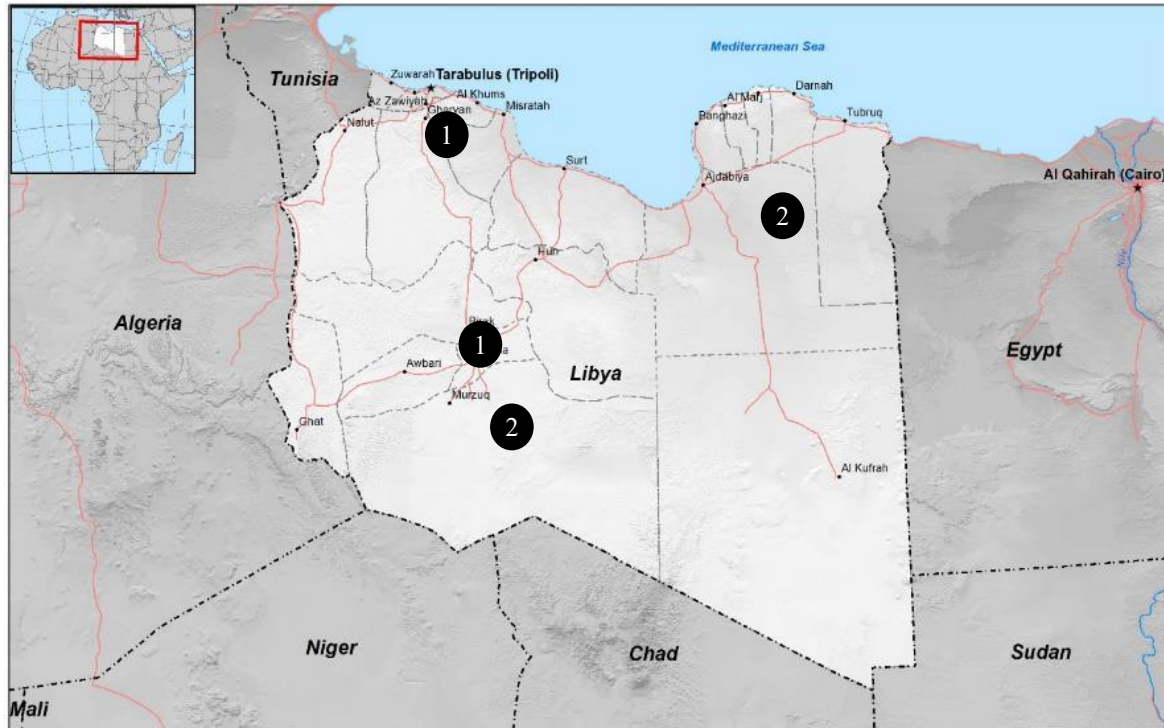


EU LIAISON AND PLANNING CELL LIBYA

Weekly Report 24 – 30 MAR 2022

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1	24-30 March	GNU readjustment of security structures in the Western area
2	24-30 March	Human security and social climate at risk
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SUMMARY

In the midst of GNS apparently positive international negotiations, GNU has deployed loyal units within and around the Greater Tripoli Area (GTA), allegedly in order to prevent any access by force and further GNS attempts to get into the Capital.

Although no further escalation has been reported, security remains precarious.

Under such confrontation at distance, the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict is indirectly affecting the economic and living condition of Libyan's citizens. Despite numerous measures tentatively undertaken by the government, the social situation remains tense with a risk to negatively affect the environment, especially before the Ramadan.

1 CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 GNU readjustment of security structures in the Western area

During the reporting time, GNU has deployed loyal units within and around the Greater Tripoli Area (GTA), in order to prevent any access by force and further GNS attempts to get into the capital. Following, the main events of interest:

