



# 1. The Big Picture

## Military unification uncertain ahead of Italy conference

The week was marked by conflicting reports over the outcome of military unification talks in Cairo, Egypt, which resumed on 17 Oct. Despite initial speculation that an Egyptian proposal would unify military institutions, such an outcome has not yet been reached.

According to the spokesperson of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Ahmed Al-Mesmari, Libyan military officials agreed on the establishment of three councils consisting of the National Security Council, Higher Defence Council and the General Command Council. Meanwhile, the Presidential Council (PC) denied reports alleging parties agreed to a final unification agreement. The PC stated that it would support any agreement that is committed to principles of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), and specifically a separation of powers with a military institution under an executive civilian authority.

Overall, there is mounting evidence to suggest the revival of the Cairo talks is unlikely to achieve significant breakthroughs, at least in the short term. The Egyptian initiative could fail due to disagreements over core political issues such as the presence in Cairo of the Government of National Accord (GNA) PM Fayez Sarraj in his capacity as Supreme Commander of Armed Forces, and fears in the West that unification would subordinate the military to Haftar's command.

Some analysts describe the timing of the latest round of negotiations as inextricably linked to the 12-13 Nov Palermo conference. Reports suggest the revival of the Cairo unification talks is symbolic and would only seek to secure Haftar's presence, which remains unconfirmed, in the upcoming Italy conference. From Haftar's standpoint, these provisional agreements in Cairo are a way to

hedge against any potential outcome(s) of the Palermo conference. Should he decide not to attend and/or the Italy-led initiative is considered a failure, the head of the LNA would still be able to revisit draft arrangements from Cairo as an alternative political framework. In the meantime, neither GNA factions nor the LNA would commit to any decisive agreement in Cairo without having more clarity on a new timeline, if any, for elections.

In the run up to the Palermo conference, Libyan political actors are likely to adopt a wait-and-see approach. Until then, the South will likely continue to provide a fertile ground for competition over legitimacy as both GNA and LNA seek to secure some last-minute gains to their public image. The LNA formed a joint operations room and launched the "Murzuq Basin" campaign to clear the Southern region from illicit armed groups. The force will be headed by Mohammed Al-Mahdi Al-Sharif, in cooperation with military operations in the Central regions, Sabha, Brak, Awbari, Ghat, Murzuq and Kufra. The joint force includes the 10th Infantry Brigade, 181st Infantry Regiment, 177th Infantry Regiment, 116 Infantry Regiment and the Subul Al-Salam Battalion. Meanwhile Fayez Sarraj also pledged to combat mercenaries and foreign armed groups in the South.

**KEY POINTS**

- Cairo talks resumed on 17 Oct
- Limited prospect ahead of Italy conf.
- LNA announces operation in South



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## 2. National Security Map

Heavy clashes in Umm Al-Aranib; 6 bodies of Khalid Bin Al-Walid Brigade members found

