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## **Libya: Release or transfer British journalists and Libyan colleagues**

Two British journalists and their Libyan colleagues held by a Libyan militia must be set free immediately or transferred into government custody, Amnesty International said.

Nicholas Davies-Jones, Gareth Montgomery-Johnson, and their Libyan colleagues have been held by the Suweihli militia since their capture in Tripoli early on 21 February.

The Suweihli militia – which operates out of Misratah but has operatives in Tripoli and elsewhere in the country – seized the men while they were reportedly filming in the capital. It accuses the two British men of entering the country without visas.

“The detention of these journalists is unlawful and arbitrary, and their captors in the Suweihli militia must either release them immediately or transfer them into the custody of the central Libyan authorities,” said Hassiba Hadj Saharaoui, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International.

“If they are being held simply for breaching visa regulations, the central authorities should release them.”

The British journalists’ families told Amnesty International they remain concerned for the men’s safety and wellbeing.

UK authorities informed them British embassy staff in Tripoli visited the two journalists on at least two occasions and that the men were in good health but very tired.

A Libyan Interior Ministry official confirmed that the Suweihli militia is holding Nicholas Davies-Jones and Gareth Montgomery-Johnson. He said the militia was “operating outside the law and not under the control of the authorities”, and its leadership had refused repeated calls to hand over the captives.

On Tuesday morning, a representative for several Misratah militias operating in Tripoli confirmed that the men were still being held at the Suweihli militia headquarters in Tripoli.

Nothing is known about the identity and situation of the Libyan men who were detained with the British journalists.

The unlawful detention of these journalists is part of a broader pattern in Libya, where hundreds of armed militias operate outside any legal framework and in defiance of the central authorities’ call for militias to disband and join the armed and security forces.

Thousands of Libyans and hundreds of foreign nationals – mainly Sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees – are currently arbitrarily detained by armed militias who behave as if they are above the law.

Others are held in detention centres now under the control of the central authorities, but virtually none has so far been formally charged or brought to trial.

During a recent month-long fact-finding mission to Libya, Amnesty International visited 11 detention facilities across the country.

Many detainees said they had been tortured and Amnesty International saw torture marks and wounds resulting from recent abuse. Torture methods meted out by the militias included suspension in contorted positions; beatings for hours with whips, cables, plastic hoses, metal chains and bars, and wooden sticks; and the administering of electric shocks.

The recent report [\*Militia threaten hopes for new Libya\*](#) documented these findings and called for the closure of all unofficial detention facilities in Libya.

“For the rule of law to prevail in Libya, the militias must stop acting as a force outside the law and close their unlawful detention centres across the country,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

“All those currently being held must be handed over to the central authorities to ensure proper judicial oversight.”