

# The Human Rights Situation in Libya



Joint Report submitted to the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
Universal Periodic Review



**Cairo Institute**  
for Human Rights Studies  
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'Homme  
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان



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**Joint Report submitted to the 50th Session of the Universal Periodic  
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(April–2025)

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Submitted by:

### **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies**

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) is an independent regional human rights organization established in 1994. For 30 years, CIHRS has maintained its presence as an effective organization based in the South (Egypt and Tunisia), with offices in some Northern countries (Switzerland, Belgium and France). It takes pride in its role of breaking barriers between peoples of the North and South by promoting transnational cultural and human rights cooperation. CIHRS builds the capacity of human rights organizations and forms coalitions and networks, striving for better representation in international human rights mechanisms that influence policies towards human rights and democracy issues in the Arab region. CIHRS enjoys special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

### **Libyan Platform for Human Rights**

The Libya Platform for Human Rights was founded in 2016. The vision of the Platform is to create a space for exchange, dialogue, and coordination in order to develop and enhance the capacity of the Libyan civil society and enable it to play an effective role in promoting public freedoms and human rights. Furthermore, the Platform envisions the development of a joint strategy for change and impact on the different levels.

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# Introduction

1. Libya remains in a state of continuous political fragmentation, where the absence of the rule of law and the failure to establish independent state institutions have fueled ongoing human rights violations. The judiciary remains compromised, failing to uphold due process and accountability. Impunity prevails, with security forces and militias engaging in arbitrary detention, torture, and targeted persecution of human rights defenders, political opponents, and journalists. The organic and legal ties between armed groups and the state have yet to be severed, allowing militias to operate with impunity, further eroding legal protections and reinforcing a climate of fear. Systematic violations in the criminal justice system—including prolonged pretrial detention, lack of access to legal representation, and confessions coerced through torture<sup>1</sup>—persist as routine practices.
2. This report highlights these critical human rights concerns and examines how the weaponization of religious discourse has been used to consolidate repression. Authorities have leveraged morality-based narratives to justify restrictions on civil society, freedom of expression, and press freedom, further stifling dissent. The repression of independent media, compounded by sweeping surveillance laws, has further narrowed the space for free speech and political engagement. Additionally, legal and administrative measures continue to curtail the activities of civil society organizations, preventing them from operating independently or engaging with international human rights bodies.
3. Given these severe and systemic violations, the report provides an in-depth analysis of these trends and presents targeted recommendations based on the Matrix of the 36th UPR cycle, focusing on legal and institutional reforms to restore judicial independence, ensure accountability for human rights abuses, and repeal restrictive laws that enable repression.
4. The political context remains a key factor in shaping these challenges, with Libya's ongoing instability exacerbated by competing power structures, a weak rule of law, and the repeatedly postponed nationwide elections. Without urgent reforms and

international pressure, the current trajectory will likely further entrench impunity and undermine prospects for a rights-respecting governance system.

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## Freedom of Association and Assembly

5. Legal restrictions on civil society remain extensive. Authorities continue to enforce the infamous Gaddafi-era law No. 19 of 2001, which grants the state excessive control over civil society organizations (CSOs), limiting their formation and funding. Article 206 of the Penal Code imposes the death penalty for forming or participating in ‘prohibited’ groups, while [Law No. 65 of 2012 Regulating the Right to Peaceful Demonstration](#)<sup>2</sup> and [Law No. 3 of 2014 on Counterterrorism](#)<sup>3</sup> provide broad justifications for the criminalization of activists and journalists under national security pretexts. Additionally, the [2022 Anti-Cybercrime Law](#)<sup>4</sup> expands government surveillance and criminalizes online dissent. These laws collectively reinforce an environment where civil society is viewed as a threat.
6. On 4 December 2023, the Baydaa First Instance Civil Court in eastern Libya rescinded decrees no. 312 and no. 7, issued by the Government of National Unity (GNU) on 22 May and 21 March 2023 respectively. Decree No. 312 had created a committee, supervised by the prime minister’s office, to oversee civil society; the committee has undue broad powers to interfere in the work of associations. Decree No. 7 gave associations the right to operate only temporarily until they legalize their status under Law No. 19 of 2001. However, despite the court ruling, authorities have continued to enforce these measures, effectively stifling civil society space. This highlights the lack of effective enforcement, as security agencies and governmental bodies continue to override judicial decisions with impunity.
7. A similar dynamic followed the suspension of Decree 286 of 2019 by the South Benghazi Court in July 2022, which [reaffirmed](#)<sup>5</sup> the independence of associations

