

GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: LIBYA FACTSHEET

OVERALL GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX SCORE:

VERY HIGH RISK

The Global Torture Index 2025 is the first analysis designed to assess the risk of torture and ill-treatment across 26 countries worldwide. This 2025 factsheet for Libya includes an analysis of the country's overall performance, a breakdown by thematic pillars and key recommendations for driving meaningful change in the fight against torture and the promotion of human rights.

COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS IN LIBYA:

OMCT Libyan
Anti-Torture Network

AT A GLANCE

Torture remains widespread and systematic in Libya, particularly in detention centres controlled by state actors, militias and armed groups. For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a **very high risk** of torture and ill-treatment, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024. Notorious facilities like Mitiga (SDF), Garnada and Kwefeya are centres of brutal abuse, where detainees—often political activists, migrants and conflict-related prisoners—are subjected to electric shocks, beatings, forced stress positions and sexual humiliation. Arbitrary arrests and secret detentions are common, with excessive use of force leading to injuries and deaths.

Migrants, in particular, face starvation, sexual violence and prolonged solitary confinement in trafficking warehouses. Migrants using Libya as a transit hub to Europe often describe an unrelenting cycle of violence and exploitation. In 2023, 14 migrants died of thirst after being expelled into the desert near the Libyan-Tunisian border; however, the actual numbers are believed to be much higher. In 2024, more than 100 bodies were exhumed from two mass graves in Al-Kufra and Al-Shwerif, both containing migrants. In addition, vulnerable groups such as women, children, LGBTQIA+ individuals and minorities face heightened risks, including discriminatory abuse and forced confessions. Documenting over 1,000 cases of torture and cruel or degrading treatment in the past four years, including 581 extrajudicial killings in detention between 2020 and 2022, the Libyan Anti-Torture Network (LAN) has also facilitated the relocation of 38 Libyan activists (2023-2024), provided legal and forensic aid to 63 torture survivors and offered medical and psychological assistance to over 50 victims.

Libya's political fragmentation and persistent conflict have entrenched human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) violations. Although a state party to the UN Convention Against Torture, Libya has not aligned its laws accordingly and rejected the establishment of individual complaints mechanisms. Law No. 10 of 2013 criminalises torture only within state detention, excluding acts by militias or trafficking networks. Despite inviting the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, access was blocked. In March 2023, authorities revived restrictive laws to criminalise NGOs and introduced a cybercrime law that targets encryption tools, escalating threats against lawyers, activists and NGOs documenting abuses. The discovery of mass graves, such as those linked to the Kanyat group in Tarhouna, underscores the scale of atrocities, which in 2024 were considered to amount to crimes against humanity by the ICC.

Libya's detention system is overwhelmed, with over 18,000 people held across 31 prisons and two-thirds without trial. LAN confirmed 976 cases of arbitrary detention at [Garnada alone](#). Additionally, an [ICC warrant was issued in 2025 against SDF commander Osama Njem Almasri](#) for crimes against humanity. He is alleged to have overseen state prison facilities in Tripoli, where thousands of persons were detained for prolonged periods and killed.

Between 2023 and 2024, 66 HRDs were detained across the country. Access to justice remains severely limited, with detainees, including human rights defenders, routinely denied legal representation. Libya lacks a functional National Preventive Mechanism, and the National Human Rights Council is politically compromised. Complaint mechanisms are ineffective, with torture survivors facing retaliation, and independent monitoring is nearly impossible. Despite legal frameworks providing for the right to redress, no compensation or rehabilitation has been provided, leaving torture survivors without support or access to fair judicial proceedings.

GENERAL INFORMATION



Type of government:

Two governments: The Tripoli-based GNU (Government of National Unity) and the east-based government GNS (Government of National Stability). Elections to unify the two have been delayed since 2021.



