

Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 01/07/2022 – 07/07/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW



1. Key developments

- Libya - widespread popular unrest
- Tunisia security update - Draft Constitution Published; Boycott calls; Protests remain likely

2. Findings

2.1. Libya - widespread popular unrest

The assessed week was dominated by a country-wide eruption of popular discontent brewing for a long time in the persisting fight on the executive legitimacy, and amounting social grievances left unsolved. Although protests are a regular occurrence in Libya against poor living standards and the stagnating quality of public infrastructure, the wave of protests that erupted on 01 July highlight that the current realities in Libya from the political blockage, enduring oil blockade, institutional fragmentation affecting any economic progress to disillusioned constituents of the political self-centred elite has reached a limit point. Overall, unstructured protest movements were expected to re-emerge over the summer as socio-economic conditions continued to deteriorate.

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In the past week, calls for nationwide demonstrations circulated on social media, allegedly made by a group self-identifying as the "Youth Revolution Movement" ("Beltrées Movement/Youth"), calling for the dissolution of existing political bodies and the holding of elections. Of note, the Movement appealed to security agencies to protect the people on the day of the demonstrations. Meanwhile, pro-GNU Constitution and Election Support Force (CESF) warned that any attempt to engage in mass protests, vandalise public property, or close roads would be dealt with swiftly in a statement on 30 June. While the Internal Security Agency (ISA) in the Eastern Region allegedly ordered an investigation into youth-led calls for demonstrations.

From the political-focused "Beltrées Youth" protest in Martyrs' Square in Tripoli during the afternoon of 01 July¹, civilian unrest swept across the country with demonstrators blaming self-interested political elites, the deteriorating living standards and high discontent on unequal and prolonged load shedding hours and power outages. While most protesters demonstrated peacefully, roadblocks and tyres set on fire on the roads in and around Tripoli and other country-wide localities through the afternoon of 02 July until 05 July, with a concentration occurring in Tripolitania.

In Tripoli, protesters burned tyres and closed off several roads in the capital on 02 July and following nights in numerous neighbourhoods including Khallat Al-Furjan, Salah Eddien, Ain Zara, Airport Road, Al-Kremiya, Al-Serraj, Janzour, Ghut Shaal, Gharghour, Downtown, Ben Ashour, Hay Demsheq, Al-Nooflieen, Al-Furnaj, Souq Al Jum'aa, Zawiyat Al Dahmani, Zanatah, Al-Fellah, Al-Hae Al-Senaea, Al-Hadba Al-Sharqiya, Gharghour, Tajoura, Wadi Al-Rabei, Qasr Bin Ghashir and some parts of the highway and Coastal Road. A significant decline was registered on 05 July whereas on 06 July no demonstrations were reported.

Official institutions as Prime Minister's Office², Presidential Council (PC) Office were cordoned off while the Ahmed Mahmoud Traffic Lights near the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) HQ was closed.



¹ Local media reference https://twitter.com/address_libya/status/1542910825165475850

² Local social media reference https://twitter.com/address_libya/status/1542950690620067841



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Beyond Tripoli, protests across the western region, included Wershiffanah, Al-Ajaylat, Nalut, Garabolli, Tarhunah, Bani Walid, Misrata; in the central region Sirte and Jufra; and the east al-Bayda, Benghazi and Tobruq. In southern Fezzan, protesters demonstrated in Sabha, and Al-Kufra.

In several instances the protests escalated into raids, looting and intentional arson of official buildings or infrastructure facilities (municipal buildings, local council buildings, GECOL Power stations, House of Representatives in Tobruq). mainly during the 01 – 04 July:

- During the night of 01 July, the most high-profile incident occurred in Tobruk where protestors stormed, ransacked, and set on fire the HoR building. Security forces reportedly retreated so as not to clash with demonstrators. Circulated video footage showed the protestors demolishing the HQ's main gate with a bulldozer in order to storm the premises³. In addition, equipment including computers and furniture were set on fire. The protestors accused HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh of failing to fulfil his role and deliberately postponing elections to remain in power.
- On 1 July, protestors stormed and set fire to city halls in Misrata⁴ and the Ministry of Finance building in Sabha.
- In Garabuli and Sabratha, the municipality buildings were also set alight, while localised sources informed of arson attacks targeting municipal council buildings in Castelverde, Tarhuna, and Qaser Bin Ghashir (all Western Region), as well as Taraghin (Southern Region).

