

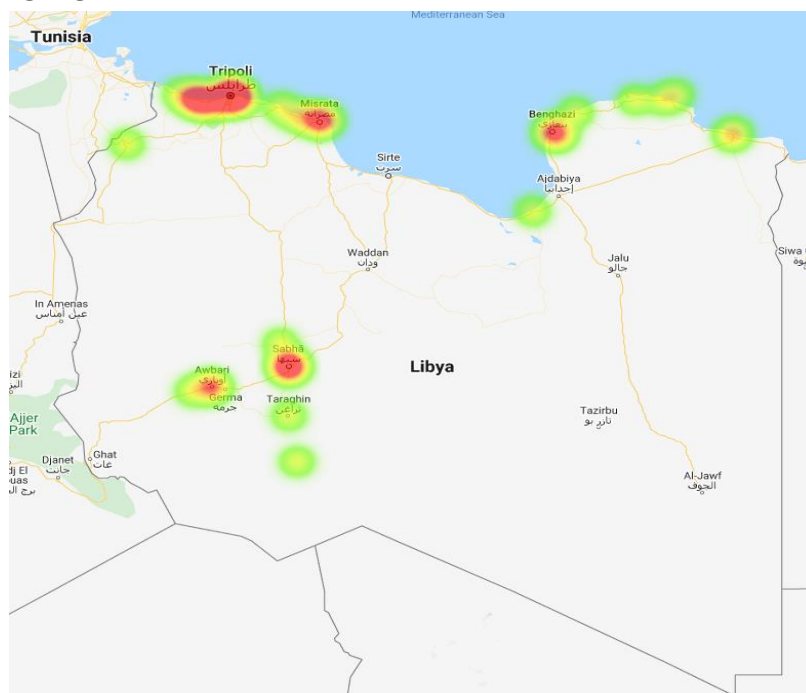
SECURITY AND DUTY OF CARE DEPARTMENT

5Security & Covid-19: WEEKLY SECURITY REPORT

Country: Libya & Tunisia

Period: 11/03/2022 – 17/03/2022

SECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW



EUBAM Libya _ Heat Map Intelyse 11 Mar 2022 – 17 Mar 2022

1. Key developments

- Volatile security situation within the GNU - GNS divide
- Other security developments
 - Instability on the Oil and Gas Sector
 - Daesh Propaganda
- Tunisia security update

2. Findings

2.1. Volatile security situation within the GNU - GNS divide

Security atmospherics across the capital saw a decline in armed groups mobilisations following the pro-Government of Stability (GNS) forces attempted entry in Tripoli that triggered armed groups/military actor tensions on both sides of the divide. Thus, after de-escalation, attention has returned to mediation by the international community, US, UNSMIL and Turkey, including renewed reports of a potential meeting between GNU PM Dadaiba and GNS PM Fathi Bashagha in Turkey. However, such meeting was not held and Prime Minister Dadaiba returned to Tripoli after only one day of attendance at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

However, the extent to which these negotiations will successfully result in a political solution is uncertain, as the respective sides in the current dialogue, represented by the GNU/ HCS on one side and the GNS/ HoR on the other, hold conflicting objectives and continue to reiterate opposing statements. For example, in remarks made to a media outlet on 14 Mar, GNS PM Fathi Bashagha repeated that his government will commence work from the capital in the coming days



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by peaceful means, stressing that there will be no parallel government in the country. Conversely, GNU PM Dadaiba reiterated his refusal to hand over power until elections are held in June.

Nonetheless, the current power struggle leaves the international powerbrokers in a delicate situation in taking an open stand of support; e.g. supporting the GNU is tantamount to rejecting the HoR's decisions, which can be construed as foreign interference and undermine key foreign policy interests in Libya.

Overall on the security stage, the week was mostly characterized by illegal migration security operations conducted on the Western Coastal areas, particularly in Sabratha and Zuwara, from where illegal migrants were either released or arrested.

- On 12 Mar, an RPG attack on a boat used by people smugglers in Sabratha Zawaga Coast on 12 Mar. allegedly conducted by the Security Directorate Support Force Western Region Branch. The targeted boat was allegedly operating under Ahmed al-Dabbashi also known as (aka) Al-Ammo.
- On 13 Mar, a raid conducted by Sabratha Security Directorate led to the arrest of 50 migrants.
- Similarly, on 15 Mar, reports indicated that 12 foreign nationals were released from an illegal detention on the outskirts of Zuwara by CID Western Border Region Investigation Agency. The area is known for its involvement in people smuggling and it's likely the foreign nationals were irregular migrants forcibly detained by a smuggling group.

Meanwhile, in the same coastal area of Al Zawiya, the occurrence of localised and low-impact clashes between armed groups, mostly criminal network orientated (fuel and illegal migration lucrative activities) erupts sporadically. On 13 Mar, skirmishes between Muhammad Al-Shawsh (Al-Rakho) and Abdelwahed Al-Kawach armed groups in Sabratha were likely motivated over smuggling.

