

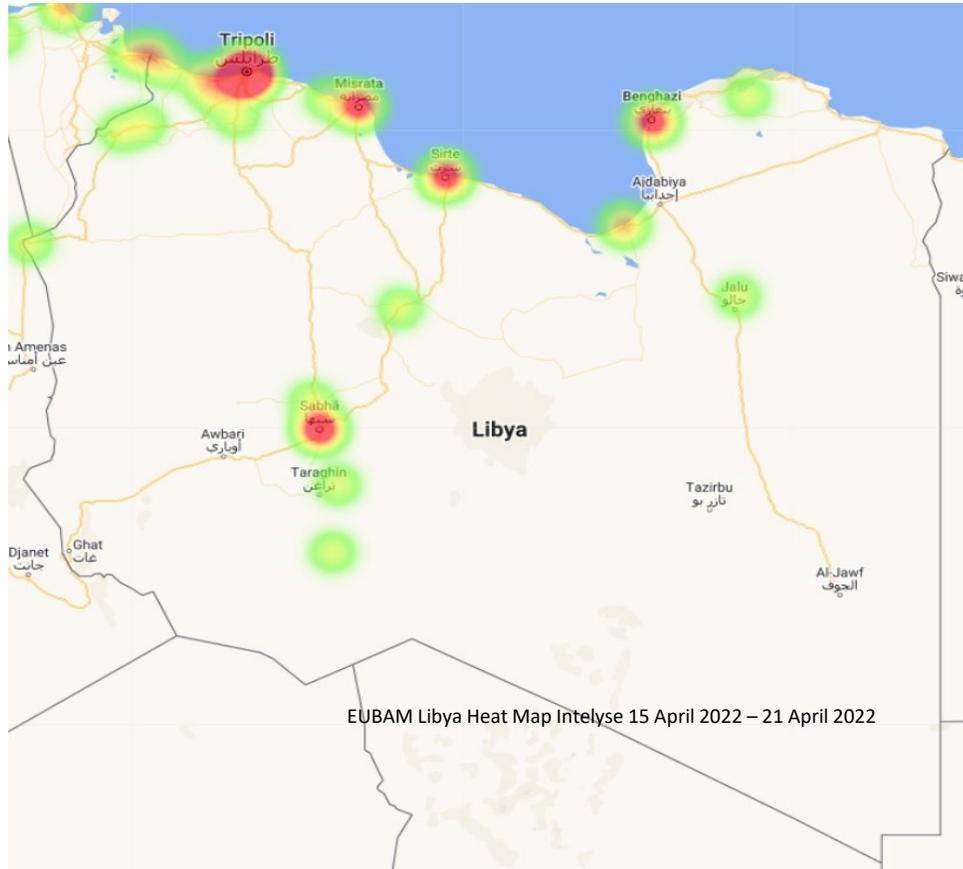
SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 15/04/2022 – 21/04/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW



1. Key developments

- Tripoli security situation remains volatile amid ongoing political impasse.
- Other security developments
  - 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) deepening rift between East and West representatives continues over re-emerging delay of staff salaries.
  - Oil and Gas sector blockade of production and export aggravates security situation and increases East – West tensions.
  - Daesh/ISIS claimed car bomb (VBIED) attack against LNA in Umm Al-Aranib
- Tunisia security update

2. Findings

2.1. Tripoli security situation remains volatile amid ongoing political impasse.

The past week saw little change in Tripoli security situation which remains volatile amid political impasse and increased cross GNU – GNS accusations for threatening the peace.



## SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

Military convoys from the western cities of Misurata, Zintan and Zawiya entered the capital Tripoli on 16 April, to back the government of GNU PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh amid from persisting reports of anticipated GNS PM Bashagha move to Tripoli

On strategic level GNU and the affiliated factions have directed their focus to land border crossing points with Tunisia, in response to the GNS PM Bashagha's presence in Tunisia and the related speculative reports of his anticipated movement from Tunisia into the Western Region of Libya.