- on 25 March, unconfirmed sources report that a force affiliated with Zintan's Osama Juwaili (pro-GNU) was handed over Zintan Airport after the withdrawal of local airport security officers, with the possible aim to prevent the probable arrival of GNS PM Bashagha;
- on 26 March, Western Coast Military Region Cdr, Major General (MG) Salah Al-Namroush met Al-Jafara Security Directorate Director, BG Abdul Nasser Al-Taif discussing the organisation and unification of security operations, including Mobile Checkpoints (VCPs) along the Western Coast Military Region;
- on 27 March, MG Salah Al-Namroush created a committee headed by General Abdel Wafi Al Maqrhi to receive the equipment of the National Mobile Force (**NMF**) militia. MG Salah Al-Namroush ordered the handover of all its military hardware, assets, camps, and weapons within a week to Col Jaber Muhammad Khamis Sada;
- on 28 March, the Minister of Interior (GNU) Khalid Mazen replaced the Commander of the Surman Security Directorate, BG Abdullah Al-Arif with BG Saleh Arhouma. BG Abdullah Al-Arif met with Minister of the Interior (GNS) Esam Bouzriba in Benghazi on March 24, along with Deputy head of Zawiyah Security Directorate, Khalid al Qazati;
- on the same day, local sources leaked a document, allegedly from GNU PM Abdul Hamid Dbeibah office, to all military and intelligence agencies in order to arrest individuals engaging with the GNS, and to refer them to Military Prosecution;
- on the same day, GNU assigns Osama Taleesh as Head of the Facilities and Establishments Security Department. Local sources reported, that the individual holds close ties with the Head of the SSA/ Abu Salim Central Security, Abdelghani al-Kikli;
- on 29 March, Prime Minister (GNU) Abdulhamid Dbeibah met with MG Namroush and Col Mahmoud Bin Rajab, which are both from Zawiyah and deploy forces along the North-West coastline and Tripoli;
- on the same day, COS of the Libyan Army, LTG Mohammed Al-Haddad conducted an inspection to the administration of the West Coast Military Region, together with MG Al-Fituri Ghribel and MG Mustafa Yahya of the 5+5 JMC, apparently to discuss with the region's Cdr, MG Al-Namroush, training plans and the training needs.

Comment

During the past months, several meetings have taken place concerning the security in the Western Coastal Region and Al-Jafara district. Changes in the leadership were discussed and plans were announced to improve the operational structures and possibly launch joint operations.

The Western Coast Military Region ensures the control of an unstable area for the presence of armed groups related to human smuggling and criminal activities, a part the presence of Al-Watiya Air Base under Turkish control, providing a physical connection with Tunisia through Ras Agedir border crossing.

The **NMF** has close ties with Zintan and is based in Janzur region but its relationship with other militias, except Janzour's Knights, is reportedly controversial. The NMF is commanded by Musa Mahmoud and falls under the umbrella of the Stability Support Agency (SSA).

Assessment

It's highly likely that the GNU military leadership is trying to reorganise within and around the GTA, in the meanwhile of an apparent compromise of GNU major external regional supporter (Turkey) to defuse tension with the GNS and not escalate. The Western Coastal Region and Al-Jafara district represent an important area around Tripoli because of the commercial and strategic activities stretching from Tripoli towards the Tunisian border. Increasing the control in there, it also helps to prevent any penetration from the area of Zintan.

The change in the leadership of the militias and the redeployment of the units are very likely associated with the trust in their leaders as well as with the willingness of those same militias to compromise with opposing interests.

Security remains precarious because of the potential for conflict and escalation. For this reason it can be inferred that main militia leaders are likely positioning themselves to face possible shifts of power.

1.2 Human security and social climate at risk

Compared to the previous period, armed group's mobilizations and tensions decreased around the GTA. In the Southern and Eastern part of Libya, no major significant security event occurred as well.

However, the Ramadan period that should start from 2nd April till beginning of May represents a critical time from an economic and social perspective.,

Families are challenged by the increase of the prices of basic products while the economy and income of sources is slowing down at the same time.

Social demonstration

Major social demonstration are linked with the poor living conditions due to low salaries and payment delays:

- on 25 March, in Tripoli, number of civilians registered for the marriage grant, and those who were affected by the delay in the grant's payment, protested and addressed GNU in demand for the payment of the grants before Ramadan. The protestors threatened to continue the protest until their demands are met;
- on 27 March, in Tripoli, number of doctors and medical assistants staged a peaceful demonstration near the PM office and demanded for the activation of Resolution No. 885, which states salary increase for medical teams;
- on 27 March, in Derna, Residents of the Korean buildings staged a demonstration in which they demanded the return of their apartments occupied by LNA militias since they entered the city in 2018.