### Key

#### THREAT INDICATORS

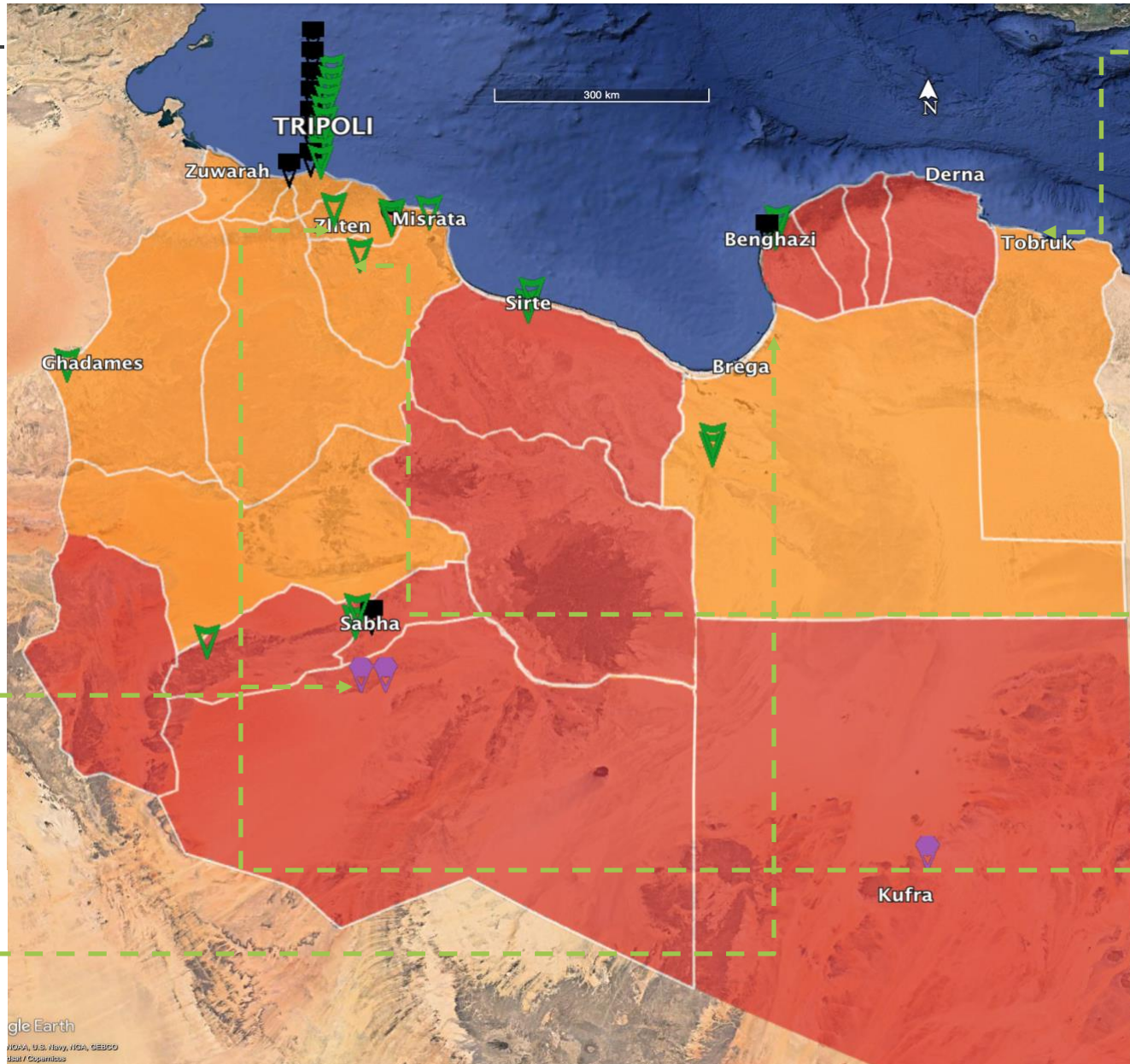
- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

#### EVENT INDICATORS

- ★ IED | VBIED
- ▼ Violent Clash
- Isolated Gunfire
- ▽ Other

According to the Mayor of Al-Sharqiya Umm Al-Aranib, the Southern Fighting Brigades found six bodies of Khalid Bin Al-Walid Brigade members, previously kidnapped by Chadian groups, in Umm Al-Aranib on 17 Oct. The Mayor noted that the number of fatalities increased to 10 on the Khalid Bin Al-Walid Brigade side following the killing of four members in the Umm Al-Aranib area on 14 Oct.

Local reports suggest the city of Ajdabiya declared a state of high alert and increased security presence in an effort to thwart potential attacks. Ajdabiya's security forces conducted patrols to prevent security breaches across the city.



On 18 Oct, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) along with the Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO) denied circulated reports of protests at the Marsa El Hariga port and AGOOC HQ. Reports emerged over dozens of tribesmen demonstrating at the port's gate in protest against the Government of National Accord's (GNA) recent appointment of a new Minister of Economy, Ali Essawi, a main suspect in the murder of a former top rebel commander.

