



Unity Resources Group

LIBYA MONITOR JULY

Key Developments And Local Insights On The Security And Political Climate



INCIDENT REPORTING



Clashes between two local families saw a family of five killed on a beach near Mitiga airport in an unintentional RPG attack on 4 July. For the most part, the streets of Tripoli are relatively secure, but the militarisation of society ensures that access to arms remains a problem.

An attempted advance on Tripoli by GNC-linked militias was stopped short in Garabulli. Armed clashes subsequently broke out on 9 July between pro-GNC forces led by Ghweil and drawn largely from Misrata, and a host of GNA-aligned Tripolitanian militias. Four deaths were recorded in the fighting, while residents fled from the area. See the notes section for more.

On 2 July, 16 prominent Misratan political figures attended a meeting in Cairo. A key ally of Haftar, Egypt is attempting to foster a better relationship with the Misratans to ultimately bridge the great divide between the Misratans and Haftar. Alongside Tripolitanians, the Misratans are Haftar's greatest opposition.

Haftar declared victory in Benghazi after a three year battle, and he now controls the vast majority of the city. The declaration has been somewhat premature, however, with sporadic clashes continuing throughout the month.

In a video published on 23 July believed to be dated from 17 July, a commander aligned with the LNA, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, has again been shown carrying out summary executions. The executions are styled in a manner akin to ISIS executions, and are an apparent show of his own strength. The executions follow the release of a video detailing similar abuses in June which were also carried out by al-Werfalli, and occurs despite earlier condemnation and calls for Haftar to prosecute him.

FLASHPOINT AREAS

GNC Attack in Garabulli

Earlier this month Ghweil advanced towards Tripoli with a convoy of 300 vehicles. The GNA's reaction to the move was swift and saw Tajouri's TRB, Kara's Nawasi Brigade and Gneiwa's Abu Sleem Brigade deployed to thwart the attack by blockading the coastal road. Armed clashes between the two sides ensued and lasted for several days, before the GNC withdrew. During the fighting, Sarraj threatened to draw on international support to protect Tripoli. Although it is unlikely that international support would eventuate, the threat highlighted Ghweil's forces as destabilising outliers with limited political legitimacy.

Ghweil's attempted advance on Tripoli follows the eviction of the GNC from the city by GNA-aligned forces in March – an eviction that Ghweil has failed to accept. Given the ongoing co-operation and consolidation of Tripoli-based militias, Ghweil's advance appears ill thought out with little chance of success. As such, the advance appears motivated by his personal vendetta rather than by a strategic military assessment.

Following the events in Garabulli, the Misratan Municipality quickly distanced itself from the attack. Although Ghweil clearly retains an ongoing intent to regain his foothold in Tripoli, the Misratans are expected to be increasingly reluctant to support him in future operations.

Sarraj's Libyan Roadmap

The GNA is making tentative progress towards a political accord, with Sarraj issuing a roadmap that sees national elections held in March 2018. There are serious questions as to the tangibility of the roadmap's proposed measures, with the proposal retaining a distinct 'UN spirit' and seemingly targeted to an international audience. Sarraj calls, for instance, for transitional justice and DDR (disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration); both measures strongly lauded within the UN as key means to creating a strong state in post-conflict environments.

Although Sarraj's roadmap is aimed at assisting reconciliation, these measures generally occur in tandem with a political accord and seek to facilitate its implementation. Without such an accord, the measures exist only in a vacuum and cannot build peace. Parts of Sarraj's roadmap then, appear somewhat whimsical and out of touch, suggesting a possible overreliance upon the political legitimacy afforded to him by the UN.

Sarraj and Haftar Meet in Paris

In a meeting in Paris on 24 July between Haftar and Sarraj, the LNA leader agreed to elections and to a temporary ceasefire. Given the multitude competing powers on the ground with their own

self interests, suggestions of a ceasefire are currently little more than symbolic. At the same time, the highly publicised meeting between the two parties does suggest a degree of political headway and at least some willingness by Haftar to work with the GNA.

The meeting follows a previous meeting between the two parties in Abu Dhabi in May, though meetings between the two are extremely rare. The agreement between Sarraj and Haftar likely doesn't signify any level of personal reconciliation; indeed, both appeared quite uncomfortable. Their joint presence in discussions, however, is vital to laying the foundations for public acceptance of a future unity government in which both parties are involved. Growing international recognition of Haftar should further increase pressure on him to 'behave' even as the LNA remains stronger militarily, and to potentially offer him incentives for co-operation.

Meanwhile, Ghweil has published an opinion piece in *The Washington Times* expressing his support for the LPA and a new unity government, while emphasising the need for civilian control over the military. Given events in Garabulli and the sidelining of the GNC in Paris, Ghweil's piece suggests an attempt to remain relevant to the changing Libyan political scene, or as he words it: 'to be part of a new generation of Libyan leadership.'

FIELD NOTES

In this edition of Field Notes, we speak more broadly to our team in Libya about key political and security events this month.

What do you think of the meeting between Sarraj and Haftar?

“It was a strange meeting. Macron complimented both al-Bunyan al-Marsous and Haftar, but they hate each other. So on the one hand you’re supporting Haftar with a Libyan army under his control, but then you’re saying thank you to BAM for their actions in Sirte, but they will never accept Haftar as their commander.”

How are Libyans reacting to the news that elections will be held in March?

