

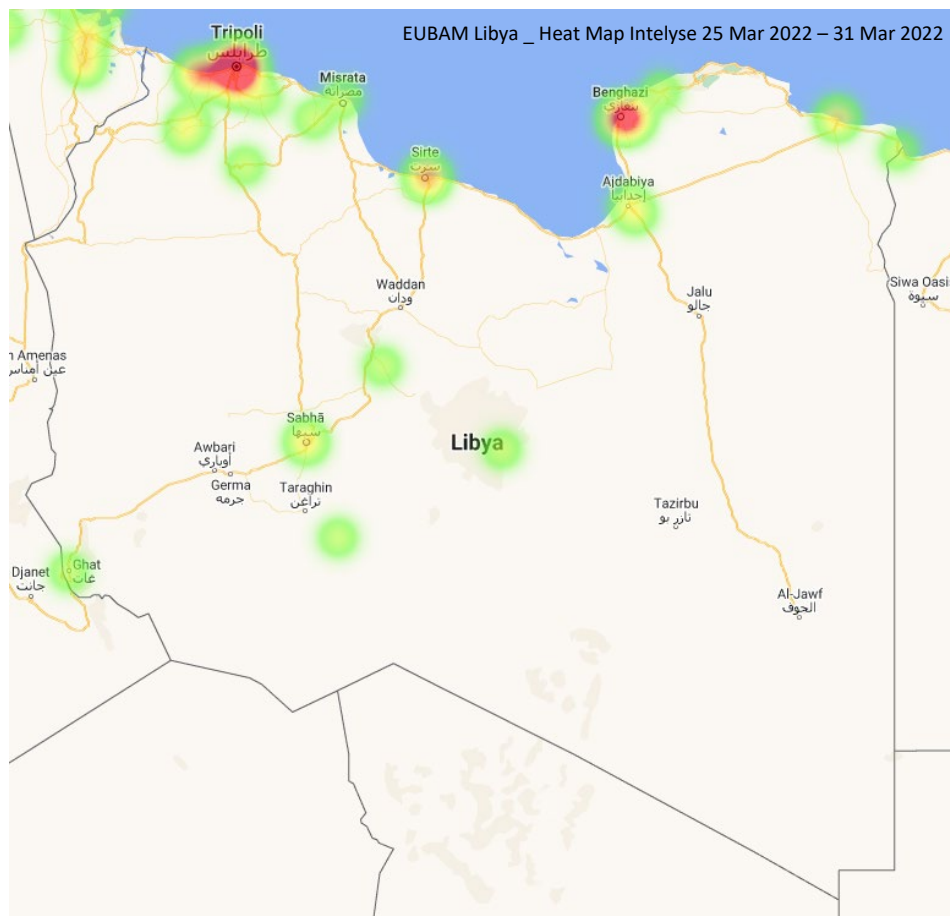
SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

5Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia Period: 25/03/2022 – 31/03/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW

1. Key developments



- **Tensed security situation within the GNU - GNS power impasse:**
 - Armed factions' deployments, static and mobile security operations in Tripoli & Tripolitania
 - GNS PM designee Fahti Bashagha statements aimed at asserting pressure on GNU to transfer power.
- **Other security developments**
 - Increased tensions between LNA 105 and 116 Brigades in Marj.
 - New video statements issued Islamic State
- **Tunisia security update**

2. Findings

2.1. Tensed security situation within the GNU - GNS power impasse

Armed factions deployments, static and mobile operations in Tripoli & Tripolitania

The reporting period saw decreased military activity in and around Tripoli. The conducted operations were mainly focused to law enforcement response to the recent uptick in vehicle thefts and isolated gunfire cases in the capital.



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The Ministry of Defence (MoD) 444 Fighting Brigade has deployed across Salah Eddien, Al-Sedra, Khallat Al-Furjan, Wadi Al-Rabei, Al-Khallatat, Wildlife Garden, Al-Ramla, Qaser Bin Ghashir, Espiaa, Sog Al-Khmies Emsihel, Sidi Al-Sayeh and Al-Heera and continue its patrols south Tripoli and areas south of Bani Walid as it expands its area of operations (AO) to deter LNA-affiliated forces from venturing northwards.