The GNU PM Dbeibah's met Mayor Hajjam<sup>1</sup> to discuss security conditions within the municipality and Western Region, instructing the latter to establish security, and to "not allow any irresponsible movements aimed at destabilising. It might be connected to reports of a confrontation in the Takwit area between a Nalut-based faction, led by Haitam Abu Derbala and Zintan-based group to reach the Dehiba Wazin Border Crossing to receive GNS PM Fathi Bashagha.

GNU PM Dbeibah's met with the Tunisian Ambassador, to discuss the increase security at the border. The meeting was subjected to assumptions of being directly related to preventing GNS PM Bashagha's movements. The meeting also prompted commentators to entail that temporary stop of traffic through the Ras Ajdir Border Crossing (Libya/ Tunisia border, consequently restored) due to the malfunction of the passport control system, was actually allegedly done under GNU PM Dbeibah's orders.

The increased quarrelsome GNU – GNS – HoR - HCS rhetoric continued to determine the political field. The HoR Speaker, Aqilah Saleh, addressed in a letter the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, the Attorney General, the Governor of the Central Bank of Libya (CBL), the head of the Audit Bureau, the head of the Administrative Control Authority (ACA), and the legal representative of the Anti-Corruption Authority, calling on all institutions, departments, interests, public and private companies, as well as diplomatic missions, not to deal in any way with the GNU.

The GNS PM Fahti Bashagha, retains his course of efforts to increase international and national support for his government while insisting on immediate handover of power. Over the course of last week, Bashagha met in Tunisia with several military leaders from Misurata as well as a number of ministers serving under Dbeibeh's cabinet. The talks reportedly focused on securing a peaceful entrance to the capital. GNS PM Bashagha accused GNU for the recent military and economic escalation in the country, however he reiterated his stance to settle the political conflict without resorting to armed confrontation<sup>2</sup>. GNS spokesperson, Othman Abdul Jalil, said that the cabinet would hold its first meeting in the city of Sebha on Thursday, "before the government begins its work from its headquarters in the capital, Tripoli" reiterating the statements that GNS will not try to do so using force.

Several pro-GNU Misrata commanders confirmed communication channels were opened with the GNS to ensure the power struggle is solved politically and without the use of force. The statement closely followed backchannel negotiations between the pro-GNU Misrata commanders and Bashagha in Tunis.

### Significant events/incidents:

15-16 Apr - Constitution & Election Support Force mobilise in anticipation of GNS entry in Tripoli.

16 Apr - Militia weapon testing on Airport Rd. & Ivo Al-Hadba Al-Mashro'

16 Apr – Reports of alleged GNS PM Bashagha meeting with Sabratah Brigade commander Abdullah Al-Khattabi and Zintan Military Council head Fathi Al-Ghazil meeting as part of his preparations to enter Tripoli.

16 Apr – Reports of a convoy, affiliated with Military Intelligence Department, Lieutenant General Usama al-Juwaili reportedly attempted to secure Bashagha's entry via the Libya-Tunisia Dehiba-Wazin border crossing

16 Apr - Several military commanders from Misrata issued a statement confirming that they had opened channels of communication between the GNU and the GNS to prevent the danger of clashes in Tripoli and the western region.

<sup>1</sup> Mayor Hajjam met with GNU Interior Minister, Major General Khaled Mazen on April 14, approx. two days before the incident at the Takwit CP. These developments indicate a strong support for the GNU within Nalut, amongst municipal and military/ security actors. Support may come with attached demands, including provision of training, equipment, and funding for Nalut-based factions.

<sup>2</sup> Media reference: <https://libyaupdate.com/bashagha-holds-dbeibeh-responsible-for-recent-escalation/>



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17 Apr - Nawasi Brigade call on security forces to remain impartial amid GNU/GNS rivalry.