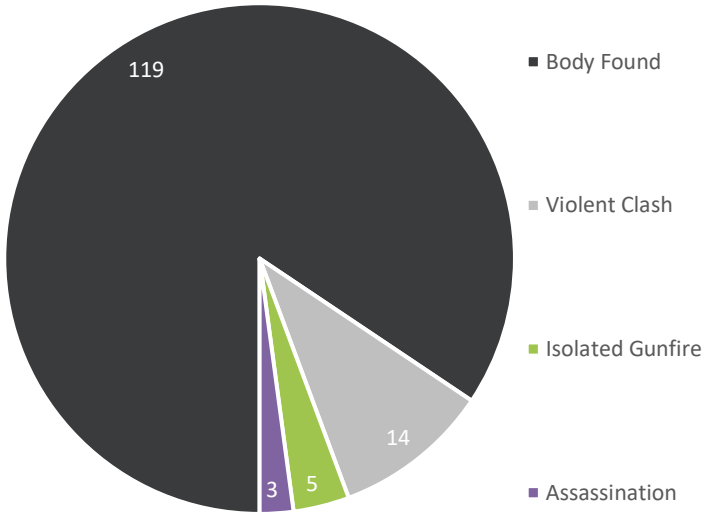
The Libyan National Army (LNA) spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, attended the opening ceremony of a Military Prosecution Office affiliated with the LNA in Bani Walid on 20 Oct. Al-Mesmari stated that the ceremony was attended by Bani Walid's local council members, the Commander of the 27th Brigade, a representative of civil society organizations and a group of LNA officers.

Local reports suggest two unidentified gunmen stormed the pumping station of the Great Man-made River Project and forced workers to halt operations in Tarhouna on 15 Oct. The latest reports suggest the Director of the Great Man-Made River Project in Tarhouna reached an agreement to resume operations.

### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

#### Additional 110 bodies found across Sirte mass graves

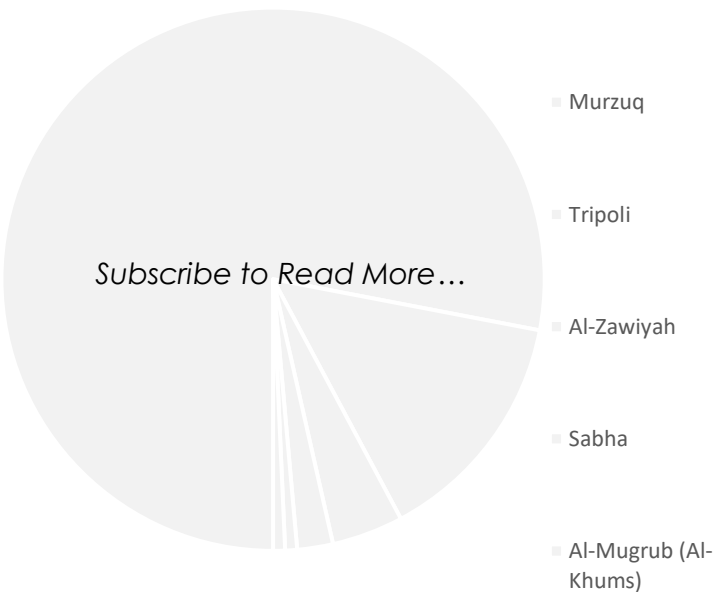
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



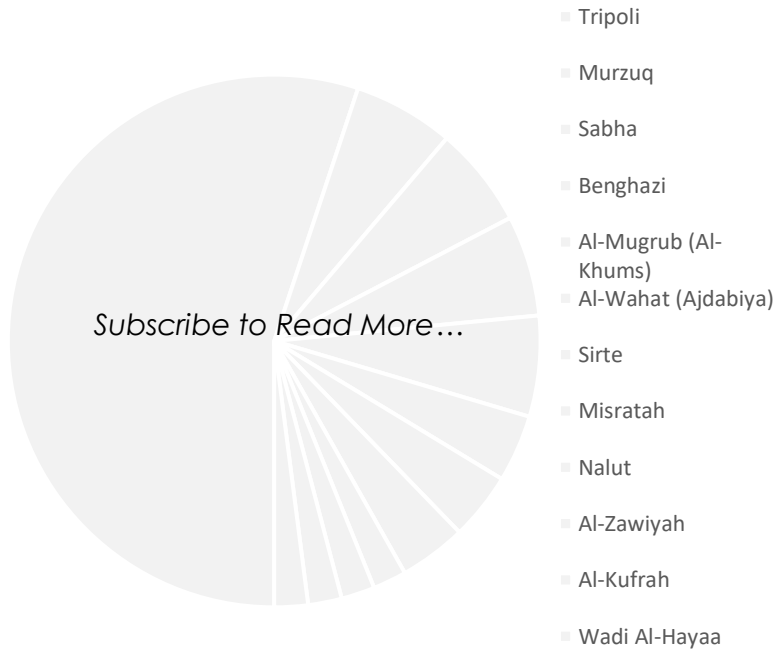
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)