United Nations Convention Against Torture:
Ratified



OPCAT ratification:
Not ratified



Population:
7.3 million



People deprived of liberty:
19,103



Prison population (per 100,000 of national population):
269



Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population):
29%



Documented Detained Human Rights Defenders:
66



Alerts Issued by the Observatory for Human Rights Defenders in 2024:
0



Prison Occupancy level:
141%



Homicide rate (per 100.000 people):
No data

THEMATIC PILLAR OVERVIEW



I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Libya demonstrates a notably poor political commitment to addressing torture and ill-treatment. Although it ratified the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), it has not accepted the Committee's competence to hear individual complaints and has failed to engage meaningfully with the body since 1999. Libya has not ratified key instruments, such as OPCAT, the Rome Statute or the Convention on Enforced Disappearances. Despite inviting the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, visits have been obstructed, and responses to abuse allegations remain limited. The principle of non-refoulement is routinely violated, with migrants and asylum seekers, especially from Sudan, Chad and Somalia, forcibly returned through unsafe desert routes. Domestically, torture is neither constitutionally prohibited nor fully criminalised in line with CAT standards. Libyan legislation, including the Libyan Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and Law No. 10 on the criminalisation of torture, fails to prohibit torture as a war crime and other forms of inhuman and degrading treatment. Furthermore, Libya still lacks a national policy, an independent protocol on the prohibition of crimes committed in the context of armed conflict, a budget or an independent mechanism to prevent or redress torture.

While the lack of explicit criminalisation of torture acts was identified across the Index as a key barrier to effective implementation of and compliance with the Convention Against Torture (CAT), Libya's domestic human rights legal framework is further weakened by the criminalisation of civic space activities and provisions banning confidential digital communications. Since 2022, the Libyan parliament has passed several laws granting authorities broader powers, including the Anti-Cyber Crime Law and Law No. 19 on Regulating Associations. The restrictions outlined in these laws are often compounded by executive orders, while [legal provisions are vaguely formulated using broad terms such as criminalising acts that violate 'public order and morality'](#). Although Libya endorsed recommendations to ratify core treaties and align its laws with the CAT, legislative reform has stalled, leaving significant gaps in protection and accountability.



II. ENDING POLICE BRUTALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

[Torture and ill-treatment by security forces during law enforcement operations are frequent and systematic](#), compounded by the absence of regulations on weapon control and the widespread availability and arbitrary use of arms. Libya has signed, but not ratified, international agreements governing weapon use and trade, and does not permit independent documentation or monitoring of related violations. Excessive force involving firearms and kinetic impact projectiles frequently results in severe injuries and deaths, with officials rarely receiving adequate human rights or IHL-based training. Arrests and interrogations frequently involve psychological pressure, physical abuse and discriminatory treatment targeting migrant women and children, ethnic minorities and human rights defenders. Secret and incommunicado detention facilities are common, and detainees rarely receive timely access to legal counsel or medical care. Torture methods during interrogations include food and water deprivation, [sexual humiliation and beatings](#).

Between 2023 and 2025, LAN has reported that police stations, particularly in Bayda, Tobuk, Almarj, Souq Aljumaa, Abouslim (both in Tripoli) and Sabha, are known to practice torture as a means of discipline. Assemblies are typically repressed violently, with enforced disappearances and torture documented against demonstrators. A lack of general oversight and accountability perpetuates systemic abuses by law enforcement. The enforced disappearance of activists arrested in the context of protests or vocal on social media is documented as a persistent practice in the internal security apparatus facilities and military headquarters under the control of the Libyan Armed Forces (LAAF), and Internal Security Apparatus premises in Tripoli within the jurisdiction of the Government of National Unity (GNU).



III. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WHILE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities under the Directorate of Combating Illegal Migration remain widespread and entrenched in Libya. Migrants are frequently subjected to corporal and collective punishments, reduced food and water, prolonged solitary confinement (lasting up to eight months) and severe physical torture. Detention conditions are notoriously harsh, with occupancy rates in migrant detention centres exceeding 300% causing rampant outbreaks of diseases such as scabies and epidemic infections. Sexual violence is also widespread. Medical assistance is rarely provided adequately, and detained migrants depend heavily on charity groups for donations of basic necessities. Deaths in custody sometimes occur, disproportionately affecting all foreign detainees, including irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Migrants face particularly severe abuses, including starvation and inhumane, prolonged detention lasting months or even years in secret trafficking warehouses and in private farms owned by Libyans and forcibly managed by migrants.

Libya's criminal detention and prisons hold an estimated 6,500 individuals across 26 prisons under Judicial Police control, though no verifiable statistics exist for facilities operated by the Ministries of Interior, Defence or State-integrated and armed groups. Detention sites vary by authority and purpose, including facilities under state control such as Judicial Police Prisons, which hold individuals accused of ordinary crimes, conflict-related detainees, civil society, political and social media activists, religious groups and those detained on political or security grounds.

