

## Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

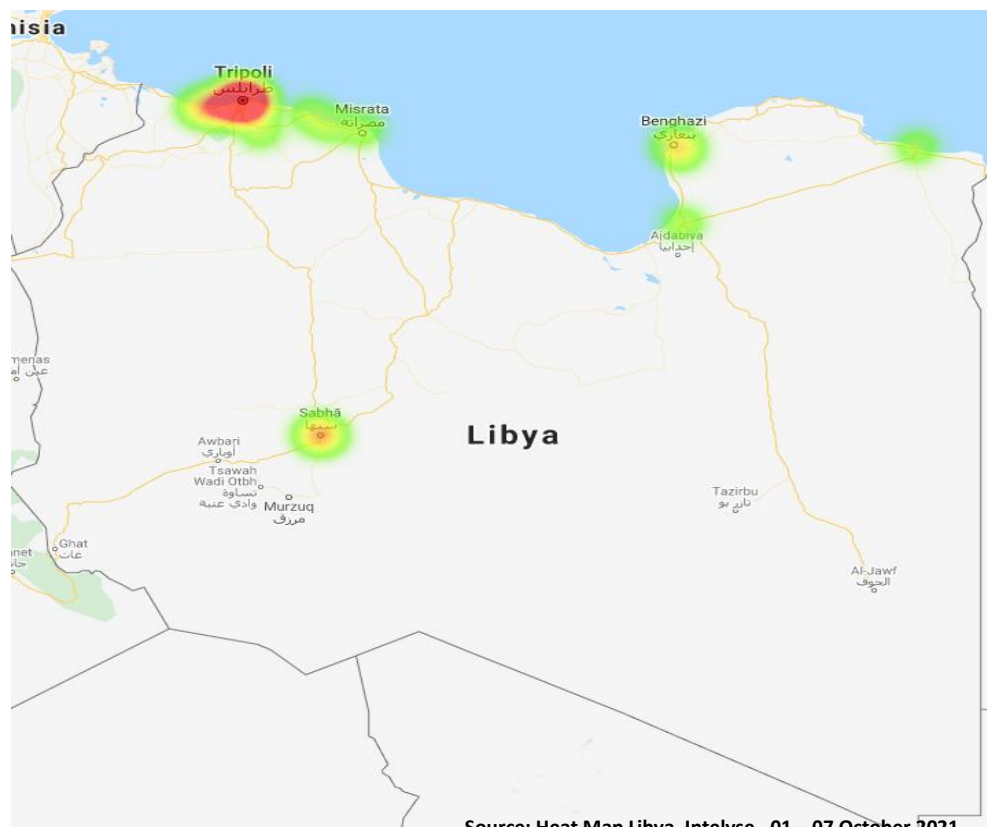
Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 01/10/2021 – 07/10/2021

### SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW

#### 1. Key developments

- Security atmospherics in Tripoli; Phased security campaign targeting irregular migration and criminality launched in west Tripoli
- External actors' movements: IGNU Foreign Minister Najla Al-Mangoush confirmed that "some" foreign fighters departed Libyan territory
- Tunisia security update - President Kais Saied continues to enjoy popular support



#### 2. Findings

##### 2.1. Security atmospherics in Tripoli; Phased security campaign targeting irregular migration and criminality launched in west Tripoli

On 01 Oct, security forces launched a security campaign targeting irregular migrants and criminals in west Tripoli - Hai Al-Andalus municipality, including Gergaresh neighbourhood-a known area harbouring multiple undocumented migrants employed in the informal economy. Sources reported the Ministry of Interior (MoI) units as the Anti-Narcotics General Administration (ANGA), Anti-Irregular Migration, and other units were mobilized during the campaign. Further on, the campaign was sanctioned by Attorney General's order introducing a curfew on all movement within Gergaresh and multiple road closures to enable forces to carry out its operation. According to



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Hai Al-Andalus municipality, at least 7,000 irregular migrants (with other numbers also circulated in the media<sup>1</sup>) were transferred to processing facilities in Ghut Shaal to be deported, whilst 45 others were referred to prosecution, following raids targeting also drug trafficking, alcohol production, and Small Arms Fire (SAF).