Western Coast Military Region Commander Major General Salah Al-Namroush orders the formation of a committee to oversee the handover of the “National Mobile Force” to Colonel “Jaber Muhammad Khamis Sada”.

On 30 March a significant movement with follow-up deployments in various areas of downtown Tripoli occurred:

- Constitution and Election Support Force mobilised forces outside the Prime Minister's Office
- Stabilisation Support Agency (SSA) established a checkpoint at the Tuesday Mall Roundabout under the Tuesday Mall Bridge
- Nawasi Brigade established several checkpoints along Omar Al-Moukhtar Street in Tripoli's downtown area.

SDCD COMMENT

Available information renders unlikely major armed clashes should Bashagha's GNS supported by allied armed factions attempt to enter the capital. Current backchannel negotiations with international powerbrokers reduce the likelihood the tensions to escalate. If Bashagha succeeds to secure Turkey's acceptance, it is reasonable to foresee that the GNU would accept to handover power peacefully. LNA can become possible spoiler should it's forces engage in deployments in the central and southern regions, which can hypothetically lead to breakdown of negotiations, triggering a Turkish military response to deter the LNA. Commentators express opinions that Bashagha is likely to attempt an entry into Tripoli either before or during the month of Ramadan (starting 02 April).

LNA will likely refrain from direct confrontation with GNU allied factions closer to the capital and will continue to exploit its control over oil and gas infrastructure in the south and east to assert blockade for financial renewal and pressure the GNU.

Several meetings have taken place during the past months, involving military/ security, and political leaderships in the Western Coastal Region, and Jafara District, as well as announced plans to change operational structures, launch joint operations, and a wider reaching military campaign by the Western Coast Military Region. It is possible that the attempted changes are linked to the GNS-IGNU power struggle, which may create and develop divisions, as well leading to defections, and hostilities. Areas under increased focus include Ajaylat, Sabratha, Sorman, Zawiyah, Warshefana, and the connecting Coastal Road.

Developments in Jafara District and the Western Coastal Region, including recent separate meetings between Jafara Security Director Taif, Western Military Region Commander, Lieutenant-General Usama al-Juweili, and Western Coast Military Region Commander, Major General Salah Al-Namroush, reflect possibly developing divisions along IGNU-GNS lines. The replacement of Sorman Security Director Mahjobi after his meeting in Benghazi is further indicative of the later.

Al-Namroush, who served as Defence Minister under the GNA, has long been absent from the public scene during the GNU's tenure. His reappearance and nomination as West Coast Military Region Commander led to speculation Turkey is pushing its interests to consolidate military posture in the west. Dbeibah's communication with Western Region military commanders indicates an intent to prioritise Al-Zawiya and areas west Tripoli to limit the GNS reach.

Together with GNS and possible GNU instructions not to engage with opposition political bodies, the current period could see security agencies and their branches switch sides, or ignore instructions/ decisions, which would likely impact security environments, including hostilities over territory and influence. Although prompted by media and social networks as protest reaction due to delay of payments, the Constitution and Election Support Force mobilisation and deployment outside the Prime Minister's Office in the evening on 30 Mar, interpreted cumulatively with the respective same day & time deployments of other SSA and Nawasi Brigade and the 444

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Fighting Brigade the last two weeks, there it is likely those to be underlying possible preparation indicators, including for potential GNS-linked movement in the Western Region.

Concerns over food supply will continue to dominate the socio-economic aspects of security environment ahead of Ramadan amid rising prices across the local market and speculation by traders and distributors.

GNS PM designee Fahti Bashagha statements aimed at asserting pressure on GNU to transfer power.

GNS Prime Minister Bashagha gave a televised interview on the Arabic Al-Hadath channel, during which the following points were assessed as significant:

