

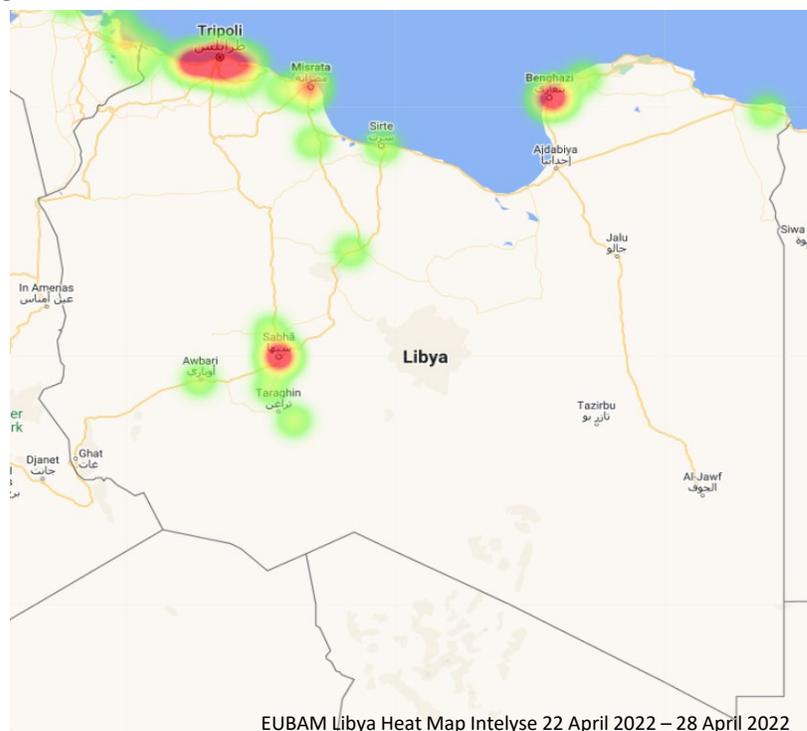
SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 21/04/2022 – 28/04/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW



1. Key developments

- Tripoli security situation unchanged and relatively stable.
- Other security developments
 - Kinetic engagements between Libyan National Army (LNA) and suspected Daesh/ISIS affiliated groups in Fezzan
- Tunisia security update

2. Findings

2.1. Tripoli security situation unchanged and relatively stable.

Tripoli's security environment remains relatively unchanged and stable. Inter-militia tensions remain high between pro-GNU and pro-GNS, however armed factions in the broader western region were prompted by rivalry over control of territories and illicit activities. Random use of firearms and indiscriminate/celebratory shooting were recorded during the period 22-28 Apr, believed to be related to celebratory shootings after football match between Al Ahli and Al Ijtihad in the late evening of 21 and during the night of 22 Apr, and with the return to Tripoli of Abdel Hakim Belhaj¹. Separated conflicting reports indicate alleged weapon testing from Hamza Camp or skirmishes between the SSA and pro-GNU 301 Battalion, which were disproved later.

Significant events/incidents:

¹ Head of the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)



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21 Apr – return of Abdelhakim Belhaj former Influential leader Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) who was received by relatives, friends, under the protection of Presidential Guard (PG) commander Ayoub Abu Rass.

22 Apr - alleged arrest/ detainment of GNS Interior Minister, Issam Abu Zariba, carried out by Abu Zayyan security force Youth in the Abu Zayyan area, Gharyan.

22-23 Apr – Armed clashes in the Shurafa area, Central Zawiyah between suspected Qasab and Fadel Al-Zarrouk armed groups².

25 Apr – alleged kidnapping and subsequent release of Abdul Nasser al-Dawi, brother of Warshefana based 55th Infantry Brigade Commander, Muammar al-Dawi. The kidnapping triggered armed actor mobilisation in Zawiyah and Warshefana, and temporary closure of the Western Coastal Road.

Other aspect of the security atmospherics in the capital is the recorded raising trend of criminality, specifically the theft of parked vehicles cases, picking at three vehicle thefts on 20 Apr and 23 Apr.

SDCD COMMENTS:

The return of Belhaj will likely shape the dynamics of loyalties and armed group alliances³. Abdelhakim Belhaj has great influence over the armed factions in Tripoli prior his exile in 2014. In his first interviews in the press Belhaj, who is also the leader of Al-Watan Party, asserted that he is open to dealing with all sides in Libya⁴, enforcing the likelihood of him taking an active position of security and political landscape in Libya, with a possible role in the developments related to the current GNU-GNS political impasse.

