

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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LIBYA: INVESTIGATE KILLINGS OF TEBU PEOPLE AND DISCLOSE FATE OF THE DISAPPEARED

The Libyan Public Prosecutor must conduct prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into all unlawful killings and murders of members of the Tebu community over the past three months in the Kufra district, south-eastern Libya, Amnesty International said today. The area is under the de facto control of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), who the organization is also calling upon to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Tebu men who have been forcibly disappeared.

Amnesty International documented a series of human rights violations committed between August and October 2025 against members of the Tebu community in the Kufra district, based on ethnic origin, by the Subul al-Salam Battalion, an armed group under LAAF command, and the Kufra police affiliated with LAAF. The abuses included unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance.

This included two incidents in which the Kufra police killed two Tebu men, and a third case in which a Tebu man died following an attack by an armed group in an area patrolled by Subul al-Salam Battalion. The organization also documented the ongoing enforced disappearance of three Tebu men, after they were shot at by members of Subul al-Salam Battalion. At least three more have been forcibly disappeared since August 2025 by the Kufra police or the military police, which is a unit of the LAAF.

Under the command of the LAAF, Subul al-Salam Battalion patrols the desert areas across the Kufra district to counter smuggling and irregular migration between Libya, Sudan, and Chad. According to a letter dated 5 September 2018 from the UN Panel of Experts on Libya to the President of the UN Security Council, no vehicles are permitted to operate in the border areas between Libya and Chad, Sudan or Egypt without authorization from the group.¹

The Benghazi-based “Libyan Government” is a government-like body that is not internationally recognized, and which is allied to the LAAF. This body has a Ministry of Interior under which police forces operate, including in the Kufra district. The LAAF, which is an armed group, controls and carries out government-like functions in Benghazi, the second-largest city in Libya, and large swathes of eastern and southern Libya, including the Kufra district. Where de facto authorities, such as the LAAF, are in control of territory and exercise government-like functions, they are bound by human rights obligations.

The Tebu are an ethnic group that inhabit southern Libya, north-eastern Niger, and north-western Sudan. In the Kufra district, black Tebu people have long faced state-perpetuated discrimination.² They have also experienced discrimination from local Arab communities, which have greater representation in local security forces and armed groups and with whom long-standing rivalries persist. Between 2011 and 2015, the Tebu and local Arab communities in the Kufra district experienced recurrent tensions and occasional armed clashes.

Amnesty International spoke with ten Tebu men who are relatives of those killed, died, disappeared, or detained. The organization also reviewed three autopsy reports related to the killings, official decisions issued by the Kufra prosecution authorities and the Ministry of Interior under the Benghazi-based “Libyan government”, as well as arrest warrants and reports issued by the Kufra police.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS, MURDERS OF TEBU PEOPLE

On 18 August 2025, a police officer and four other men from a local Arab community, stopped the car of 20-year-old Tebu man, Youssef Mousa, and one of them shot him, according to an eyewitness and a family member. Mousa died 11

¹ Security Council Report, *Letter dated 5 September 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) concerning Libya addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2018/812 (5 September 2018), Annex 19.

² Amnesty International, “Libya: Central government must protect Kufra residents from militia clashes,” 23 April 2012, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2012/04/libya-central-government-must-protect-kufra-residents-militia-clashes/>; Amnesty International, “Libya must stop forced evictions of Tabu tribe members,” 6 April 2010, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2010/04/libya-must-stop-forced-evictions-tabu-tribe-members/>; Amnesty International, *Libya: Scores of families risk homelessness in Libya*, 31 March 2010, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde19/004/2010/en/>.

days later from a neck wound caused by a gunshot, according to an autopsy report reviewed by Amnesty International. On 21 August, the police arrested two suspects, while on 26 August the prosecution ordered the arrest of two other suspects who remain at large at the time of writing.

A relative of Mousa, told Amnesty International that he believed the killing may have been linked to a knife attack which took place in June in Al-Jawf, the capital of the Kufra district, carried out by a man believed to be Tebu against a man from the local Arab community. Mousa's relative said that members of the local Arab community suspected Mousa to be involved in the attack, which the relative believes to be the reason why Mousa was targeted.