From a ground impact view, civil unrest remained concentrated during the night to early morning hours, progressing from late afternoons with roadblocks and tires set alight and groups of people assemblies in the streets. During the morning, security forces and the administrations removed the debris and roadblocks and cleared targeted governmental buildings.

In the Western region, the security force responses have largely kept a low profile, mainly deployed pre-emptively to protect governmental buildings in an apparent effort to avoid any potential escalations whereas likely mindful of the potential of losing the local acceptance and, therefore, their possible areas of control and influence in the capital.

In LNA-controlled areas, security reinforcements were sent to Tobruk on 02 July. However, limited reports of intimidation or heavy-handedness explain a lack of protests in LNA-dominated areas. *Notably, green flags were displayed during a small rally in Tobruq on 02 July⁵. Although it was quickly forgotten, the incident might suggest that pro-Gadhafi regime elements are becoming more empowered due to the current political instability and lack of a clear roadmap forward, leaving room for various political opinions to be expressed. In follow-up statements after the HoR building attack, HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh stated the attack was led by Gaddafi's support base and directly accused Mohamed Menfi's brother of being involved in the incident⁶.*

With a slight decline of civil unrest incidents on 04 and 05 July, the reports of deployment of security actors, aiming to prevent further closures of roads and damage to public and private property, while arrests operations were conducted on several participants of the high impact episodes, especially on eastern -Tobruq HoR building:

- Arrest campaigns targeting demonstrators have been reported in Tripoli and Misrata (Western Region), Tobruk (Eastern Region), and Sabha (Southern Region).
- On 04 July, the 777th Brigade (assessed as pro-GNS) claimed pro-GNU forces arrest campaigns targeting protestors and alleging excessive use of force and torture.
- On 04 July, the Misrata Municipal Council statement claimed that demonstrations in the municipality turned to violence, with protestors expressing themselves in immoral and illegal ways. As a result, the judiciary declared a security

³ Local social media footage <https://twitter.com/AlHadath/status/1543159412877139968>

⁴ Local media reference https://twitter.com/address_libya/status/1542940345180524544

⁵ Local social media reference https://twitter.com/address_libya/status/1542930809245802498

⁶ Local social media reference <https://twitter.com/almasartvlibya/status/1543367740215410688>



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alert and ordered security actors to open roads and remove obstructions, claiming that the deployment of security actors aims to protect public and private property and ensure all safety and security.

- In Tobruk, localised sources informed of the LNA arrest campaign, including raids on the homes of suspected demonstrators. Pro-LNA sources reported that the arrest campaign targeted pro-former regime demonstrators and “outside actors, aiming to destabilise the region”.
- In Sabha, the LNA security response to disperse protesters allegedly turned violent, with security forces shooting at protesters, resulting in the killing of an identified local national⁷.

Both GNS and GNU respond to protest activity

Reporting on the demonstrations showed that although united in their frustration over living conditions, their political demands differed from city to city, some expressing discontent with the GNU, others with the GNS, others with Aqeela Saleh and the HoR overall. This perception allowed of multiple stakeholders to press with populist statements likely because of their specific political agendas.

- GNU-PM Abdulhamid Dadaiba responded to the protests by claiming they have his support and his agreement that all institutions, including the government, should leave, but claiming that only elections can resolve the current situation. However, his position is unlikely to resonate with the general population at this stage, with no plans for elections being advanced.

- From the other camp, GNS-PM Fathi Bashagha called for the "safe exit" for GNU ministers during a speech at the Forum of Sheikhs and Notables in Sirte. In a quick try to turn the situation to his advantage, Bashagha stated *"Now you have a very narrow window of opportunity, that we had called for reconciliation and that we would not enter Tripoli by force and not a drop of blood would be spilt; but when we see Libya threatened and exposed to dangers, and when we see the suffering of 7 million Libyans and their lives in danger, in such a case, other words will be said."*

- In addition, the LNA stated on 02 July announcing that it stands in solidarity with the protesters' demands but called for an end to acts of assault and sabotage of public and private institutions.

- The pro-GNU Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) reaffirmed its support for all popular movements in a manner that does not infringe on the freedom of others and ensures the safety of public and private properties, following a meeting with the founder and members of the “People’s Will Movement”.

