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World Report 2024



Human rights violations and abuses by armed groups and militias remain pervasive, as political elites and myriad quasi-authorities compete for legitimacy and control of territory, nearly 12 years into Libya's political transition away from Muammar Gaddafi's strong-man rule.

Authorities in both east and west Libya are cracking down on the activities of civic groups, harassing and sometimes detaining and prosecuting local staff members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and imposing obstacles for non-Libyans to obtain entry visas. In March, the Tripoli-based prime minister declared that NGOs that fail to overcome the nearly insurmountable conditions for registration, administration, and operations would be ruled unlawful.

On September 10, a massive storm (Storm Daniel) hit eastern Libya, mostly affecting the city of Derna, and led to the [confirmed](#) deaths of 4,352 people as of October 31, with 8,500 reported missing and 43,400 displaced, according to the United Nations. The direct cause of many of the casualties and much of the damage was the torrent of water after two dams collapsed, which washed neighborhoods into the Mediterranean Sea. Libyan groups have called for an independent international investigation into the alleged failure by authorities to conduct preventive maintenance of infrastructure and to evacuate communities at risk.

Political Process and Elections

Two rival administrations continue to compete for control in Libya: the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU), headed by Abdelhamid Dabeiba, and a parallel body in eastern Libya, the Government of National Stability (GNS), established by the eastern, Tobruk-based parliament, the House of Representatives (HoR).

Elections remain elusive as competing authorities disagree over [amendments](#) to the 2011 constitutional declaration regarding elections.

Libyans have not voted in presidential or parliamentary [elections](#) since 2014, when a [contested vote](#) led to divided rule and conflict. At time of writing, there was no confirmed date to hold elections.

Libya's 2011 interim constitution remains the only one in place. A draft constitution submitted by the elected Libyan Constitution Drafting Assembly in July 2017 has yet to be put to a national referendum.

Armed Conflict and War Crimes

[Fighting](#) in Tripoli on August 14 and 15 between two major armed groups, one linked to the GNU Interior Ministry and the other to the Defense Ministry, resulted in at least 55 people killed and over 100 injured, including an undisclosed number of civilians, according to the UN. Clashes in April between rival armed groups in Zawiya resulted in at least [four civilians killed](#), and in May, renewed clashes there reportedly killed two people.

As of March, the Tarek Ben Ziyad Brigade and Brigade 20/20 of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), the armed group controlling eastern and much of southern Libya, forcibly evicted on short notice more than 20,000 residents of Benghazi and forced them to rescind their property or ownership documents without an appropriate compensation scheme for residents, according to 6 [UN experts](#) and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The Brigades' members demolished scores of residential units, including historic neighborhoods and protected heritage sites in the Benghazi center to make way for new residential and commercial building developments, and briefly arrested several residents and at least two activists protesting the evictions, the experts said.

In Tarhouna, where hundreds went missing between 2014 and 2020 when the al-Kaniyat militia under the leadership of al-Kani family members controlled the town, the [General Authority for the Search and Identification of Missing Persons](#) continued to identify the remains of hundreds found in [mass graves](#) in the area. As of October 31, no trials of those allegedly involved in the killings and disappearances had commenced.

Antipersonnel [landmines](#) and unexploded ordnance (UXO), including cluster munition remnants, continued to pose a risk, especially in Tripoli and its surroundings, where they killed or injured scores of civilians, including deminers, during and after the 2019-2020 Tripoli conflict. There are remnants from previous conflicts in 2011, 2014, and some that date back to World War II. Libya has not ratified the international Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which respectively prohibit antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions. In September, an official from the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) warned that the flooding in Derna "shifted unexploded ordnance into areas previously free of weapon contamination," [increasing the risk](#) for residents and aid workers.

Three years after a ceasefire agreement ended the [2019-2020 Tripoli conflict](#), Turkish and other military forces; thousands of foreign fighters from Chad, Sudan, and elsewhere; and members of private security companies, including the Wagner Group, remained present in Libya.

Libya has not endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration to protect education during armed conflict.

