Report

Libya: The security situation in Tripoli and surrounding areas

LANDINFO

Utlendingsforvaltningens fagenhet for landinformasjon

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SUMMARY

The security situation in Libya reflects the chaotic political situation, where three governments claim legitimacy, and where hundreds of armed groups control different parts of the country. None of the three governments has actual control over the armed groups, resulting in "rule of the gun". The conflict level is fluctuating, both in the capital Tripoli and in surrounding provinces, where a mosaic of militias are in control on a local level. Violence mainly occurs between militias. However, militia involvement in kidnappings, smuggling of people and goods, political violence and other criminal activities, combined with a non-functioning police force and justice system, result in a widespread feeling of insecurity and volatility among civilians.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This is Landinfo's first extensive report on the situation in Libya since the series of reports published in collaboration with sister organisations in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden in December 2014 (CGRS-BE et al. 2014a-e). The report restricts itself to giving a review of security issues in the metropolitan area related to acts of violence committed by militias, whether politically motivated or for other reasons. When necessary, relevant context is highlighted.

1.1 COVERAGE OF THE SITUATION IN TODAY'S LIBYA

The situation in Libya after the fall of the Qadhafi regime in September 2011 has gained much attention internationally. Nevertheless, the publicly available reporting on the country is characterised by a large amount of anecdotal information, whereas there are few sources who provide solid analyses of systematically collected information. Those that do exist have a particular focus on the chaotic political situation and often revolves around what various Libyan political players are able to do with two aspects. The first is Libya's position as the most important transit country for the current flow of unlawful migrants to Europe, and the second is the emergence of jihadist groups that could pose a security threat to western countries. The international interest in Libya's humanitarian conditions is limited to and represented by a small research community, some human rights organisations, a handful of journalists and think tanks and online media focusing on Islamist terrorism and security issues and/or the Arab world.

In the spring/summer of 2014, two circumstances arose to worsen access to information further:

- Fighting broke out between relatively large armed groups[1] in Tripoli in April, which made the security situation in the metropolitan area so difficult that both diplomats and most international organisations (as well as some local ones) left the country.[2]
- One important consequence of the parliamentary elections in June 2014 was that Libya ended up with several competing governments, none of which enjoy broad legitimacy.

During 2014, the majority of those who report regularly about the situation in Libya ceased to have a permanent presence there (Smith 2017, pp. 2-4). Many international actors ended the cooperation they had had with Libyan institutions, and the international organisations that still cooperate with Libyan actors, such as various UN agencies, focus in particular on political mediation and peace talks (pp. 5-7), as do the various thinking tanks (p. 10-11). International NGOs pay particular attention to migrants and internally displaced persons (p. 8).

[1] In the Libyan context, in Arabic, *majmu'a musallaha* ('armed group') is usually used as a neutral term for armed groups. The groups often refer to themselves as *katiba* ('brigade'), while *milishiya* ('militia') has negative connotations of someone who does not act in the best interest of the country (Crisis Group 2012, p. 37). In this report, however, we use 'militia' and 'armed group' synonymously, while 'brigade' is only used in translations of names of specific groups.

[2] As of September 2017, Italy is the only western country that has reopened its embassy in Libya.

Today, there are significantly fewer diplomats, organisations and other international actors permanently present in Libya than what was the case before the summer of 2014, and those among them who still follow Libyan affairs have switched to relying on reports from local sources and information obtained on short visits to the country.[3] However, their Libyan partners who are still in place, also face more difficult working conditions, due to the continuing difficult security situation in the country (p. 14).

Finally, the shift in the type of collaborative projects, from institution building and development to peace talks and political mediation, has led to much lower demand for reporting on local social conditions.[4] As a result, there is little information on security issues in Libya that is detailed, up-to-date and based on systematic surveys and analyses.

1.2 AVAILABLE SOURCES

The security situation in Libya is the main focus of two international actors today.[5] The University of Sussex operates the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which follows politically motivated violence in countries in Africa and Asia (ACLED n.d.a). ACLED conducts analysis and comments on the situation in a selection of countries in various publications, from which we will refer to the relevant ones. However, ACLED does not issue regular analyses of data for Libya. However, such analyses are issued by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD n.d.), which produces security reports on Libya at the provincial levels based on data from ACLED. They issue quarterly reports covering the period from the first quarter of 2014 onwards, and annual reports for 2011 and onwards. ACLED data includes conflict events and fatalities,[6] but not the number of injured persons.

Available reports based on systematic information gathering with a focus on how Libyans perceive the security situation and what measures they take in daily life are based on fieldwork conducted in 2013, prior to the escalation in the conflict level in the country in 2014 (Small Arms Survey 2014; Mangan, Murtaugh & Bagga 2014; Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015). These are referenced since there is no more recent material with the same level of detail, and because many of the parameters were the same then as now, even though the conflict level was lower.[7]

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[3] For safety reasons, the UN expert panel only conducted day trips to Libya in preparation for this year's report (Spittaels et al. 2017, p. 7).

[4] The fragmentation of political legitimacy led to international organisations and authorities no longer having one single government with formal legitimacy to cooperate with on institution building projects. Now they prioritise to cater to a situation in which Libya once again gains a single central authority that exclusively represents the country's interests in the international community.

[5] Libya Body Count, a Libyan-driven project aimed at compiling a comprehensive overview of fatalities in Libya, closed down in the year 2016/2017 after being active for three years. Their reviews are still available: Libya Body Count 2017a contains fatalities according to conflict event per month for 2014-2016, 2017b distributes fatalities geographically, and 2017c includes short descriptions and sources for each event.

[6] The Libyan website Libya Body Count compiled statistics on fatalities resulting from acts of violence for the period 2014-2016. It closed down at the end of 2016 (Libya Body Count 2017).

[7] Here, in particular, we point to the fact that even in 2013, there was no government with real control over the militias in the country. All throughout the period since the Qadhafi regime, people have had to turn to non-state actors to ensure as much security in the everyday situations as possible.

We also use information from sources that follow the ever-changing power relations in Libya, such as the think-tanks Critical Threats and Libya Analysis/Eye on ISIS in Libya,[8] as well as Crisis Group, and have examined the last three reports to the UN Expert Panel in Libya (Dilloway et al. 2015; Tessières et al. 2016; Spittaels et al. 2017). In respect to human rights, both Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty follow the situation in Libya and are useful sources.

In the process of gathering material, the Norwegian Embassy in Egypt has been in contact with Western diplomats who visited Tripoli in May-June this year. They have answered questions about security in the metropolitan area based on their experience.

However, we would also like to point out what kind of source material we have been unable to find. Most importantly, there is a lack of detailed and in-depth overviews of which militias are in control at local level, for example, at district level in the cities or elsewhere in the west (this also applies to Arabic-language sources[9]). Nor do we have material that makes it possible to tell which militias control which parts of a given route, or systematic, solid information about how different militias act in various situations.

1.3 GEOGRAPHICAL DEMARCATION

This report is limited to describing the situation in the metropolitan area, defined as the six coastal provinces from Misrata and west towards the border with Tunisia (from east to west: Misrata, al-Murqub, Tripoli, al-Jafara, al-Zawiya and al-Nuqat al-Khams). This area was inhabited by 55% of the population at the time of the population census in 2006, whereas it only covers 2.75% of the country's land area.[10] Similarly, 22% of the population lived in the four eastern coastal provinces from Binghazi to Darna, representing 3.85% of the country's land area.[11]

At times, we also use the traditional division of Libya into three regions:

- Tripolitania: The northwestern part of Libya. In addition to the six provinces defined above as the metropolitan area, the region includes the provinces of Sirt, al-Jabal al-Gharbi and Nalut.

