



Libya: Wake-Up Call to Misrata's Leaders

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The leaders of the Libyan city of Misrata could be held criminally responsible for ongoing serious crimes by forces under their command, Human Rights Watch said today in a [letter to the city's military and civilian leaders](#). They could be held responsible by authorities that include the International Criminal Court (ICC), Human Rights Watch said.

Human Rights Watch highlighted the ongoing torture and abuse in detention facilities in and around Misrata and continued arrests, torture, and forced displacement of people from the nearby town of Tawergha. These abuses appear to be so widespread and systematic that they may amount to crimes against humanity, Human Rights Watch said.

"Our letter to Misrata authorities is a wake-up call," said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Five months after the conflict with Gaddafi forces ended, militias from Misrata are still committing serious abuses – crimes under Libyan and international law – and the city's leaders can be held legally responsible for those acts by the ICC."

Human Rights Watch acknowledged that war crimes were committed by Gaddafi forces against the people of Misrata during the 2011 conflict, which require accountability. But these crimes did not justify the abuses going on today, Human Rights Watch said.

The ICC has ongoing jurisdiction over war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Libya since February 15, 2011. It could prosecute military commanders and senior civilian official for serious crimes committed by forces or subordinates under their effective command and control.

A United Nations [Commission of Inquiry](#) concluded on March 2 that militias from Misrata had apparently committed crimes against humanity.