Reports allege that alongside Abdelhakim Belhaj, Shaaban Hadiya⁵ also returned to Libya. In separate reporting it was indicated that Belhaj had arrived at his residence accompanied by LIFG members, relatives, and Presidential Guard (PG) commander Ayoub Abu Rass. The presence of closely aligned with the Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) and Ghneiwa militia commander of Presidential Guards Ayou Abu Rass, was interpreted by commentators as indicator of indirect SSA support for Abdelhakim Belhaj.

It is worth noting that on 26 Apr, the Attorney General have revoked the issued in 2019 arrest warrant for Belhaj⁶, adding to the controversy of his return which has potential to smear the GNU's public image whilst increasing the potential for further divisions between armed groups in the capital.

The return of Belhaj was used by pro LNA sources to claim continued presence of hard-line Islamist factions in Tripoli. The latter imply of alliance between GNU PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah's with LIFG⁷ and controversial cleric Sadiq Al-Gharyani to oppose the GNS's alliance with Mohamed Sawan - founding leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Libya, who supports the GNS and Fathi Bashagha.

22-23 Apr armed clashes were claimed to be related to the suspected targeted killing of a Qasab armed group member and cause the withdrawal of infrastructure service provides from Zawiyah, and damage to i.a. civilian homes, and oil tanks. Follow up comments on social networks implied the assessment that the tensions between the groups is likely results from underlying armed actor competition dynamic, including control/ influence over illicit activity, funding, personnel, and territory.

The 25-26 Apr alleged kidnapping of Abdul Nasser al-Dawi⁸ was initially reported to be conducted by the Zawiyah based CID/1st Support Division aka Al-Far (the Rat) Militia and that the victim had been taken to the Division's Headquarters (HQ) in Zawiyah. The incident was reportedly followed by armed fractions mobilisation in areas of Zawiyah and Warshefana by the Head of the SSA / Commander of the General Administration of Central Support (GACS) Abu Salim Branch, Abdelghani al-Kikli; closure of the Western Coastal Road by forces affiliated to the 55th Infantry Brigade; announcement of state of

² Fadel Al-Zarrouk armed groups is reportedly affiliated with Zawiyah Criminal Investigation Department (CID)/ 1st Support Division, under Captain Muhammad Al-Bahron aka Al-Far)

³ Media reference: <https://libyaupdate.com/belhajs-return-coordinated-with-dbeibah-sources-say/>

⁴ Media reference: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/turkiye-playing-positive-role-in-libya-libyan-party-leader/2573460>

⁵ aka Abu Obeida Al-Zawi - pro-LIFG commander from Al-Zawiya who headed the Revolutionaries Ops Room during the Libyan Revolution

⁶ Media reference: <https://twitter.com/TheLibyaUpdate/status/1519052323905024001>

⁷ Considered by LNA to be a terrorist group which has had ties to Al-Qaeda

⁸ Media reference <https://twitter.com/LibyaReview/status/1518723647569117184>



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emergency (Al-Nafeer) in Abu Salim, by Hassan Abu Zariba Deputy Head of Stability Support Agency (SSA), mobilising forces in Zawiyah. Following reported mediation by the Awlad Saqr Tribe, Abdul Nasser al-Dawi was released, and the Coastal Road reopened. Follow up reports claimed that the perpetrators were not aligned with the 1st Support Division, but rather with the Warshefana based Senussi family, following the 55th Infantry Brigade detainment of Bashir and Salah Al-Senussi. 55th Infantry Brigade Commander Dawi is said to have received messages following his brother's kidnapping, demanding the release of Bashir and Salah Al-Senussi.

Neither the 1st Support Division nor the Senussi being behind the alleged kidnapping versions have been corroborated so far. However, the closure of the Western Coastal Road, and the reported mobilisation of forces in Zawiyah would suggest a link to actors, representative, supported, or present in Zawiyah.

The incident can be precepted as single occurrence and not tied to the current power struggle, however the accusations that the pro-GNU Al-Far militia from Al-Zawiya was behind the incident had triggered tensions. The development highlighted the potential single incidents has to escalate into a broader armed clash.

The lack of counter actions from the GNU Ministry of Interior (Moi) and the Chief of Staffs to armed actor behaviour and violence is raising security concerns. Similar incidents are used by the GNS in the ongoing GNS-IGNU power struggle to point out the limitations of the IGNU vis-a-vis armed actors. These incidents led to both civilian and armed actor casualties, infrastructure damage, and to intermittent closure of the Western Coastal Road, which serves as the connection route between the Ras Ajdir Border Crossing and Tripoli which may have detrimental effect on EUBAM Libya emergency relocation capacities.