under Article 15 of the 2011 Constitutional Declaration. Nonetheless, the Civil Society Commission circumvented the ruling by issuing Decision No. 5 of 2023, effectively replacing Decree 286 without judicial or legislative oversight. Several Libyan civil society organizations challenged the decision before the administrative court, but the court rejected their appeal in October 2024.

8. The targeting of civil society organizations and youth groups has intensified in the past four years. In 2023, **the General Authority for Endowments and Islamic Affairs** <sup>6</sup> (Awqaf) accused CSOs of espionage, proselytism, and promoting homosexuality, contributing to stigmatization and security threats against activists. On 11 November 2024, the Ministry of Youth issued Circular No. 7 of 2024, requiring prior government approval for any youth trip abroad or engagement with international actors, severely limiting independent youth activism. Such policies aim to control youth mobilization and prevent the emergence of politically active movements that could challenge authoritarian governance structures.
9. The Civil Society Commission (CSC), which oversees NGOs, has strengthened its collaboration with security agencies, requiring organizations **to pledge non-communication with foreign entities without prior approval** <sup>7</sup>, effectively criminalizing independent human rights work. This has led to a decline in international partnerships and reduced access to foreign funding, further weakening civil society. **Reports** <sup>8</sup> indicate that some organizations have ceased operations entirely due to fear of legal repercussions and arbitrary arrests.
10. Arbitrary detentions and intimidation tactics have escalated against activists. In March 2024, journalist Zainab Tirbah and activist Ahlam Nasser Ben Taboun reported receiving death threats after criticizing government policies. The Internal Security Agency (ISA) has labeled activists as ‘foreign agents’ and ‘morally corrupt’, rendering them vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and targeted violence. Additionally, between 2023 and 2024, at least 17 CSO members and activists were arbitrarily detained in locations including Mitiga Prison, Benghazi’s Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade-run detention center, and unofficial ISA facilities. Many detainees were denied access to legal representation and subjected to coercive interrogations.
11. Human rights organizations have documented a sharp increase in **online**

harassment campaigns<sup>9</sup> targeting activists and organizations that speak out against governmental repression. These campaigns, often orchestrated by state-affiliated actors and pro-government media outlets<sup>10</sup>, have resulted in defamation, cyber-attacks, and doxxing of civil society leaders. Several activists have reported being forced to flee the country due to escalating threats<sup>11</sup>, further weakening the presence of independent advocacy voices within Libya.

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## Recommendations

1. Repeal Law No. 19 of 2001 and adopt a legal framework in line with Article 22 of the ICCPR to ensure full protection of freedom of association. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.74 – Supported)*
2. Lift restrictions on civil society organizations, including prior approval requirements, restrictions on funding, and punitive dissolution orders. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.82 – Noted, not Supported)*
3. End the arbitrary arrest and intimidation of civil society activists, ensuring accountability for enforced disappearances. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.165 – Supported)*
4. Abolish Presidential Decree No. 286 and all similar executive decrees restricting CSO operations. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.168 – Supported)*
5. Guarantee an enabling environment for youth activism by repealing Circular No. 7 of 2024 and ensuring youth organizations operate without undue restrictions. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.172 – Supported)*
6. Ensure the protection of peaceful demonstrators and refrain from using excessive force to disperse protests, in compliance with international human rights standards.
7. Hold security forces accountable for abuses committed against peaceful demonstrators, ensuring independent investigations into allegations of excessive

force. (A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.159 – Supported)

8. Establish a transparent legal framework for international cooperation with NGOs, allowing civil society organizations to engage in global advocacy efforts without fear of government reprisal. (A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.69 – Supported)
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## Freedoms of Expression, Opinion and Media