## Nationwide Fatalities by Type of Attack (Past 27 Weeks)



### Data Analysis

Whispering Bell recorded this week a total of 141 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 57 deaths reported last week and 16 the week before. Beyond the discovery of at least 110 bodies across Sirte mass graves, this week was marked by a surge in nationwide fatalities from violent clashes. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 14 cases of isolated gunfire, 8 mortar/rocket incidents, 2 kidnappings, 2 carjackings, an explosion, 4 protests, and a raid incident.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 33 incidents, including 27 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Isolated gunfire incidents were on the rise across Tripoli. There were reports of sporadic gunfire due to a wedding celebration in Tripoli's Souq Al Jum'aa area at approximately 0030hrs on 19 Oct. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, there were reports of sporadic gunfire in Tripoli's Sedi Assaieh area at approximately 2300hrs on 19 Oct. Beyond this, reports suggest sporadic gunfire was heard due to a drive-by shooting on Tripoli's Al Nasr St at approximately 0300hrs on 19 Oct. Whispering Bell recorded a carjacking incident in Tripoli. Reports suggest a black 2013 Hyundai Elantra vehicle was carjacked North of Tripoli's Airport Road in the early hours of 13 Oct.

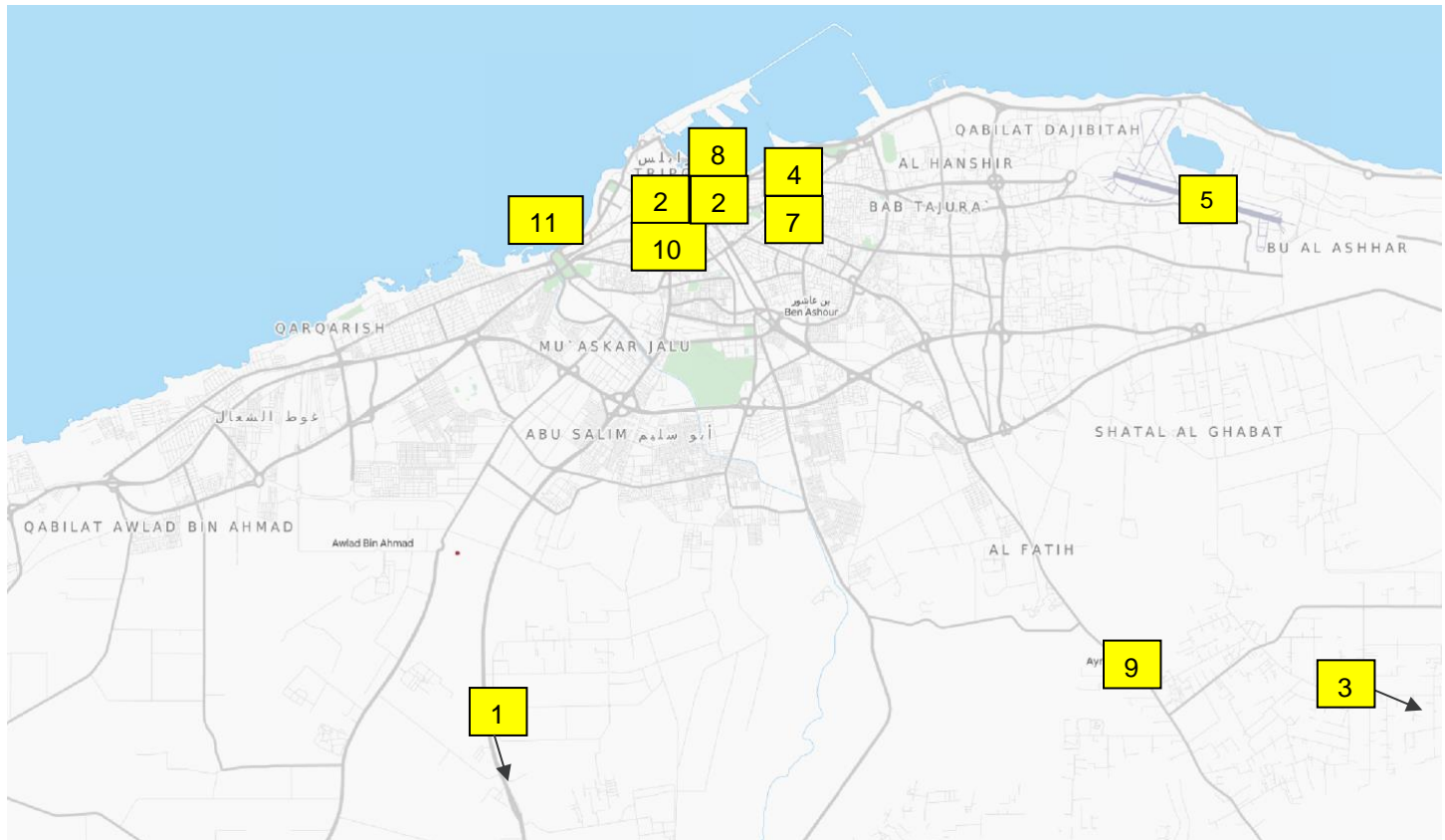
The week in Central Libya was marked by the discovery of another mass grave with at least 110 bodies found on the outskirts of Sirte. The development would bring the total number of bodies found across mass graves in Sirte to 225 in the past week. Meanwhile, an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team from Sirte's Protection and Security Force dismantled improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including an unexploded aerial bomb ready to detonate in Sirte's second residential area on 20 Oct.