Basic food scarcity

The Ukraine/Russia crisis forced the Libyan authorities to take measures in order to mitigate

the effect of a potential scarcity of basic products:

- on 23 March, Libya has imposed a total ban on the export of all types of fish, effective immediately. It also announced the plan to create a three-month strategic stock of basic foods. The announcements came following a meeting headed by Economy Minister Mohamed Hwej to discuss the mechanism of regulating the local market. It also announced the plan to create a three-month strategic stock of basic foods and to control their prices;
- on 23 March, the Internal Security Agency (ISA) has addressed foodstuff provisions and market price conditions, claiming that suppliers have taken advantage of the “international crisis” by limiting supplies, and increasing demand and prices. The ISA has subsequently launched an extensive campaign, targeting wholesale markets, arrested perpetrators, and conducting ongoing investigations.

Criminality

As a consequence, Libyan's citizen poor living conditions have directly impacted on the increase in criminality:

- on 24 March, in Sabratha, security forces arrested a criminal involved in irregular migration and human trafficking operations;
- on 26 March, in Mizda, the 444th Fighting Bde reportedly carried out a search and arrest operation in Nasmah area Southeast of Mizda. Number of suspects were arrested over accusation of being involved in fuel smuggling activities;
- on 26 March, in Musaid, a town bordering with Egypt, the security forces in coordination with the CID raided a criminal hideout and arrested several human traffickers and irregular migrants;
- on 28 March, in Harawah, East of Sirte, unknown individuals stole a total of 2640 meters of electrical cables resulting in electrical outages in the area (recurrent events).

Human rights

The UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) has declared its concern by the crackdown on civil society in Libya, where it is very common to practice arbitrary arrest and the use of social media campaign against Human right defenders, humanitarian workers and other civil society actors.

In the last four months, 7 young men have been arbitrarily arrested and detained by Internal Security Agency (ISA – see **Annex**) in Tripoli. The ISA has since posted videos of the men who confessed to be “atheist, areligious, secular and feminist”, and to propagate atheism and contempt for religion through social media.

On March 13, the Tanweer Movement, an NGO focused to express the difference and diversity of Libyan society, of identity, religion and gender, was dissolved and its board members left Libya over fears about their safety, as 5 of its members were reportedly arrested for unknown reasons. A video “confession” from one member was posted online by ISA. In the confession, he claimed that the movement promoted “infidelity, atheism and atheist feminism”.

Comment

Libya is a very conservative Islamic state, but from a Human Security perspective, the protection of citizens' fundamental freedoms remains critical during such a transitory period towards a national rejuvenated identity.

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict is contributing to further disrupt living condition of Libyan's citizens. Despite numerous measures taken by the government to support and boost the household purchasing power, the social situation is tense, especially before the Ramadan.

Assessment

Citizens' fundamental freedoms are at risk.

Adding to physical insecurity, the increase of living cost, food scarcity and high rates of unemployment have the potential to trigger demonstrations and riots as soon as a new government would be formally established.

At the same time, it is likely that criminality activities will continue and increase as the struggle for money and power remains as a vital interest of the "dark economy".

2 OTHER SIGNIFICANT SECURITY RELATED EVENTS

- a. On March 24, HoR Speaker Aqilah Saleh met with Eastern Region Security Directors and was briefed on the Eastern Region security conditions. He praised the efforts of IGNU Mol Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Faraj Aqim. Two days later GNS Interior Minister Issam Abu Zariba met with Faraj Aqim in Benghazi.
- b. On the same day, a graduation ceremony was held at the Training Centre for LNA 128th Bde. The ceremony was attended by Saddam Haftar and Hassan Al-Zedma, 128th Bde Cdr. Zedma's brother, named Salem, is the Deputy Prime Minister (GNS) for the South.
- c. On March 25, the Tuareg Movement warned that they would escalate their protests at Sharara oilfield giving the GNU a week to implement their grievances related with national ID numbers. If this deadline were not to be met, the movement stated that they would completely shut off the oilfield.
- d. **Terrorist Threat**
 - On 26 March, at a critical time for the Tunisian internal politics, the Tunisian National Guard Spokesman Houssam Eddine Jabali claimed that Tunisian authorities arrested 150 terrorist elements over the past six months, allegedly planning to join Daesh-affiliated groups. This includes "foreign militants" planning to join "**Jond Kilafha**", a group linked to Daesh in Libya and in the mountains on the Tunisian-Algerian border, as well as planning attacks targeting neighbouring countries;
 - meanwhile, localised sources warned of increased Daesh presence in Bani Waled, including transfer of personnel from other Western Region municipalities (Misrata, Zliten, Msallata, Sabratha, and Gharyan);
 - on the same day 10 prisoners allegedly members of the Shura Council and imprisoned on terrorist charges, escaped from Tripoli Province, Abu Saleem Prison.
- e. On 26 March, the member of the 5+5 JMC, MG Mustafa Yahya (West) stated in declaration that the JMC has yet to coordinate the withdrawal of the Wagner Group FF / mercenaries from Libya. However, reports continue to claim that these FF/mercenaries have being withdrawn with the intent of fighting in Ukraine. One report claimed that Wagner Group has consolidated in Jufra and Brak Shati Airbases while aligned Syrian mercenaries are being sent to training camps near Rostov in Russia and Belarus.