12. Over the 2023–2024 period, both western and eastern Libyan authorities have intensified restrictions on society, using morality-based rhetoric and national security justifications. On 6 November 2024, the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) announced the establishment of a ‘Morality Police’, expanding state control over large swaths of society - particularly CSOs, artists, women<sup>12</sup> - and imposing new restrictions under the pretext of protecting public morals.
13. In parallel, the eastern Interior Ministry has mandated prior security and cultural clearance for any artistic work, specifically targeting rap music for allegedly containing ‘obscene language, encouraging the exploitation of minors, and inciting rebellion against the family’. These measures reflect an ongoing strategy of moral policing, which authorities justify as necessary for preserving Libyan cultural values and national security. In reality, however, moral policing serves as a mechanism to suppress dissent and independent civic engagement.
14. Libyan authorities have systematically repressed freedom of expression through restrictive laws, arbitrary detentions, assassinations, and online censorship. Law 76 of 1972 on Publications imposes onerous conditions on media outlets, requiring prior censorship and restricting editorial independence. Articles 178, 195, 205, 208, 245, 438, and 439 of the Penal Code prescribe harsh penalties, including the death sentence, for expression-related offenses under broad terms like ‘insult’, ‘impugn’ the reputation, ‘disdain’, and ‘defamation’.

15. Law 3 of 2014 on Counterterrorism continues to be applied against journalists and activists, criminalizing critical speech under the guise of counterterrorism measures. Law No. 5 of 2022 Regarding Combating Cybercrimes (2022) allows warrantless surveillance, censorship, and harsh prison sentences for online dissent, threatening journalists, whistleblowers, and human rights defenders.
16. The Foreign Media Directorate introduced new restrictions in 2018, requiring international journalists to register with the government and obtain security clearance before reporting in Libya. The Media Authority under the Government of National Unity (GNU) enforces a licensing regime for print and digital media, giving it the power to shut down publications arbitrarily.
17. In July 2024, after reporting on corruption, **Libyan TV host Ahmed al-Sanussi** <sup>13</sup> was held in custody for three days in Tripoli following a complaint by the Economy Minister. In April 2022, after reporting on corruption, journalist Ali al-Rifawi was detained by the ISA. His whereabouts were unknown until he was released three days later.
18. Since the fall of Gaddafi in October 2011, Libya has become one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, with dozens assassinated and no meaningful investigations or prosecutions to bring their killers to justice. Violence against media professionals has only intensified over the years, with a chilling effect on the exercise of press freedom. In February 2015, activist and blogger Intessar al-Hasiri was found murdered in Tripoli; her death was met with silence from authorities. No investigation followed, and those responsible remain unknown. Just over a year later, in March 2016, rights activist Abdul Basset Abu Al-Dahab was killed in a car bomb attack in Derna, another case that faded into impunity.
19. June 2016 saw the brutal execution of Khaled al-Zintani, a photojournalist targeted by Daesh militants in Benghazi, silencing yet another voice documenting Libya's turmoil. Then, in July 2018, journalist Ali Moussa Abdel-Karim was found dead in Sabha; he was murdered shortly after he published articles critical of local militias. Like the others before him, his death went unpunished, further reinforcing the culture of fear and impunity that continues to define Libya's media landscape.

20. In February 2022, the Internal Security Agency (ISA) in Tripoli **arbitrarily detained**<sup>14</sup> members of the Tanweer group, an organization advocating for women's and LGBTQ+ rights. They were forced to confess under duress to atheism and promoting debauchery, and later prosecuted.
21. On Friday, 19 April 2024, political activist Seraj Fakhrudin Dughman tragically **died** under mysterious circumstances in an unofficial prison located within the headquarters of the General Command of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) at Ar-Rajmah, southeast of Benghazi. Security authorities notified his family of his death on the morning of his passing, and his body was returned to them for burial the same evening. Prior to his death, Dughman was serving as the director of the Benghazi branch of the Libya Center for Strategic and Future Studies. He had been arbitrarily detained since 1 October 2023 in a facility operated by the ISA, following his arrest with four other activists—Fathi Al-Buja, Tarek Al-Bashari, Nasser Al-Du'aysi, and Salem Al-Areibi—none of whom were given a trial or access to a lawyer. These detentions were based on their involvement in discussions in September 2023 about Libya's political situation and forthcoming elections. The charges against them include attempts to overthrow political bodies and the military institution, namely the General Command of LAAF. A family member of one of the detainees reported to CIHRS that none of the detainees have been provided with legal representation yet, and they have not been allowed any visits.
22. Article 7 of the Anti-Cybercrime Law grants the National Information Security and Safety Authority (NISSA) unrestricted powers to block websites and remove online content, suppressing digital activism. Article 37 stipulates a prison sentence of no less than five years and a fine for anyone found guilty of spreading 'rumors' or information perceived as endangering national security. Articles 9 and 39 criminalize the use of encryption tools, barring journalists and activists from communication online securely.
23. During an interview with "قناة ليبيا المستقبل" (Libya Al-Mustaqbal Channel) on 14 January 2024, Faraj Aqem, the Undersecretary of the Libyan Ministry of Interior, **confirmed**<sup>15</sup> the existence of a cyber-security team within the ministry, tasked with monitoring the online activities of Libyan citizens. Aqem explicitly stated that

