

NATO Supported Islamic Militants Attack Muslim Shrines in Libya

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Islamic hard-liners in Libya have attacked at least a half-dozen shrines of other Muslim groups because they believe their practices are sacrilegious.

In one case, eyewitnesses said dozens of armed, bearded men in military uniforms ransacked a Sufi shrine in Tripoli this week.

They burned relics and carried away the remains of two imams, or prayer leaders, for reburial elsewhere.

Sufism is a mystical tradition in Islam. The order said its mission is to live a simple life of contemplation and prayer but its followers are frequently targeted by extremists.

Libya's new rulers have sought to reassure the international community that extremists will not gain influence as Moammar Gadhafi's ouster is completed.

Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, head of the governing National Transitional Council, reacted with alarm to reports that graves were being desecrated.

He appealed to a top Muslim cleric, al-Sadek al-Gheriani, to issue a fatwa, or religious ruling, on the issue. He also called for restraint.

"I ask those destroying these mosques to stop doing that because this is not the time to do that," Abdul-Jalil said Tuesday at a news conference. "What they did is not on the side of the revolution."

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