[8] Critical Threats is run by the American think tank American Enterprise Institute and focuses particularly on the activities of Iran and various jihadist organisations (Critical Threats, n.d.), while Libya Analysis/Eye on ISIS in Libya is a platform for analytical coverage of the situation in Libya, which offers consultancy services to the organisational community (Libya Analysis, n.d.a; n.d.b).

[9] Arabic-language Google search on *kharita Libya majmu'at musallaha* ('map Libya armed groups') and *kharita Libya kataib* ('map Libya brigades') conducted on 12 September 2017. We have only found one map indicating where different militias are based in Tripoli, but it is not detailed and, also, outdated (al-Sharif 2017). Furthermore, in its latest report, the UN Expert Panel included a list of various militias that supported the National Salvation Government (see section 2.1.1) and which areas of Tripoli and its surrounding areas they controlled in spring 2017, but this information may also be outdated (Spittaels et al. 2017, p. 101).

[10] In July 2017, the UN estimated that Libya had a population of 6.4 million (UN DESA 2017, p. 19).

[11] OCHA 2011 and ACAPS 2015 provide visual representations of the population density in different parts of the country and clearly demonstrate how the country'

s population is concentrated in these two rather small areas. Internally displaced persons in the country have probably only marginally changed the main pattern since their movements have predominantly occurred within these two densely populated areas and to a small extent between them (IDMC 2015).

- Cyrenaica (Arabic: Barqa): Eastern Libya. In addition to the four densely populated eastern coastal provinces, the region encompasses the provinces of al Butnan, al-Wahat and al-Kufra.
- Fazzan: Southwestern Libya, i.e. the provinces of al-Jufra, Wadi al-Shati, Sabha, Wadi al-Hayat, Ghat and Murzuq.

2. BACKGROUND: POLITICAL STAGNATION AND CHAOS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Libya's political situation is highly complex, even for a country that has been through major upheavals. Here is a brief review of factors that form the basis for the security situation in the country.

2.1 POLITICAL ACTORS

2.1.1 Actors who dominate the political process

Today, three institutions/actors claim to represent Libya:[12]

- The Presidential Council (*al-Majlis al-Ri'asi*), which was established after the Skhirat agreement was signed in December 2015 and which is led by Fayiz al-Sarraj.[13] The government of the Presidential Council is referred to as the Government of National Accord (*Hukumat al-Wifaq al-Watani*). The Presidential Council is internationally recognised by the UN, the EU and several other important countries, but has no formal legitimacy in Libya, since neither the House of Representatives nor the National Congress has recognised it – even though representatives of both institutions negotiated the Skhirat agreement.
- The National Congress (*al-Mu'tamar al-Watani al-'Amm*, its exact translation being the General National Congress)[14] and its government, which refers to itself as the National Salvation Government[15] (*Hukumat al-Inqadh al-Watani*), led by Khalifa al-Ghwayl. It is dominated by actors from Zuwara and Misrata (in Tripolitania) and the militia *Jabhat al-Sumud* (Front of Steadfastness).

[12] See Eaton 2017b for a short video presentation of the process from 2012 to today.

[13] For the background of the Skhirat agreement, see Crisis Group 2016 and Kingsley 2015. Toaldo 2017a describes relations between the Presidential Council and other political actors and groups.

[14] The National Congress convened in August 2012, after the election one month earlier. The National Congress was intended to be a transitional institution and had as its primary task to put in place a new constitution, which it failed to do in the 18 months it had at its disposal. Formally, it was to dissolve after the House of Representatives convened in August 2014, but refused to do so, on the assumption that the election turnout of only 14% in the election to the House of Representatives in July 2014 rendered the institution illegitimate.

[15] Implicitly, this government "rescues" Libya from the government derived from the House of Representatives, which it considers to be lacking legitimacy. (The Arabic term can be translated as Salvation Government since *inqadh* has religious connotations.)

- The House of Representatives (*Majlis al-Nuwab*)[16] and its government led by Abdallah al-Thini. It is occasionally referred to as the Tubruq authority, since the headquarters of the House of Representatives is located in Tubruq. It is dominated by Eastern politicians (Cyrenaica) with a strong scepticism towards Islamists, and is in particular supported by militias sharing their scepticism.

The UN Panel of Experts points out that divisions characterise the political process in all three institutions, as well as attempts by the competing governments of al-Ghwayl and al-Thini to sabotage the Presidential Council (Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 9-11).

In addition to these three factions, there is the former General Khalifa Haftar, who leads the militia Libyan National Army (LNA).[17] The House of Representatives and Haftar are allies in principle, yet it is not the case that the House of Representatives has real control over LNA, or Haftar.

LNA has military control over large parts of Cyrenaica and is also allied with several important militias in Fazzan and the western areas of Tripolitania. Haftar is thus such a powerful and politically ambitious actor that he cannot be disregarded.[18] This is why, for example, he was an important participant in the talks on Libya's roadmap for a political way forward in Paris in July, equal to the leader of the Presidential Council Fayiz al-Sarraj (Toaldo 2017b).

2.1.2 More marginal political actors

Some actors and groups have little direct influence on national political developments. This applies in particular to minority groups such as the Berbers, the Tuaregs and the Tubu, who have little weight in the political process because they constitute such a small part of the population. However, militias rooted in these environments have considerable local power in several areas, especially in Fazzan and in the mountainous areas bordering Tunisia. These areas are strategically important because many important smuggling routes are located there, and control of this traffic and the borders to the west and south thus gives these militias some political influence.

2.1.3 Actors who have positioned themselves outside the political process

Jihadist groups such as Ansar al-Sharia and IS (al-Dawla al-Islamiyya – Islamic state) reject the political process as entirely illegitimate. These groups have quite limited support, even among Salafi-oriented Libyans,[19] but despite low numbers and limited

[16] The House of Representatives has formally replaced the National Congress as the Libya legislative assembly.

[17] Despite the name, this is an alliance of militias. The name reflects the fact that some of the leadership and the fighters have a background in Libya's defence forces during the previous regime. It can also be interpreted as an attempt by Haftar to assert a formal legitimacy that has been contested since the House of Representatives spent at least eighteen months before giving Haftar and LNA a formal role, something neither the Presidential Council nor the National Congress has done (Aljazeera 2015). Haftar was a general under Qadhafi but was taken captive in the war with Chad in 1987. Upon release in 1990, he lived in exile in the United States until he returned to Libya during the uprising in 2011.

[18] Which is also due to substantial support for Haftar from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, and strong sympathy for him in influential political circles in, for example, Russia and France.

[19] Very simplified, jihadists are Salafis who think it is legitimate to resort to force to achieve their goals, while other Salafis think their goals must be reached by other means. At the same time, they generally share long-term political goals and views on how society should be organised. For more thorough discussions about what unites and separates Salafis and jihadists, see Crisis Group 2005 and Maher 2016.

support, they have a disproportionately large influence on political developments because of their willingness to use violence against both other combatants and civilians.