individuals found criticizing government officials or the ministry online would be swiftly arrested and could expect to be imprisoned by the following day, without any judicial proceedings. He also claimed that the government has the authority to force the extradition of opponents of the state residing abroad with the assistance of Interpol. These actions represent a chilling crackdown on freedom of expression and a serious infringement on the right to privacy.

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## Recommendations

1. Repeal the Anti-Cybercrime Law (2022) and ensure online freedom of expression, in line with international human rights obligations. *(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.80)*
2. End arbitrary arrests, forced confessions, and unlawful detentions of journalists, activists, and human rights defenders, ensuring their right to due process and fair trial, based on the exercise of their right to freedom of speech. *(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendations 148.126, 148.128, 148.165, 148.171)*
3. Investigate and prosecute all cases of attack, enforced disappearance, and murder targeting journalists, activists, and human rights defenders, ensuring accountability for perpetrators. *(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendations 148.158, 148.142, 148.166, 148.176)*
4. Abolish Law 76 of 1972 on Publications and reform laws criminalizing freedom of expression, including by repealing vague and overly broad provisions in the Penal Code (Articles 178, 195, 205, 208, 245, 438, and 439) that impose excessive penalties on speech-related offenses. *(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.80)*
5. Enact legal protections for digital rights, including safeguarding journalists, whistleblowers, and activists from warrantless surveillance and censorship. *(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendations 148.80, 148.174, 148.179)*

*(Supported - A/HRC/46/17, Recommendations 148.68, 148.77, 148.82, 148.178).*

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## Patterns of Enforced Disappearance, Secret Detention, and Unfair Trial

24. Enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention in undisclosed locations constitute a systemic strategy employed by both state-affiliated security forces and armed groups across Libya. These practices serve as mechanisms of political repression, social control, and suppression of dissent, targeting individuals based on political affiliation, journalistic activity, human rights advocacy, and, in the case of migrants, their perceived status as an expendable population. The use of enforced disappearance is designed not only to eliminate opposition but to also instill fear within broader communities, suppressing dissent and reinforcing the power structures of armed groups and state authorities.
25. The Libyan judiciary remains structurally compromised, lacking both independence and the capacity to enforce legal protections. Judicial institutions routinely succumb to pressure from political actors and armed factions, facilitating the criminalization of dissent. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers frequently face intimidation, and in some cases, have themselves been targeted for abduction or assassination.
26. In November 2020, prominent lawyer and human rights activist **Hanan al-Barassi**<sup>16</sup> was assassinated in Benghazi by unidentified masked gunmen. Known for her outspoken criticism of corruption and human rights abuses, particularly those linked to eastern Libyan authorities, her murder underscored the perils faced by legal professionals challenging powerful factions. In May 2024, **Prosecutor Hamza Saqr**<sup>17</sup> was kidnapped and later found dead in a mass grave in Tarhuna. His abduction and murder highlighted the severe risks judicial officials encounter in Libya, where armed groups often operate with impunity.