“Generally speaking they are positive. It’s just a matter of the ones who are not positive or

who are 50/50. They’re worried about the mechanism of elections, how successful they will be, how transparent the results will be and whether the UN and other NGOs are serious about supervising them or not.”

Do you think Haftar could run for the presidency?

“It is possible. He has a lot of popular support in the east, and growing support in the south, plus some parts of the west like Zintan. He might run for elections but it will just be another tool to control the country, whether it’s by force or peaceful – of course peaceful is better for him. If he wins we would never see elections again in Libya until he dies.”

Who are the primary contenders for the presidency?

“Mahmoud al-Jibril is a key figure, but we don’t know if he

will participate. But he has a lot of support and credibility. He was a key figure leading the uprising against Gaddafi and he is good with the economy. He has a lot of respect.”

RADA has now taken control of Mitiga airport in Tripoli. Have there been any changes?

“Yes for sure. Under RADA, the airport is functioning much better and it looks much more professional too. RADA wear uniforms, whereas before the militia in control was plain clothed. So you really see their presence and that they are in control. RADA have also started cleaning up the airport, such as by weeding so it seems they want to create a good impression of their presence. The security process is not that streamlined yet, but it’s not bad. Foreigners receive a lot of attention though, even after you have been officially checked RADA guys will

still come up and ask who you are and what you are doing in Libya.”

RADA also detained a member of the PFG this month. What motivated this detention?

“I heard rumours; they said it was for corruption. Usually when RADA detain government officials they accuse the people of corruption. Maybe there are other reasons though and corruption is just what they say.”

How are people reacting to the new envoy Ghassan Salame?

“People aren’t commenting so much because it’s still early days so we can’t judge him yet. Personally I think he will be good because he is Arab - he speaks Arabic and understands the culture, and because he is native he understands nuances in language. I think it’s hugely important to have a native Arabic speaker.”

SPECIAL FOCUS REPORT

Communal tensions were raised this month with the issuance of a highly controversial fatwa by the Salafi-Madkhali-dominated Supreme Awaqaf Committee of the HoR. In a strongly worded statement the committee declared Ibadis to be Khawarij and to hold kuffar beliefs, and Ibadism to be a distortion of Islam. Although such statements reflect orthodox Salafist thought, they hold extra weight in Libya for the Amazigh (Berber) minority. Within Libya, most Amazigh are Ibadi. Although statistics vary on the number of Amazigh in Libya, it is estimated at approximately 5-10%.

Responding to the fatwa, the Supreme Council of Libyan Amazigh (SCLA) argued that it amounted to a call for genocide. The Amazigh have faced considerable discrimination in modern times - under Gaddafi the Amazigh language, Tamazight, and any cultural symbols were banned in public life as Gaddafi attempted to Arabize the population. Gaddafi rested his leadership upon uniting disparate tribes under a common Arab identity, resulting in the disenfranchisement of minorities. The Amazigh felt especially humiliated because they weren't being recognised as their own people.

Naturally, the Amazigh joined the revolution against Gaddafi, and they subsequently largely sided with the GNC and Libya Dawn against

Haftar. The majority of Amazigh have long been wary of Haftar's militarism and connection to former regime elements and Arab nationalists. Further explaining Amazigh support, the GNC is led by the Amazigh Nouri Abusahmain – the first Amazigh to lead Libya in the post-Gaddafi era. Amazigh support for the GNC has waned over time. Amazigh nationalists were disappointed that Abusahmain wasn't pushing more strongly for Amazigh rights, while Abusahmain argued that he had to rather represent the whole country.

At the same time, the majority of Amazigh remain opposed to Haftar with the SCLA describing the LNA as a 'terrorist, racially-based militia.' This opposition is despite Haftar's misleading declaration in a January 2017 interview with *Corriere Della Sera* that 'Even the Berbers from the Nafusah mountains south of Tripoli are our allies.' Indeed, merely a month after his comment, fighting broke out in the Janzour district in western Tripoli between members of the Arab Warshefana tribe who support Haftar, and the Amazigh Janzour Knights, who support the GNA.

The intolerance expressed within the Salafi-Madkhali's fatwa is not unusual. In 2012, Salafis destroyed a number of Ibadi shrines in Zuwara, an Amazigh town. Since then, within Haftar's



Source: Libya Tribune

zone of control in eastern Libya, Salafis have destroyed Sufi shrines, and notoriously – again through the HoR committee – attempted to introduce a ban on women travelling without a *mahram*, or guardian.

Three weeks after the initial controversy, the HoR finally responded by downplaying the fatwa and expressing its ongoing support for the 'moderate' committee. Haftar, meanwhile, has failed to respond, although his connection to the committee ensures that he holds some responsibility for their activities. This responsibility is perhaps more so the case given Haftar's concerted efforts to portray himself as a bulwark against Islamist extremism in Libya. Considering the growing influence of Salafi-Madkhali within semi-government institutions, the question remains, how long will their influence be contained?

GLOSSARY

BDB	Benghazi Defence Brigade
CSA	Civil Status Authority
DMSC	Derna Mujahidin Shura Council
GNA	Government of National Accord
HoR	House of Representatives
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LNA	Libyan National Army
LPA	Libyan Political Agreement
PGF	Petroleum Facilities Guard
PC	Presidency Council
RADA	Special Deterrence Forces (Interior Ministry Special Forces)
SCBR	Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries
TRB	Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade