

Libyan rebel ethnic cleansing and lynching of black people

📅 July 7, 2011 💬 190 Comments



Benghazi rebel headquarters

Further specific evidence has emerged that there is a strong racist element within the rebel forces, including at command level, and it is the stated intention of these forces to ethnically cleanse areas they capture of their dark-skinned inhabitants.

Racism amongst the rebels including at command level

In a recent [article](#) in the Wall Street Journal, journalist Sam Dagher pointed out the obvious fact that the Libyan war is aggravating ethnic tensions in that country. The article talks about the fate of Tawergha, a small town 25 miles to the south of Misrata, inhabited mostly by black Libyans, a legacy of its 19th-century origins as a transit town in the slave trade:

Ibrahim al-Halbous, a rebel commander leading the fight near Tawergha, says all remaining residents should leave once if his fighters capture the town. “They should pack up,” Mr. Halbous said. “Tawergha no longer exists, only Misrata.”

Other rebel leaders are reported as:

“calling for drastic measures like banning Tawergha natives from ever working, living or sending their children to schools in Misrata.”

In addition, according to the article, as a result of the battle for Misrata:

nearly four-fifths of residents of Misrata’s Ghoushi neighborhood were Tawergha natives. Now they are gone or in hiding, fearing revenge attacks by Misratans, amid reports of bounties for their capture.

Amid allegations of black mercenaries and stories of mass rape by the inhabitants of Tawergha, Sam Dagher reports on further evidence of the racism amongst the rebel forces:

Some of the hatred of Tawergha has racist overtones that were mostly latent before the current conflict. On the road between Misrata and Tawergha, rebel slogans like “the brigade for purging slaves, black skin” have supplanted pro-Gadhafi scrawl.

The racial tensions have been fueled by the regime’s alleged use of African mercenaries to violently suppress demonstrators at the start of the Libyan uprising in February, and the sense that the south of the country, which is predominantly black, mainly backs Col. Gadhafi.

This information has already been publicised, in the WSJ and also in the [Black Star News](#). Bryan Chan of the [Los Angeles Times](#) reports visiting a prison in Benghazi, where terrified black men were paraded for the cameras (with Human Rights Watch silently taking notes). One man bravely protested he was just a guest worker and the guards presented a Gambian passport as proof he was a Gaddafi operative. Chan's Libyan interpreter asked:

“So what do you think? Should we just go ahead and kill them?”

There is a lot of horrific video footage clearly showing [public lynchings in Benghazi](#) (link to graphic description of some of the footage). including at the rebel HQ, beheadings of blindfolded prisoners and interrogation of prisoners, including in hospitals.

The myth of black mercenaries leads to lynchings

Other evidence of the massacres of black people, which include the lynchings and murder of black soldiers of the Libyan army, guest workers from other African countries and dark-skinned Libyan civilians include a report from the BBC on 25 February which cited a Turkish construction worker as saying:

“We had 70-80 people from Chad working for our company. They were cut dead with pruning shears and axes, attackers saying: ‘You are providing troops for Gaddafi.’ The Sudanese were also massacred. We saw it for ourselves.”

On 27th February Nick Meo of The Telegraph reported from Al-Bayda that he had been shown mobile phone footage of a ‘*captured*

mercenary’ (presumably he means black person with a uniform) lynched from a street lamp as well as a *‘black African hanging on a meat hook.’*

Amnesty International crisis researcher, Donatella Rovera spent the period from 27 February to 29th May in Misrata, Benghazi, Ajabiya and Ras Lanouf. Yesterday she was [interviewed](#) by Austria’s ‘The Standard’ and had this to say on the subject:

“We examined this issue in depth and found no evidence. The rebels spread these rumours everywhere, which had terrible consequences for African guest workers: there was a systematic hunt for migrants, some were lynched and many arrested. Since then, even the rebels have admitted there were no mercenaries, almost all have been released and have returned to their countries of origin, as the investigations into them revealed nothing.”

Who spread the myth and why?

So what accounts for the widespread popularity of this myth? It is, to be frank, an example of highly successful propaganda, appealing to the basest of racial stereotypes. The myth was highly important in gaining consent for the operation in Libya, in order to cover up and justify the massacres of black people taking place.

In account after account, the mercenary myth is used to justify the imprisoning and killing of black people and this process continues today. Given the background of racial tension in Libya, including the October 2000 race riots which led to the killings of 200 people with 1000s forced to flee, the consequences of the spreading of this propaganda were entirely predictable and constitute incitement to commit atrocities.

The myth of black mercenaries was spread by certain political leaders including members of the National Transitional Council in Benghazi, British Defence Minister Liam Fox and NATO spokesperson [Oana Longescu](#).



According to Amnesty, allegations of “African mercenaries” have led to the lynchings

The viagra myth

On the viagra myth beloved of the [ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo](#), Donatella Rovera had this to say:

“No one really took that seriously did they? On the 21 March, after the first air strikes on Gaddafi’s troops outside Benghazi, a young man who worked in the media centre presented us with many boxes of the potency drug. He claimed to have found them in the destroyed tanks. The vehicles had been completely burnt out, but the packaging looked brand new. I can not believe that anyone took him seriously.”

NATO enabling human rights abuses

So is NATO actually “protecting civilians” – or is it rather supporting rebels, some of whom who intend to harm dark-skinned Libyans and ethnically cleanse areas over which they take control?

The information contained in this post, is widely known and has been reported in the [Independent](#) and other newspapers, so NATO can not claim ignorance of the facts.

As this is being written, the "brigade for purging slaves and black skin," is advancing on Tawurgha, supported by NATO strikes from the air and on the ground by Special Forces. A rebel commander has declared the intention is to wipe the town off the map and we have already seen the lynchings of black people and the driving out of black people from Ghoushi.

By continuing to escalate the conflict in Libya, allowing the arming and supporting the rebel side, providing bombing support to enable them to advance and refusing to implement a cease-fire as demanded by the [United Nations and African Union](#), NATO is enabling serious abuses of human rights and NATO officials will certainly be held to account.

26 September – [Please click here for a comprehensive update on the Tawergha](#)

[Tweet](#)

Reddit

Loading...

ethnic cleansing, libyan

▾ rebels, lynching, mercenaries, Oana Longescu, racism, Tawergha, Tawurgha