27. In addition to previously mentioned cases such as those of Hanan al-Barassi and Hamza Saqr, there are numerous other documented cases of enforced disappearance. On 18 July 2019, **Dr. Seham Sergiwa** <sup>18</sup>, a Member of Parliament for Benghazi, was abducted from her home by an eastern-based militia. Her disappearance, following public criticism of the country's ongoing conflict, exemplifies the targeted elimination of opposition voices. To date, her whereabouts remain unknown, and no credible investigation has been initiated by authorities. On 1 October 2020, **Walid Al-Hudhairy** <sup>19</sup>, an official at the National Commission for Human Rights, was arrested by Libyan intelligence services in Tripoli, within a broader pattern of forcibly disappearing individuals critical of security agencies. Al-Hudhairy's fate remains unknown.
28. In October 2023, following LAAF raids in Benghazi, at least 19 individuals including relatives and supporters of former Defense Minister Al-Mahdi al-Barghathi, **were forcibly disappeared by LAAF-affiliated groups** <sup>20</sup>, including the Tariq Bin Ziyad Brigade. LAAF authorities have refused to disclose their whereabouts, and families remain without information. Attempts to seek legal representation have been hindered, and fears of extrajudicial executions persist.
29. On 11 March 2021, activist Zakaria Al-Zawi was abducted by the internal security forces of LAAF in Benghazi and later detained at Al-Kuwaifiyah Prison. His family was denied access to any legal proceedings, and he remains forcibly disappeared. On 3 June 2021, human rights defender and journalist Mansour Mohamed Atti was kidnapped in Ajdabiya by unidentified gunmen.
30. In June 2021, **at least 532 migrants were forcibly deported** <sup>21</sup> from Kufra Shelter and Deportation Center to Sudan and Chad. Many of these individuals remain missing, with credible reports suggesting they were transferred to militia-run detention centers. The deportations occurred without legal oversight, violating international refugee protection norms and constituting part of a broader pattern of abuses against migrants in Libya, though similar cases often go undocumented or are difficult to verify.
31. Libya's judiciary has demonstrably failed to prosecute perpetrators of enforced disappearance. Even in high-profile cases such as MP Seham Sergiwa's abduction,

the courts have remained complicit through inaction. Despite widespread documentation, there have been no legal proceedings against state-affiliated actors involved in disappearances.

32. Armed groups continue to exercise extrajudicial power with impunity, as exemplified by the 2017 execution of prisoners by Mahmoud al-Werfalli, a LAAF commander under an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court, who was assassinated before he could be brought to trial.
  33. International legal accountability efforts have been obstructed by foreign governments. In January 2025, Osama Elmasry Njeem, a Libyan police chief **sought by the ICC** <sup>22</sup> for war crimes and crimes against humanity, was arrested in Italy by the Turin judicial police. However, the Court of Appeal in Rome then deemed Najim's arrest 'irregular' due to the failure to follow proper protocols, specifically the lack of prior consultation between the Minister of Justice and the Court regarding the ICC warrant, and **ordered his release**<sup>23</sup>. He was then **reportedly**<sup>24</sup> returned to Libya by Italian authorities on a state-owned aircraft. This illustrates the lack of enforcement of international legal mechanisms by Western states.
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## Recommendations

1. End impunity for enforced disappearance by prosecuting perpetrators, including state security personnel and militia leaders.
2. Ensure transparency regarding detainees' whereabouts, facilitating independent monitoring of detention facilities. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.165 – Supported)*
3. Close all clandestine detention facilities, ensuring detainees are granted due process rights, including access to legal counsel. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.160 – Supported)*

4. Safeguard human rights defenders, journalists, and political activists from arbitrary detention. (*A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.172 – Supported*)
  5. Cease the illegal deportation and indefinite detention of migrants, ensuring compliance with international humanitarian obligations. (*A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.180 – Supported*)
  6. Bolster international legal cooperation on accountability by enforcing ICC warrants and extradition requests.
  7. Implement institutional judicial reforms to ensure courts function independently of political and militia interference.
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## Gender-related and Women's Rights

34. Legal restrictions on women's rights remain severe. Authorities continue to impose policies that curtail women's mobility, political participation, and freedom of expression. In 2022, a *de facto* travel bans for women under the age of 60 without a male guardian was introduced in eastern Libya. Every Libyan woman traveling alone is required to complete an official declaration providing her reasons for travel, an explanation of why she is traveling alone, and details of her travel history. In 2023, the **Internal Security Agency of Libya's Government of National Unity imposed<sup>25</sup>** similar restrictions on women's freedom of movement. Reports indicate additional travel restrictions enforced extra-legally on Libyan women's travel abroad by border authorities and local security forces, citing 'national security concerns'. These restrictions have been implemented inconsistently, creating an arbitrary and unpredictable system of control over women's movement.
35. Women's political participation continues to be systematically undermined. The 2022 electoral laws, drafted by the House of Representatives, failed to include any gender quota, leading to the effective exclusion of women from leadership positions. In 2023, discussions around electoral laws included a proposal for a

