**Subject:** Libya -- Flash – Tensions rising in the capital amid political stand-off between Government of National Unity (GNU/PM Dbeiba) and new Government of National Stability (GNS/PM Bashaga) in Tripoli

**FACTS**

* Tensions in and around the Libyan capital have risen tangibly over the last 24 hours. However, there were no confirmed reports of clashes between militia, nor are there currently any indications of imminent armed confrontations.
* Within a week after Fathi Bashaga’s GNS received the confidence of the Libyan parliament (HoR), GNS PM Bashaga on Tuesday vowed in an hour-long video message to take over Tripoli “by the force of law” within 48 hours. As a result, both sides are since last night preparing for such move to materialize.
* Forces loyal to the GNU have established sand barriers on major roads outside the capital, and other forces loyal to GNS PM Bashaga have reportedly attempted to enter the city from various locations.
* Over the last 24 hours, there has been a myriad of conflicting news on the GNS PM’s whereabouts and his possible avenues of entry into the capital, as well as on GNU cabinet and other resignations, including pertinent denials, in addition to militia movements in and around Tripoli involving limited clashes.
* Such news also included a potential resignation by FM Mangoush, who reportedly soon after confirmed her continuation of service in the GNU.
* MoI Mazen, reportedly having not been seen in office for days, appeared today alongside GNU PM Debeiba, touring Tripoli neighborhoods.
* The GNU and GNS with their respective supporters and backers remain engaged in fierce disinformation battles. Both sides appear adamant to display confidence that they shall prevail in the current stand-off.
* UNSMIL and SASG Williams have gone public with their concerns  about militia movements in the area, and called on all actors to exercise restraint and refrain from provocative actions. The US embassy followed suit with a similar message.
* Already yesterday, the Arab League AL voiced its support for the UN’s efforts to find a solution to the Libyan crisis,  including elections.
* The Libyan people’s aspirations continue to be largely ignored by the ongoing public discourse between GNU/GNS supporters, in which the GNS is mainly focussing on the GNU’s failure as a government, especially in mismanaging the country’s riches. The GNU is largely trying to display business as usual, and its supporters are focussing their rhetoric on the GNS’s suspicious nature, as being supported by General Haftar and external forces.

**COMMENTS/ASSESSMENT**

* Supporters of the conflicting parties are continuously vying for the support of the international community. This underlines the fact that, despite the abundant public criticism of the UN’s role in Libya’s political process, both sides remain in much need for such support in order to bolster their legitimacy.
* As of now, UN SASG has successfully maintained her neutrality in the current face-off, and stands ready for possible mediation in GNU/GNS negotiations. Despite being a champion for the Libyan people’s desire for elections, she continues to struggle with her popularity among political actors, and in the public debate.
* The factor of the Libyan people’s potential decisive public positioning regarding the GNU/GNS stand-off remains an important wild card. However, most actors currently do not expect the people to come out in support for one side or the other.
* Although GNS supporters are adamant to suggest  that the GNS PM will be able to negotiate the desired Tripoli takeover soon, the relevant parameters on the ground haven’t visible changed over the last days.
* All observers continue to agree that there is no appetite among Misratan or Tripolitanian forces to engage in fighting against each other. Needless to say that such fighting would also entail too big of a political risk for GNS PM Bashaga, and further reduce his government’s potential legitimacy among Tripolitanian constituencies.
* However, with the current rise in tensions, there is a real risk of armed clashes,  mostly owing to miscalculations of strength or potential vulnerabilities of the other side. Should that happen, immediate efforts by local actors to contain the situation can be expected.  Needless to say that there is no guarantee that such efforts would also be necessarily successful.
* Given all the firepower on the  ground in a high state of alert, the situations could in certain local constellations get out of control and become unmanageable for political actors.

*Signed-off: José Antonio SABADELL, HoD*