- Foreign relations: the statement had balanced policy approach, emphasising references to Bashagha's perceived legitimacy of Turkey's intervention during the Libyan National Army (LNA) Tripoli offensive in 2019-2020; It stressed on Egypt and Saudi Arabia importance for Libya, and their shared security; strong relationship with Qatar; and GNS efforts to develop relationships with Gulf countries.
- Relations at the national level: emphasis were put on the importance of reconciliation between various factions, including former Colonel Gaddafi Regime supporters, the "February 17 Revolution" armed groups/militias, and the LNA. In regards to of GNU-GNS stalemate, PM designee Bashagha stated that he doubles down on the need to replace the GNU; as for the Interim Presidency Council (IPC) to remain as it is until the HoR and HCS reach an agreement on a constitutional base for elections; asserting that HCS Chairman, Khaled al-Mishri was subject to "great pressure and threats", and that the GNS enjoys support the HCS.
- GNS Prime Minister Bashagha stated that the GNS had formed a group to communicate with armed groups, and that those who had been opposed to the GNS, and allegedly "bribed" by the IGNU, had now changed their positions due to their "*discovery of the truth*" about the conduct of the GNU.
- GNS Prime Minister Bashagha claimed that IGNU Prime Minister Dbeibah clinging onto power will weaken due to diminishing financial funds as the payments and budgeted revenues will be stopped.
- PM designee confirmed his opposition to changes in the leadership of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), the Central Bank of Libya (CBL), and the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), due to their importance with regards to stability.

SDCD COMMENT

Indicators suggest that GNS PM Bashagha has conducted, partially productive outreach and had meetings and rapprochement with formerly opposing external actors i.e. Egypt, and Turkey. Representatives of both Egypt and Turkey met interlocutors in Libya's West (by Egypt) and East (by Turkey), as well as GNS Prime Minister Bashagha, HoR Speaker, Aqilah Saleh, and LNA Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, which can be interpreted as strategies that are amplifying shifting relations, and attempt to present GNS Prime Minister Bashagha's statesmanship skills. A key point with regards to the external relations, is the defence of Turkey's intervention in Libya by effectively underlining its legitimacy based on the Government of National Accord (GNA)-Turkey 2019 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The timing of GNS Prime Minister Bashagha's statements regarding GNS external relations, is likely intentional towards developing international consensus on supporting the GNS executive power take-over in Tripoli.

At the national level, GNS Prime Minister Bashagha addresses three key points, including (a) finances, which he claims will be cut off from the GNU. This is quite a bold claim, and indicates that he may be aware of developments within, as well as supporting efforts to alter, the relationship between the GNU and the CBL. The NOC had communicated its dissatisfaction with the GNU in terms of the oil sector, which seemed to verify reports that the NOC would keep oil revenues in its Libyan Foreign Bank (LFB) accounts.

With regards to Prime Minister Bashagha the claim that the GNS had formed a group to communicate with potentially opposing armed groups, would fall in line with previous Arab media reports of GNS-armed group meetings in Tunis, Tunisia. Furthermore, armed groups who had now allegedly changed positions regarding GNU could corroborate the assumptions, that financial allocations from the "Emergency Fund" received by armed groups would not necessarily guarantee their loyalty in the medium to long term, and may be only a short-term tactic to financially exploit the GNU's current situation. The reconciliation between the major components can be highlighted as necessary precursor for the creation of military/security, and political sustainable stability. GNS actions and support for military unification, and the actions to take over

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governance, in the East and the South, are indicators of it taking reconciliation seriously, and producing results towards this effect.

GNS Prime Minister Bashagha reiterated in the interview that he expects to enter Tripoli “without a single drop of blood” within a few days, basing the success of this venture on communication with all parties. Although a peaceful GNS executive power take-over in Tripoli is possible, a medium to long term consolidation, carrying out the promise of holding elections, and not extending the GNS’s term, will likely face significant challenges. The creation of a balance of power amongst military/ security and armed group actors, their integration in State (financial) structures, and the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR), is unlikely to be “all-inclusive”, and may cause hostilities, and targeted armed engagements.

The timing of GNS Prime Minister Bashagha’s statements on 27 March regarding GNS external relations, and political activity and developments involving Cairo, and Doha, is likely intentional towards developing international consensus on supporting the GNS executive power take-over in Tripoli. Official confirmation of GNS Deputy Prime Minister Zadmā’s dialogue with Turkish Ambassador Yılmaz is yet to be recorded, but would prove significant in terms of a key external actor in Libya engaging with, and thus confirming the GNS’s governance role in the Southern Region. It is also reasonable to assume that Bashagha will use all means to isolate Dbeibah also politically and economically.

2.2. Other security developments

Increased tensions between LNA 105 and 116 Brigades in Marj.