30% quota for women's representation<sup>26</sup> in the legislative body responsible for drafting a new Libyan constitution. However, a draft electoral law released in January 2023 proposed only a 10% quota for women. This reduction prompted protests from the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace and other civil society groups, who called on all Libyans to reject the draft law due to its limited provisions for women's representation.

36. On 6 November 2024, the GNU's Minister of Interior, Imad Trabelsi, announced the establishment of a 'Morality Police', to enforce mandatory veiling on women in public spaces and regulate female participation in public events. The announcement followed a series of morality-based decrees, including the GNU's decree 422 of 2024<sup>27</sup> and the Presidential Council's decree 14 of 2024<sup>28</sup>, which banned women from attending mixed-gender gatherings. These policies reflect a broader pattern of gender-based control, enforced through religious and cultural justifications.
  37. Gender-based violence remains widespread and unaddressed. Libya lacks specific legislation criminalizing domestic violence, leaving survivors without legal protection or recourse. Law enforcement agencies frequently refuse to register cases of domestic abuse, forcing survivors to seek protection from informal networks. Reports indicate that victims of sexual violence are often pressured to marry their rapists as a means of preserving family honor.
  38. The role of law enforcement in perpetuating gender-based repression is evident in state-sanctioned harassment of women activists and professionals. In March 2023, the ISA in Tripoli launched a social media defamation campaign against women's rights activists, labeling them 'Western agents' and 'morally corrupt individuals'. The campaign targeted lawyers, journalists, and human rights defenders, leading to increased threats and online harassment. Many women were compelled to deactivate their social media accounts for safety reasons.
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## Recommendations

1. Ensure the full protection of women's rights, including freedom of movement, political participation, and access to public spaces, in compliance with international human rights standards. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.97 – Supported)*
  2. Repeal all policies and decrees that restrict women's mobility, including de facto travel bans imposed at border checkpoints. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.99 – Supported)*
  3. Implement legal reforms to criminalize gender-based violence, ensuring survivors have access to justice and protection mechanisms. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.103 – Supported)*
  4. Abolish the morality-based restrictions on women's dress code and participation in public events, including the mandatory veiling policy enforced by the GNU's Ministry of Interior. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.101 – Noted)*
  5. Increase women's political representation by reinstating gender quotas in electoral laws and ensuring barriers to female participation in governance are removed. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.98 – Supported)*
  6. End the arbitrary arrest, defamation, and intimidation of women activists, politicians, and journalists, and ensure accountability for state-sponsored online harassment campaigns. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.102 – Supported)*
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# Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees' Rights

39. Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Libya are and have been subjected to arbitrary detention in facilities characterized by inhumane conditions. Reports indicate widespread abuse, including torture, forced labor, and sexual violence, perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. The lack of accountability and oversight has allowed such practices to persist. Detainees frequently report being subjected to **overcrowding, malnutrition, and denial of medical care**<sup>29</sup>. Women and children face heightened risks, with reports of sexual exploitation by guards and traffickers. Testimonies from former detainees describe instances where **migrants were sold**<sup>30</sup> to armed groups and forced into labor under the threat of violence.
40. The case of **Shuaib Ibrahim**<sup>31</sup>, a 19-year-old Somali asylum seeker who died in Tripoli on 6 January 2020, highlights the critical issue of inadequate healthcare for non-Libyan citizens. His death underscores the systemic neglect and denial of essential health services to migrants and asylum seekers in detention. Many detainees suffer from preventable diseases due to unsanitary conditions, lack of clean drinking water, and absence of medical attention. The conditions in detention centers have been described by **UN**<sup>32</sup> and **humanitarian**<sup>33</sup> organizations as 'life-threatening' and 'comparable to modern slavery'.
41. **European Union Involvement:** The EU and its member states have been implicated in supporting Libyan authorities, including the Libyan Coast Guard, in efforts to intercept migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea. This collaboration has resulted in the forcible return of migrants to Libya, where they face severe human rights abuses. 'The suffering of migrants detained in Libya is an outrage to the conscience of humanity', **said the UN human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein**<sup>34</sup>. 'The European Union's policy of assisting the Libyan coastguard to intercept and return migrants in the Mediterranean [is] inhuman.' In many cases,

intercepted migrants have been directly returned to detention centers known for human rights violations, effectively outsourcing Europe's border control to Libya while turning a blind eye to the atrocities committed against those intercepted at sea.