### SDCD COMMENT

*Dynamics of loyalties and armed group alliances are likely to remain fluid over the next few weeks as the possibility of a GNS PM Bashagha attempt to enter into Tripoli continues to be a major factor for possible deterioration of the security environment across Libya's western region. It is apparent that the GNS is under increasing pressure to enter the capital, which raises the likelihood of military mobilisations and deployments within central Tripoli from pro-GNU factions to deter Bashagha. The reports alleging commander Bashir Al-Bugra (Tajoura-based Rihbat Al-Duro'o battalion, a.k.a. Bugra Brigade), pledged allegiance to the GNS and that commander Mohamed Bahroun (Al-Zawiya based Al-Far militia) has opened communication channels with Bashagha, reiterate the assessment of how fragile balance of alliances. Osama Juwaili's (commander of Zintan militia) position vis-à-vis the GNU/GNS power struggle remains ambiguous and undermines the GNU.*

*This week's developments indicate a strong support for the GNU within Nalut, amongst municipal and military/ security actors. Support may come with attached demands, including provision of training, equipment, and funding for Nalut-based factions.*

*Although not verified, it cannot be discarded that GNS PM Bashagha meetings in Tunisia have attracted the attention and allegedly prompted the Tunisian government to issue a warning to Bashagha not to "engage in any political activity from Tunisian territory and that he is welcome as a guest of Tunisia who came for tourism or treatment". If confirmed, it is also possible the latter reaction to be resulting from the talks between GNU PM Dbeibah and the Tunisian Ambassador to Libya, indicating that GNU has some support from Tunisia.*

*The likelihood of use of hybrid information campaigns is increasing, since both GNU and GNS are looking for a leverage to strengthen their positions and push their agendas. Although speculative reports are being swiftly denounced, it is apparent that those have significant impact over the public opinion and have potential to aggravate political and security atmospherics.*

*The stance of western armed factions has a determining role on the expected dynamics of the security environment in Tripolitania. It can be assessed that the Tripoli based armed groups have displayed a more peaceful stance this week by calling for "impartiality" and "de-escalation", appealing for political solutions of the crisis without military/security actors involvement, indicating a clear shift from the pugnacious rhetoric over the past few weeks.*

## 2.2. Other security developments

### 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) deepening rift between East and West representatives continues over re-emerging delay of staff salaries.

LNA representatives remained in the centre of this week's developments with series of pro-GNS & anti – GNU politically charged statements, accusing GNU of "tampering with Libya's resources", blaming the HoR, the International Community and the United Nations responsible for the GNU, implying GNU is to be blamed for the rising tensions in Libya.

In related development, Lieutenant-General Muhammad al-Haddad - Leader of western Libya military forces and one of the western representatives in 5+5 JMC asserted the raising threat of armed confrontation and claimed his readiness to engage all parties in effort to avoid conflict<sup>3</sup>.

Adding to the dynamics is the information that GNU has disbursed April salaries for armed personnel based in western Libya before end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr)<sup>4</sup>, while it withheld pay checks for Internal Security Agency (ISA) and LNA servicemen in the east and south, which triggered harsh reactions from LNA, HoR National Security and Defence Committee and triggered protests and demonstration in Benghazi.

<sup>3</sup> Media reference: <https://libyaupdate.com/leader-of-western-libya-military-forces-warns-against-imminent-war/>

<sup>4</sup> Media reference: <https://twitter.com/almasartvlibya/status/1516878380519632898>