Speculative reports in media and social networks claim of intra-LNA tensions, allegedly involving LNA Chief of the General Staff, Abdul Razek Al-Nadori son Lieutenant-Colonel Abdel-Fattah Al-Nadori, and Colonel Saddam Haftar, for two consecutive days on 27 and 28 March and corresponding deployment of 106th Brigade reinforcements to the Chinese Buildings (said to consist of 50 vehicles in addition to the 35 stationed at the Chinese Buildings). Contradictory reports ranged from denial of clashes in Al Marj to suggesting a declared a state of emergency by Marj Security Directorate declared a state of emergency and mobilised all forces, followed by unconfirmed successful mediation intervention, and resolution of the situation. Other reports claimed Abdel Fateh Al-Nathouri recently contacted 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).

SDCD COMMENT

Of note, the 106th Brigade is considered the largest single group within the LNA in terms of manpower, military equipment, and territorial control. It is also assessed as most influential one being under the command of Colonel Saddam Haftar, son of LNA commander Khalifa Haftar.

The event is unusual considering the usual levels of coherence between different LNA units and the fact that LNA Chief of the General Staff, Abdul Razek Al-Nadori is assessed as the closest affiliate to Khalifa Haftar trusted to replace him as commander in chief during the Haftar’s presidential elections run in Dec 2021. Lack of elaboration on the incident discards the supposition of potentially developing intra-LNA rift in relations, hence increases the likelihood the news to be fabricated.

New video statements issued Islamic State

The Islamic State's official media have released a 4-minute video of the Wilayah Libya on Thursday¹, showing their fighters pledge allegiance to their new leader, identified as Abu Thabet al-Muhajir - IS Libya Province commander, revealing that he is a foreigner. The video shows about 19 fighters and at least 10 vehicles, roaming around an unspecified area, likely in southern Libya.

SDCD COMMENTS

The new IS caliph Abu Thabet al-Muhajir was announced by the group on 10 Mar after the death of his predecessor Al-Qurayshi who died in a US raid in Feb 2022. In retrospect, on 13 Mar, a small group of militants based in Libya published a pledge of allegiance to the new caliph. The latest video footage was published by IS itself, unlike previous content published via IS-affiliated news agencies such as A'maq. The latest video corroborates assessments of the group’s degraded

¹ Media reference: <https://twitter.com/G88Daniele/status/1509230805922549765>

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capabilities in Libya. The *modus operandi* of the group continues to be considered to consist of small groups of militants operating across remote desert areas, while potential affiliated individuals and cells in urban areas are presumably tasked with supportive logistical duties i.e. supply and travel/transfer of fighters, provide shelter /safe haven.

2.3. Tunisia security update

On Monday, the Speaker of the Assembly of the People's Representatives (APR), Rached Ghannouchi, announced that the parliament will hold two plenary sessions this week. A first session, set for 30 March, aimed to discuss revoking the exceptional measures adopted by President Kais Saied on 25 July. The second session was scheduled for 2 April to examine the socioeconomic conditions of Tunisia. Most political parties who have a seat in the APR expressed interest to join the sessions.

President Saied denounced the plan, reiterating all decisions made by the parliament will be null and void under the 25 July presidential decree. Saied suspended the current APR as a part of his 25 July measures and scheduled the next parliamentary elections for December 2022, leaving Tunisia without a parliament for a year.

After action taken by Rached Ghannouchi and a number of deputies, who held a videoconference meeting of the APR office on 30 March, when 116 parliamentary representatives have voted in favour of the cancellation of the exceptional measures, the Tunisian President Kais Saied announced on Wednesday March 30 the dissolution of Parliament², warning that military and civilian armed forces will be used respond to those who would oppose by the use of violence³. Also, on 30 March, Minister of Justice sent a correspondence to the Attorney General at the Court of Appeal of Tunis, to initiate legal proceedings against deputies, with accusations of forming a criminal group and actions against the internal security of the State⁴.

SDCD COMMENTS

Follow-up reactions from main political parties, leading politicians and civil organisations were polarised⁵. Commentators assess that the political crisis will continue and that its economic and financial repercussions will worsen, holding authorities in place, in particular President Kais Saied, responsible for the deterioration of the situation of the country and the citizens, including potential increase of political protests and demonstrations and civil unrest.

From legal point of view, what has been decided cannot be applied, since the activation was not sanctioned by the president, nevertheless, there is a political significance to the action by the parliamentary majority, since it challenges the president nor being sole institution making decisions. The session will also have external repercussions with the notion that Parliament is still in place despite the suspension.