In the same line, several static and mobile security operations were conducted within Tripoli's neighbourhoods by different security/military actors on law enforcement tasks. However, the high-level of criminal acts continue to characterise all three regions in Libya killings/retaliation attacks, arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, armed robberies, carjacking, thefts.

SDCD COMMENT

The security atmospherics in Tripoli continue to be dominated by the threat of Bashagha's commitment to govern from Tripoli. However, as he finds himself stuck in the eastern region due to GNU's domestic flight travel ban while the advance team sent to Tripoli on 10 Mar saw obstructed access and startling mobilisations from many armed groups, his allies in both western and eastern become increasingly impatient. The latest attempt indicates that GNS is currently lacking the necessary degree of support by on-the-ground mil/ sec and armed group actors in the Western Region.

Consequently, speculations over possible plans to enter Tripoli continue to emerge, supported by his statements of intent on entering the capital this week. For example, a rumoured low-profile move into Tripoli and its establishment (although temporarily) at the World Islamic Call Society HQ, controlled by the Zintan General Security Apparatus led by Abdullah Trabelsi. Of note, Trabelsi was among the Misrata and Tripoli armed factions that appeared in a video statement rejecting the appointment of the Bashagha-led government on 01 Mar.

Another single source reported the speculation on Bashagha's arrival via air into Zintan (possibly via Zintan Airport) before moving to the World Islamic Call Society HQ. The same option was raised before his attempt on 10 Mar, although it appeared to have been thwarted by a reported lack of support from the city.

While it is difficult to assess the credibility of the reports, should Bashagha manage to reach and establish its presence in Tripoli, a return to the situation of 2016, when two governments have been based in Tripoli, might emerge. The political deadlock would likely further impact the security environment, as militia groups would seek to gain control of key areas and side with or against one of the governments and probably move their allegiance with whomever they perceive as having power.

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2.2. Other security developments

Instability on the Oil and Gas Sector

On 11 March, the Tuareg Movement informs of the road's closure leading to Sharara Oil Field, clarifying that protests have been held over the past two weeks at the Field's main gate. The route closure aims to prevent trucks from arriving/leaving the oil field, except for trucks transporting food supplies. The closure follows the perceived continued marginalisation of Tuaregs, including lacking citizenship and the IGNU's failure to comply with demands.

Similarly, on 11 March, Oil Crescent tribal actors and activists released a statement¹, threatening closure of oil production and halt of exports; claiming political marginalisation of Oil Crescent actors; calling for United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to withdraw support for the IGNU and to recognise the legitimacy of the Government of National Stability (GNS); pointing out IGNU support for armed groups; expressing support for elections based on a constitution and no further interim governance; and calling on Attorney General to launch an investigation into corruption by a "family".



Source: <https://twitter.com/AlmaaraMedia/status/1502343053041967106>

Added to this, in a letter dated 10 Mar, speaker of the House of Representatives (HoR), Aguilah Saleh, requested National Oil Corporation (NOC) chairman Mustafa Sanalla to not transfer oil revenues to the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) and instead deposit the funds into an escrow account at the Libyan Foreign Bank (LFB).

SDCD COMMENT

The instability in this sector comes amid ongoing political division within Libya triggered by the legitimacy battle between GNU PM Dadaiba and the HoR's nominated Fathi Bashagha-led Government of National Stability (GNS). The HoR is likely attempting to cut off revenue to the GNU to diminish its authority and ability to continue governance, thus paving the way for the GNS. The HoR letter comes simultaneously as residents of the Libyan National Army (LNA) controlled Oil Crescent region threatened to shut down oil exports if the GNU does not step down. Given LNA chief Khalifa Haftar's tacit support for the GNS, it is likely that his supporters instigated this blockade to pressurize the GNU. While Sanalla is less likely to answer these demands, it will likely increase the potential of additional oil blockade-related threats in the short term.

Daesh Propaganda

On 13 Mar, Daesh in Libya propaganda images were released, via Amaq Media, entitled "Allegiance of the Soldiers of the Caliphate to the Commander of the Faithful, Abu Al-Hassan Al-Hashemi Al-Qurashi"². The propaganda outlet displayed three images of a small number of fighters claiming allegiance to the organisation's new leadership, Abu Hasan al-Hashemi al-Qurashi.

The latter (Iraqi national; alias "Zaid al-Iraqi") was appointed as the Caliph of Daesh, succeeding Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi, who was announced dead on 03 Feb 2022 due to a US raid in Idlib Province, northwest Syria. His appointment was confirmed in a 12-minute audio statement released on 10 Mar. The announcement has triggered a series of pledges from Daesh groups worldwide on social media and through its Amaq Media Agency. While the Daesh Libya propaganda displayed eight militants in a small footprint in a desert area, images from much more active insurgent theatres like Nigeria showed larger contingents with vehicles and an array of weaponry.