Turning to southern Libya, the security environment continues to deteriorate as clashes unfold between local brigades and foreign element, and amid reports of an upcoming Libyan National Army (LNA) operation. Heavy clashes reportedly erupted between the LNA's 104 Battalion and remnants of Chadian opposition groups, resulting in the death of at least four LNA forces in the Umm Al Aranib area on 14 Oct. According to reports, clashes erupted after LNA forces identified Libyan abductees kidnapped by an armed gang affiliated with Chadian opposition groups in the region's desert areas.

In Eastern Libya, tensions continue to grow as politically-motivated protests erupt in Benghazi. Meanwhile, in Ajdabiya, local reports suggest Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebels raided an unidentified Turkish company, robbed equipment and vehicles, whilst kidnapping five security guards on the Marada - Aguila Road on 11 Oct.

# 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

## Militia tensions between SDF & TRB; Mitiga Airport targeted with rocket



### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (13 Oct) Carjacking on Airport Road
2. (14 Oct) Owners & contactors of local companies protest overdue payments
3. (14 Oct) Mortar shell removed in Wadi Al-Rabei
4. (16 Oct) TRB militiaman assassinated near Radisson Blu Hotel
5. (16 Oct) Mitiga Intl. Airport targeted with rocket; no flight disruptions
6. (16 Oct) Building of "Al-Wataniya" station catches fire
7. (16 Oct) MOFA employees evacuate building due to security concerns
8. (16 Oct) TRB leader's right hand killed during assassination of Al-Hankoura
9. (17 Oct) Truck driver transporting furniture kills man in Ain Zara
10. (19 Oct) Drive-by shooting on Al-Nasr Street
11. (20 Oct) Demolition of Military College for Girls HQ commences