In a second incident, on 6 September, unidentified men in a khaki pickup truck opened fire on the vehicle of Ibrahim Soliman, a 20-year-old Tebu man, on a desert road about 150 kilometres north-west of Tazirbu town, in the Kufra district, according to an eyewitness and a family member. Both told Amnesty International that Soliman was returning from a hunting trip shortly after dawn, when the attack occurred. The witness said that Soliman's car caught fire immediately after the shooting. An autopsy report, reviewed by Amnesty International, confirmed he died as a result of severe burning.

On 14 September, Soliman's family filed a police complaint accusing Subul al-Salam Battalion of responsibility for his killing, according to a Kufra police report reviewed by Amnesty International. As of 14 October, neither the Kufra police nor the prosecution had informed the family of any intention to open an investigation. A family member told Amnesty International that they accused Subul al-Salam Battalion because it is the only group mandated to patrol the area where the incident occurred and on the basis of the colour of their vehicles, which matched the description of the vehicle used in the attack.

In a third incident, on 7 October, officers from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Kufra branch, which forms part of the Kufra police, shot 33-year-old Tebu man Mousa Abdullah at a checkpoint in Al-Jawf, according to his family. He was taken to a hospital and died from a gunshot wound to the chest, according to an autopsy report reviewed by Amnesty International.

On the same day, the same officers detained his friend, who had been travelling with him in the car during the incident, in a security facility adjacent to the checkpoint for over a day without charge before releasing him. Prosecutors subsequently ordered the arrest of seven officers from the CID Kufra branch who, according to interviewees, belong to the local Arab community based on their family names. As of 14 October, five officers had surrendered and two remained at large at the time of writing. That same day, the Ministry of Interior of the Benghazi-based "Libyan Government" dismissed the head of the Kufra Security Directorate – who is the commander of the district-level branch of the Ministry of Interior of the Benghazi-based "Libyan government" including the CID Kufra branch, according to an official decision reviewed by Amnesty International.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE OF TEBU PEOPLE

In a separate incident, on 6 September, another Tebu man reported to his relatives that members of Subul al-Salam Battalion had opened fire on his car but that he had escaped injury. The man was travelling with his brother and nephew, who were also returning from a hunting trip in the same area where Ibrahim Soliman had been killed. The relative told Amnesty International that after that initial phone call, the family then lost contact with all three until an unidentified man answered one of their phones, saying that the brother "was with them and was doing well." The next day, the family found the man's car burned on the same desert road where Soliman had been killed, about 30 kilometres from Soliman's vehicle.

As of the time of writing, Subul al-Salam Battalion has not disclosed the fate or whereabouts of the three men. No investigation has been opened by prosecution authorities into the enforced disappearance of the three men.

Separately, on 29 August, Kufra police officers at a checkpoint in the Qurdufai neighbourhood of Al-Jawf arrested two Tebu men, according to two of their family members. One relative told Amnesty International that later that night a third family member went to the checkpoint to inquire about the men's whereabouts. Police officers told him that the two had assaulted a police officer and would be released within a few hours. A few hours later, one of the detained men called the relative and said that the authorities were preparing to transfer them by plane to Benghazi in eastern Libya. Their whereabouts have remained unknown since, which amounts to enforced disappearance.

On 22 August, police summoned another Tebu man under threat of arrest. He went to a local police station the same day, where officers detained him and transferred him to a prison in Al-Jawf controlled by the military police under the LAAF, according to two of his family members. One relative told Amnesty International that he was held there for a week, during which he was allowed family visits. During his detention in the military police prison, he told relatives who visited him that

the recently dismissed head of the Kufra Security Directorate had questioned him about his possession of weapons and alleged hostility toward the local Arab community.

At the end of that week however, the military police transferred him to an unknown place in Benghazi. As of the time of writing, the authorities have not disclosed his whereabouts, which amounts to enforced disappearance.

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under international human rights law, an “enforced disappearance” refers to the arrest, detention, abduction of a person or by any other form of deprivation of liberty by government officials or by organized groups or private individuals whose actions are condoned by the government in some way, followed either by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person.

The right to life is protected by international human rights law. The UN Human Rights Committee stated that a killing is unlawful if it lacks a legal basis or is otherwise inconsistent with life-protecting laws and procedures is, as a rule, arbitrary in nature. For the killing not to be unlawful, the use of potentially lethal force must be strictly necessary in light of the threat posed. Such force should only be used as a last resort, once all other reasonable options have been exhausted or found insufficient, and it must not exceed what is required to neutralize the threat.³

³ UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment 36: Article 6: right to life, 3 September 2019. UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 12.