Of note, the “Beltrees Youth” warned that it would escalate its demands and continue to hold nationwide protests following their dissatisfaction with the outcomes of their meeting held with Presidential Council (PC) Head Mohamed Menfi at his office on 02 July. Furthermore, the movement march scheduled on 04 July in Tripoli was cancelled due to the movement’s failure to obtain security approval to hold the demonstration.

Reports indicate the protesters will erect tents across public squares on 03 July, reiterating their commitment to peace and rejecting attempts to “hijack” the movement by engaging in violence from the road closures and other acts of vandalism, claiming the storming of government headquarters does not represent it. At the same time, the movement confirmed its demands of presidential and legislative elections as soon as possible, empowering the Supreme Judicial Council and Presidential Council (PC) to dissolve all political bodies and announce a national emergency, solving the electricity crisis, cancelling all proposals to lift fuel subsidies and adjusting the price of bread, and the exit of all foreign mercenaries across the entire Libyan territory.

⁷ Local social media reference <https://twitter.com/taqarifatnews/status/1544256187616591872>



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On the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) file, with high temperatures registered along the coast, outages became more prevalent and industrial output had to be curtailed to save energy on already strained electricity infrastructure. Apart from the endemic institutional and infrastructure challenges of the electricity sector, criminal activity targeting the infrastructure has gradually contributed to the degraded system. For example, on 03 July unidentified assailants stole 300-metre-long power cables feeding the Airport Road, Al-Furosiya Buildings, Al-Fateh Village, and Al-Nakhil Street in Bani Walid causing subsequent power outages in the above areas.

In addition:

- On 23 Jun, the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) - Benghazi branch⁸ reported a total blackout across the majority of areas in Benghazi after the fifth gas unit and the third steam unit at the Benghazi North Power Plant went out of service. The further announcement pointed out that the disruption in the electrical network was due to gas supply shortages feeding the Benghazi North and Zueitina power plants.
- On 26 Jun, GNU-PM Dadaiba suspended the GECOL board and referred its members for investigations. On 26 Jun, GNU-PM Dadaiba suspended the GECOL board and referred its members for investigations. However, amid the wave of national protests, the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) board was reinstated on 03 July.
- Early warnings were sent by NOC⁹, following the announcement of “force major” at Al Sidra and Ras Lanuf ports on challenges and potential disruption of the coastline supply with natural gas. In the same context, GNU Spokesman Mohamed Hmouda stated that gas supply shortages resulting from the suspension of oil production and export operations caused a loss of 1k megawatts from the public network.

Separately, there has been a slight improvement in electricity supply across the country. Over the past 48hrs, load shedding is approximately 8-12 hours over two intervals (4+4/4+6) across the majority of Tripoli’s areas.

SDCD COMMENT

The civilians across Libya were united in expressing frustration with the deterioration of living conditions, specifically increased food and fuel prices, prolonged power cuts, and limited access to cash. Political elites were condemned for their corrupted practices and failure to provide meaningful political representation to the civil population.

Currently, the “Beltress Youth” movement expressed its intent to continue the protests until there are signs of improvement in living conditions. However, in the short term, the development of unrest would likely be influenced by ongoing and opposing political and armed actor efforts to divide and incite protest movements to gain control of the narrative toward their interests.

For example, the pro-GNS 777th Brigade led by Haitham Tajouri held the GNU responsible for the arrest of many protesters and called on the government to facilitate their immediate release in a statement on 04 July. The Brigade stated that some of the protesters were tortured. Similarly, although state institutions were attacked, both the LNA and armed groups in the western region, sensing that popular support was behind the protestors, chose not only to consent but actively side “with the people” – at least for the time being.

As such, the protests may provide an opportunity for political exploitation, and possible further escalation as the international community faces concerns and negotiates ways to avoid further deterioration in stability.

At the same time, any efforts to influence official protest movements, including attempts at disempowering the objectives of the unrest, as well as increased hostile security responses (targeted arrests/assassinations), are likely to reinforce sentiment within local civic groups and escalate unrest. Aversely, amid ongoing civil unrest, including potentially violent demonstrations and the sabotage of public buildings, authorities in Libya may deploy security forces to enforce anti-protest measures.

⁸ Of note, GECOL announced on 24 June a disruption in the electrical network due to gas supply shortages feeding the Benghazi North and Zueitina power plants. GECOL reported 300 megawatts of production capacity was lost, causing some units to be put out of service.

