

Advocacy dossier

Siham Sergiwa

سهام سرقيوة

Forcibly disappeared **Libya**

Siham Sergiwa is a member of Libya's House of Representatives and a women's rights defender who was abducted from her home in Benghazi by masked armed men on 17 July 2019. Her fate and whereabouts remain unknown, and in July 2026 rights groups again called on the authorities in eastern Libya to disclose them.

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The case at a glance

Siham Sergiwa is a member of Libya's House of Representatives and a women's rights defender who was abducted from her home in Benghazi by masked armed men on 17 July 2019. Her fate and whereabouts remain unknown, and in July 2026 rights groups again called on the authorities in eastern Libya to disclose them.

Status	Arrested	Country
Forcibly disappeared	**17 Jul 2019**	**Libya**

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Immediately disclose the location, legal status, and condition of Siham Sergiwa.

02 Grant unrestricted access to family and independent legal counsel.

03 Bring Siham Sergiwa promptly before a competent judicial authority, or release them.

04 Investigate the disappearance as a crime under international law and hold all responsible officials accountable.

02

How the case unfolded

17 July 2019

Start of enforced disappearance

Abducted from her home in Benghazi

Dozens of masked gunmen in army attire stormed Siham Sergiwa's home in Benghazi and took her away. The attackers beat her 16-year-old son and shot her husband in the leg. On the previous night she had publicly called for an end to the Libyan National Army offensive on Tripoli. Amnesty International pointed to evidence linking the attack to an armed brigade affiliated with the Libyan National Army, which denied responsibility.

17 October 2019

Other act

UN mission calls for her immediate release

Three months after the abduction, the UN Support Mission in Libya condemned it as an attempt to silence a prominent female voice, called for her immediate release and said the relevant authorities in eastern Libya were legally responsible for establishing what happened to her.

17 July 2020

Other act

Amnesty International calls on the Libyan National Army to reveal her fate

One year after the abduction, Amnesty International said her fate and whereabouts remained unknown and called on the Libyan National Army to reveal them immediately. It noted that no full, impartial and independent investigation had been opened.

October 2021

Other act

UN fact-finding mission finds grounds to believe she is a victim of enforced disappearance

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya reported that the evidence indicated she was abducted by either the Libyan National Army or affiliated armed groups, which had failed to provide information on her fate. It found reasonable grounds to believe that she is a victim of enforced disappearance, and no evidence that the authorities had conducted an effective investigation or kept her family informed.

March 2023

Other act

UN mission's final report points to the leadership of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces

In its final report the mission said she was abducted in the afternoon from her home in the heavily secured Bu Hadimah district of Benghazi by 25 to 30 masked and uniformed armed men. It said the scale and sophistication of the operation suggested that the top leadership of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces knew or should have known of her abduction and fate, and found reasonable grounds to believe that this leadership failed to take reasonable measures to have the case investigated and prosecuted.

August 2025

Other act

Unverified image circulates that reportedly shows her being abused

In August 2025 a grainy image circulated on social media that commentators said showed Siham Sergiwa being physically abused. Human Rights Watch could not verify it. If authentic, it would be the first image of her since the abduction.

15 September 2025

Other act

Human Rights Watch calls for an investigation into two missing lawmakers

Human Rights Watch called on the Libyan authorities to urgently investigate the cases of Siham Sergiwa and fellow lawmaker Ibrahim al-Drissi, and to examine the authenticity, timing and location of the circulating images. No entity has acknowledged responsibility for her disappearance.

July 2026

Other act

Seven years on, rights groups call for disclosure of her fate

Marking seven years since her enforced disappearance, Libya Crimes Watch (17 July 2026) and the Committee for Justice (24 July 2026) said her fate and whereabouts remained unknown and called on the authorities in eastern Libya to disclose them immediately and to conduct an independent investigation leading to accountability.

03
The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: more than seven years after armed men took her from her home in Benghazi on 17 July 2019, the fate and whereabouts of Siham Sergiwa remain unknown. No authority has acknowledged holding her, and no investigation has produced public results.

Background and Work

Siham Sergiwa is a member of Libya's House of Representatives and a defender of women's rights. According to her circulated curriculum vitae and her family, as reported by The New Arab, she studied psychology and obtained a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of London, later became a professor in Libya, and, according to her husband Ali Rabi', helped found the first association for autism in Benghazi. She supported the participation of women in public life.

She was elected to the House of Representatives for Benghazi in 2014. The New Arab reports that in October 2018 she called for Khalifa Haftar to be held accountable before the House and for the military to be placed under civilian oversight, and that in April 2019, at a parliamentary meeting in Cairo, she rejected the offensive on Tripoli and called for a ceasefire and a return to political talks. In 2015 she attended a session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, according to a photograph published by Human Rights Watch.

The Abduction

On the evening of 16 July 2019 she spoke on the Libya Al-Hadath television channel, called for an end to the bloodshed and for a political settlement, and publicly opposed the Libyan National Army offensive on Tripoli. On 17 July 2019 dozens of masked gunmen in army attire stormed her home in Benghazi and took her away. The attackers beat her 16-year-old son and shot her husband in the leg. Slogans left on the walls included "the army is a red line".

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya later reported that she was taken in the afternoon from her home in the heavily secured Bu Hadimah district by 25 to 30 masked and uniformed armed men. Amnesty International pointed to evidence linking the attack to an armed brigade affiliated with the Libyan National Army, which denied responsibility. Neighbours and relatives abroad told Human Rights Watch that some of the cars at the scene were linked to the 106th Battalion of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces. The interior minister of the former interim government in the east blamed unidentified "terrorist groups" without providing evidence.

Detention Conditions and Health

Nothing has been officially disclosed about where she is held or whether she is alive. The UN mission said in 2021 that it had received conflicting reports about her fate but could not verify them. Around 11 August 2025 an image circulated on social media that commentators said showed her being physically abused. Human Rights Watch could not verify the image or its time and place, and said that, if authentic, it would be the first image of her since the abduction.

Legal Proceedings

No one has been charged. In its October 2021

report the UN mission found reasonable grounds to believe that she is a victim of enforced disappearance, that the evidence indicated she was abducted by the Libyan National Army or affiliated armed groups, and that there was no evidence of an effective investigation or of the authorities keeping her family informed. In its final report of March 2023 it found that the scale and sophistication of the operation suggested that the top leadership of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces knew or should have known of her abduction and fate, and that this leadership failed to take reasonable measures to have the case investigated and prosecuted.

On 1 September 2025 Human Rights Watch wrote to the commander of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces and to the general prosecutor. The prosecutor did not reply. The armed forces replied on 10 September 2025 that, as a military institution, they do not conduct criminal investigations of this kind and that any member found to be implicated would be referred for prosecution.

International Response

On 17 October 2019 the UN Support Mission in Libya condemned the abduction as an attempt to silence a prominent female voice, called for her immediate release and said the authorities in eastern Libya were legally responsible for establishing what happened to her. One year after the abduction, Amnesty International called on the Libyan National Army to reveal her fate immediately. On 15 September 2025 Human Rights Watch called for an urgent investigation into her case and that of the lawmaker Ibrahim al-Drissi, who was abducted in Benghazi on 16 May 2024. The UN mission has linked her case to the 2020 killing in Benghazi of Hanan al-Barassi, a critic with a large social media following, describing both as part of a pattern of singling out criticism from women. In July 2026, seven years after the abduction, Libya Crimes Watch and the Committee for Justice called on the authorities in eastern Libya to disclose her fate and open an independent investigation.

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