2.2 CONFLICT LINES AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Following the fall of the regime, a number of topics create strong political divisions in Libya:

- How Islamic should the state be? The question whether the state and its institutions should be "Islamic", and what that means, is important in all countries with a Muslim majority. In Libya, the main dividing line goes between Islamist-oriented actors on the one hand and anti-Islamists[20] on the other. To some extent, this conflict line overshadows more underlying ones, which can trigger divisions if either of these two sides achieves political dominance:
    - Muslim brothers-oriented Islamism and Salafi-Islamism. Since the fall of the Qadhafi regime, these main orientations have collaborated politically, but they have different ideologies and different political traditions and goals in a number of areas.
    - Nationalists against federalists. Nationalism is, in the Libyan sense, understood as the centralisation of political institutions in the capital, while federalists want greater local self-government. Federalism has particularly strong support in eastern Libya.
    - The view on political reforms and institution building. There are widely varying views on how law and government should be reformed, not least among Islamists and "secularists".
- Demobilisation of militia groups. What role, if any, should the "revolutionary"[21] militants have in the Libyan security forces? How to do something about the massive spread of weapons in Libyan society?
- Changes in property rights under the old regime. Should the dramatic changes during the Qadhafi period in ownership of housing, businesses and land be reversed? If so, how and to what extent?[22]
- Economic policy. In optimal circumstances, Libya would enjoy quite high oil revenues, but the country's economy is dominated by exports of a single commodity, which does not create very many jobs. How should the country

[20] These are sometimes referred to as secular, since they believe state institutions and judicial systems should not be directly founded in Islamic political and legal tradition. Libyan politicians who promote such views, however, do not identify as secular or liberal since the corresponding Arabic concepts (respectively *'almani*/*dunyawi* and *'aqli*) have connotations of godlessness to many. When Islamists in Libya call their opponents secular, it is intended to be negative. (Similarly, anti-Islamists use terms like jihadists or terrorists very loosely about Islamists.)

[21] In the Libyan context, 'revolutionary' (*thuwwar*) is first and foremost used about those who took up arms against the Qadhafi regime in 2011, but also about those who supported the fight against the regime.

[22] See Fitzgerald & Megerisi 2015 for a review of this topic. In addition to conflict over rights to property that changed ownership as a result of legislative changes under the old regime, there have been a number of cases where persons or groups have taken over the property of others (with explicit or implicit threat of violence) after the old regime fell in 2011, unrelated to changes from the Qadhafi period.

educate and employ its large youth cohorts in an economy without much industry and a neglected agricultural sector?

- Smuggling and crime. Many militias are deeply involved in the smuggling of migrants and goods and other criminal activities. This gives them a strong interest in preventing the country from achieving a strong central power that would be able to clean up this business and deprive them of high revenues (see section 4.4).
- Judicial actions against persons who were part of the Qadhafi regime. Apart from a ban disallowing persons affiliated with the Qadhafi regime and others with "views hostile to the February 17 revolution" from holding various public offices and positions of trust, forced through by the extreme militia in 2013 (see Alrifai 2013), no framework has been defined for who should be held liable for actions committed on behalf of the old regime or for the abuse of their own power position. This seems to be little discussed today, but there are still several thousand detainees in Libya accused of having "blood on their hands"[23] for acts committed during the Qadhafi period or the conflict in 2011 (HRW 2015).

The chaotic political situation from the summer of 2014 onwards relates in particular to the first line of conflict, i.e. between Islamist and non-Islamist-oriented political forces. The chaos does not only create significant challenges around important policy choices, but also involves enormous practical complications in regards to national governance: a large number of government institutions have broken up into various administrative units with loyalty to different political actors, resulting in challenges to resource allocation, service and communication. A report from the U.S. Institute of Peace describes the consequences this has for the prison system (Mangan & Murray 2016, p. 14):

> *In 2014, the Judicial Police was thrown back into a state of flux. De outbreak of civil war led to the creation of two rival governments and, consequently, a split in the Judicial Police. A second headquarters was established in the east, based at Gernada Prison in Al Bayda. [...] the organizational structure of the prison system fractured along an east/west axis with the exception of the prison in Zintan, which falls under the authority of the new Judicial Police headquarters in the east because of the city's political alliances.*
>
> *Technically, much of the institutional planning, financial management, and other divisional activities continues to be directed from Tripoli. Both east and west leadership continue to maintain open lines of communication, articulating that they hope that their professionalism can, in time, overcome political divisions. However, although the Tripoli headquarters insists that salaries for all Judicial Police are handled through its finance office, all four Judicial Police prisons in the east (as well as with several in the west) complain of delays in salary delivery and failures to receive salaries, in some cases for a year or more.*

[23] See Crisis Group 2011, pp. 13-15 for a discussion of the unclear definition of the concept "having blood on one's hands".

Most parts of the public administration face similar practical challenges, including the agencies that are supposed to administer state-owned natural resources and other revenues, such as oil resources, taxes and fees (Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 51-60). Also, agencies responsible for law and order can act independently of the authorities they are supposed to represent in principle and occasionally violate the interests of the community, such as when elements within the Coast Guard cooperate with militias on smuggling (pp. 103-104). Actors involved in the power struggle for control of various state institutions and agencies become allies with various militias on occasion (p. 53). Banknotes issued by the competing central bank in the east create practical problems (pp. 221-226). Different factions also control the country's foreign missions.[24]

2.3 FORCE OF ARMS

There is currently no functioning central authority that can ensure security for the population of Libya. Strictly speaking, the country has not had any state power with a real power monopoly over the country's territory and population since 2011.[25] Since then, no civilian authority has in practice been capable of putting an end to the activities of armed groups. This also applies when various forces have declared that they support, are allies with or swear allegiance to different political institutions or players. There are no examples of civilian authorities having forced a militia to act against its interests when they contradict those of the authority, while there are countless examples of militias having acted differently from what the allied civilian authorities want without being held responsible for this in any way.

HRW confirms in its annual report for 2016 that none of the competing authorities in Libya can create security for the population and that armed groups can act without fear of consequences (HRW 2017a):

> *Militias and armed forces affiliated with the two governments engaged in arbitrary detentions, torture, unlawful killings, indiscriminate attacks, abductions, and forcible disappearances. Criminal gangs and militias abducted politicians, journalists, and civilians—including children—for political and monetary gain.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *In the absence of a state authority exercising control over the national territory, dozens of rival militia groups and military forces, with varying agendas and allegiances, continued to flout international law with impunity.*

The consequence of this is rule of the gun – that at the end of the day, holding power is synonymous with having force of arms, and no government in the country has sufficient arms to stop other armed actors.[26]

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[24] In the embassy in Moscow, there are actually representatives of both the Presidential Council and the House of Representatives. Russian authorities say this has been arranged with the intention of making them work together (Barmin 2017).

[25] It is up for definition whether this condition occurred as early as when rebels took control of parts of the country in spring 2011 or whether it started from the fall of the Qadhafi regime in August that year.

[26] For example, when a court in Tripoli released twelve men who had been in custody for several years suspected of having abused protesters on behalf of the Qadhafi regime in spring 2011, and they were later found dead. Probably they were killed in a prison formally controlled by the Government of National Accord (Fetouri 2016a).

2.4 NEAR COLLAPSE OF THE POLICE AND JUDICIARY

An important reason why none of the competing authorities in Libya are able to create safe conditions for the population is that the police and judiciary generally do not function.

2.4.1 Police

In practice, the police in Libya has very little power, and this description in a report from the U.S. Institute of Peace still holds (Shaw & Mangan 2014, p. 39):

> *Law enforcement institutions in Libya, widely derided by the populace for their association with the Qaddafi regime, have for the most part broken down. Although some evidence suggests that many ordinary people now want the government to establish a reformed system of policing, police and prosecutors alike outlined the challenges of doing so. Most important is the degree to which militia groups in some areas see themselves both as the guardians of the law and the natural inheritors of the economic benefits of illicit markets. The long-term establishment of effective and legitimate systems of law enforcement will be a critical factor in responding to the challenge of organized crime*.

One actor in Tripoli, for example, describes the police as "weak, underfunded and unprotected, outgunned by the militias that are affiliated with the Interior Ministry, but have an almost completely free hand" (Fetouri 2016b).