⁹ National Oil Corporation (NOC) statement 30 June <https://noc.ly/index.php/ar/new-2>



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Sporadic road closures would likely pose an impact on the mission's mobility across the majority of urban centres and towards official government locations, specifically Tripoli, including Mitiga Airport routes.

At the time of writing, no protests were reported in Libya overnight since 05 July, while local reporting points to the long queues observed outside banks due to the availability of cash and across the majority of petrol stations, likely in preparations for the Eid Al-Adha observation (08-11 July).

2.3. Tunisia security update - Draft Constitution Published; Boycott calls; Protests remain likely

The office of the President on 30 June published its proposed constitution, which is scheduled to be voted on in a referendum on 25 July. The constitution is based on the results of a January–March 2022 online consultation, which registered a participation rate of 6% of eligible voters. Of this 6%, 86.4% stated they were in favour of a presidential system, as proposed by President Kais Saied. Influential parties and civil society organisations remain opposed to the proposed constitution, and protests ahead of and following the referendum remain possible.

A few key elements of the proposed constitution, with reaction from Tunisia's political and civil forces:

- The draft will significantly empower the executive branch and strip powers from the legislative and judiciary. Thus, the President would have almost complete control over the judiciary and military, with no parliamentary oversight over the armed forces or security forces. The cabinet would answer to the President rather than to parliament, and the President would be solely responsible for appointing and dismissing ministers.
- The president would also have the ability to dissolve parliament, which would now include a second chamber for “regions and districts”. The parliament would only suggest legislation for the president’s government to consider. Parliament would be prohibited from considering financial issues, with the president gaining sole authority over the state budget.
- The president would be allowed to serve two terms of five years each but could extend them in the case of an “imminent danger to the state,” similar to the clause used on 25 July 2021. Unlike in the 2014 constitution, the president would have full power in such a state of exception, with no review power for parliament or the constitutional court. There is no mechanism for removing the president.
- One significant change surrounds the status of Islam; it no longer appears in the first article, but the draft constitution later says the state must work to “achieve the goals of pure Islam in preserving [people’s] life, honour, money, religion, and freedom.” It adds that education is based on Islamic identity and that the president must be a Muslim.
- Several crucial elements, such as how parliament will be elected or the status of Tunisia’s independent institutions, are absent from the constitution and will be clarified through subsequent laws instead. Yet the constitution says that the president will continue to rule by decree until the creation of a new parliament following December’s elections—and even after that, he will be able to present draft laws that take precedence over laws proposed by parliament.
- The document also mentions that the constitution “shall enter into force as of the date of the final announcement of the referendum result by the Independent High Authority for Elections,” with no mention of it needing to receive a majority of votes (or any votes at all) in the referendum.

The text of the constitution had a great impact on Tunisian public opinion and the political class with increased statements of boycott calls. In contrast, the powerful Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), which had said it would wait to see Saïed’s draft before deciding whether or not to support it, voiced concern over the document but decided it would not tell its more than one million members which way to vote.

Claimed reports of calls for demonstrations and sit-ins over the second half of July, preceding the referendum have a likely goal to disrupt the process leading to a delay in the referendum date and a renegotiation of its contents.

Increasing threat

- *If manifestations in the lead-up to the referendum turn violent and result in an aggressive response of the security forces, this would likely encourage greater activism and delay the referendum.*



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- Following the probable adoption of the new constitution, delaying the parliamentary election scheduled for December 2022 would increase the threat of protests. These would likely be more disruptive and entail using force by security personnel and demonstrators.
- The further increase of the global food and energy prices would intensify the protest threat both before and after the referendum.

Decreasing threat

- Protests in the lead-up to the referendum remaining peaceful and not growing substantially in size would indicate a lower appetite by opponents to engage in protracted activism, including ahead of the parliamentary elections in December. The referendum and legislative election would likely proceed on schedule.

5. COVID-19 Update¹⁰

| 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 Deaths % Change | Overall Covid cases |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Libya * | 51 | 28 | + 82% | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 % | 502.189 |
| Tunisia ** | 11.955 | 6.687 | +79% | 991 | 49 | 26 | + 88% | 1.066.127 |

¹⁰ Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 07/07/2022 16:00GMT
As of 04/04/2022 The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) of Libya is publishing only weekly COVID-19 related statistics

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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 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. These documents may not be copied, forwarded or reproduced, manual, electronic, photographic to any other person or organization outside EU Institutions and EU Members States without further approval from the originator.