- f. On March 27, Prime Minister (GNS) Fathi Bashagha stated during a televised interview on an Arabic channel that:
- he postponed entering Tripoli to avoid a direct confrontation;
 - he would be in Tripoli within a few days and would establish his HQ in the capital, reiterating the mantra of “**by force of law, not by force of arms**”;
 - there is no dispute between Bashagha and Haftar, at the moment. They met in Benghazi because Libya should be one;
 - Turkish military forces did not interfere in Libya, but when asked to intervene, it responded with an agreement. On the other hand, Wagner Group and other foreign fighters that, having a different status, must be considered illegal foreign forces and are to leave the country;
 - a small number of armed groups had been bribed with money, but their position has now changed and they will not be supportive of the GNU.

Assessment: Taking in consideration latest events and diplomatic efforts of GNS and HoR (Egypt, Turkey, Arab Gulf countries), it is likely GNS is receiving international and domestic support not to escalate and peacefully transition. Even Turkey appears to politically support Bashaga’s Government so a shift from GNU to GNS is plausible in the short to medium term (three months), while security forces loyal to TUR could help influencing the tempo and preserving original interests.

- g. On the same day, local sources reported an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) flying over Abu Salim and Al-Hadba Al-Mashro' at night, followed by heavy gunfire as Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) units attempted to shoot it down.
- h. On the same day, localised sources informed of the closure of the Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency Office in Al Assah, (35KM west of Riqdalin). The closure included suspension of personnel salaries and closure of checkpoints.
- i. On 28 March, reports indicate the LNA 106th Bde led by Khaled Haftar sent military reinforcements from Benghazi to Al-Marj to arrest the LNA’s 115th Infantry Bn Cdr, Abdel Fateh Al-Nathouri, son of LNA COS, LTG Abdel Razzak Al-Nathouri. In response, the Marj Security Directorate declared a state of emergency and mobilised all forces, underscoring the monolithic dimension of the LNA.

Comment: there are conflicting reports over the nature of the tensions. Some reports suggest Abdel Fateh Al-Nathouri recently made contact with GNU PM Abdel Hamid Dbeibah, while other reports suggest Abdel Fattah accused Haftar’s sons of being behind the assassination of LNA Special Forces (Al-Saiqa) Commander Mahmoud Al-Werfalli (Mar 2021). In response, the Marj Security Directorate declared a state of emergency and mobilised all forces. The 106th Brigade is considered the largest single group within the LNA in terms of manpower, military equipment, and territorial control.

- j. On the same day, GNS Deputy Prime Minister for the Eastern Region, Ali Al-Qatrani issued a statement, instructing public and private sector leadership, not to implement any decisions by the GNU, nor to ratify complete or partial changes to legal and administrative positions of institutions and bodies and to communicate administrative and financial transactions with GNS Ministries. He warned that violations would be met with legal measures.

- k. On the same day, GNS Deputy Prime Minister for the Eastern Region, Ali Al-Qatrani, and GNS Interior Minister, Issam Abu Zariba inaugurated GNS Mol Eastern Region HQ in Benghazi, in the presence of former GNU Mol Undersecretary for Technical Affairs, Faraj Aqim.
- l. On 29 March, the UN Security Working Group for Libya held session co-chaired by the UK in Tunis. The meeting was the first in 2022, after two failed attempts in January and February.

