

Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

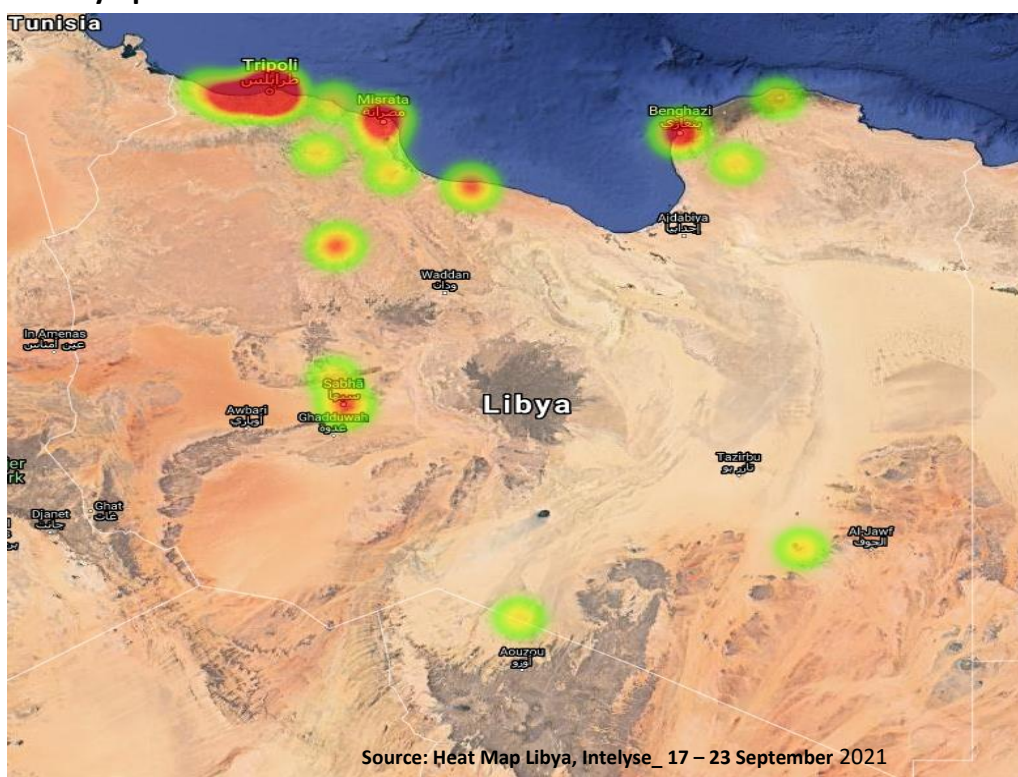
Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 17/09/2021 – 23/09/2021

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW

1. Key developments

- Security atmospherics in Tripoli
- Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) announced no-confidence vote from the Interim Government of Unity (IGNU) prompted protests in Tripoli and major cities
- Other security activities
- Libya/Tunisia land/air borders reopen
- Tunisia security update - Protests continue in Tunisia



2. Findings

2.1. Security atmospherics in Tripoli

Militia kinetic activities levels declined this week. Nevertheless, the recent developments on the political stage against the Interim Government of Unity (IGNU) official mandate is helping to fuel further competition amongst armed groups in the northwest, particularly in the uncertainty of the election's deadline. This results in increased levels of instability which are likely to manifest in targeted murders and kidnappings of armed group members/affiliates, kidnappings/ detainment of mid-level political actors, and armed clashes between groups.

Militia movements in Tripoli were reported overnight 20-21 Sept, with various militia groups reported to be mobilising around western and south-central Tripoli. According to security reports, this activity appeared to be largely driven by the Stability Support Agency (SSA) which pushed militia elements towards 7 April Camp (home to Zintani and 301 Battalion forces) and the International Airport. Small arms fire was in use in the area with small

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clashes reported around Gypsum Checkpoint. While the SSA did not enter 7 April Camp, the area was reportedly calm with no increase in security incidents in the following morning.

Further on, on 21 Sept, localised sources claimed of a meeting between Ghaniwa al-Kikli (Stability Support Agency (SSA)) and Mahmoud Hamza (444th Fighting Brigade), mediated by Mustafa Kadour (Nawasi Brigade), said to result in an agreement to resolve tensions and exchange detainees¹. It remains to be seen if this alleged reconciliation will hold ground in the context of recent increased tensions witnessed between SSA aligned units and opposition forces, most likely fuelled by ongoing competition and the possibility of political actors' backers and lines of patronage that could change in December. However, it should be noted that the threat of clashes triggered by minor disputes can still occur without warning.