With a similar mobilisation, on 02 Oct, Tripoli Security Directorate, Zintan General Security Apparatus, Osama Juwaili's forces (Ministry of Defence), and Municipal Guards closed off shops in the area as the security campaign proceeded on the second day of the campaign. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) reported the completion of the first phase of its security campaign targeting irregular migrants and suspected criminals in Gergaresh, west Tripoli, while the second phase is intended to target slums and makeshift constructions in the area.

The security action was taken on the political stage, with IGNU PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah accompanied by Interior Minister Khaled Mazen visit to Hai Al-Andalus municipality to oversee the MoI-led security campaign. The PM was filmed exchanging views with locals on the ongoing demolition campaign and urban development plans, in a likely opportunity of building his credentials as a leader who can bring security to the capital and increase his popular support.

Although the security campaign held security and political support, the manner in which it was conducted raised concerns. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) released a statement<sup>2</sup> from Assistant Secretary-General Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, stating concern about reports of killing and excessive use of force against migrants and asylum seekers during the raids, including one mortality and 15 injured, with those arrested currently being "arbitrarily detained" by the IGNU MoI Directorate of Combatting Illegal Migration.

Meanwhile, the Tripoli Security Directorate called on citizens to register their expatriate workers or tenants to the nearest police stations or the Passports, Nationality, and Foreigners Affairs Department on 04 Oct, while failure to adhere to the latest measures will result in legal implications. It is likely that the latest backlash prompted the directorate to issue such measures in an effort to legitimise the anti-migration security campaign and prevent security breaches involving illegal immigrants.

In another sequence of events, Chief of the General Staff (western forces) Mohammed al-Haddad, accompanied by the Chief of Staff of the Ground Forces, Al-Fitouri Greibel and the commander of the Tarhuna Operations Room, Abdul Qadir Mansour, inspected the HQ of 444<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Tikbali Camp. At this camp, clashes were reported in early September when the commander of the Tripoli Military Region, Abdulbaset Marwan, ordered the SSA to oust 444<sup>th</sup> Brigade International Developments Tripolitania Region from Tikbali Camp. 444<sup>th</sup> Brigade ultimately should have come under Marwan's command under the Tripoli Military Region, suggesting relations between the brigade and Marwan had deteriorated. A mediation on 21 Sept between SSA and 444, supported by Turkey, reached an alleged agreement to replace Marwan with Greibel, although this does not yet appear to have happened.

Localised sources, reported on 02 Oct that a Western Region military/security actor and armed group meeting took place in Tripoli, in attendance of the Misrata 166<sup>th</sup> Battalion Commander, Muhammad Al-Hassan, Nawasi Brigade Commander, Mustafa Kaddour, Zawiyah Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Captain, Muhammad Al-Bahron, and Furzan Janzour Commander, Mohamed Al-Baroni. Although, the details of the discussions or potential agreements have not been released as yet, speculations were raised on an agreement to form a "National Body" for cooperation, and conflict avoidance.

#### **SDCD COMMENT**

*While the military/security and armed group activity in the Western Region, particularly in Tripoli continues to show reduced levels of activity, the run-up to planned elections, and national and international actor pressure might influence current conditions. With underlying structural issues and the threat of re-emerging localised conflict as a*

<sup>1</sup> Media reference: <https://9jabreed.com/photos-one-killed-15-injured-4000-arrested-as-police-crack-down-on-migrants-in-libya/>

<sup>2</sup> UNSMIL official webpage: [STATEMENT of the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, Georgette Gagnon | UNSMIL \(unsmil.org\)](https://www.unsmil.org/press-releases/2020/10/02/statement-of-the-united-nations-assistant-secretary-general-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-for-libya-georgette-gagnon)



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*real possibility, these might also increase in correlation to political developments. Clashes between armed groups affiliated with Libya's executive authority proved to fall within the political divide between pro-election supporters and status-quo actors. It has been eventuated by the intense clashes between the 444<sup>th</sup> Fighting Brigade affiliated with the IGNU's Chief of Staff and Ghneiwa al-Kikli's Stabilisation Support Apparatus (SSA) affiliated with the PC. Albeit the dispute between these militias has apparently been settled, the risk of armed clashes or demonstrations of force should not be overlooked in the coming months in the capital, notably in the increasing political tensions.*

