Tripoli, run by Libya's EU-backed Department for Combating Illegal Immigration (DCIM).³⁹ "Sexual violence and exploitation are rife in several detention centres across the country," said Tarik Lamloum, President of the Belady Organization for Human Rights. In his remarks to the UN Security Council on 15 July⁴⁰ Ján Kubiš, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Libya, also mentioned receiving in June "shocking reports of sexual violence against girls and boys in official detention centres".

On 20 June, the death of an unidentified migrant was reported; shot dead by security forces at the Bab al-Zaytoun Gate in Tobruk, eastern Libya, after a car he was traveling in quickly crossed the gate without stopping.

On 20 June, an explosion occurred inside the detention centre in the Abu Rashada area near the city of Gharyan, according to eyewitnesses, with reports of casualties and injuries. Neither the Ministry of Interior nor the Department for Combating Illegal Immigration (DCIM) have shared information or communicated publicly about it.

On 22 June, international humanitarian organisation Doctors without Borders (MSF) announced a suspension of its activities in the Al-Mabani and Abu Salim detention centres in Tripoli, due to "the persistent pattern of violent incidents and serious harm to refugees and migrants, as well as the risk to the safety of [their] staff".⁴¹ MSF said detainees were injured by automatic fire at the Abu Salim centre on 13 June, with 6 people killed, but the organisation was not given access to the centre for a week afterwards. According to MSF, "the increase in violence since the beginning of 2021

39 Magdy, Samy, and Renata Brito (2021) 'Libyan Guards Accused of Sexually Assaulting Minors,' Associated Press, 20 June, <https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-libya-africa-middle-east-europe-9e9cdf60495c34372c1b2155f010f3f6>

40 (2021) 'Remarks to the Security Council by Ján Kubiš, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya,' United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), 15 July, <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/remarks-security-council-j-n-kubi-special-envoy-secretary-general-libya-and-head-united>

41 (2021) 'Violence against Migrants Forces MSF to Suspend Centre Activities in Libya,' Doctors without Borders (MSF), 22 June, <http://www.msf.org/violence-against-migrants-forces-msf-suspend-centre-activities-libya>

goes together with the simultaneous significant rise in the number of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers intercepted at sea by the EU-funded Libyan coastguard, forcibly returned to Libya and locked in detention centres". The Libyan authorities have not reacted to the announcement.

On 24 June, local authorities in eastern Libya deported Egyptian minors through the Musaid border crossing.

On 25 June, the Kufra Shelter and Deportation Centre deported 44 migrants to Sudan.

On 30 June, a Libyan Coast Guard boat, identified by German organisation Sea-Watch as a boat supplied by Italy, fired several times on a small wooden boat in distress in the Maltese Search and Rescue zone and almost rammed it, in order to force the people on board back to Libya.⁴²

42 Tondo, Lorenzo (2021) 'Libyan Coastguards 'Fired on and Tried to Ram Migrant Boat' – NGO,' The Guardian, 2 July, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jul/02/libyan-coastguards-fired-on-and-tried-to-ram-migrant-boat-ngo>

5. Restrictions of public freedoms and attacks against civil society and journalists

Arbitrary restrictions on civil society organisations and journalists continued to be reported, including an arrest and an assault of journalists, while 3 activists and human rights defenders were disappeared.

■ Attacks against human rights defenders and activists

On 11 March, activist **Zakaria Al-Zawi** was kidnapped after his house was stormed by armed men from the Internal Security Service of the LAAF in Benghazi. He was taken to the Al-Kuwaifiyah prison for unclear reasons and his family was prevented from communicating with him. He was released after two days.

On 27 March, **Jamal Muhammad Adas**, human rights defender and head of the Civil Society Commission of Tripoli, was kidnapped in the Zenata area of the capital. He was released 10 days later.