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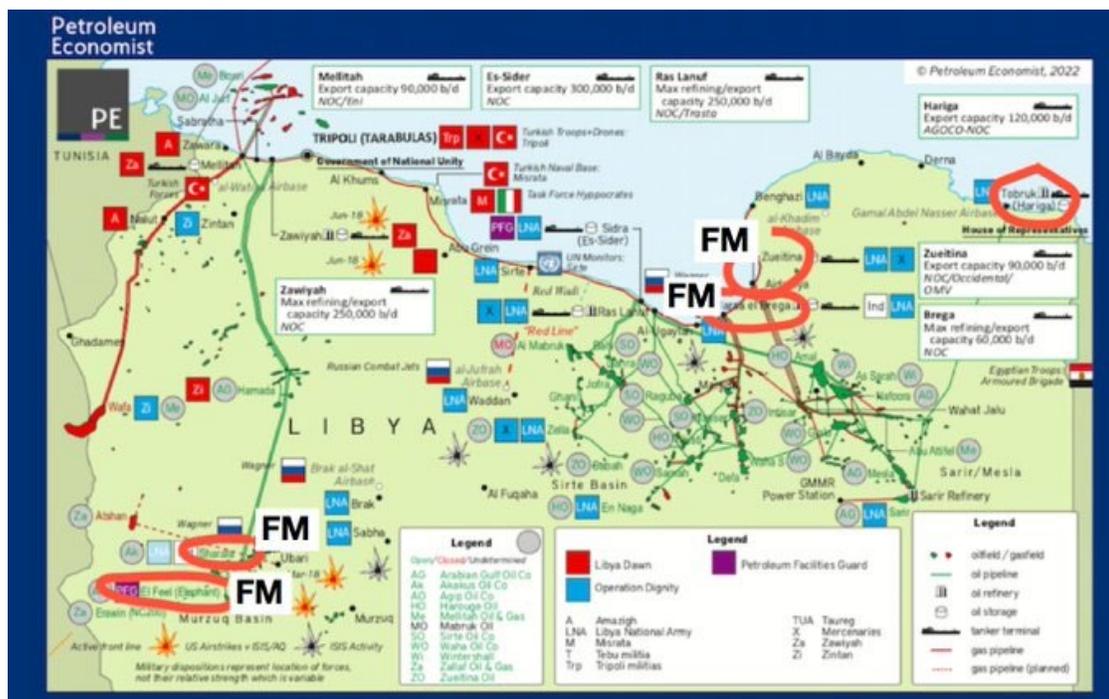
UN SASG also reacted by urging GNU to guarantee the payment of salaries to “all Libyan counterparts, regardless of political or organizational affiliation” and calling for resumption of the JMC work. The Presidential Council followed with affirmation of the continued support for efforts to unify the monetary institution and the need to continue regularly disbursing the salaries of public sector employees

**SDCD COMMENT**

*The 5+5 JMC East and West tensions have prominent impact over the political climate in Libya and the ongoing institutional crisis. LNA 5+5 JMC representatives’ statements cover all significant recent developments, including but not limited to GNU – GNS power impasse, blockade of oil productions, delay of ISA and LNA east and south personnel salaries, the Daesh/ISIS claimed VBIED attack in Umm Al-Aranib, with common denominator implying that GNU must be held responsible. In contrast the Western representatives of 5+5 JMC maintain dialogic and open for communication position, aimed at establishing communication between parties to deescalate tensions.*

**Oil and Gas sector blockade of production and export aggravates security situation and increases East – West tensions.**

Starting 17 Apr, following the entry of protestors into the Al-Feel field, the Libya National Oil Corporation (NOC) warned of cascade shutdown across its facilities at Zueitina, Al-Feel, Sharara, Mellitah terminal and Brega oil port terminal, declaring a force majeure and halting production. It is considered that the trigger of the Oil and Gas(O&G) blockade of production and export is the 14-16 April transfer of revenues from the NOC to the GNU Ministry of Finance accounts after the launch of the GNU National Plan for the Development of the Oil and Gas Sector (13 Apr). The transfer of funds to GNU account has aggravated the tensions, and triggered the reaction of GNS Planning and Finance Minister Hammad’s statements, followed by series of oil field and port closures. Allegations of allocation of funds from the GNU Ministry of Finance to armed factions i.e. the Misrata-based JOF, added arguments to the speculations that the GNU is attempting to gather support from Tripolitania based armed factions in order to maintain power.



Chronology of events:

14-16 Apr - NOC transferred 6 billion LYD, in two instalments, to the GNU Ministry of Finance account at the Central Bank of Libya (CBL).



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16 Apr - GNS Planning and Finance Minister Osama Hammad called on the Attorney General's Office, Administrative Control Authority (ACA), Audit Bureau, and National Anti-Corruption Authority (NACA) to stop the transfer of oil and gas revenues to the IGNU Ministry of Finance account, until a budget is adopted.