### Two TRB-affiliates killed

Reports suggest a militiaman affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) identified as "Khairy Al-Hankoura" was killed near Tripoli's Radisson Blu Hotel Al-Mahary Hotel at approximately 0030hs on 16 Oct. Initial reports indicate masked gunmen riding a brown Toyota pick-up, a 2013 grey Toyota Innova and a white KIA Sportage stepped out of their vehicles and opened fire on Al-Hankoura standing nearby the hotel. Whilst the identity of the killers remains unconfirmed, conflicting reports emerged suggesting the involvement of the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) or the Ghneiwa militia. Hankoura was close to the Ghneiwa militia over the past two years, with speculated reports of his imprisonment by Ghneiwa during this period. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest the "right-hand" of the head of the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB), Haithem Al-Tajouri, identified as Mohammed Al-Bekbak, was killed during the assassination of the TRB-affiliated militiaman "Khairy Al-Hankoura" on 16 Oct. Sources reported that Al-Bekbak had previously arrested forces affiliated with the Special Deterrence Force (SDF).

With the potential involvement of the SDF or Ghneiwa militia in the murders of Al-Hankoura and Al-Bekbak, it is evident that there are internal rifts, possibly over the recent security arrangements in the capital city. Prospects for retaliation between Tripoli's main militias remain high.

### Two SDF-affiliates killed

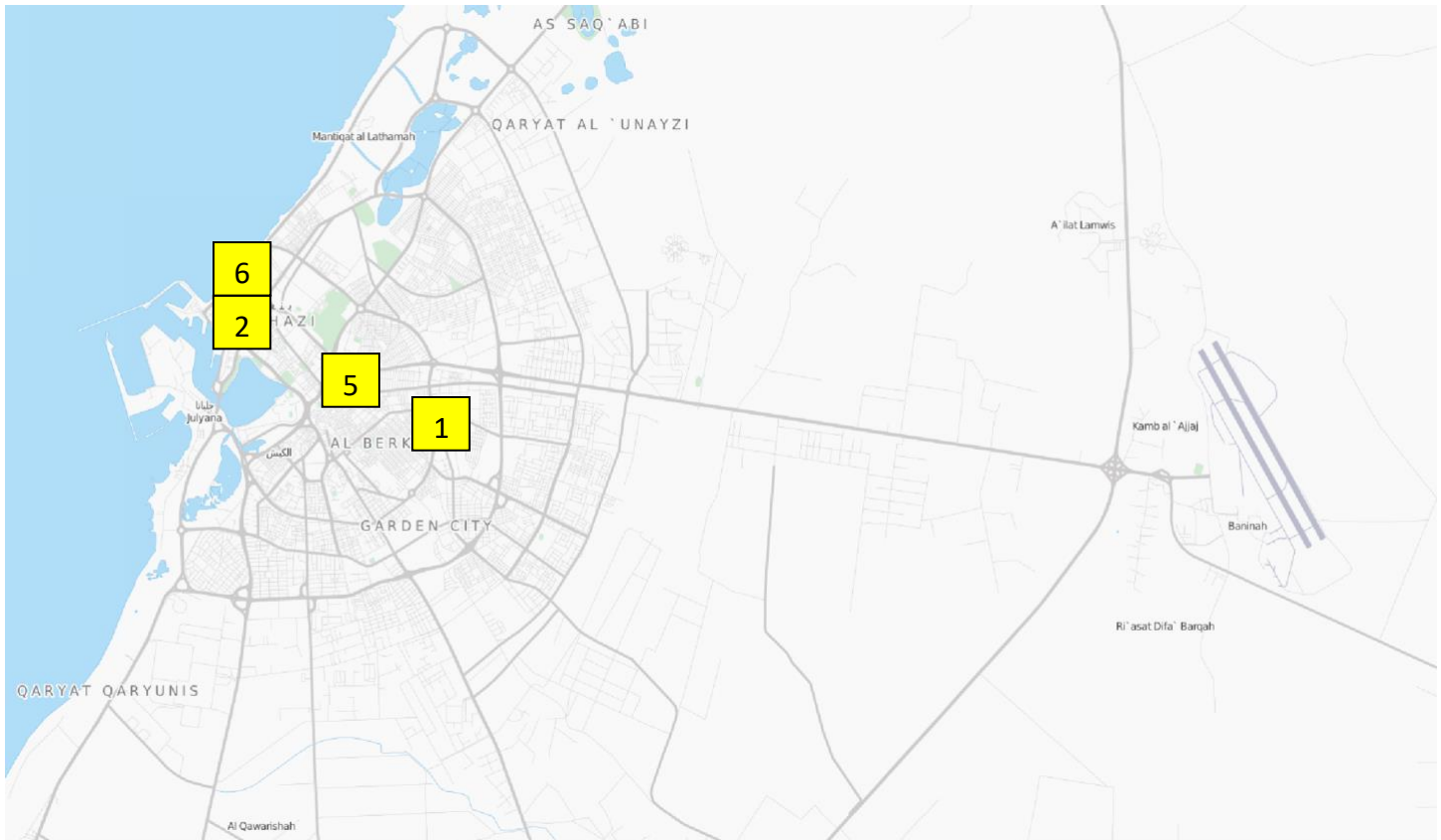
Reports suggest unidentified assailants killed two men affiliated with the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) in Tripoli's Zawiyat Al-Dahmani at night on 16 Oct. The incident follows increased tensions in Tripoli's Zawiyat Al-Dahmani area due to killing of two Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) affiliated forces on 16 Oct. There remains the possibility of a link between the two security incidents.