Already in a survey conducted in 2013, only one-third of those asked said that they reported attacks or threats to the police. Informants interviewed in focus groups also stressed that police reports were not motivated by any belief that the police were actually able to do anything concrete but were made to establish a case in the event that the police and judiciary began to function once again in the future. Several people also pointed out that the police occasionally referred issues to other actors, such as militias or clan leaders, in order for them to resolve the issue at hand. Some chose to go directly to a militia where they had relatives or friends for assistance (Small Arms Survey 2014, pp. 3-4).

2.4.2 The judiciary

The judiciary also only works to a small extent. HRW describes the judiciary in Libya as dysfunctional and unable to hold criminals to account (HRW 2017a), and further comments that:

> *Ongoing insecurity led to the collapse of the criminal justice system in Libya. Courts in the east remained mostly shut, while elsewhere they operated at a reduced level.*

In a report by Crisis Group (2013), the think tank suggests that, following the fall of the Qadhafi regime, Libya needed reforms both of laws and in the judiciary itself. There has hardly been any development in these fields whatsoever, since neither the National Congress nor the House of Representatives has adopted relevant concrete reforms. HRW has also called for extensive reforms (Salah 2014).

Some representatives of the judiciary disagree that the collapse is total, but nevertheless admit that all activities must take place within boundaries determined by the militias. Criminal cases are only occasionally investigated, but even when the

police believe they have clarified who the perpetrators are, they are rarely prosecuted unless this takes place upon the initiative of a militia, as in this description from Tripoli (Fetouri 2016b):

> *Though most crimes in Tripoli are investigated, very few are solved. At some stage of the investigation, the police will just leave the file open but give up on the case. Ahmed's investigators usually know who did what, but they often cannot touch the suspect.*
>
> *When a case reaches the prosecution stage, it means that a militia was involved in bringing the accused to justice, but that is no guarantee that he will be found guilty, as the prosecutors would be more concerned with his militia connections than the evidence against him.*

In practice, the courts handle very few cases and limit their activities to matters that do not challenge the armed groups at local level or that are more or less dictated by them.

2.5 ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

Libya is in a deep economic crisis. The country has only one important export product, namely oil. During the uprising against the Qadhafi regime in 2011, oil production effectively stopped, but almost returned to its original level during 2012. In 2013, production fell sharply due to conflicts over control of infrastructure in the oil industry (Cunningham 2015). Since then, production has never reached more than just over half the level before the conflict broke out in 2011 and at times, it comes to around one third of that level (Pack 2017b). Also, the fall in crude oil prices from May 2014 meant a halving of the revenue for the oil extracted. The conflict between the various competing authorities in Libya concerns, among other things, gaining control of the institutions through which oil revenues are channelled – the state oil company NOC, the central bank and the country's oil fund (Crisis Group 2017a).

In addition to the sharp fall in government revenue, the country is plagued by currency speculation, a liquidity crisis, bank fraud and inflation (Pack 2017a, p. 1-14; Pack 2017b) and by the fact that local bank branches are effectively controlled by militias (Stocker 2017). Even though Libyans face practical challenges in withdrawing cash from local banks, there is still a large amount of money in circulation – "there is a large amount of money in the mattresses in Libya" (Mary Fitzgerald and Mustafa Fetouri, Landinfo's Libya Seminar, September 2017). In the spring of 2017, there was still no major reduction in turnover in local commercial activity, but people were beginning to worry about inflation and ever higher prices for some important goods. At the same time, some of the phenomena that make the economic situation liveable for the population is costly for Libya's state fund: this is due to lack of collection of taxes and fees, extensive subsidies for fuel and basic goods, and revenues from "ghost workers"[27] (Pack 2017a, pp. 14-16).

[27] Wage income from public sector positions that exist only on paper, through the identity of fictitious or deceased family members.

3. BACKGROUND: A MOSAIC OF MILITIAS

Nobody knows how many militias there are in Libya, but the number could be up towards 1700 (ACAPS 2017) or 2000 (BBC 2016). The number changes over time as new armed groups arise or dissolve and alliances between them are entered and broken. Alliances occur on both ideological and opportunistic grounds, and it is not uncommon to see alliances across important political divisions. Nor is it uncommon to see conflicts between groups that part of the same alliance or between groups for which it is difficult to identify ideological differences. A number of militias have arisen after the uprising in 2011 ended, especially after the conflict level rose sharply in 2014. The militias that arose during the uprising against the Qadhafi regime in 2011 today include a large number of fighters who were not involved in the struggles at the time. The armed groups include some rather large militias, but also very many fairly small ones – and the militias also vary in size over time.

3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF MILITIAS

Since there are so many militias, several sources group them into various categories. However, the categorisation sometimes varies significantly between different observers.[28] It is common to group them according to what political actors or ideologies they have declared support to, or according to the alliances they are or have been a part of. Others divide them according to different criteria, such as the type of group or communities they originate from and whether they have a local affiliation where they operate. Ethnicity is another criterion, but rarely clan/tribal affiliation.[29] Several commentators mix different criteria in their categorisation. The picture is not made any less complicated by the fact that an individual militia group often has features that allow it to fit into several categories or that alliances can include militias that have few common features apart from having shared practical interests for a certain period of time.

On the local level, it is most often more important for Libyans that the militias who have control have legitimacy and anchoring in the community than what they stand for ideologically and what alliances they are part of. At the same time, it is important that the militias are perceived to act in accordance with local community interests.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF POWER RELATIONS IN LIBYA

All maps of power relations in Libya involve major simplifications, since they operate with different combinations of large collective categories. Thus, these summaries make the power relations in Libya appear much more uniform than they actually are.

[28] As examples of sources with different classifications, we can mention Aljazeera (2017), Critical Threats (e.g. Estelle & Park 2017), The Economist (2017), the European Council on Foreign Relations (Fitzgerald 2017a), Eye on Isis in Libya (Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017) and Wikipedia (Wikipedia 2017; Zifan 2017).

[29] Although Libya is a society where people mostly belong to a clan/tribe (simplified, a tribe is a political alliance of clans), this affiliation plays a limited role for many Libyans in daily life – it is primarily family and other networks people have personal relationships with that are important. While most Libyans know which clan/tribe they belong to, few have knowledge of who holds leadership positions within their clan/tribe, or how to get in touch with them (Cole & Mangan 2016 Tribe, pp. 6-12). This is also reflected in the organisation of the militias, which primarily are homogeneous in terms of clan belonging when the population in the militia's area of origin is homogeneous in terms of clan. Furthermore, clan/tribal leaders have no more influence over militia leaders than that of others with social standing in the Libyan community.

Most apply a colour to an area according to dominant militias categories, which means that the militias at the local level are far from always of the same type or part of the same alliance. Others are more nuanced and more clearly demarcate areas where there are militias of several categories. However, even sources like these do not indicate more than two to three main categories in one single area or that militias that in principle are allied may still be in ideological conflict with each other at the local level for various reasons.

In large parts of Libya, shifts in power relations between different militias at local levels continue, new militias emerge, alliances change, and some militias disintegrate (ACLED 2016b, pp. 2-3). Some of these changes receive great attention both nationally and internationally, such as when there are jihadist groups involved or when the development contributes to changes in the number of migrants who travel to Italy by boat (see Lewis & Scherer 2017). However, the control can also switch between groups without the same attention being paid to it outside the affected areas. This happens especially when the changes do not have significant consequences for external conditions or take place without major combat. There are, however, certain geographical differences.