Between 16-17 Apr, several local groups announced the suspension of production and export operations across key terminals demanding a handover of power from GNU PM Abdel Hamid Dbeibah to GNS PM Fathi Bashagha, and the dismissal of NOC Chairman Mustafa Sanalla. The locals mobilized in Sharara Oil Field, Al-Feel Oil Field, Marsa Al-Hariga terminal, and Zueitina terminal.

17-19 Apr - the NOC declared "force majeure" on Zueitina, Al-Feel, Sharara, Mellitah terminal and Brega oil port terminal

18 Apr - GNU Ministry of Finance allocated of \$100 million Libyan Dinar (LYD) to Misrata-based Joint Operations Force (JOF).

19 Apr – in a statement quoted by media, GNU PM Dbeibah condemned the closure of oil fields and ports, instructing security and military<sup>5</sup> forces to take appropriate actions to resolve the crisis.

19 Apr -GNU Oil and Gas Minister Mohamed Oun forms committee to communicate with groups behind oil site closures to find quick solutions to resume oil production<sup>6</sup>.

### SDCD COMMENT

*The seemingly coordinated action of closure and seizure of production by number of fields/ port terminals across Libya, strengthens the assessment that the actors involved are not acting on their own accord, and is likely to be instigated by LNA General Command. It appears that local tribal actors are making statements calling for shutdowns giving the LNA General Command possibility to politically distance from the closures. Example of LNA involvement is the Sharara oil field closure was enforced by the 191st Infantry Battalion<sup>7</sup>, after local actors released a statement calling for the field's closure. The likely connection between tribal actor statements and LNA mil/ sec actor involvement, may indicate a possible prolonged shutdown scenario.*

*Politization of the shutdown and attempting to force compliance with demands to handover of power from the GNU to GNS. The GNU reactions point at Khalifa Haftar, House of Representatives' (HoR) Speaker Aqila Saleh and Prime Minister-designate Fathi Bashagha, are being responsible for the escalation and shutdown of oil production and blockade on oil exports.*

*GNU statements claim the parties behind the blockade are attempting to drag the country into conflict, prompting GNU's readiness to take steps against the closure and open communication with all involved parties to avoid confrontation.*

*The Petroleum Facilities Guard was also subjected to criticism by circles affiliated to GNU for being unable to control the Libyan oil facilities and allowed their closure. Nevertheless, Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) assigned on 20 Apr the final batch of 4k military numbers/IDs to its members across all branches and announced the promotion of personnel, indicating that their current alliance is probably with GNU.*

*The possibility of a GNU-sanctioned military operation to resume production across oil facilities in the southern region, is unlikely considering that GNU positions and influence in Fezzan are relatively weak.*

*Viewed from socio-economic aspect the seizure has impact on cooking gas production and closures on power generation<sup>8</sup>, which will imminently increase the likelihood of civil unrest amongst the Libyan population and further aggravate the security situation, not excluding escalation of armed conflict between rivalling factions.*

### Daesh/ISIS claimed car bomb (VBIED) attack against LNA in Umm Al-Aranib

On 19 April, the Daesh/ISIS faction Islamic State's Libya Province (ISLP) claimed a car bomb attack (vehicle borne improvised explosive device VBIED) in the evening of 18 April, at a camp for the Libyan National Army (LNA) in Umm al-

<sup>5</sup> statements were made in the presence of his chief of staff and Head of Petroleum Facilities Guard in Western Region.

<sup>6</sup> Media reference: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/aoun-forms-committee-communicate-parties-behind-closing-oil-sites>

<sup>7</sup> The 191st Infantry Battalion Tuareg-based force has connections to LNA General Command, announcing its support, alongside other Southern Region Tuareg-based actors, for the LNA in February 2019. Further, it appears that Colonel Qadhi has influence over security at Sharara oil field, including his October 2020 appointment as a security leader at the field

<sup>8</sup> For example, the Zueitina terminal closure is expected to have a knock-on effect on cooking gas supply and electricity production at the North Benghazi power plant.



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Aranib, southern Fezzan. The group issued a communique claiming the attack to be part of their campaign to "Revenge Battle for the Two Shaykhs". The message claimed at least one LNA casualty and others were wounded.

