

Libya: Government of National Unity must ensure militia leaders are held to account after outbreak of violence in Tripoli

Responding to yesterday's armed clashes in Tripoli between various militias, which resulted in the surrender of many members of the notorious Stability Support Authority (SSA) militia and the killing of its leader, Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, known as "Gheniwa", as well as subsequent decisions by the Government of National Unity (GNU) today, including appointing a new head of the infamous Tripoli-based Internal Security Agency (ISA) and dissolving the Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM), Mahmoud Shalaby, Egypt and Libya Researcher at Amnesty International, said:

"For years, the SSA and the ISA terrorized people in Tripoli through enforced disappearances, torture, and other crimes under international law. SSA members subjected hundreds of migrants and refugees to torture, forced labour and rape after intercepting them at sea and returning them to detention centres under SSA's command.

"Now, the GNU must prioritize the rights of victims and break the cycle of impunity. It must ensure that all members of these militias, including their leaders, who are suspected of committing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations are held to account. The GNU must immediately open thorough, independent, impartial, and transparent investigations into the crimes committed by these groups over the past years. But accountability must not turn into revenge: militia members who are arrested or surrender must be treated humanely while in detention and be protected from the risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

"The GNU's appointment of a new head of the ISA today must bring to an end the ISA's vicious campaign of repression against people who [peacefully exercise their human rights](#). The GNU must also ensure that the former head of the ISA, Lotfi al-Harari, is held accountable for all crimes under international law allegedly committed under his command. In particular, while he was deputy head of the Abu Salim Central Security Force, another militia, he is suspected of having been involved in crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations since 2011, including arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearances.

"The GNU's decision to dissolve the DCIM and integrate its members into the Ministry of Interior must include rigorous and thorough individual vetting to ensure that alleged perpetrators of well-documented crimes against migrants and refugees, including sexual violence, extortion, forced labour, and inhuman detention conditions across DCIM centres, are held accountable."

Amnesty International is also calling on the GNU to ensure the immediate release of all individuals who are detained without charge or a legal basis in official or unofficial places of detention controlled by the SSA and all other militias, including the ISA. All those held arbitrarily must have access to effective remedies.

Background

On 12 May 2025, armed clashes erupted in Tripoli between rival militias amid reports of the killing of one of the most powerful militia leaders in Tripoli Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, known as "Gheniwa". Emergency Medicine and Support Center, a governmental health institution, [stated](#) that six dead bodies were collected from the streets of the Abu Salim neighbourhood in Tripoli after the clashes, without clarifying whether they were civilians or fighters.

On 13 May 2025, the GNU issued several [decisions](#), including establishing a governmental committee tasked with inspecting detention facilities and ensuring respect for the humane treatment of detainees. The committee is also tasked with reviewing the legality of arrests and detentions in

order to guarantee that decisions on release or continued detention by judicial authorities are implemented. The GNU's decisions included the dissolution of DCIM, as well as the appointment of another head for the ISA.

The SSA, created by the GNU in 2021, was commanded by, Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, known as "Gheniwa", who was appointed despite the well-documented history of crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations allegedly committed by militias under his command since the 2011 uprising. Amnesty International has [documented](#) crimes including enforced disappearances and deaths in custody by SSA militia members under "Gheniwa's" command, as well as interceptions of refugees and migrants at sea that have been marred by reports of violence, leading to loss of life at sea.

For years, Amnesty International has [documented](#) crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations across DCIM detention centres, in which migrants and refugees have been subjected to indefinite arbitrary detention and reported extortion and forced labour, cruel and inhuman detention conditions, sometimes amounting to torture, severe beatings with various objects, and sexual violence.