3.2.1 Cyrenaica: Haftar's LNA controls large areas

Khalifa Haftar's militia alliance Libya National Army (LNA) has since 2014 consolidated control over large parts of the populated areas of Cyrenaica, including the country's second largest city of Binghazi. However, despite its name, LNA is an alliance of a number of militias, not a unitary army.

At the same time, there have been extensive struggles between LNA militias and various jihadist groups[30], especially in Binghazi and Darna. There are also other armed groups at local levels challenging LNA's hegemony in the region – some of these are Islamist, while others focus more on local power relations than on greater national conflict lines.

3.2.2 Fazzan: A complicated picture

The situation in Fazzan is more complex than in Cyrenaica. Here, there is no single dominant actor, but a number of militias of local origin supplemented by militias from other parts of the country. Since Fazzan is very sparsely populated with large uninhabited areas, what is of particular importance is control of cities and towns and the roads connecting these. Several of the roads are strategically important because they overlap with smuggling routes (for a thorough review of the situation in Fazzan, see Crisis Group 2017c).

3.2.3 Tripolitania: A complicated picture

3.2.3.1 Tripoli

As shown by the maps prepared by Critical Threats (Estelle 2016; Estelle 2017a; Estelle 2017b; Ristori 2017; Estelle & Park 2017) and Eye on Isis (Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017, pp. 22, 27, 41), various categories of militias control different parts of

[30] Like Islamic State (IS), Ansar al-Sharia and various independent jihadist groups.

Tripoli.[31] Many fall into one of three categories: National Congress allied, Presidential Council allied and Ansar al-Sharia-associated militias. However, militias that in principle support the National Congress or the Presidential Council are not under the control of these institutions, but usually pursue their own interests when they do not overlap with those of their alliance partners.

Furthermore, there are some conflicts between the various militias and not only across the categories: militias that are part of the same alliance may also have different interests that escalate to violence between them, not least in relation to the control of criminal activities (see part 4.4). From time to time, new militias arise: ACLED points out that in the period from December 2015 until May 2017 the number of active militias in Tripoli more than doubled and that the number also changed significantly in the previous two years (2016b, p. 3).

3.2.3.2 Elsewhere in the capital area

In the areas east and west of Tripoli, the picture is even more complex, with militias of almost all imaginable categories.[32] And not only are just about all types of militias represented, the maps from Critical Threats for October 2016 to July 2017 (Estelle 2016; Estelle 2017a; Estelle 2017b; Ristori 2017; Estelle & Park 2017) and Eye on Isis (Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017, pp. 22, 27, 41) give evidence of constant changes in power relations in parts of the area.

3.3 DANGER OF NEW AND EXTENSIVE ARMED CLASHES

Several commentators point to a risk of a renewed rise in conflict between major militia alliances, both if militias from Misrata should attempt to return to Tripoli or if Haftar's LNA should try to take control of the capital (ACLED 2017, pp. 16-17; Benibrahim 2017a; Eaton 2017a; Moody 2017). One source points out a dangerous situation in which further polarisation in Libya could result in moderate Islamists allying more closely with jihadist groups against Haftar's LNA and other forces that Islamists often link to the Qadhafi regime (Estelle 2017c). There are also reports that both the LNA and Misrata militia are acquiring combat helicopters and other military equipment that could enable air attacks (Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 24-34; Delalande 2017).

If the situation worsens, we could potentially witness new bombing of civilian areas, as in August 2014 (Amnesty 2014a). Rearmament of several actors can also lead to more extensive combat than in the previous phases from 2011 to today, with even greater consequences for civilians.

[31] This is a map of all of Libya where Tripoli is marked as a city where militias can be classified in two or three different main categories. They do not indicate in which parts of the city the different armed groups have a base or control. We have only found one map that gives a certain indication of where in the city different militia groups have bases, published by the Arabic-language online newspaper *al-Arabi al-Jadid* (see the video in al-Sharif 2017).

[32] The main exception is militias based on ethnic grouping in the south of the country. These operate only to a small extent outside Fazzan.

4. THE SECURITY SITUATION

In this section, we focus primarily on security issues that have consequences for the civilian population. They include conflicts between militias that also affect third parties and acts of violence directed at civilians – whether politically motivated or criminal.

4.1 TRIPOLI

In its latest analysis of the situation in Libya, ACLED gives the following description of the situation (2017, p. 16):

> ***Insecurity in Tripoli***
>
> *Frustration has grown over the lack of security in Tripoli as free-roaming, unaccountable militia activity has disrupted electricity power and kidnappings continue to undermine the safety of residents. ACLED reported the most substantial Tripoli-based militia competition in December 2016 where militia attacks accounted for 13.9 % of conflict activity with events falling to 2.8 % of activity in January 2017.*

In its previous analysis, ACLED described the situation as follows (2016b, p. 3):

> *This emerging conflict pattern is largely localised to Tripoli and has been characterised by street battles between rival militia groups and increased rates of kidnappings and murders. Perpetrators of the violence include the Bab al-Tajoura Brigade, the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, the Abu Salim Brigade and the National Mobile Forces. Militia violence may indicate the desire of these armed groups to be included in the latest political settlement: as al-Sarraj works to build a unified military force and international powers vote to lift the arms embargo, these flash episodes of conflict signal to the necessity of their inclusion for enduring stability.*

In an analysis from January 2016, ACLED also points to conflicts between various militias in Tripoli, in several cases between militias which were formerly allies in the fight against the militias from Misrata (2016a, p. 7).

	2015				2016				2017	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Conflict events	47	42	32	45	40	47	27	46	61	30
Conflict-related fatalities	16	43	28	24	17	86	5	22	51	78

Tripoli: Conflict events and conflict-related fatalities 2015-2017[33] (ACCORD 2015f, 2015g, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016h, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d)

The table shows that the number of conflict-related fatalities[34] fluctuates quite significantly, while the number of conflict events varies less. The numbers represent

[33] For 2014, see ACCORD 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e. For 2011-2013, see ACCORD 2016g, 2016f, 2016i.

[34] For a more detailed account of ACLED's method and definitions, including what kind of fatalities are considered to be conflict-related (*conflict fatalities*), see ACLED n.d.b. ACLED's numbers differ slightly from those presented

all of Tripoli and do not say anything about the distribution between different districts. A survey conducted in 2013 and 2014 (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015) revealed that people's experience of the security situation in Tripoli varied between different parts of the city, and informants from the southern districts were those who reported the highest degree of insecurity. These were the districts that had seen the greatest number of fights between various militias struggling for control. However, other important factors were that the armed groups who had control of the areas from autumn 2011 until 2013-2014 had no local origin and many of them regarded the local population as political opponents.[35] In the Suq al-Jum'a district, the militia groups had local anchoring and were politically on the same side, and the community reported a greater sense of security in their daily lives (pp. 9-10).

If we compare the number of conflict-related fatalities in the capital with the population, we get 10.42 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015 and 12.2 for 2016, while it rose to 24.2 for the first half of 2017. This is several times higher than the situation before the 2011 upheavals: for 2008, the World Health Organisation estimated that the murder rate in Libya was 2.9 per 100,000 inhabitants (Evans 2011). The figure is also above the average for North Africa, where the murder rate is below 5 per 100,000. At the same time, the number is somewhat below the corresponding figure for Southern Africa, where it is over 30.