### Mitiga Intl. airport targeted with rocket

Sources confirmed that a rocket targeted Mitiga International Airport while it was closed in the early hours of 16 Oct. Air traffic was undisturbed. Following the targeting of the airport, "Tripoli's Youth Movement", known for claiming responsibility for previous attacks on the airport, denied its involvement. Thus far, attribution is unclear, however reports emerged of a potential link between the attack and the previous killing of a TRB militiaman on 16 Oct.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Increased calls for Haftar to reveal fate of abducted former Mayor



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (11 Oct) Indiscriminate gunfire injures boy in front of house
2. (12 Oct) Family of abducted former Mayor organize sit-in
3. (15 Oct) Locals protest against existing political bodies
4. (18 Oct) Municipal members reject Al-Thini reforms
5. (19 Oct) Gunman storms hospital & fires sporadic shots
6. (19 Oct) Locals call on Haftar to reveal fate of Al-Araibi

#### Calls to release abducted former mayor

Local reports suggest the family of the abducted former Mayor of Benghazi, Ahmed Al-Araibi, organized a sit-in calling on Khalifa Haftar to interfere and release Al-Araibi and his son in front of Benghazi's Tibesti Hotel on 12 Oct. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, several residents held a protest calling on the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, to reveal the fate of the previously abducted former Mayor of Benghazi, Ahmed Al-Araibi and his son in Benghazi on 19 Oct. Conflicting reports continue to emerge over the motive behind Al-Araibi's abduction and the potential parties behind the incident. In Nov 2017, leaked reports circulated accusing Al-Araibi of collaborating with military leaders affiliated with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Benghazi. Beyond this, reports suggest Al-Araibi often opposed Haftar's decisions, subsequently leading to his resignation in Apr 2017.

#### Municipal members reject Al-Thini reforms

Local reports suggest members of the Municipal Council of Benghazi rejected the decision issued by the head of the Interim Government, Abdullah Al-Thini, to dissolve the municipal council and form a "management council", consisting of a head and four members. Saqr Omran Boujouari was appointed as the head of the management council, whilst Jazia Jibril, Idris Ghaith Qadoura, Tariq Hamed Al-Shwaheidi and Kamal Miftah Sawan were appointed as members. In a statement, the municipal council members rejected Al-Thini's decision and demanded a reversal, whilst threatening to resort to the judiciary. The former military governor of the Derna-Bin Jawad district, Abdelrazak Al-Nadouri, issued a decree appointing Abdulrahman Al-Abbar as the Mayor of Benghazi in mid Apr 2017, replacing the former resigned Mayor Ahmed Al-Araibi. The head of the House of Representatives (HoR), Aguila Saleh, dismissed the role of military governor of Derna to Bin Jawad following the end of military conflicts in the Eastern region on 21 Jul 2018. The removal of Al-Nadouri's military governor post subsequently suggests all decrees issued during this period were dismissed.

