

URGENT ACTION

OLDER SUFI SHEIKH FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED FOR A YEAR

Ailing 79-year-old Sufi Sheikh Muftah Al-Amin Al-Biju has been forcibly disappeared since his arbitrary arrest from his home in Benghazi on February 4, 2024, amid an intensified crackdown on Sufi clerics and activists by armed groups allied to the self-proclaimed Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), in de facto control of eastern Libya. Concerns over his health and wellbeing have been heightened by recent reports on the use of torture and other ill-treatment in Gernada prison, where he is believed to be held.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **UA 9.25**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Field Marshall Khalifa Binqasem Haftar
General Commander of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF)

CC: Libyan Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Wafa Bughaighis
1460 Dahlia Street NW,
Washington, DC 20012
Email: info@embassyoflibyadc.com

Dear Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the ongoing enforced disappearance of 79-year-old **Sufi Sheikh Muftah Al-Amin Al-Biju** (hereafter **Shaikh Al-Biju**), was arbitrary arrested by heavily armed men in plainclothes. His detention is part of a larger crackdown targeting Sufis. The family has still received no official information regarding his whereabouts, fate, or legal status.

Amnesty International learned that relatives were told by unofficial sources that Sheikh Al-Biju was being detained in Gernada prison, where his health has been deteriorating since his incarceration. Concerns about his wellbeing are mounting amid reports of torture and other ill-treatment in Gernada prison. Former detainees also recount cruel and inhuman detention conditions including exposure to extreme cold without climate appropriate clothing or bedding, and denial of adequate healthcare.

I urge LAAF to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Sheikh Al-Biju; and release him immediately as his detention is linked solely to the exercise of his human rights, including freedom of religion. In the meantime, the LAAF must grant Sheikh Al-Biju access to his family, lawyers, and adequate healthcare, including in outside hospitals if necessary. He must be protected from torture and other ill treatment and held in conditions meeting international standards.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to information gathered by Amnesty International, **Sheikh Al-Biju** has been subjected to multiple threats by Salafi groups, including a failed assassination attempt in 2013, and the closure of his center for teaching the Quran, located in the Gardens area in Benghazi in 2016, forcing him to teach from home. Amnesty International learned from informed sources that he was initially held by the Security Directorates' Support Body. The Security Directorates' Support Body frequently publishes videos on its social media channels depicting arrests for "witchcraft and sorcery". According to information received unofficially, Sheikh Al-Biju was subsequently transferred to Gernada prison.

In November 2024, The Supreme Council for Islamic Sufism in Libya issued a [statement](#) condemning the ongoing persecution of Sufi sheikhs and their followers in Libya, raising the alarm over the arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, deaths in custody, enforced disappearance, and use of forced "confessions" to accuse several sheikhs in Benghazi of "witchcraft". It also pointed to the efforts by those espousing the Salafi Madkhali ideology to discredit and undermine the Sufi orders since the fall of Mu'ammar Gaddafi's rule in 2011. On January 9, 2024, Libya's parliament, allied to the LAAF, approved a new law criminalizing "witchcraft and sorcery", with penalties ranging from imprisonment for up to fourteen years to the death penalty.

Amnesty International has long documented how armed groups allied to LAAF including the Internal Security Agency (ISA)- Benghazi and Tariq Ben Zeyad subjected actual or perceived critics and opponents of the LAAF to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture and other ill-treatment. Since January 2024, heavily armed ISA agents have arrested without a warrant dozens of people, including women and men in their 70s, from their homes, streets or other public places in areas of eastern and southern Libya under LAAF control. Those arrested were then transferred to ISA-controlled facilities, where they remained arbitrarily detained for months without being allowed to contact their families or lawyers, and none were brought before civilian judicial authorities, allowed to challenge the legality of their detention, or were formally charged with any offenses.

On January 16, 2025, the Military Attorney General under the LAAF announced the establishment of an investigative committee to investigate reports of torture and other ill-treatment in Gernada prison, after videos showing detainees being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and flogging, in Gernada appeared online. Since the announcement on the launch of investigations, no further details about the progress or findings of investigations have been shared publicly.

Amnesty International has consistently documented torture and other ill-treatment in prisons and detention facilities under LAAF's control, including the "Internal Security Agency" and the "military" wings of Gernada prison. Families of those detained in Gernada have also long complained of the absence of visits, sometimes for years, and denial of communication with their loved ones. Libya is currently divided between two entities competing for legitimacy, governance, and territorial control. The Government of National Unity (GNU) controls Tripoli and most of western Libya, while the LAAF, a powerful armed group, is in de facto control of eastern and southern Libya.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Arabic, English, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: August 4, 2025

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Sheikh Muftah Al-Amin Al-Biju (he/him)