Since 2021, the LAN and OMCT have documented systematic torture during pre-trial investigations at police stations, military headquarters and prisons at notorious sites like Mitiga (SDF), Kwefeya, Al-Jaweya in Misrata, Garnada, Stability and Support Apparatus in Tripoli, Aljufa Air Base, Tamanhent Air Base, Security Directorate buildings in Marj, Sirte, Misrata and Tripoli. In January 2025, videos from [Garnada exposed horrific practices, including beatings, electric shocks, forced humiliating postures and psychological abuse](#). In February 2025, another [video showing two members of Rescue Division torturing a Pakistani migrant in Misrata](#) Security Directorate surfaced.

Women detainees endure virginity testing and sexual harassment, with two recent cases reported in Tripoli and Al-Bayda. LGBTQIA+ individuals suffer structural discrimination, increased isolation and limited safeguards in Libya. Some Indigenous groups face discrimination and are considered stateless. The Tuareq and Tebu, for example, are categorised as non-Libyan stateless peoples and lack legal or administrative recognition. Overall, torture is normalised in Libyan detention facilities, with released detainees suffering psychologically and socially due to social isolation and cultural stigma.



IV. ENDING IMPUNITY

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

Impunity for torture is deeply entrenched in Libya and fuelled by systemic weaknesses in investigation, prosecution and protection mechanisms. Investigations into torture and ill-treatment face significant procedural obstacles, including mandatory prior authorisation for inquiries against public officials that require a referral from a prison warden to the Prosecution. Military tribunals still broadly investigate and prosecute outside of their jurisdiction and common regulations set in law. This is exemplified by the 2021 secret trials involving hundreds of Libyans, including the death penalty sentences of 22 civilians. Although court jurisdiction and legal specialists, as well as transitional justice, are currently discussed academically, political divisions and powerful groups impede actual implementation.

In 2023, 43 complaints of torture and ill-treatment were documented, mostly involving males (80%), predominantly aged between 25 and 55, in locations such as police stations in Tripoli, Sabha, internal security headquarters, immigration detention centres, military prisons and unofficial prisons controlled by state-integrated security and armed forces. The ongoing absence of accountability and the prolonged impunity for those responsible for [grave violations in Tarhuna between 2016 and 2020](#) threaten to deepen instability and exacerbate divisions across Libya.

Victims face considerable barriers to accessing justice, including limited confidentiality, ineffective complaint mechanisms and the need to lodge complaints at the same location where abuses occurred. Psychological support is virtually absent, as is effective dissemination of information about victims' rights, especially in remote or illiterate communities. Reprisals against victims, witnesses and even prosecutors are common, with officers frequently using threats or bribery to deter complaints. Judges face intimidation, and trials involving torture allegations are notoriously slow, reflecting inadequate resources, political influence and a lack of judicial independence. The absence of a specialised investigative unit and the National Human Rights Institution's limited mandate further aggravate impunity.

In their last report in March 2023, [the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya found credible evidence that state security forces and armed militias committed numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity](#). Nevertheless, the UN Human Rights Council terminated the mission's mandate and instead adopted a capacity-building resolution lacking any monitoring or investigative measures.



V. VICTIM'S RIGHTS

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

Victims of torture in Libya face significant legal, institutional and practical gaps regarding protection, rehabilitation and access to adequate redress. Libyan law lacks an explicit definition of a torture victim, narrowly recognising only women victims of sexual violence from the 2011 war under Law No. 119 and broadly referencing victims of grave war-related violations. In addition, under '[Libyan Law on Transitional Justice and National Reconciliation 2025](#)', despite nominal legal integration of the right to rehabilitation within transitional justice frameworks, the possibility of practical implementation is virtually non-existent given the absence of qualified professionals trained to address victims' needs.