5. COVID-19 Update⁶

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	361	670	- 46%	51	24	28	- 14 %	501,705
Tunisia	1,539	3,449	- 55%	128	114	116	- 2%	1,035,884

² Media reference: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/publication-dans-le-jort-du-decret-presidentiel-sur-la-dissolution-de-larp/>

³ Media reference: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-kais-saied-met-en-garde-video-tout-recours-a-la-violence-sera-confronte-aux-forces-armees-militaires-et-civiles/>

⁴ Media reference: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/des-deputes-poursuivis-en-justice-pour-atteinte-a-la-surete-de-letat/>

⁵ Media references: <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/parlement-derniere-minute-116-deputes-votent-en-faveur-de-lannulation-des-mesures-exceptionnelles/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/dissolution-du-parlement-abir-moussi-felicite-les-destouriens/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-imed-ben-halima-audio-larticle-72-ne-prevoit-pas-la-dissolution-du-parlement/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-ahmed-nejib-chebbi-audio-ce-que-les-deputes-ont-fait-aujourdhui-est-historique-meme-sils-sont-arretes-ils-seront-honores-et-graves-dans-lhistoire/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-jaouher-ben-mbarek-la-decision-de-dissoudre-le-parlement-est-inconstitutionnelle-et-dangereuse/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/dissolution-du-parlement-la-position-officielle-de-lugtt-sera-bientot-annoncee/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/ennahdha-et-le-pdl-sont-deux-formationen-de-fascistes-selon-le-parti-des-travailleurs/>; <https://www.tunisienumerique.com/ennahdha-veut-reproduire-le-scenario-libyen-en-tunisie-selon-haykel-mekki/>

⁶ Data from WorldOMeter. Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> [online]. Last updated: 17/03/2022 16:00GMT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

AQ - Al-Qaeda
AQIM - Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BCP – Border Crossing Point
BDB – Benghazi Defense Brigade / Saraya Defend Benghazi (SDB) (Al Qaeda-aligned – AAS and RSCB associated/umbrella group) CBL – Central Bank of Libya
CNI – Critical National Infrastructure
DACOCT - Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism
DDR - Disarmament, demobilising and reintegration
DPF – Derna Protection Force (an amalgamation of all militias in Derna, including the MSCD)
GECOL – General Electricity Company of Libya
GNA – Government of National Accord (UN-backed)
GNC – General National Congress
IGNU – Interim Government of National Unity (2021)
GTUC - Greater Tripoli Union Council (Tripoli militias and others, established in June 2020) HCS - High Council of State
HNEC – High National Elections Commission
HoR – House of Representatives (Tobruk-based)
IDF – Indirect Fire (mortars/rockets)
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons
IED - Improvised Explosive Device
IOC - International Oil Company
5+5 JMC – 5+5 Joint Military Commission
IS/DAESH - Islamic State
LNA – Libyan National Army
LNG – Libyan National Guard
LPA – Libyan Political Agreement (2015)
LPDF - Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (2020)
LROR - Libyan Revolutionary Operations Room
MoD - Ministry of Defense
MoF - Ministry of Finance
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education
MoI - Ministry of Interior
MoJ - Ministry of Justice
MoO - Ministry of Oil
MoT - Ministry of Transportation
MSCD – Mujahideen Shura Council of Derna (AQ aligned)
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation (aid/charity)
NOC – National Oil Company
NSG – National Salvation Government (GNC)
PC – Presidency Council (IGNU)
PFG- Petroleum Facilities Guard
RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
RSCB - Revolutionary Shura Council of Benghazi
RTA - Road Traffic Accident
SAF - Small Arms Fire
SDF – Rada Deterrence Force/ Special Deterrence Force/ Rada
SSA - Stability Support Agency
Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
TPF – Tripoli Protection Force (TRB, Nawasi 8 Force, Bab Tajoura Brigade and Ghneiwa umbrella group, established in December 2018)
UNSMIL – United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance

Disclaimer: This report is based in security incidents reports from multiple sources, including international partners and open sources, whose accuracy may not always be fully verified. It cannot be assumed that all security incidents in Libya and Tunisia were reported to and/or tracked 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.