During the Working Group, it was noted:

- that JMC 5+5 activity on the Action Plan for removal of FF/mercenaries and on establishing the Ceasefire Monitoring Component (CMC) had effectively been paused, in part due to the recurring non-payment of salaries to eastern forces, that still persists;
 - the impasse of the programme of work identified by the GNU and LNA Chief of Staffs, aimed at unifying Libyan Armed Forces as well to pave the way for the beginning of a consistent and reliable SSR and DDR processes;
 - the more sophisticated nature of current armed groups in competition with any possibility to forge a National Army and develop SSR;
 - Sirte, as a more neutral ground for future security related meetings;
 - the criticality of the economic track, also in relation to how money are allocated in the security realm.
- m. On the same day, LNA General Command has established the 54th Saiqa Battalion under command of Major Fayez al-Maliki. The Battalion is stationed at the Benghazi Special Forces Camp.
 - n. On 29 March, French Special Envoy to Libya Paul Soler had talks with GNS PM Fathi Bashagha in which it was underlined the need to preserve Libya's unity, hold simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections, and **fully** implement the 2020 ceasefire agreement through the 5+5 JMC.
 - o. On 30 March, it has been reported that armed clashes broke out close to the Libyan GNU HQ in Tripoli when the government was having a meeting. An armed group allegedly from Misrata has claimed a payment debt for its participation in a parade. The PM Dabaibah has minimized the event, declaring later through social networks that nothing serious had happened.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The political stalemate between the two governments persists.

However, Bashagha efforts to edge international consensus have apparently progressed, while consolidating GNS presence in the East and South of Libya. On the other side, GNU PM continuous populist activity reaffirms that he will only hand over his governmental responsibilities to an elected executive.

On the pure security domain, forces on the ground appear unwilling to resume heavy clashes, pending the payment of salaries and the impasse of financial expenditures.

In this respect, to note the relevant role of Turkey, key regional political and security supporter of PM Dbeibah and GNU, to possibly create the premises for a smooth and peaceful hand over – take over.

Despite such mediating activity, a controversial attitude is demonstrated on the ground, where the military entities are readjusting their posture in Tripolitania, mainly within the Western Coast Military Region, *de facto* able to influence the tempo of that political commitment. In the Eastern part of Libya some internal frictions within LNA have apparently marred its monolithic appearance.

In such a contest, and an electoral process long to be processed, some critical landmarks of the CFA agreement have regressed.

In addition, human security and social climate are constantly at risk, heavily affected by the possible oil blockade, spike in staple food and energy prices and claims of unpaid salaries.




All of this is complicated by the geopolitical situation because of the conflict in Ukraine that has increased both the likelihood and insidiousness of such factors of instability for Europe, where that same actor, to say Turkey, is playing a critical mediating role.

Finally, the terrorism menace, in a cross border uncertain relationship with Tunisian political stalemate, and the persisting illegal migration exploitation, do not allow the Libyans, the bordering countries and EU institutions to lower the guard.

Sign-off for release: Brig. Gen. STELLA, V.

Disclaimer: This report is based on security events and reports from multiple open sources, whose accuracy may not always be verified. Therefore, the information and conclusions expressed are subject to change without notice.