Judicial System and Detainees

Libya's criminal justice system remained weak with serious due process concerns. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers remained at risk of harassment and attack by armed groups. Military courts continued to try civilians.

On December 6, the HoR voted to [establish a constitutional court](#) in Benghazi, despite the lack of a permanent constitution and without the buy-in of key stakeholders, including the High State Council (HSC), an advisory body to the GNU. In June, the Supreme Court of Libya ruled it [unconstitutional](#).

Twenty-eight official prisons under the supervision of the justice ministry held 19,103 people, including 216 women, as of May 5, according to the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)). Many others are held in prolonged detention without trial, in prisons run by militias and only under the nominal control of authorities. Inhumane conditions, including severe overcrowding, torture, and ill-treatment, are prevalent at these facilities.

International Justice

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Khan, continued the investigation in Libya.

In May, Khan [announced](#) to the UN Security Council that ICC judges had issued four new arrest warrants against individuals for serious crimes in Libya that remained sealed and that he had applied for two more.

[Saif al-Islam Gaddafi](#), a son of Muammar Gaddafi, who is wanted by the ICC since 2011 for serious crimes he allegedly committed during the Libyan revolution of that year, remains a fugitive, and Libya is under a legal obligation to surrender him to the Hague.

Ending its mandate in March, the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Libya [found](#) in its final report “reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity were committed against Libyans and migrants throughout Libya, in the context of deprivation of liberty.” The mission also found that arbitrary detentions, murders, torture, rapes, enslavement, sexual slavery, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances were widespread. Libyan authorities pledged in 2022 at the Human Rights Council to use the FFM’s findings and recommendations as a baseline for future reports to the council and treaty bodies, according to the FFM’s final report.

Death Penalty

The death penalty is stipulated in over 30 articles in Libya’s penal code, including for acts of speech and association. While military and civilian courts continued to impose the death penalty, no executions have been carried out since 2010.

Six Libyan women and men, arrested separately in March, are [reportedly](#) facing the death penalty for allegedly converting to Christianity and for proselytizing. They have reportedly been charged under article 207 of the penal code for “promoting theories or principles” that aim to overthrow the political, social, or economic system and for possessing “books, publications, illustrations, slogans, or any other material with the intent to endorse the aforementioned acts or advocate them in any other way.” A lawyer representing one of them said his client was [tortured](#) during interrogation.

In a mass trial, a Misrata criminal court in May sentenced 23 defendants to death, 14 to life in prison, and another 14 to varying prison terms for their alleged links to [Islamic State](#) (ISIS) in 2015 in Sirte, including the [killing](#) of 21 mostly Egyptian Copts. Five were acquitted.

Freedoms of Assembly and Association

Libya’s [penal code](#) stipulates severe punishments, including the death penalty, for establishing “unlawful” associations and prohibits Libyans from joining or establishing international organizations without government permission.

After months of [increasing restrictions](#) on civic groups [and NGOs](#), including harassment, detention, and prosecution of local staff members, and after a March 8 edict by the Supreme Judicial Council declaring null and void any organizations not established according to a [draconian 2001](#) Gaddafi-

era law, the GNU prime minister in a March 21 [circular](#) gave NGOs provisional legal standing until they “correct their legal status” in line with the 2001 law.

Freedom of Expression

In the aftermath of the flooding, and after a demonstration on September 18 by Derna residents calling for an international investigation into the causes of the flooding and accountability for negligent officials, armed groups affiliated with the eastern Internal Security Agency seized and detained at least five Derna residents who had demonstrated, according to activists. On September 19, the LAAF ordered most [media organizations](#) and journalists to leave Derna, sparking concerns about a media blackout on the relief operation.

On October 2, the Benghazi Internal Security Agency [arrested](#) Fathi al-Baaja, a university professor and former member of the 2011 National Transitional Council, together with two political activists, Seraj Doghman and Tarek al-Bishari, after discussions at a symposium on repercussions of the Derna dams collapse. As of November 1, they remained in detention without any formal charges.