State protections exist solely for witnesses testifying against terrorism or corruption, leaving victims of torture without adequate legal, judicial guarantees and safeguards. Compensation mechanisms remain inadequate and ineffective, primarily due to political instability. Compensation has exclusively targeted property losses from the war, [with no reparations granted specifically for torture victims](#). The several national transitional justice committees and compensation commissions established over the years to manage compensation and reparations have stopped working some time ago. No public apologies, official acknowledgements or public recognition have been extended to victims or their families. Rehabilitation services are severely limited, available mainly through internationally funded NGOs subject to strict government monitoring and surveillance. Cultural sensitivity, psychological support, medical care and social integration programmes remain largely absent, significantly impacting survivors' recovery.



VI. PROTECTION FOR ALL

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

In Libya, vulnerable groups, including women, children, LGBTIA+ individuals, ethnic minorities, migrants and religious minorities, face severe and systematic rights violations with little state protection. Discrimination, arbitrary arrests and restricted access to services are widespread. Refugees and migrants, particularly those intercepted at sea or held in detention, are subjected to torture, forced labour and unlawful mass expulsions. Security forces and detention centre guards are often complicit in trafficking networks, with survivors reporting being subjected to electric shocks, rape and beatings inside detention centres that the state had officially ordered cease operation. However, the same guards, along with trafficking gangs, continue to operate these facilities and routinely commit acts of torture. Examples include cases reported to the Libyan Anti-torture Network involving incidents at Shohada Alnaser Centre in Al-Zawiya and the Al-Khoms facility in 2023 and 2024.

Meanwhile, guards at other active Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) detention centres engage in financial deals to sell migrants to gangs and individuals, who exploit them through forced labour and gruelling work, such as cleaning and construction. Migrants held in detention centres run by the DCIM and its guards are regularly subjected to torture, abuse, forced labour, sexual violence and exploitation. These practices occur with the knowledge of government authorities and the local community, yet no preventive or punitive measures are implemented. Migrants are also facing increasingly dangerous conditions fuelled by misinformation, xenophobic discourse and systemic neglect.

Gender-based violence is rampant. Honour killings, child and forced marriages and domestic abuse persist, with six honour killings recorded in July 2022 alone. Conservative attitudes and legal gaps contribute to the continued legality of virginity testing, the lack of safe abortion access and impunity for intimate partner violence and femicide. [Child marriage remains common and unaddressed by law.](#)

LGBTQIA+ individuals are criminalised under bylaws and face systemic exclusion. Indigenous groups like the Tuareg experience forced displacement, denial of collective land rights and exclusion from policymaking processes. Religious minorities are also targeted. In February 2024, 79-year-old Sheikh Muftah Al-Amin Al-Biju was [arbitrarily detained](#) in Benghazi amid an intensified crackdown. At least 14 other sheikhs from Sufi sects have been arbitrarily detained under accusations of 'alkufr', while activists face accusations of 'atheism,' with forced confessions obtained through torture.

In conflict settings, the absence of domestic laws addressing war crimes results in rampant impunity. Civilians continually lose their lives in military and security operations, where random shelling and indiscriminate targeting are normalised. Extrajudicial and unlawful killings in wartime contexts are largely neglected, even when the perpetrators are known to the authorities. Some conflict-related detainees endure executions, torture, starvation, denial of visits and a complete lack of judicial safeguards.



VII. RIGHT TO DEFEND AND CIVIC SPACE

INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK

In Libya, the civic space and environment for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) remain critically restrictive and dangerous. The government does not recognise, promote or protect HRDs, actively obstructing independent civil society organisations through restrictive decrees. In March 2023, GNU-aligned authorities in eastern and western Libya intensified bureaucratic obstructionism, reactivating draconian provisions of Law No. 19 on the reorganisation of NGOs. HRDs frequently face severe reprisals, including forced confessions under duress being broadcast on social media, arbitrary detention, judicial harassment of local NGOs and imprisonment with sentences ranging from two to ten years. Throughout 2023, at least 23 HRDs were arrested and prosecuted; three managed to escape, and 16 were eventually released after more than six months in detention, while several remain in custody without proper judicial guarantees.

Freedom of association and assembly is severely limited, with unregistered organisations operating illegally under Law No. 19 of 2001 facing extreme punishments, including the death penalty. Regulations on NGOs are deliberately vague, allowing arbitrary suspensions on the grounds of 'national security' or 'foreign interference'. Freedom of expression and media protection laws are absent, with HRDs frequently subjected to criminal defamation charges, cyber-attacks and surveillance by state authorities. Torture and ill-treatment, judicial harassment, and even occasionally death, are a reality for HRDs. Despite international attention, Libya has not invited the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs and lacks a national protection mechanism.