Previously, during the 18 Apr, assailants with assumed tribal affiliation, attacked a TBZ CP in the Mansheiyah area, Sabha, resulting in the killing of two TBZ members.

Following the VBIED incident, on 19 Apr LNA claimed that at least two Daesh/ISIS members under Moataz Ahmed were killed during a security operation in the Qatrun area.

### **SDCD COMMENT**

*Although the first attack has not been attributed to Daesh, the reasons for the attack are assessed by observers and commentators to be triggered from the LNA extension into Sabha and Fezzan, attempting to establish control, and remove non-aligned/ unwanted actors from these areas. The extension has created grief animosity between LNA and local tribal actors, external forces, and extremist elements, who resist the LNA expansion into areas of their control/influence. VBIED attack appears to be a consequence of ongoing confrontation between the LNA and Daesh. LNA started counterterrorism operation targeting and aiming to remove Daesh presence within the Southern Region after the attacks in June 2021. The incident appears to be related to series of previous assaults specifically targeting of LNA/ TBZ forces, similar to Daesh/ISIS claimed attacks on 18 Jan 2022 at the Chinese Company Condos in Umm Al Aranib, 24 Jan 2022 hit-and-run attack in the area between Majdul and Qatrun; 26 Jan 2022 LNA TBZ Desert Patrol (LNA Southern Operations Force), together with LNA support forces Khalid Bin Walid Brigade and Umm Al-Araneb Martyrs Brigade clash with Daesh forces in the Asida/ Karadwedi Mountain area; 06 Feb 2022 Daesh alleged deployments at positions on the outskirts of Umm Al Aranib and 28 Feb 2022 LNA and Daesh armed clashes in the Asida/ Karadwedi Mountains.*

*Above incidents strengthened the assessment of increased likelihood of Daesh activity in the Southern Region. Argument supporting that is a leaked in media GNU Ministry of Interior (MoI) document, dated January 02, 2022, indicating Daesh presence and informing of planned attacks on "vital and important targets" in the Fezzan Region, with armed assaults and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The majority of the indicators suggest that the Southern Region remains the most likely location of terrorist attacks, however alleged reports from neighbouring countries (i.e. Algeria and Tunisia) claiming potential Daesh reorganisation and strengthening of capacity, including presence in the western coastal townships and cities of Tripolitania and in western Libya areas along Tunisian and Algerian borders, which if confirmed increases the threat levels of potential terrorist operations across Libya"*

### **2.3. Tunisia security update**

The political crisis and socio-economic difficulties determine the security atmospherics in Tunisia.

On 17 April, the President Kais Saied criticized what he described as the Ministry of Justice's lack of action to prosecute the MPs who attended the 30 March parliament session. On the same day, the public prosecutor launched a new investigation on the MPs. After the 30 March session, around 20 MPs were immediately summoned, but the hearings were postponed indefinitely because some of the MPs enjoy immunity as lawyers. The revival of the judicial processes will raise questions over president's apparent attempts to influence the judiciary, which may trigger reactions if MPs arrests resume in the coming days.

Opposition groups continued to challenge the government. The lack of political dialogue progress in the past months raises doubts whether the recent announcement will gain ground. The polarization among opposition groups remains a challenge in forming a strong and organized front against Saied's administration.

The Tunisian government is yet to deliver concrete plans for the promised national dialogue. Reports claimed that President Kais Saied plans to exclude critics and restrict the agenda to a certain list of issues. The UGTT, which has been one of the dialogue initiative's major advocates, rejected these plans. Contention over the conditions of the dialogue will cause further political infighting and possible electoral delays and as a result escalation of political tensions and increased likelihood of civil unrest.



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5. COVID-19 Update<sup>9</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 Deaths % Change	Overall Covid cases
Libya *	<b>28</b>	96	<b>-71%</b>	4	0	10	<b>- 100 %</b>	501.862
Tunisia **	<b>864</b>	900	<b>- 4%</b>	72	24	57	<b>- 58%</b>	1.039.532

\* Last updated data 10/04/2022

\*\* Last updated data 19/04/2022

<sup>9</sup> Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 17/03/2022 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.*