42. **Abuses by the Libyan Coast Guard:** The Libyan Coast Guard, which has received European funding, **training, and support**<sup>35</sup>, has repeatedly been accused of using excessive force against migrants at sea, including ramming boats, opening fire on them, and conducting violent interceptions. **Testimonies from survivors**<sup>36</sup> detail instances where Coast Guard personnel assaulted migrants during transfers, resulting in severe injuries and, in some cases, drownings. In 2022, the United Nations **documented**<sup>37</sup> multiple instances where intercepted migrants were handed over directly to traffickers and militias upon arrival in Libya.
43. **Forced Deportations:** In July 2023, a group of 20 migrants and asylum seekers from western and central Africa were forcibly displaced to the Tunisian-Libyan border near Ben Guerdane by Tunisian military and National Guard officers. This incident exemplifies the perilous conditions and lack of protection faced by migrants in the region. Migrants left in desert border zones without food, water, or shelter often fall victim to smugglers or are forced to walk for days to reach safety, with many succumbing to exposure and dehydration. Similar cases of pushbacks have been documented along Libya's border with Niger and Chad, where migrants report being abandoned in remote areas with no means of survival.
44. **Human Trafficking and Smuggling Networks:** Libya remains a key hub for human trafficking, with traffickers exploiting the country's lawlessness to operate with impunity. **Detained migrants**<sup>38</sup> are often 'sold' multiple times between different trafficking rings, forced to pay ransom for their release, or subjected to forced labor in agricultural, construction, and sex work industries. Testimonies from survivors describe torture used as a method of coercion, **with migrants being filmed while being beaten**<sup>39</sup> and having the footage sent to their families as a means of extortion.
45. **Libya's Law No. 19 of 2010 on Combating Illegal Immigration**<sup>40</sup> infringes on human rights by criminalizing irregular migration without distinguishing between

migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, violating international protection standards. The law subjects undocumented migrants to detention with hard labor, fines, and forced deportation, often without due process or access to asylum procedures. It also fails to provide protections against arbitrary detention, inhumane treatment, and exploitation, leaving migrants vulnerable to abuse, torture, and forced labor in Libya's notorious detention centers. By penalizing humanitarian assistance and offering incentives for informants, the law further erodes fundamental rights to safety, dignity, and legal protection, contradicting Libya's obligations under international human rights and refugee law.

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## Recommendations

1. Repeal Law No. 19 of 2010 and establish a legal framework ensuring the non-criminalization of irregular migration. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.265 – Noted, not Supported)*
  2. End the exploitation of migrants and refugees in detention centers by phasing out their use and ensuring that detained individuals are released and granted access to legal pathways for protection. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.184 – Supported)*
  3. Ensure independent investigations into human rights abuses committed in detention centers and hold perpetrators accountable. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.149 – Supported)*
  4. Guarantee non-refoulement protections for asylum seekers and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.277 – Noted, not Supported)*
  5. Strengthen human trafficking laws and ensure the prosecution of traffickers and smugglers operating within Libya. *(A/HRC/46/17, Recommendation 148.195 – Supported)*.
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## Footnotes

1. “Leaked Videos Show ‘Systematic Torture’ inside Garnada Prison.”  
<https://www.libyanexpress.com/leaked-videos-show-systematic-torture-inside-garnada-prison/> ↗
2. “Law No. (65) of 2012 Regulating the Right to Peaceful Demonstration.”  
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3. Libya - DCAF Legal Databases. “Law No. (3) of 2014 on Counter-Terrorism.”  
Accessed April 6, 2025. <https://security-legislation.ly/latest-laws/law-no-3-of-2014-on-counter-terrorism/> ↗
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