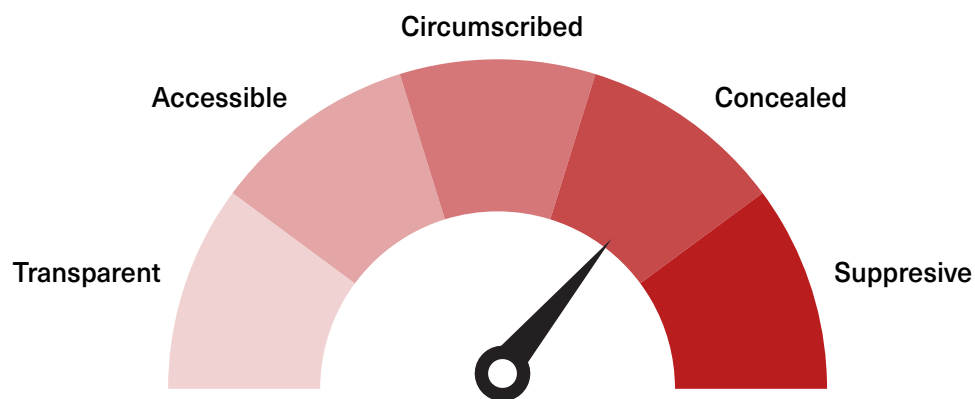
This legislative framework has enabled the direct targeting of both local and international NGO staff, with the Libyan Anti-Torture Network documenting 43 incidents of arbitrary detention of activists in GNU-controlled areas between March and September 2024, alongside 23 cases in LAAF-held eastern Libya, including one extrajudicial killing. Between 2022 and 2024, 18 Libyan staff members working with international NGOs (INGOs) were arrested and interrogated about their professional activities.

The Internal Security Agency (ISA), a security agency, arrested the activist and blogger Maryam Mansour al-Warfalli, known as 'Nakhla Fezzan' [for her social media post in January 2024](#). She [was released in November 2024 without charges](#).

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Global Torture Index rates the access to information and transparency available in each country when measuring and assessing the risks of torture and ill-treatment. It considers the availability of information, as well as the obstacles faced by civil society organisations in collecting and accessing data. Data access must be guaranteed, both in law and in practice, to ensure state transparency and accountability. It enables organisations, journalists and individuals to request information on public bodies, protocols and statistics on human rights violations. This indicator reflects the challenges in accessing information within a country, with each country and territory assigned a rating as Suppressive, Concealed, Circumscribed, Accessible or Transparent.

Libya's score is **concealed**, based on our evaluation of its current level of transparency and access to information.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN LIBYA: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Index includes 5 recommendations for Libya, taken from the [Index webpage](#), which will serve as references in upcoming editions to monitor achievements within the anti-torture movement.

1. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and ensure that national legislation is fully aligned with international human rights law. Provisions that criminalise torture, enforced disappearances and discrimination should be reviewed and amended, including ensuring that acts of torture committed outside of state detention are punishable, and addressing state responsibility to ensure humane living conditions.
2. Establish independent oversight bodies responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of police brutality, particularly in the Sabha, Tobruk, Sirt, Benghazi, Zawiya and Tripoli police stations. An independent body should be granted access to monitor and document such violations, enabling identification of patterns and trends in close cooperation with civil society.
3. Establish an independent body responsible for receiving and investigating torture allegations, both inside Libya and involving Libyan actors abroad. Amend national laws to ensure robust enforcement and protection mechanisms, consistent monitoring of investigations, and to address all forms of discrimination and inhuman treatment.
4. Enable the International Criminal Court to conduct investigations in the country into crimes against humanity committed in Tarhunah from 2015 to 2020 and fully cooperate with its proceedings.
5. Repeal restrictive laws such as Law No. 19 of 2001, amend those that criminalise Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), revise cybercrime legislation to safeguard the privacy of defenders, lawyers and victims, and end arbitrary arrests, detentions and harassment. Additionally, public awareness campaigns should be conducted to counteract negative social media narratives aimed at civil society organisations, and emphasising the value of HRDs in promoting a fair society.



FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: <https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index>. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at tortureindex@omct.org.

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