4.2 ELSEWHERE IN THE CAPITAL AREA

Conflicts between different militias also create unrest in the areas around Tripoli. The causes of conflict can be explained by both the struggle for political control and for control of revenues from criminal activities:

> *In the greater Tripoli region as well as to the west in Zawiya, the distinction between political and criminal violence has proven difficult to untangle as instability created through oil and fuel pipeline shutdowns has been characterised by quasi-criminal groups and smugglers with close ties to prominent families within Zawiya. It is unclear as to whether this is localised posturing to secure control over lucrative smuggling networks and livelihoods or whether it feeds into the wider, national-level conflict* (ACLED 2017, s. 16, cf. Moody 2017).

by the Libya Body Count, which may be due to different sources of reference and a slightly different categorisation. Moreover, these definitions do not overlap with those on which the murder rate is based, but we still believe that the comparison provides a good pointer about the changes in violence in Libya.

[35] The militia saw themselves as "revolutionary" and the population as loyal to the overthrown regime.

	2015				2016				2017	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Misrata										
Conflict events	16	20	8	8	11	14	6	6	8	11
Conflict-related fatalities	1	29	1	0	6	28	2	18	0	5
Al-Murqub										
Conflict events	12	7	3	4	6	2	2	3	2	1
Conflict-related fatalities	12	1	0	20	53	1	0	5	2	15
Al-Jafar										
Conflict events	5	20	4	1	2	5	2	1	4	15
Conflict-related fatalities	4	26	0	0	1	0	0	3	7	30
Al-Zawiya										
Conflict events	21	23	11	10	11	2	7	5	2	3
Conflict-related fatalities	31	6	8	23	31	8	2	9	0	4
Al-Nuqat al-Khams										
Conflict events	20	18	8	14	12	2	2	1	3	9
Conflict-related fatalities	22	29	2	13	110	0	0	4	37	5

The provinces of Tripoli: Conflict events and conflict-related fatalities 2015-2017[36] (ACCORD 2015f, 2015g, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016h, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d)

Here too, we see large fluctuations in the figures between different periods and different provinces, which testify that there is great unpredictability in the level of violence in this area.

4.3 FATALITIES IN VARIOUS CONFLICT EVENTS

In ACCORD's analysis of ACLED's numbers of conflict-related fatalities, the events are distributed into various categories.[37] Findings show that in eight of the last ten quarters analysed, at least 70% of the fatalities were caused by armed struggles between militia groups:

[36] For 2014, see ACCORD 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e. For 2011-2013, see ACCORD 2016g, 2016f, 2016i.

[37] Unfortunately, these numbers are only broken down at the national level in the analyses, and not at provincial levels.

Period		2015				2016				2017	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Conflict-related fatalities	Number	851	763	751	340	580	714	697	879	560	404
Armed combat actions that involve combatants	Number	669	549	531	196	419	562	526	759	284	330
	%	78.6	72.0	70.7	57.6	72.2	78.7	75.5	86.3	50.7	81.7
Other categories that involve combatants and civilians	Number	182	214	220	144	161	152	171	120	276	74
	%	21.4	28.0	29.3	42.4	27.8	21.3	24.5	13.7	49.3	18.3

Libya: Conflict-related fatalities 2015-2017[38] (ACCORD 2015f, 2015g, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016h, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d)

Thus, conflict violence that ends with death primarily involves fighters from militia groups in today's Libya. Unfortunately, these numbers are only broken down at the national level in the analyses, and not at provincial levels. Nevertheless, the underlying source material shows that this pattern also applies to Tripoli and the provinces around it. For example, the UN Panel of Experts reports on clashes between militias in Tripoli over control of various strategic areas and institutions and that such conflict is likely to persist since the Presidential Council is unable to stop it (Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 14-15). As is apparent from section 4.2 above, the conflict level between different militias is also periodically high in the provinces around the capital.

4.4 CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT OF MILITIA GROUPS

Some militia groups are involved in crime. In its latest report, the UN expert panel highlights four forms of criminal activity: smuggling of petroleum products, smuggling of human beings and trafficking in human beings, interference with the work of government agencies and arms trade. The expert team also emphasises that other criminal activities for which they have described militia ties in previous reports are still widespread (Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 60-64). Earlier reports have mentioned kidnapping, armed robbery, people smuggling, other smuggling (Dilloway et al. 2015, pp. 45-47) and smuggling of petroleum products, "protection" for smugglers and others, extortion, kidnapping, currency fraud and robbery (Tessières et al. 2016, pp. 45-48). Even in the relatively peaceful period of 2012-2013, militias were involved in crime, and the conflict over control of various forms of criminal activity erupted into violence (Shaw & Mangan 2014, pp. 20-26):

> *The western side of the coast, and Zuwarah […] in particular, developed into a significant locus of illicit activity. This is in part a reflection of its location:*

[38] For 2014, see ACCORD 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e. For 2011-2013, see ACCORD 2016g, 2016f, 2016i.

its proximity to the nearest European territory, situated at the juncture of two trafficking routes from the west and the south.

[…]

Given their strategic locations, population concentrations, transportation infrastructure, and above average revenue levels, coastal cities have been the sites of the fiercest clashes between armed groups over access to criminal markets. These are repeatedly portrayed as political conflicts, but it is rare that an underlying economic interest cannot be easily identified.

[…]

The trafficking dynamics from Tripoli along the west coast and toward the Tunisian border are particularly significant in demonstrating the decisive impact of how the emerging criminal economy and organized criminal behavior are shaping the political transition.

[…]

Control over smuggling and trafficking has also been a key source of conflict in a number of other northern towns. Although these conflicts have broadly been portrayed to outsiders as clashes between those who supported Qaddafi and those who did not, they are in fact also strongly motivated by a fight over who controls trafficking routes and the resources they generate.

In 2014, Shaw & Mangan assessed that there was a tendency for different groups to consolidate control over different areas (2014, pp. 21-22), but three years later that does not seem to have happened. There are still reports of changes in the power relations between militias in the metropolitan area (Lewis & Scherer 2017). The UN expert panel also confirms this:

> *Along the coastline between Tripoli and the Tunisian border, many armed groups are involved in trafficking in persons and fuel smuggling, which have allowed them to obtain substantial wealth […]. Over the past year, these criminal networks clashed repeatedly, directly or through proxies […]. In Zawiyah, dozens of casualties were reported in 2016 and 2017. Armed groups involved in criminal activities also challenge local authorities, such as the Sabratah Municipal Council, thereby threatening peace […]* (Spittaels et al. 2017, s. 14).

4.4.1 Crimes that affect civilians directly

Some criminal activities are directly targeted at civilians and have major influence on people's perception of security.

4.4.1.1 Kidnappings

Kidnapping is a very widespread form of crime. A number of sources report abductions, kidnapping and deprivation of liberty by militias, motivated by political goals and ransoms (ACLED 2017, p. 16; Amnesty 2014b, pp. 10-14; Amnesty 2015; Amnesty 2017; HRW 2017b; Jawad 2017; MEE 2016b; Moody 2017; Mustafa 2016; NYA International 2017, p. 3; Spittaels et al. 2017, pp. 19-20, 124).

In a survey conducted in 2013, 6% of the respondents said that kidnapping occurred frequently or very frequently in their neighbourhood (Small Arms Survey 2014, p. 3). Also, a report from U.S. Institute of Peace finds that kidnapping was a major concern for 33% of respondents in 2013, but that the proportion rose to 56% in 2014. In Tripoli, the proportion was even greater, especially among the wealthy. By 2014, 5% of those surveyed on a national basis had experienced that they themselves or a close family member had been kidnapped[39] (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, p. 12).

Since 2014, the number of kidnappings has increased, and kidnapping is no longer primarily a danger to visibly prosperous or prominent persons. Now kidnappings affect all segments of society, and even children have been killed by kidnappers when their families have not paid the ransom. For fear of reprisals, many persons are also afraid to speak openly about the fact that family members have been kidnapped (Mary Fitzgerald and Mustafa Fetouri, seminar in Landinfo, 6 September 2017). The Libya Herald has reported that in a 46-day period at the turn of the year, 293 kidnappings occurred in Tripoli alone (Libya Herald 2017a).