Annex - Internal Security Agency (ISA) information sheet

Leadership Source 1 Source 2	<div data-bbox="347 190 730 224">Brigadier General Lotfi Al-Hariri</div> <div data-bbox="826 190 999 434">  </div> <div data-bbox="335 472 1292 607"> <p>General Al-Hariri has previously been the deputy Head of the ISA, when Major General Rashid Al-Rajbani was in charge. Al-Hariri took over command in 2021 after Al-Rajbani's resignation (and consequent kidnapping by alleged Dbeibah - affiliated militias at Tripoli Mitiga Airport).</p> </div> <div data-bbox="335 647 1292 712"> <p>Al-Hariri has also been kidnapped once (see EULPC Weekly Report 18-24 February 2022).</p> </div>
Aliases	<p>In Arabic: الداخلي جهاز</p> <p>The ISA is also translated as '<i>Internal Security Apparatus</i>'. The Ghadaffi era-name '<i>Internal Security Service</i>' is also sometimes used.</p>
Affiliation	<div data-bbox="335 846 523 1216">   </div> <div data-bbox="539 891 762 925">Presidential Council</div> <div data-bbox="539 1120 810 1153">Internal Security Agency</div> <div data-bbox="890 831 1241 936"> <p>The Internal Security Agency reports directly to the Presidential Council.</p> </div>
Profile Source	<p>The Internal Security Agency is one of the regular civil institutions affiliated to the components of the Libyan state and aims to preserve the entity of the state, protect its political, social and economic security, and combat terrorism, destructive phenomena, dangers and threats that target its religious and social values and undermine its standing or its international relations.</p>
Legal basis Source 1 Source 2 (DCAF)	<p>Cabinet Decree no. 325 of 2013, establishing the General Investigation Service, provides some of the legal basis for the ISA.</p> <p>The ISA already existed before the renewal of its mandate in 2013. In fact, Decree no. 417 of 1987 of the General People's Committee established the Internal Security Agency. This decree was amended by decree no. 787 of 1990 on amending some provisions of the previous establishing decree.</p>
Background Source 1 (DCAF) Source 2 (ICC) Source 3	<p>The organizational predecessor of the ISA is the '<i>Internal Security Service</i>' (ISS). The ISS was operational in the Ghadaffi era. The ISS has been dissolved in 2011 by the National Transitional Council. The legal foundation for the (former) ISS is Decree no. 417/1987 and decree no. 787/1990 of the General People's Committee. The commander of this (former) ISS was Lieutenant General Al-Tohamy Mohamed Khaled. The International Criminal Court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant in 2013 for his involvement in crimes against humanity in 2011. He is reported to have died in Cairo (Egypt) in Feb. 2021.</p>
Headquarters Source	<p>Tripoli, V5MQ+PH9، طرابلس، Libië</p>

Personnel Source (EUBAM)	The size and internal structure of the ISA is (still) unknown. Personnel from the (former) ISS has been deployed to work at the ISA according to Decree 325/2013.
Contact Source	E-mail: info@isa.gov.ly , report@isa.gov.ly Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ISA00 Phone: +218 21-3608101 Twitter: @isa_gov_ly. Telegram: https://t.me/isa_gov_ly (created 11-03-2022)
Selection of recent events Source , and previous EULPC Weekly Reports. <i>This selection is meant to reflect the diverse operations of the ISA, not to be considered limitative of all events involving the ISA.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 23-03-2022: meeting between Commander of ISA and the Minister of Economy and company owners about controlling food prices and to provide cost-of-living allowances for persons; – 23-03-2022: arrest of a man because he was supposed to be an atheist and arrest of a man who was suspected of killing a lot of people; – 21-03-2022: arrest of a person accused of being the owner of a factory (established in 2013), producing boats for the purpose of illegal migration; – 05-03-2022: arrest of members of a terrorist cell allegedly planning to carry out operations against LNA military or security actors within Derna (Eastern Libya); – no specific date, March 2022: arrest of at least 7 men that were exercising their right to freedom of expression; arrest of a man suspected of having had sexual intercourse with a child; – no specific date, February 22: arrest of a network of persons specialized in counterfeiting COVID-19 virus vaccination cards; – 22-02-2022: arrest of a man involved in the 2013 robbery of the Sirte Central Bank; – 14-10-2021: arrest of a Tunisian man involved in the 2015 terror attack on the Corinthia hotel. The man confessed (on tape) to be also involved in cross-border smuggling of IS fighters between Tunisia and Libya; – 08-02-2021: arrest of a suspect of the Janaury 2021 bombing of the Naval Academy in Janzour.
Assessment	The ISA and its predecessors have been involved in internal security issues since its foundation in 1987. Although the name, its leadership and organizational pertinence have changed, the focus of its work remains on maintaining law and order from an Islamic religious perspective. The ISA is an independent body that directly reports to the Presidential Council. The relation between the ISA and other agencies, such as the General Investigation Service (that has the same legal basis) and the Ministry of Interior is unclear. The religion-based approach to law enforcement translates into security operations to prevent and fight economic crimes (oil, controlling food prices, combating corruption), arrests of critiques and persons with non-traditional Islamic beliefs (journalists, homosexuals, feminists, atheists), combating terrorism and securing state interests (such as elections). It seems that the ISA grows more active in the current timeframe. This might be attributed to tension in the critical (oil) infrastructure, food shortages (with a view on the upcoming Ramadan period) and close ties to GNU PM Dbeibah, who is holding on to power in these political uncertain times. A frequently observed modus operandi of the ISA is to videotape confessions of suspects, photograph ID's and personal objects from suspects and post this on their social media channels. The ISA has received criticism from (amongst others) Amnesty International for doing so.