On 3 June, **Mansour Mohamed Atti**, human rights defender and journalist, head of the Red Crescent branch in Ajdabiya, and the Ajdabiya branch of the Civil Society Commission, was kidnapped near his workplace in Ajdabiya by unidentified gunmen in two white Toyota cars and taken to the east part of the city, according to eyewitnesses.⁴³ The circumstances of Mansour's abduction and the continued control of Ajdabiya by the LAAF point to the strong likelihood that he is being held by the Internal Security Services of Benghazi.

■ Right to political participation

43 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS). "Libya: The Kidnapping of a Human Rights Defender Raises Concerns and Threatens the Credibility of Scheduled Elections."

The circumstances of the disappearance of human rights defender **Mansour Atti** indicate that he was targeted for his peaceful civil society and human rights work, notably for his work to raise awareness and mobilise citizens to participate in the upcoming elections. Ahead of his disappearance, he led a conference on 31 May in Ajdabiya about the upcoming elections. On 26 May, he participated in a joint committee formed by the Civil Society Commission and the High National Election Commission, to prepare electoral monitoring by civil society organisations. On 7 April, the Internal Security Agency in Ajdabiya stormed an event he attempted to organise about the elections, arrested and interrogated him for hours before releasing him. On 13 February 2021 and 24 December 2020, he was summoned for interrogation by the same services for his work with civil society, where he was accused of being a “dangerous individual” and promoting “foreign agendas”.

■ **Freedom of association**

In January, the Tripoli Civil Society Commission refused to renew the registration of the Libyan Center for Press Freedom (LCFP), on the grounds that its name included “press freedom” – qualified as too broad an expression – and “Libyan” – which private media entities are not allowed to use. The Commission also stated its objection to the renewal to preserve “national security”. The LCFP was able to obtain a registration from the Benghazi Civil Society Commission in February, which does not guarantee the organisation's ability to operate in the country, as the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in March 2021 has not led to the unification of the Tripoli and Benghazi Civil Society Commissions.

■ **Freedom of expression and freedom of the press**

On 25 February, a group of journalists was assaulted by security personnel affiliated with the Sabha Security Directorate, accompanying the GNU Presidential Council on their first visit to the city of Sabha, southwest of Libya. On the same day, a reporter from Al-Ghad TV, **Ziad al-Werfalli**, was arrested by diplomatic guards of Prime

Minister Abdel Hamid al-Dbeibah after covering his press conference, and was accused of working without a license. He was released on 28 February. On 27 February, local and international correspondents were expelled from the Sabha Municipal Council by the same security personnel while they were covering the visit of Prime Minister al-Dbeibah.

On 28 January, the principal of the Uqba bin Nafeh school in Al-Marj was suspended and referred for investigation following his intervention in Al-Marj radio. In the intervention, he criticised the condition of the school and its facilities, and mentioned that the classrooms were flooded with water.

On 30 March, **Mohamed Bayou**, head of the Libyan Media Foundation, issued instructions to prevent employee Mohamed Shanina from entering the building of state-owned TV Channel Al-Rasmiyah, because Mr. Shanina liked a Facebook post criticizing Mr. Bayou's performance.

On 15 June, the GNU adopted Decision No. 116/2021, which dissolved the Libyan Media Foundation into six governmental authorities, leading to further fragmentation of public media on the basis of political affiliation.⁴⁴

On 23 June, the LAAF forced Ajdabiya News to withdraw their issue published on that day, which criticised the security situation in Ajdabiya and included an article about the kidnapping of the newspaper's former editor-in-chief and human rights defender **Mansour Atti**.⁴⁵

44 (2021) 'Libya: Foundation's Dissolution Detrimental to Independent Media Required for Free and Fair Elections,' Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 2 July, <https://cihrs.org/libya-foundations-dissolution-detrimental-to-independent-media-required-for-free-and-fair-elections/?lang=en>

45 (2021) 'Libya: The Kidnapping of a Human Rights Defender Raises Concerns and Threatens the Credibility of Scheduled Elections,' Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), 21 June, <https://cihrs.org/libya-the-kidnapping-of-a-human-rights-defender-raises-concerns-and-threatens-the-credibility-of-scheduled-elections/?lang=en>