

Libya: Opposition Arbitrarily Detaining Suspected Gaddafi Loyalists
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(...) Libyan opposition authorities are arbitrarily detaining dozens of civilians suspected of activities in support of Muammar Gaddafi, Human Rights Watch said today. The opposition authorities, which exercise control in eastern Libya and parts of the west, should provide the detainees with full due process rights or release them, Human Rights Watch said.

The authorities should also bring volunteer security groups that have formed in the east under a recognized civilian authority and investigate their alleged abuses, Human Rights Watch said. One detainee of a volunteer group was apparently tortured to death in custody. (...)

(...) Arrests should be made only by civilian authorities based on concrete criminal charges backed by evidence, rather than on vague accusations of pro-Gaddafi activity, Human Rights Watch said. Civilian detainees should be informed of the grounds for their detention, have access to a lawyer, and be able to challenge the allegations before an independent judicial authority.

Over the past two months, Human Rights Watch has visited rebel-held detainees in Benghazi, Misrata, and Zintan, interviewing the detainees and the opposition officials holding them. In all three opposition-held cities, the authorities allowed Human Rights Watch unrestricted access, including private meetings with detainees.

As of May 28, 2011, opposition forces were detaining about 330 civilians and combatants – 118 in Benghazi, 160 in Misrata, and 52 in Zintan. Detainees in some eastern Libyan towns have been released or transferred to Benghazi after interrogation. Additional detainees may be held in other opposition controlled cities and towns.

The exact number of civilian detainees – non-fighters, most of them accused of association with Gaddafi's internal security apparatus or Revolutionary Committees – remains unclear because the opposition authorities do not always distinguish them from captured fighters. The Revolutionary Committees are an influential ideological organization Gaddafi has used to enforce control. (...)

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