Eastern-based authorities on February 16, 2023, announced that they would start enforcing an [anti-cybercrime law](#) passed by the HoR in September 2022. Four UN experts criticized the law as infringing on the rights of free expression, privacy, and free association and called for its revocation. On February 17, eastern Libyan authorities arrested two women—a singer and an online content creator—for allegedly violating “honor and public morals.” Both women have been released since.

In December 2022, a Tripoli court [sentenced](#) four men to three years in prison with hard labor for their involvement with the [Tanweer movement](#) and for being “atheist, areligious, secular and feminist.” The FFM [said](#) that evidence “was extracted under coercive circumstances without lawyers present” and was concerned that “the legal provisions relied upon are inconsistent with the principle of legality and international human rights law.”

Women’s Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity

In May, the Tripoli Internal Security Agency, a body linked to the GNU, began [requiring](#) Libyan women traveling without a male escort to complete a detailed form about the reasons for their travel and past travel, which is not a requirement under Libyan law and violates women’s rights to equality and freedom of movement.

Libya lacks a domestic violence law that sets out measures to prevent domestic violence, punish abusers, and protect survivors. The penal code allows for a reduced sentence for a man who kills or injures his wife or another female relative because he suspects her of extramarital sexual relations. It also allows perpetrators of rape to escape prosecution if they marry their victims.

Libya’s Family Code discriminates against women with respect to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The 2010 nationality law also discriminates by allowing only Libyan men to pass on Libyan nationality to their children and requiring women to get the authorities’ permission before marrying a non-Libyan man.

The penal code prohibits all sexual acts outside marriage, including consensual same-sex relations, and punishes them with flogging and up to five years in prison.

Internally Displaced People

As of August, there were about 125,802 [internally displaced](#) people in Libya, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). These include thousands of former residents of the town of Tawergha,

who were driven out by anti-Gaddafi groups from Misrata in 2011 and have been unable to return due to the [deliberate destruction](#) of the town and the scarcity of public services. They also include thousands of families forcibly displaced by the LAAF from [Benghazi](#), [Ajdabiya](#), and [Derna](#) since 2014.

As of October 31, an additional 43,421 [remain displaced](#), including [16,000 children](#), because of Storm Daniel's impact on northeastern Libya.

Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

According to the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM), 947 people were found dead and 1,256 went missing at sea along the central Mediterranean migration route after departing from Libya between January 1 and November 25.

According to IOM and UNHCR, as of April, there were 705,746 migrants and as of October, there were 50,986 registered [asylum seekers and refugees](#).

As of July, Tunisian security forces [collectively expelled](#) over 900 African migrants and asylum seekers to a remote, militarized buffer zone at the [Tunisia-Libya](#) border. Over 150 people were transferred to Libya, where they faced arbitrary detention and deportation. [In August, Libyan authorities said they had recovered at least 27 bodies](#) in the border area since the start of the expulsions.

Between January and November 25, Libyan forces intercepted or rescued 15,057 migrants and asylum seekers attempting to cross the Mediterranean and returned them to Libya, according to the [IOM](#). In Libya, they faced arbitrary and indefinite detention in inhumane conditions in facilities run by the GNU's Interior Ministry and were held with smugglers and traffickers, where they were [subjected](#) to forced labor, torture, ill-treatment, extortion, and sexual assault, according to the FFM.

Key International Actors

United States authorities announced on December 12, 2022 that they took custody of [Abu Agela Masud Kheir Al-Marimi](#), a former official of Gaddafi's government, accusing him of complicity in the downing of Pan Am flight 103 in 1988 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing 270 people. On January 25, a US court appointed a Federal Public Defender as al-Marimi's counsel, and on [February 8](#), he pleaded not guilty to the formal charges of [destruction of aircraft](#) resulting in death. As of October 31, the trial had not started.

The Libyan General Prosecutor announced an investigation into the transfer to US custody of al-Marimi, who had no outstanding arrest warrant in Libya.

The European Union continued to cooperate with abusive Libyan Coast Guard forces, providing material and technical support and [aerial surveillance](#) to help them intercept Europe-bound migrants at sea and return them to Libya. In February, Italy handed over to the Coast Guard a search-and-rescue vessel [paid for by the EU](#), and promised four more, deepening the EU's complicity in that agency's human rights abuses.