The assessment of criminal cases in Tripoli lead to the conclusion that the vehicle theft incidents can be considered as opportunistic, peaking as consequence of reduced number of law enforcement operations during Ramadan and do not warrant a change of crime threat indicators.

2.2. Other security developments

Kinetic engagements between Libyan National Army (LNA) and suspected Daesh/ISIS affiliated groups in Fezzan

The 18 Apr, Umm Al Aranib Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attack on LNA check point was followed by propaganda statements from Daesh/ISIS's spokesman Abu-Omar al-Muhajir, urging its members to take revenge for the killings of Hashimi al-Qurashi and Abu Hamza al-Qurashi.

The subsequent armed engagements during the night of 25-26 Apr between LNA units and suspected Daesh/ISIS militants were claimed to be linked to the counter-terrorism operations conducted in the aftermath and as part of LNA's security operations⁹. LNA Moral Guidance Department Director, Major General Khaled Al-Mahjoub made media statement speculative and partially conflicting, reports regarding the occurrences during the night of 25-26 Apr. According to the statement, LNA Tariq Bin Ziyad (TBZ) 10th Company patrol unit found and approached a parked vehicle in the area between Ghadduwah and Taraghin, upon which the vehicle attempted to escape, and was pursued by the LNA joint force, of TBZ 10th Brigade, 73rd Brigade and 128th Brigade units. Further information suggests that LNA TBZ and Daesh affiliated group clashed in Ghadduwah area and as a result at least two Daesh affiliated persons were injured. The LNA identified groups vehicle, in which they found, and mobile phones, and materials and tech for production of remote controlled improvised explosive devices¹⁰.

LNA conducted further pursuit of Daesh affiliated forces towards the Tarbu Mountain, south-east of Ghadduwah and the Murzuq-Wadi Otaba area, followed by LNA 129th Brigade mobilisation to secure Murzuq. to secure the Murzuq area.

SDCD COMMENT

The LNA is apparently in state of alert, following the April 18 Daesh claimed VBIED attack in Umm Al Aranib. Local opposition armed actors, tribal forces, terrorist and extremist elements have demonstrated capabilities to pose security threats for the LNA. There is a potential for development of a scenario in which above mentioned groups may engage into hostile acts

⁹ targeting and aiming to remove Daesh/ISIS presence within the Southern Region

¹⁰ Media reference: <https://twitter.com/TheLibyaUpdate/status/1518723774383898627>; <https://twitter.com/TheLibyaUpdate/status/1518723051294232584>; <https://twitter.com/AhmedElmadni/status/1519041757685628933>



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against LNA, which follow broader military/ security, or even political objectives. Overall, the combination of lacking deterrence military/law enforcement resources to mitigate security threats in Fezzan, the porous borders and conflicting tribal/armed groups positions, are likely to increase threats on the LNA in Fezzan, including by terrorist and extremist elements.

On separate note, it appears that there is an ongoing Daesh/ISIS information/propaganda campaign¹¹ aiming at popularising their cause portraying that the organisation is operational and capable.

In potentially related announcement, the LNA Spokesperson for the Commander-in-Chief of the LNA, Major General Ahmed Al-Mismari made parallel between the Daesh/ISIS claimed attacks claiming possible links to armed factions concentrated in western Libya which leadership controls the institutions, implying GNU PM Dbeibah being personally liable for potential escalation of armed conflict in Libya. The statement of Gen Mismari further involves the LNA in the current GNS-GNU political impasse making accusations for GNU supporting militias and mercenaries on Libyan territory “threatens peace, security, and the outcomes of political dialogue” and being detrimental to the LNA combat against terrorism.

2.3. Tunisia security update

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

Tunisian law enforcement conducted series of counterterrorist operations in which arrested five suspected terrorists in Souse, Ben Gardane, Nabeul, Kairouan and Ben Arous.

SDCD COMMENT

Disagreements over the conditions of the dialogue, changes if the electoral system and constitutional referendum will cause further political infighting and possible electoral delays and as a result escalation of political tensions and increased likelihood of civil unrest.

Fighting terrorism, remains one of the few causes uniting the Tunisia's divided political landscape after the ISIS attacks in 2014-2016, bearing the understanding that effective combat against terrorism is key to secure foreign investments and support the tourism sector.

5. COVID-19 Update¹²

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 *	42	28	+50%	6	1	0	+100 %	501,904
Tunisia **	661	864	-23%	55	17	24	-29%	1,040,193

* Last updated data 25/04/2022

** Last updated data 26/04/2022

¹¹ Media reference: <https://libyareview.com/23287/isis-release-images-of-militants-in-south-libya/>; <https://twitter.com/Oded121351/status/1518957279940390913>

¹² 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.