4.4.1.2 Theft

In a survey done in 2013, 5% of respondents said that domestic burglaries occurred frequently or very frequently in their neighbourhood (Small Arms Survey 2014, p. 3). The fear of burglary and car thefts increased sharply from 2013 to 2014 among respondents in a survey conducted by the U.S. Institute for Peace (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, p. 12). There are no indications of conditions having improved since then.

It is difficult to determine who is behind the thefts. The existing studies do not say anything directly about this, and no subsequent investigations have been carried out since 2014. The police also cannot be a vital source of solid information since they hardly investigate or prosecute thefts at all, even in those cases where people report them.[40]

In addition to individuals and groups of criminals, however, the militias are also occasionally involved in straightforward theft. As an example, the UN Panel of Experts mentions Jihaz al-Amn al-Ri'asi (the security agency of the Presidential Council), which, despite its name, is a militia and among other things has committed bank robberies in Tripoli (Spittaels et al. 2017, p. 123). Robberies at roadblocks is another form of theft for which militias are clearly responsible. In the USIP survey conducted in 2014, 12% of respondents on a national basis and 15% of respondents in Tripoli reported that they had experienced theft at roadblocks (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, p. 38).

[39] Here it is difficult to see from the report what the informants count as a kidnapping. Since as many as one in twenty indicate that they or their family members have been affected, this may indicate that, for example, being held back by armed persons by a roadblock or the like can be defined as kidnapping.

[40] In the USIP survey, it varied widely from place to place whether the informants stated that they would report burglary to the police (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, pp. 26-27). As pointed out in part 2.4.1, reporting to the police may also have reasons other than a realistic hope of investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the crime.

4.4.1.3 Violent crime

As described at the start of this chapter, the level of violence in Libya has risen sharply since the uprising in 2011, as seen by the number of fatalities caused by violent crime. At the same time, the majority of these fatalities occur in fights between militia groups and primarily involve combatants and to some extent civilians who get caught in the crossfire. However, violent crime is not limited to events ending with death. It is also important to look at other uses of violence and situations where people are implicitly or explicitly threatened with violence. These are conditions where there is much less data than what is the case for fatalities due to violence. For several reasons, no actors attempt to report systematically on the number of injured victims. One reason is that no local institutions or agencies (such as hospitals or police) attempt to systematise information about events they know of. Thus, there is little concrete information to be collected. Another reason is that the real situation is probably severely underreported in Libyan media because many people want the least possible attention to such events afterwards, for fear of reprisals from those responsible for the threats or violence they were exposed to (Mary Fitzgerald and Mustafa Fetouri, Landinfo's Libya seminar in September 2017).

Also, there has hardly been any studies of how common it is to be exposed to violence or threats. One exception is the study by Small Arms Survey in 2013, when respondents were asked if they or others in their household had been victims of three forms of violence in the two years since the Qadhafi regime's fall. 9% stated that someone in their household had been the victim of at least one of the three specific categories (2014, p. 3):

- Assaults and threats: 8%
- Thefts: 3%
- Sexual offences: 1%

The threat of violence does not have to be specifically directed at a person's own household for it to contribute to a climate of fear. The situation is also influenced by experiences other people have,[41] the media picture and rumours. For example, in the survey referred to above, 10% said that killings occurred frequently or very frequently in their neighbourhood (Small Arms Survey 2014, p. 3), even though the number of people killed in Libya apart from persons killed during combat between militias is not very high.

4.4.2 Crimes that cause increased levels of conflict

In addition, crimes that are not directly targeted at civilians can indirectly affect people's sense of security.

4.4.2.1 Drugs

One factor that causes insecurity is the increase in drug abuse, among both combatants in militia groups and others. This has several consequences, related both to the conflict between groups on smuggling and drug sales and to the fact that the use itself leads to increased violence and unpredictability:

[41] An anonymous reporter from the Libya Herald (2017c) points out, for example, that "Gunfire is a regular enough event in Tripoli for it not to panic anyone – unless it happens to be just where you are".

> *The cities are increasingly becoming markets for drug consumption, in part because of the government's disarmament strategy that has given cash payouts to many in the militia groups. In each of the main cities – Tripoli, Benghazi, and Misurata – drug consumption is seen as a growing threat. Illegal narcotics – mainly hashish, some heroin, and to a limited extent cocaine – are now more prevalent, as discussed earlier, but the city markets appear to have been flooded with prescription pharmaceuticals. Drug use has prompted behaviour in Libya's youth that has challenged prevailing cultural norms and social structures. In some cities, notably Tripoli, communities have reacted, sometimes with violence, against those seen to be fostering local demand for drugs* (Shaw & Mangan 2014, p. 21, see also pp. 22–23).

4.4.2.2 People smuggling

The significant people smuggling in boats to Europe happens mainly from the coast between Tripoli and the Tunisian border. This lucrative traffic is an important source of income for several armed groups in the area – whether directly involved in the smuggling or receiving shares of the revenue from the traffickers for facilitation (Shaw & Mangan 2014, pp. 17-19). Although migration only occurs to a limited extent from Tripoli, the capital is a key hub of the people smuggling economy (Shaw & Mangan 2014, p. 23).

The people smuggling business also creates conflict between various armed groups, which occasionally escalates into violent crime. One reason for such conflicts is competition for strategic territory and market shares, but there are also examples of militias that try to work against those involved in people smuggling. Some combat people smuggling for more principled reasons, as reported in Zuwara (Bellingreri 2017; Petre 2015) and Tripoli (Zaptia 2017). Also, some militia groups derive revenues from stopping people smuggling (Mannocchi 2017b; Michael 2017). However, there is little evidence that this last form of militia activity is anything but opportunistic and is simply based on the fact that it is more profitable than facilitating people smuggling.[42]

4.4.2.3 Smuggling and uncontrolled import of goods

Many imports of goods to Libya occur without control by the authorities, and some of this traffic goes through ports along the coast. Misrata is, for example, a centre for the import of used cars from Europe. Pharmaceutical drugs are also an important product (Shaw & Mangan 2014, pp. 12-13). With functioning central authorities, this trade would have been checked and stopped or been subject to fees, which would mean a loss of revenue for those who run the business at present. Thus, they have a strong personal interest in the central authorities remaining weak and in opposing attempts to be deprived of control over their business – including by violence.

The Libyan authorities have little practical control over what is happening in the ports:

> *The port management reports that formal state security architecture is inadequate and that businessmen, who are often armed, threaten the*

[42] This activity can also cause conflict, as when fighting broke out between an IS-allied local militia and the relatively new anti-people smuggling militia Brigade 48 in Sabrata in mid-September (Libya Herald 2017d; al-Wasat 2017).

management if an attempt is made to search or intervene in the movement of goods. "Nobody has authority, so everybody has authority," says the manager responsible for security. "Guns are what determine influence in the port now." Port management has tried to increase levels of security by entering into a specific contract with police and customs agents whereby they would be paid more for delivering a service, but it had little impact, and when it expired in May 2013, it was not renewed (Shaw & Mangan 2014, p. 24).

Most of the smuggling takes place from abroad and into Libya, however, one particularly important form of smuggled goods goes out of the country: petroleum products. Smugglers buy petrol and diesel fuel at heavily subsidised prices in Libya, which they can sell at great profit abroad (Gazzini 2017; Mannocchi 2017a).

