

Libya: UN rights arm sounds alarm for safety of prisoners at imminent risk of torture

18 July 2017 – The United Nations human rights arm today voiced deep concern for the safety of individuals taken prisoner by members of the Libyan army after recent fighting in Benghazi, noting that they may be at imminent risk of torture and even summary execution.

“Our concern is based on reports suggesting the involvement of the Special Forces, a unit aligned with the LNA [Libyan National Army], and in particular their field commander, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, in torturing detainees and summarily executing at least 10 captured men,” Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), told journalists at a media briefing in Geneva today.

“We urge the LNA to ensure there is a full, impartial investigation into these allegations and also call on the group to suspend Mr. al-Werfalli from his duties as a Special Forces field commander pending the conclusion of such an investigation,” she added.

According to OHCHR, on multiple occasions, there have been videos circulating on social media which allegedly show Mr. al-Werfalli executing kneeling men, or ordering them shot.

The latest video, which was posted on social media this month, seems to show LNA fighters kicking and taunting prisoners, while Mr. al-Werfalli is apparently heard accusing two men who have their hands tied behind their backs of belonging to terrorist groups, added the OHCHR spokesperson.

“The fight against terrorism cannot be used to justify summary executions or other grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” she stressed.

Also at the briefing, Ms. Throssell stated that, in March, the LNA announced investigations into alleged rights abuses but added that it has not shared any information regarding the status of the inquiries.