*In a linked consequence of the anti-illegal migration campaign in Tripoli, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Libya announced that due to "increasing number of spontaneous arrivals outside the Community Centre and rising tensions involving violence and disruptive behaviour, activities at the CDC have been suspended until further notice". Whereas, localised sources posted pictures of the CDC showing what appear to be illegal migrants protesting conditions in Libya, calling to be evacuated, the prospects for further operations, as part of a growing crackdown on the presence of illegal migrants might have an increasingly impact on the security environments in Tripoli.*

## **2.2. External actors' movements: IGNU Foreign Minister Najla Al-Mangoush confirmed that "some" foreign fighters departed Libyan territory**

Following reports suggesting Syrian mercenaries have been repatriated from Libya by Turkey over the last couple of weeks, the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights (SOHR)<sup>3</sup> stated that preparations are underway to return a batch of Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries from Libya. Syrian militia leaders have been asked to prepare the return of 2000 mercenaries. The SOHR claims around 7000 Syrian mercenaries are still based in Libya. Nevertheless, while in another related article<sup>4</sup>, SOHR sources have confirmed the "return of the first batch of Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries from Libya, as an aero plane with nearly 300 Syrian fighters aboard landed in Turkish territory", a new batch of nearly 90 fighters of Turkish-backed factions operating in Turkish-held areas in Afrin were sent to Libya in the previous days in return for the return of a similar batch to Syria as a part of the routine back-and-forth transfer operations." The nature of reporting of the external actors' movements within different reports, pose further uncertainty on the level of "withdrawal".

The reports coincided with an increase in Turkish military flights and the removal of radar equipment and Pantsirs from Jufra Airbase by Wagner Group, suggesting at least a partial drawdown of military assets in Libya by Moscow and Ankara.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry called for renewed support for the implementation of the (October 2020) ceasefire during a virtual meeting. Shoukry stated this included the freezing of military agreements for training and the exit of training crews from Libya. Cairo has renewed its demand for 'the unconditional, simultaneous and coordinated exit of all foreign forces, mercenaries, and foreign fighters from Libya, without exception. Their renewed call comes as reports indicate Moscow and Ankara have started at least a partial drawdown and as the US National Security Advisor visited Cairo. As such, international pressure may well increase in the coming weeks to try and maintain momentum with any drawdown.

On 03 Oct, IGNU Foreign Minister Najla Al-Mangoush confirmed that "some" foreign fighters departed Libyan territory, describing the development as a "very modest start" while stressing that her government is still seeking the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries on a larger and more comprehensive scale, during a visit to Kuwait. Al-Mangoush's statement would confirm recent military activity at the LNA-controlled Al-Jufrah Airbase and intense aerial activity by Turkish Air Force cargo aircraft.

<sup>3</sup>Syrian Observatory of Human Rights (SOHR)  
[https://www.syriahr.com/en/224030/?\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk=\\_pmd\\_V42FZAuqvDsPw2NaVPII98hJVXD6EaqvhNih4OTr1M0-1633072216-0-gqNtZGzNAeWjcnBszQjR](https://www.syriahr.com/en/224030/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk=_pmd_V42FZAuqvDsPw2NaVPII98hJVXD6EaqvhNih4OTr1M0-1633072216-0-gqNtZGzNAeWjcnBszQjR)

<sup>4</sup> SOHR - <https://www.syriahr.com/en/224388/>

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In the aftermath of Al-Mangoush's statement, the Turkish Defence Ministry confirmed the continuation of training, assistance, cooperation and military advisory activities in Libya, reaffirming previous statements that it is not a "foreign force" in Libya as its presence is legitimised by its security agreement with the former GNA (2019).