¹ Media reference <https://libyareview.com/21941/libyan-oil-crescent-threatens-to-shut-down-oil-ports/>

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SDCD COMMENT

In Libya, Daesh presence although remains small with limited capability, might be motivated in the current instability (security and political) to conduct activities which would attract the attention of the new global leadership. While the threat level is pronounced in the Southern Region, the mobility of terrorist and extremist elements, organisation of networks and sleeper cells, and divided counterterrorism efforts in a vast geographic space with limited border controls.

2.3. Tunisia security update

Emerging information revealed that Tunisia is experiencing shortages in primary goods and an unprecedented rise in food prices, heavily affecting bread production. Reports indicate bakeries when on strike or have closed down to protest against the difficulty to obtain essential supplies. Further on, the food shortage has been exacerbated by the Ukraine-Russia conflict, as both countries make up around 60% of Tunisia's wheat imports. The Regional Chamber of Bakeries claimed they had not been paid their bonuses in the past 11 months, indicating the crisis had existed long beforehand.

With the announcement of President Kais Saied of a crackdown on commodity speculation and monopolisation, security forces have intensified operations against the illegal distribution of goods. However, the government has been criticised for blaming the crisis on illegal traders rather than imposing subsidies. Tunisia's plea for an IMF loan means injecting government incentives on affected industries would negatively impact its credit rating.

In this context, a protest³ was organised in Tunis on 13 March by the Free Constitutional Party against President Saied's failure to avert an economic crisis, showing the increasingly broad opposition to his actions.

On 14 March, the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) threatened to hold a strike (date not released) in coordination with the General Federation of Information, a Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) affiliate, accusing the government of attempting to suppress journalists and impose President Kais Saied's propaganda in the media.

A call for a protest was raised by the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT)-affiliated Public Transport Workers Union to demand "dignity and rights" for transport workers and to denounce a government circular, which prohibits government officials from negotiating with unions without explicit authorisation from Tunisian President was launched for 16 March. Similarly, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) stated that it could not agree with the deep economic reforms required by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The UGTT has repeatedly rejected proposals to privatise state companies, freeze public sector wages, and lift subsidies. Meanwhile, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) demanded the inclusion of civil societies in the negotiations with the IMF under the banner of the "Stop; we are over-indebted" campaign.

³ Media reference <https://news.yahoo.com/tunisian-protest-shows-widening-opposition-112319670.html>

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Amid frequent nationwide counter-militancy operations, which often occur in less developed parts of Tunisia, the Tunisian Ministry of Interior⁴ (MOI) announced the arrest of a militant cell that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). The cell allegedly planned to manufacture explosive materials and attempted to attract youth to adopt the “takfiri” ideology. Segments of the population in such localities are marginalised by their poor economic conditions, making them susceptible to radicalisation by militant groups. In this case, the arrest of a six-member cell is notable as it points to a broader network and, at the same time, demonstrates the intelligence-gathering capabilities of Tunisian authorities to mitigate the militant threat. Counter-militancy operations will likely continue nationwide.

SDCD COMMENTS

The Tunisian government has not made any action over public calls for public dialogue. The mounting demands of stakeholders relating to the planned austerity programs threaten Tunisia's plea for a US\$ 4 billion deal with the IMF. Amid public tensions due to rising prices, protests resisting economic reforms are expected in the near term. The UGTT carry out strikes to pressure the government.

The food crisis will further damage President Kais Saied's local popularity and impact his political roadmap. The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) is expected to pressure the government to act on the rising prices through work stoppages.

Regarding the Jihadist movement in Tunisia, according to Washington Institute research⁵ terrorist arrest statistics from 2021 declined from the previous year and appear to support the notion that jihadism remains a less drastic problem than it was in 2015-2018. Moreover, despite in a slight increase of attacks in 2021 compared to 2020, all but one of the attacks has involved operatives using explosive devices against security forces in rural mountainous areas, thus “there were no large-scale, sophisticated attacks focused on crowded civilian areas, unlike the string of mass-casualty incidents seen in the past”.

Tunisian Terrorist Activity and Arrests, 2011-2021

Year	Attacks	Arrests	Prosecutions
2011	1	2	N/A
2012	4	6	N/A
2013	22	30	N/A
2014	21	32	2
2015	36	162	2
2016	40	260	4
2017	47	403	1
2018	30	520	3
2019	29	132	18
2020	8	227	4
2021	12	192	21

Table and analysis credit <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/tunisian-jihadism-shadow-coup>

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 days	Weekly Deaths % Change	Overall Covid cases
Libya	1.494	3.160	- 53%	213	40	45	- 11 %	500.760
Tunisia	3.523	7.072	- 50%	293	56	152	- 63%	1.029. 627

⁴ Tunisian Ministry of Interior announcement <http://www.interieur.gov.tn/actualite/27657/%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%A9>

⁵ Washington Institute research [Tunisian Jihadism in the Shadow of a Coup | The Washington Institute](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/tunisian-jihadism-shadow-coup)

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.