

## LIBYA

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### **Tribal conflicts continue in Tripoli, Bani Walid; amended electoral law addresses some Islamist concerns**

Tribal clashes continued in and beyond Tripoli in this period. In the former Gadhafi stronghold of Bani Walid members of the Warfallah tribe, the largest in the country, ejected the May 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade - which is backed by the National Transitional Council (NTC) - and set up their own council. The Defence Minister, Osama al-Juwaili, visited the town and agreed to accept the authority of the new council though the May 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade remains camped outside the town. Al-Juwaili is also the leader of the Zintan Military Committee (ZMC), and the Zintan have traditional links with the Warfallah - a fact that is likely to have influenced the Defence Minister's intervention. However, the agreement gave rise to demonstrations in the capital where it was seen as capitulation to pro-Gadhafi remnants.

Meanwhile in Tripoli there were outbreaks of fighting between members of militias from Zintan and Misrata over control of a sports complex used as a base by the Misratans. The skirmish was part of a wider confrontation between militias for control of key areas of the city. We reported previously clashes between Misratans and members of the al-Zawiyah militia which is linked to the Tripoli Military Council (TMC), headed by Abdel-Hakim Belhadj. The TMC and the ZMC-linked Tripoli Revolutionary Council have also fought on numerous occasions demonstrating the tensions between all the main groupings. Misratan militiamen also attacked a refugee camp outside Tripoli and killed five former residents of the town of Tawergha, which was used by pro-Gadhafi forces as a base for attacks on Misrata during the civil war. These incidents demonstrate the continuing inability of the NTC to prevent well armed militias from pursuing their own agendas.

Clashes between militias in support of their tribal interests are likely to increase as elections draw nearer. This week the NTC published an amended draft Electoral Law for the new Constituent Assembly. The new draft, which is still open for further revision, proposes that two thirds of the 200 seats should be held by candidates from political parties and the remaining third by independents. This will go some way to answering Islamist concerns that an election based on independent candidates alone would rely too heavily on tribal affiliations (see our last Report).

However, Libya is a tribal society and political parties were banned by the former regime. It is therefore inevitable that new parties will form along tribal lines, and that local tribal leaders will feature heavily in the newly elected bodies. Tribal militias have retained their weapons and are fighting to consolidate their power bases to ensure influence in the future government, as the Bani Walid situation demonstrates. It will be extremely difficult for the NTC, whose members themselves have varied tribal loyalties, to impose order in this environment.

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