On 20 Sept, reported civilian congestions and increasing tensions around petrol stations in Tripoli resulted in small arms fire localised incidents. Although, Brega Petroleum Marketing Company has stated that there were no shortages with supplies recently delivered, however, the reopening of the Ras Ajdir border crossing likely caused an increase in fuel demand.

SDCD COMM:

Overall, the wider Tripoli area, Warshefana, and Western Coastal Region have the potential to further military/ security actor and armed group tensions and activity, with the rapid development of armed confrontations and the subsequent impact on respective security environments, including potential effects on transit/ evacuation routes. Although levels of kinetic engagements were relatively stable this week, the Western Region hostile activity levels and security volatility in the current political instability and polarisation are likely to increase in the fluid allegiance structures. Considering the security/ military actor, armed group competition, uncontrolled availability of weapons in Libya, the trust and reliance in the political process, and attempted governance reform play a decisive role.

Unresolved wealth management, including the unified budget in a deadlock for approval, reports of ongoing unrest within service providers to critical national infrastructure, state departments and agencies, may lead to further discontent and renewed protests, as recently seen in the oil and gas sector. Political-driven civil unrest might be expected.

2.2. Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) announced no-confidence vote from the Interim Government of Unity (IGNU) prompted protests in Tripoli and major cities

On 21 Sept, Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) announced it has withdrawn confidence from the Interim Government of Unity (IGNU) through a majority vote (89 out of 113 deputies) while allowing the IGNU to continue to serve as a "caretaker" government with reduced governance capabilities.

The released statement has triggered a civil reaction on the same evening to protest against the withdrawal of confidence in Tripoli (Martyrs Square), Tripolitania (Al-Ajaylat and Zawiya), Fezzan (Hun and Sabha) and Cyrenaica (Kufra and Tobruk). IGNU Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah was reported joining protesters at the Martyrs Square (Tripoli) while also stating that the IGNU remains committed to serving citizens and to reaching free and fair elections, in an apparent attempt of retaining the public support and popularity amongst domestic and international figures, much of which has been gained through his recent willingness to offer concessions and to fund programs².

Calls in social media for continuation of protests indicated that anti-HoR demonstrations are planned to take place in Tripoli on 23 Sept, with high likelihood that other major cities and regions might be affected.

¹ On 12 Sept, 444th Fighting Brigade informed that it has filed a formal complaint to the military prosecutor and competent authorities, on the "abduction" of 11 individuals (including seven "Libyan army soldiers" and three civilians with "relatives working within the military") after being "kidnapped" by the Stability Support Agency (SSA) on 03 Sept during confrontations at the Takbali Camp.

² His willingness to fund projects, including through an increase in pensions, granting marriage/ family and children allowances, and launching the "Return of Life" development project, has made him popular with the Libyan public across all regions.

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A recent electoral law passed by the Eastern-based parliament on 10 Sept that the High Council of State (HCS), the parliament's upper house based in Western Libya, rejected. Apart from the submission of a request for a vote of no-confidence by 45 HoR members to the HoR Speaker, Aguila Saleh, on 13 Sept, a similar motion was raised in August by 29 MPs calling for a vote of no confidence and accusing the government of 'not providing the simplest services to the Libyan people.'. While the HoR closed-door session in Tobruk on 20 Sep did not result in a no-confidence vote, it created a sub-committee to investigate the claims against the IGNU. Reportedly, the committee was tasked with completing investigations within a two-week timeframe and issuing a final recommendation on whether to withdraw confidence from the government.

The domestic and international community prompted reactions, calling for elections as determined by the LPDF roadmap. In contrast, the HoR has been on the defensive stand, seeking to justify its vote by focusing on the IGNU's alleged excessive spending and hinting at allegations of corruption. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) released a statement expressing its concern over the HoR's vote to withdraw confidence from the IGNU. The statement added that the IGNU remains the legitimate government in Libya until another body replaces it through elections and calls on all Libyan institutions and actors to complete the necessary preparations for the December 2021 elections³. A strong reaction from local municipalities with 65 municipalities mayors' statement in Libya expressed their rejection of the HoR decision as "clear contravention of the Constitutional Declaration and its amendments, the Political Agreement, and the UN-led road map agreed upon in Geneva".⁴

On a recent sequence of events, on 22 Sept, localised sources⁵ claimed that Libyan National Army (LNA) Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar temporarily stepped down for three months, appointing General Abdul Razzaq Nadori⁶ as Commander-in-Chief in his absence. Sources speculate that the decision comes ahead of an alleged forthcoming announcement of Haftar's candidacy for president in the upcoming 24 Dec 2021 elections. It should be noted that the House of Representatives (HoR) presidential election law requires officials to step down 90 days before elections. Similarly, local sources claimed that HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh has taken sabbatical leave⁷, matching the three-month deadline for resignation set by the speaker in the drafted electoral law.

SDCD COMM:

The controversial no-confidence vote thus further deepens the divide between Eastern and Western institutions and casting uncertainty on an already precarious electoral timeline. In the near term, there is increased likelihood of civil unrest in Tripoli and other municipalities throughout Libya following the HoR vote and with a longer-term impact upon political stability.

As the date of the election's approaches, there is an increased risk of destabilizing actions meant to impede their implementation from inter-militia clashes in Tripolitania, military provocations between the eastern and the western blocs, threats to oil and water infrastructure, civil unrest. Threats against the person organizing the elections include a scenario that might see the removal of IGNU officials from government offices.

In the current conditions, there is the risk of tensions arising from these possible candidacies such as former interior minister Fathi Bashagha, former vice president Ahmed Maiteeg, Khalifa Haftar and Aquila Salleh currently showing their intention in the running for the presidential elections by armed groups opposed to one of these personalities. Haftar's electoral intentions increase opposition to elections among western region armed factions. By extension raises the likelihood of skirmishes across Tripoli and the west to oppose any candidate from running for office. In addition, although confidence in presidential elections being held on schedule is decreasing, Haftar and Saleh are

³ UNSMIL Official page: <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/unsmil-statement-reports-about-no-confidence-motion-against-gnu>

⁴ Media reference: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/mayors-65-municipalities-refuse-hors-step-withdraw-confidence-government>

⁵ Social media reference: <https://twitter.com/TheLibyaUpdate/status/1440697110546956294>

⁶ General Abdul Razzaq Nadori - Chief of Staff of the Libyan Armed Forces, appointed by the Libyan House of Representatives on August 24, 2014. (<https://www.eg24.news/2021/09/who-is-abdel-razek-al-nadori-who-is-assigned-the-duties-of-the-commander-in-chief-of-the-laf.html>)

⁷ Social media reference: <https://twitter.com/fawaselmedia/status/1440440789100744715>



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likely to have the IGNU and western region responsible for any delays in holding elections on schedule, considering the previous speeches in support of the timely polls.

2.3. Libya - Tunisia land/air borders reopen

On 17 Sept, Libyan authorities have announced that they will reopen the country's air and land borders with Tunisia, after a two-month halt. The Libyan announcement would closely follow a Tunisian presidential decree on 16 Sept ordering the reopening of land borders and air traffic with Libya upon a review of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation in both countries.

The decision is likely linked to Libyan interim Prime Minister Dadaiba official meeting with Tunisian President Kais Saied in Tunisia (09 Sept) followed by the statement of an agreement of a future joint protocol in reopening air and land borders. Despite this easing of border measures, COVID-19-related restrictions, including quarantine requirements for travellers and PCR testing, remain in effect for both countries.

Tunisian and Libyan national airlines (Tunisair and Libyan Wings) announced the resumption of flights between the two countries. Meanwhile, flights between Tripoli and Malta resumed on 20 Sept after more than two years of suspension, following the arrival of the Maltese Minister of Economy, Silvio Schembri, at Mitiga International Airport. In the same line, IGNU Spokesman Mohamed Hamouda stated that the Egyptian and Libyan Civil Aviation Authorities agreed to resume flight operations between Mitiga, Misrata, and Benina International Airports and Cairo International Airport (CAI) starting from 30 Sep. Hamouda stated the agreement came during the PM's latest visit to Egypt, when a series of agreements were signed, including a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Libyan and Egyptian Transportation Ministries.

2.4. Other security activities

Increasing reports of external actor movements in the wider Tripoli area and Western Region.

Security reports indicated that two Airbus A400M (alleged Turkish military cargo aircraft) departed from Isparta, Turkey and arrived at Al-Watyah Airbase, Libya⁸ on 20 Sept. Previous reports of two military cargo aircraft landing at Misrata Air College were reported on 17 Sept. and two military aircraft landing at Al-Watyah Airbase on 15 Sept. Further on, a localised source reports of "shipping containers" arriving at the Tobacco Factory (Tripoli), while other localised sources inform of buses carrying alleged external forces heading towards Al-Watyah Airbase. Although there is limited information on these movements' nature, Turkey's presence in Libya has been defended through previous agreements between former GNA and Turkey in 2019⁹. However, it might indicate a possible preparation among mil/sec actors and aligned armed groups, in cooperation with aligned external actors.

In a security operation, Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seizes a shipment of weapons and explosives in Saif al-Barli area, near the Sudan, Egypt and Libya border triangle. According to a statement, after receiving information regarding smuggling activity in the area, on 18 Sept, RSF members "deployed on the border strip between Sudan, Egypt, and Libya, managed to seize a shipment of weapons, ammunition, and explosives coming from the State of Libya," the statement was quoted by Anadolu. It added that four Libyans were arrested in operation.¹⁰

2.5. Tunisia security update - Protests continue in Tunisia

⁸ Site reference: <https://www.itamilradar.com/2021/09/20/double-turkish-flight-to-libya/>

⁹ Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar stated that the presence of the Turkish forces in Libya comes in response to the invitation of the Libyan government for consultancy, military, and educational cooperation. The statement was made on 07/08/2021 during the visit of Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeiba in Turkey.

¹⁰ Media reference: <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/sudanese-forces-seize-libya-arms-shipment>

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On 18 Sept, demonstrations were organized in Tunis, in front of the Municipal Theatre, following an online petition signed by 103 Tunisian personalities stressing the rejection of any attempt to "challenge the Constitution." Local sources claimed that most of the protesters were supporters of the Islamist-party Ennahdha, which formed the largest bloc in parliament before its dissolution by the president. A campaign on social media, launched by Tunisian politicians and activists, under the headline "Citizens against the coup", called for demonstrations on 18 Sept against the exceptional measures taken on 25 July by President Kaïs Saïed, and to warn against the return of the dictatorship in the country.

A few hours later, a counter-demonstration was organized by the 25 July Movement¹¹ to support and defend the measures taken following the establishment of the state of emergency.

No violent incidents were reported although security forces deployed to the sites of the events monitored and followed the developments.

On 08 Sept, Tunisia's President indicated he was preparing to change the country's constitution, claiming only do so using existing constitutional means.¹² The statement was followed by reactions of the political parties and civil society, with the UGTT labour union calling for legislative elections to allow a new parliament to debate the constitution and change the political system. The moderate Islamist Ennahda, the biggest party in the now-suspended parliament and a key player in successive Tunisian governments, rejected any move. In a statement, the party said the 2014 constitution formed the basis of Tunisia's political and social contract and the legitimacy of both its parliament and president, and that deviating from it would mean a retreat from democracy.

This protest, the first after the 25-26 July demonstrations, showed a measure of the strength of the anti-President front, which so far has been relatively subdued and mainly associated with the Ennahdha party. In contrast, the President's ability to control the police and the Ministry of Interior as well as of his commitment to fundamental freedoms was tested. Police brutality has plagued Tunisian protests, and it continues to pose a risk for possible escalation of unrest.

SDCD COMM:

Within two months after President Saïed activated emergency provisions and seized executive powers, the security and volatile political situation in Tunisia will likely persist in Tunisia following President Kais Saied decree¹³ in strengthening presidential powers, indefinitely suspending the country's Parliament, and depriving parliamentarians of immunity from prosecution as of 22 Sept¹⁴. With the Parliament's suspension, political opposition has been weakened and some MPs targeted by arrests and judicial investigations.

While most Tunisians back the president's new course, his actions have focused on centralising control of the security apparatus and COVID-19 vaccinations to the detriment of the much-needed socio-economic reforms. These decisions have already drawn criticisms from political parties, particularly Ennahda.

The newly introduced measures will allow Saïed to rule by decree, form a new government, and make any policy decisions unanimously. In addition, Saïed announced that he is in the process of forming a committee that will spearhead the revision of the country's constitution.

Domestic stakeholders were quick to vehemently denounce Saïed's 22 Sept actions. Rached Ghannouchi, head of the country's largest political party, Ennahda, rejected the move, claiming that the party would not accept the suspension of the constitution. Meanwhile, the second biggest party, Heart of Tunisia, asserted that Saïed was conducting a "premeditated coup", and called for "a national alignment against the coup". Both parties have since called for countrywide protests in response.

*The extension of the presidential powers could further fuel the disenchantment of the opposition and thus, enhance the momentum for continuous calls for demonstrations and the potential of ensuing social unrest. **END COMM***

¹¹ Media reference: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/une-contre-manifestation-a-lavenue-habib-bourguiba-pour-soutenir-kais-saied-et-les-mesures-du-25-juillet-video/>

¹² Media reference: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tunisias-president-indicates-he-will-amend-constitution-2021-09-11/>

¹³ Tunisia Presidency Facebook page: [Presidency Tunisia رئاسة الجمهورية التونسية - Home | Facebook](#)

¹⁴ Media reference: [Tunisia's Saïed issues decree strengthening presidential powers - France 24](#)

3. Situational Awareness for EUBAM-Libya

3.1. Armed conflict

Libya-Tripoli

- **The armed conflict remains underlying concern to the political developments focused on expected 24 December elections.**
- **Inter-militias' clashes:** *Likelihood of skirmishes and Small Arms Fire (SAF) in Tripoli, the western coastal area (main cities) and southern area (Tripoli's belt) remain high with tendency to increase further considering the continuous hostilities between militias coalitions. The security situation can be described as highly volatile with continuous inter-militia's tensions and coalitions in the capital Tripoli greater area and on the western flank of Tripoli, particularly on the Al Ajaylat, Az Aziziyah, Wershiffana. In a scenario of heavy clashes in Tripoli and on the western coastal areas, obstructions of movement are likely to affect traffic towards the Mitiga Int. Airport and the western coastal highway, including an expansion closer to Tripoli western neighbourhoods including Janzour (location of the EUBAM Libya HQ offices) with potential impact Mission's operational freedom of movement and relocation/evacuation capabilities.*
- Tripoli's areas under particular focus include contact lines between opposing alliances across the Southern Tripoli belt – Abu Salim, Alhadba, Salah Al-Deen, Ain Zara, as well as in Central Tripoli – border areas between Bab Ben Ghashir, Ben Ashour, and Dahra.
- On the southern front border, fighting between the LNA and FACT appears to have calmed after the LNA attack on September 14, however, further attacks/confrontations remain possible with the LNA reportedly carrying out combing operations.

Tunisia-Tunis

The main threat categories for the capital are **terrorism, criminality, and hazards** (especially road traffic accidents). Threats related to armed conflict are assessed as **non-existent**.

3.2. Terrorism

Libya-Tripoli

Ahead of elections, the terrorism threat can be perceived as high across all major urban centres, despite the fact both Daesh and AQIM have been degraded in Libya. The latest IGNU-LNA Joint Force engagement in several counterterrorism raids is likely to trigger tit-for-tat drive-by shootings and other targeted attacks against IGNU and LNA positions.

SDCD COMM: *Radicalized individuals and informal cells in western and eastern regions could pose a threat with limited capabilities for medium lethality incidents in the Libyan capital. In southern Libya, it is evident the group retains the personnel and facilities to be able to produce the explosives and, given the recent attacks (06/06, 14/06 and 22/08), it raises the awareness on their lethality and potential intent to continue their attacks. The active semi-structured and small terrorist-cells could be operating in Southern Libya (Fezzan Region) and some active elements in the western coastal area near Sabratha (Tripolitania Region). **END COMM***

Tunisia-Tunis

- The Security Services in Tunisia continue with the counter-terrorist operations to tackle the terrorist threat.
- Radicalized individuals and informal cells could pose a threat with limited capabilities for low-medium lethality incidents in the Tunisian capital.
- **Special attention in displacement towards/throughout:**
 - **Southern area:** Southern desert area formed by Bir Rijm Maatoug - Borj Bourguiba - Ben Guardane, due to terrorist threat at Libyan border with terrorist infiltrations.



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- **Saharan area bordering with Libya and Algeria:** terrorist skirmishes against security forces. Military exclusion area created since 2013.
- **Western Central and Northern West region of Tunisia:** relevant and continuous counter-terrorist activities against jihadist elements in the mountain areas of Kasserine, Siliana, Kairouan et du Kef.

3.3. Criminality

Libya-Tripoli

- High levels of criminality continue to be reported with acts of **looting, carjacking, conflicts over private property, assassinations, and kidnappings for ransom.**
- Criminal incidents have been reported in numerous areas of Tripoli suburbs with **special attention to the southern belt surrounding the capital and main roads/venues.**

SDCD Comment: *The security environment was marked by continued acts of violent crimes (murders, targeted killings, kidnapping, carjacking, thefts), random/unaccounted and celebratory shooting incidents resulting in collateral victims through stray bullets incidents. Meanwhile law enforcement efforts conducting arrests and security operations against organised crime gangs continued.*

Tunisia-Tunis

- The Tunisian security forces maintain their **operations to tackle organised criminality.**
- **Burglary, car break-in, petty theft, financial scams, blackmail, homicides.** Most dangerous scenario, the violent assault targeting EUBAM assets and personnel.

3.4. Civil unrest

Libya-Tripoli

- Civil unrest, during the assessed period, caused by the deteriorated political context, increases the risk of destabilization actions at the institutional and security levels, notably through demonstrations of force affiliated to political parties or personalities. Social and financial grievances continue to trigger protests demanding better conditions.
- Ad-hoc demonstrations and potential violent encounters with security forces have the potential to create temporary movement restrictions, thus impacting a mission operational moves in the city.

Tunisia-Tunis

- In light of the recent extension of the presidential executive powers, the opposition calls for protests in the near to medium future cannot be ruled out. While, President Saied has taken several steps in reappointments to certain positions as he seems to prioritize fighting the COVID-19 crisis and improving the government's fiscal situation, further civil unrest remains linked to the level of popularity and support that he draws so far from a majority of Tunisians.
- Civil unrest remains sensitive to the future political and social developments.

4. COVID-19 Update¹⁵

Country	Cases in the last 7 days	Cases in the preceding 7 days	Weekly Case % Change	Cases in the last 7 days/1M pop	Deaths in the last 7 days	Deaths in the preceding 7 day	Weekly Death % Change	Overall Covid cases
Libya	6,246	8,235	-24%	894	91	95	-04%	334,049
Tunisia	6,224	8,958	-31%	520	212	449	-53%	702,503

¹⁵ Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated:23/09/2021 12:00GMT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

AQ - Al-Qaeda
AQIM - Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BCP – Border Crossing Point
BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade / Saraya Defend Benghazi (SDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group)
CBL – Central Bank of Libya
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
DPF – Derna Protection Force (an amalgamation of all militias in Derna, including the MSCD)
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya
GNA – Government of National Accord (UN-backed)
GNC – General National Congress
IGNU – Interim Government of National Unity (2021)
GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020)
HCS - High Council of State
HNEC – High National Elections Commission
HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)
IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons
IED - Improvised Explosive Device
IOC - International Oil Company
IS/DAESH - Islamic State
LNA – Libyan National Army
LNG – Libyan National Guard
LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)
LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)
LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room
MoD - Ministry of Defense
MoF - Ministry of Finance
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education
MoI - Ministry of Interior
MoJ - Ministry of Justice
MoO - Ministry of Oil
MoT - Ministry of Transportation
MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)
NOC – National Oil Company
NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)
PC – Presidency Council (IGNU)
PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi
RTA - Road Traffic Accident
SAF - Small Arms Fire
SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada
SSA - Stability Support Agency
Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
TPF – Tripoli Protection Force (TRB, Nawasi 8 Force, Bab Tajoura Brigade and Ghneiwa umbrella group, established in December 2018)
UNSMIL – United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

Disclaimer: This report is based in security incidents reports from multiple sources, including international partners and open sources, whose accuracy may not always be fully verified. It cannot be assumed that all security incidents in Libya and Tunisia were reported to and/or tracked by EUBAM Libya. The Security and Duty of Care Department (SDCD) emails a daily security update (DSR) which includes a full description of the incidents that serve as the basis for this report.