In positive development, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) convened in Geneva on 06 Oct to discuss the drafting of a comprehensive action plan for the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries from Libya, in a meeting facilitated by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

**SDCD COMMENT**

*While it is still early to assess that it is the start of a full coordinated drawdown, it is encouraging and comes as international pressure for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Libya increases, while corroborated with the statements from both Turkey and Russia and the reports of foreign troops movements, previously reported.*

*The statement of the Russian Foreign Minister Serghei Lavrov, that the deadline for withdrawing the forces from Libya is not important, and what matters is that they are removed in a balanced way to ensure the military balance on the ground, would tacitly highlight that due to this balance of power, the Libyan conflict stopped in the summer of 2020 and that no conflict has yet erupted despite heightened rhetoric over the last months.*

*On this note, the African's Union Peace and Security Council meeting on 30 September<sup>5</sup>, raised concerns over the disturbing impact of a chaotic withdrawal of these "arms to hire" in the region's conflicts, if they are just being set out of Libya.*

*Meanwhile, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) meeting with officers from the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in the presence of PM Dabaiba, U.S. Envoy to Libya Richard Norland and AFRICOM Commander Stephen Townsend, when practical ways to remove foreign mercenaries were discussed, coupled with the JMC meeting in Geneva might give hope of the prospected plan to remove mercenaries in a gradual manner.*

*Overall, wider Tripoli area, Warshefana and Western Coastal region remains prone to foreign presence movement, foreign fighters' changeover, and cargo delivery. The potential for rapid developments of armed confrontations and subsequent impact on respective security environment, including potential effects on transit and evacuation routes remains. At the same time, the risk for increased armed groups activity, mobilisation, ad-hoc vehicle checkpoints and small firearms engagement remains high.*

**2.3. Tunisia security update – President Kais Saied continues to enjoy popular support**

On Sunday 03 Oct, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Tunis to express their support to President Kais Saied while other similar demonstrations were held in Gafsa, Gabès, Tataouine, Sousse, Monastir, Kasserine, Sfax, and Kef. Media outlets<sup>6</sup> released the number of supporters that took the streets counting thousands: Tunis- 7,000 (10,000 at peak), Sfax – 6000, Sousse – 2000 and Gafsa - 1500.

A day before, President Kais Saied assured that a national dialogue would take place soon and a new government would also be formed subsequently. Saied's statement came during a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, amid the nomination on 29 Sept of Nejla Romdhan Bouden as the new Prime Minister, over three months after the implementation of the 25 July decree.

<sup>5</sup><https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/eng-final-psc-communique-1035th-psc-meeting-mercenaries-and-foreign-fighters-30-sept-202.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Media reference: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-manifestation-du-03-octobre-chiffres-officiels-dans-ces-regions/>



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Meanwhile, Parliamentary Speaker Rached Ghannouchi declared 1 Oct as the first day of the third session of the parliament for the 2019-2024 period, in defiance of Saied's decree extension. Ghannouchi also called on the lawmakers to "convene constantly and show steadfastness to return to democracy".

### **SDCD COMMENT**

*While the appointment of the country's and the Arab world's first-ever female Prime Minister was acclaimed internationally, the constitution remains suspended.*

*The parliament headquarters are reported closed off, while MPs abiding by Ghannouchi's call committed to working remotely. Ghannouchi's defiance to Saied's decision to freeze parliament activities will increase tensions, while civil society organizations and some political parties continue to express their deep concern about the consolidation of the President extraordinary powers, and the lack of institutional means to contest his decisions.*

*Therefore, the risk of further civil unrest persists, following the intention announced by 90 ARP deputies to return to work after the official summer break end on 1 October which triggered military reinforcements around the Assembly of Representative of People (ARP) (similar with the move on the 25 and 26 July) to prevent the deputies to enter. Ongoing tensions and harassment between Ennahdha deputies and protesters opposing their return were reported to have gathered on the spot.*

## **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.

#### **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.



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***SDCD Comment:*** 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, 22/08 and 27/09), 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).

#### 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.
  - **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, 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.
- Increasing civil unrest tied to political instability, including demonstrations against the HoR. Speculation exists around domestic and foreign actor involvement in encouraging protests, with alleged aim of obstructing the timely holding of planned December 24, 2021 national elections
- 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



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- 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 Update<sup>7</sup>

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	4,663	5,220	-11 %	667	84	76	+11 %	344,847
Tunisia	2,687	3,811	-29 %	224	129	188	-31 %	709,001

On 02 Oct, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) inaugurated a new COVID-19 vaccination centre at the Ras Ajdir Libya-Tunisia border crossing point (BCP). The vaccination centre was established as part of the joint health protocol facilitating passenger transit via the BCP.

<sup>7</sup> Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 07/10/2021 15:00GMT

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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  
5+5 JMC – 5+5 Joint Military Commission  
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*





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*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.*