4.5 JIHADIST GROUPS

As mentioned at the beginning of this report (part 1.1), Western coverage of the situation in Libya has a particular focus on various jihadist groups, because they constitute a terrorist threat to Western interests. There are two websites focused on jihadist groups which follow the situation in Libya closely, namely Critical Threats (run by the neo-conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute, cf. Critical Threats n.d.) and Eye on ISIS in Libya (closely linked to the site Libya Analysis, for more, see Eye on ISIS in Libya n.d.). We refer to these sources for detailed reporting on jihadist activities, and will merely provide a summary description here.

4.5.1 Tripoli

Jihadist groups like IS,[43] Ansar al-Sharia[44] and others have held a foothold in Tripoli in periods since the fall of the Qadhafi regime in autumn 2011 (see map in Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017, pp. 22, 27, 41). Also, there are militias in the capital that stand for a strict Salafi Islamism (Pack & Smith 2017) and are thus ideologically close to the jihadist groups. These include, among others, the armed group working closely with the Presidential Council, namely the Rada' force of Abdulrauf Kara.[45]

Jihadists have conducted several terrorist attacks in Tripoli in which civilians have become victims, such as the IS attack on the Corinthia Hotel on 27 January 2015 (Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017; Zway & Kirkpatrick 2015). It is likely that IS has several so-called sleeping cells in Tripoli, who could be planning new terrorist attacks (MEE 2016a).

[43] For a brief review of how IS gained a foothold in Libya, see Crisis Group 2017b, pp. 11-19. See also Fitzgerald 2017b.

[44] Ansar al-Sharia announced at the end of May 2017 that they were dissolving. In the announcement, they called for revolutionary forces and so-called Shura councils to unite (Reuters 2017). This can be interpreted as meaning that at least some persons associated with Ansar al-Sharia would join other militias who are ideologically close to them – either Salafi-oriented or jihadist groups.

[45] *Rada'*: 'Deterrent'. This armed group is formally affiliated with the Interior Ministry under the Presidential Council as a special police force, but has its base in the salafi vigilante group the Nawasi brigade (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, pp. 39-40).

4.5.2 Capital area outside Tripoli city

There are IS-allied militias in several parts of the metropolitan area. Eyes on Libya states that by May 2017 IS militia had control over parts of Sabrata and Bani Walid, and a presence between Tripoli and Zawiya and south and east of Misrata. Also, they state that other jihadist groups are based in Misrata (Pack, Smith & Mezran 2017, p. 41). As recently as September, there were fights between IS militias and other militias in Sabrata (Libya Herald 2017d; al-Wasat 2017).

4.6 LOCAL PEOPLE'S SECURITY PRECAUTIONS IN DAILY LIFE

A report on security issues from 2015 reveals that Libyans' sense of insecurity often rises when they move out of their local area and when they go outdoors at night – even locally. This may be because people generally have the best overview of the changing security conditions in the areas in which they frequent the most, but also that they have to take more precautions in areas where they are perceived as outsiders, and sometimes as enemies. The reason for this may be that they are attributed a different political point of view based on social background, such as regional origin, clan affiliation and similar (Abou-Khalil & Hargreaves 2015, pp. 10-11). All oral sources Landinfo has been in contact with for the preparation of this report, say that people still experience this today since the situation is worse now than it was in 2013-2014 (when the studies of the report cited above were conducted). Thus, it has not become any less important for people to take action in everyday life to avoid danger, especially when they move outside their local area.

Private circles and local media are important sources of information on changing security conditions. Another way to keep up to date is through social media, such as online discussion groups where people exchange information about what the situation is like in various areas (one example is Safe Path Tripoli n.d.). People also try to get an overview of contacts or acquaintances they have within various militias (Western diplomatic source, email to the Norwegian Embassy in Egypt). Such connections can assist in situations where people have problems with the militias they are a part of, but also just revealing that one has contacts with other local level militias can sometimes be a deterrent.

5. TRAVEL FROM ABROAD TO TRIPOLI

Travel to Tripoli from abroad is either by plane or by road from neighbouring countries. (There are currently no operational ferry routes between Tripoli and other Mediterranean cities.) We will confine ourselves to circumstances related to travel by plane to Mi'itiga International Airport or by car from Tunisia to Tripoli.

5.1 MI'ITIGA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Tripoli's main international airport, located in Qasr Bin Ghashir just over thirty kilometres west of Tripoli city centre, was destroyed in combat action in the summer

of 2014.[46] Since then, all flights to the capital have gone to Mi'itiga International Airport, which was previously used primarily for domestic flights and for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

There are currently no direct flights between European cities and Tripoli, except for Istanbul.[47] However, there are flights to several countries in the region (e.g. Egypt, Jordan, Niger, Sudan and Tunisia), almost exclusively with Libyan airlines (FlightStats n.d.).

For now, the Rada' force has exclusive control over the airport since the Buni brigade was expelled in early July this year, following an internal settling of scores within the militia on revenue from the smuggling migrants in transit from Bangladesh and North Africa (Lewis & Scherer 2017; Libya Herald 2017b).[48]

Although control of Mi'itiga has changed hands, passengers face many of the same challenges: [49]

- The security checking of luggage and passengers is random.
- Both the Buni brigade and the Rada' force are dominated by Salafi Islamists, who are deeply hostile to other Libyans they regard as potential political opponents. This is especially true for people who are either known to support Haftar and LNA or are suspected of this from their regional origin and clan background.
- Libyans who have been abroad for a long time are sometimes suspected of being "anti-revolutionary", especially if they have been abroad since the uprising against the Qadhafi regime broke out in 2011. However, this focus is not as strong as it was in the years following the uprising in 2011.
- There is great variety in the behaviour of the militias who control the airport, and people with very similar social background can be treated entirely differently – while one person can be detained, another with a similar profile passes through without being stopped.
- There is a large amount of criminal activity outside the terminal building.

5.2 DRIVING BY CAR FROM TUNISIA TO LIBYA

There is a great deal of traffic between Libya and Tunisia, mainly by road, of both commercial goods and Libyans traveling from the metropolitan area to Tunisia for a variety of reasons (tourism, trade, medical treatment, visits to relatives living in Tunisia, etc.). Tunisian authorities also estimate that there are at least one million

[46] The runway is working, but the construction of the passenger terminal has not yet begun (BenIbrahim 2017b).

[47] This may be due to the fact that aviation authorities in the EU believe the safety of luggage and passengers is not good enough (Mustafa Fetouri, Libya Seminar in Land Info September 2017).

[48] There has been conflict between militias for the control of infrastructure such as airports and ports on a number of occasions in Libya, as such control provides opportunities for large revenue from smuggling people and goods (Shaw & Mangan 2014, p. 21).

[49] Here we rely on information obtained from a western embassy accredited to Libya in May 2017, when the Buni brigade had the control, in conjunction with information from Mustafa Fetouri, who travelled to Norway from Mi'itiga in September when the airport had been under the control of the Rada' force for about two months.

Libyan people living in the country (Karasapan 2015), and probably, some of these also travel in and out of Libya.

The journey from Tripoli to the border town of Ra's Jdir is around 180 km along the coastal road. However, it passes through an area where control changes between several different militias, which cover most of the political spectrum in the country (see parts 3.2.3 and 4.4.2). Most people who use this road thus risk facing combatants from militias far removed from themselves politically and ideologically. Also, from time to time, fighting breaks out both along the coastal road and along alternative roads further into the country. There is also a large amount of crime along the road, not least detentions of various kinds.

The border crossing between Ra's Jdir in Libya and Bin Qardan in Tunisia is closed at irregular intervals. Both countries have blocked traffic on various occasions, for different reasons (see, for example, Aljazeera 2016; Benibrahim 2016; Fornaji 2017).

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