## 6. What's next

### Intl. backing of Palermo Conference could revive political process

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

On the domestic front, meetings between the High Council of State (HCS) and the House of Representatives (HoR) on the reformation of the Presidential Council (PC) resumed. The HoR accepted the amendments proposed by the HCS regarding the executive authority. It is likely that the back-and-forth between the HoR and HCS will persist on the reformation of the PC, though reports suggest there remains no evident candidate to potentially assume Serraj's role. Internationally, military unification talks resumed in Cairo with the Libyan National Army's (LNA) spokesman stating that final agreements were reached, however, the PC denied the latter. The Cairo talks came against the backdrop of meetings between Egyptian President Abdulfattah Sisi and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, where the Libyan file was discussed. Russia's deepening relationship with Egypt continues to raise questions over a potential shift in Moscow's balancing act in Libya. Meanwhile, observers suggest Italy's upcoming conference on Libya may revive the stagnated political process due to international backing from the US and Russia, in contrast to the previous Macron-endorsed Paris summit. Furthermore, the Italian Foreign Ministry is due to host a ministerial conference discussing stabilizing Libya on the basis of the UN plan on 25 Oct.

#### SECURITY FORECAST

This week was marked by a series of killings of militiamen affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) and the Special Deterrence Force (SDF). Additionally, Mitiga International Airport was targeted with a rocket, though air traffic was undisrupted. Overall, due to reports of the series of killings highlighting wider potential TRB-SDF tensions, along with unconfirmed reports of an imminent Al-Kaniat militia attack, the security situation in Tripoli will likely remain tense in the short term. In the wider West, a drive-by shooting killing three in Al-Zawiya highlights ongoing turmoil in the city, whilst security concerns at Zawiya's Refinery persist. In Bani Walid, a suspected Islamic State (IS) house raid and subsequent arrest, in addition to Ajdabiya declaring a state of high alert, indicates increased suspicious movements in the region. Turning to Libya's South, confrontations between local armed groups and Chadian mercenaries intensified in Umm Al-Aranib, whilst Haftar announced the formation of a joint force to combat illicit groups in the region. It is likely that confrontations will intensify, potentially prompting further involvement by Western authorities. In the East, the upcoming Benghazi International Forum & Exhibition of Oil & Gas would help increase confidence in the sector, though it will be held in a context of tensions that could result in disruptions.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*Center for Global Policy*", the author, Azeem Ibrahim, provides insight on the only officially announced Presidential Candidate thus far, Dr. Aref Ali Nayed. "The person who stands out the most as a visionary future leader for a united, successful Libya at this moment in time is Dr Aref Ali Nayed, a Canada-educated Islamic scholar, engineer, philosopher and Libyan Ambassador to the UAE – who to date is the only individual who has announced his candidacy for president. Dr Ali Nayed has an impressive academic and educational background, but also business and philanthropic track record, both in the West, and in Libya where he returned to in 1990s. But most of all, what stands out is what he envisions for Libya. Dr Ali Nayed sees a radically localist Libya, a Libya of cities and hinterlands each of which celebrate their own unique cultural and historical heritage, each of which fosters its own vision for itself, and all of whom would be supported by a central government to maintain open and mutually beneficial relations with each other and with other parts of the region and the world. The central government would be there to administer the peace and the shared public goods, such as the country's vast oil reserves, but otherwise all the differences and idiosyncrasies of Libya would be embraced and fostered, rather than fought over." said Ibrahim.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for the "*Atlantic Council*", the author, Karim Mezran, discusses how seven years after the death of Libya's ousted leader Muammar Al-Gaddafi, it remains vital for Libya to incorporate Libya's past into its future. "There is, right now in Libya, a return within the country of sympathizers of Gadhafi's Jamahiriyya. In most cases, this sympathy is a form of resentment for the marginalization of constituents of the old regime by the revolutionary elites more than a real allegiance to the old form of government. Gadhafi and Gadhafism have become a symbol for the dissatisfaction with the new situation, not an assertion of the superiority of the old regime. Declarations and statements by former Gadhafi loyalists expressly state their allegiance to a pluralistic and constitutional system not to a return to the Jamahiriyya or dictatorial exercise of power. There is a need in Libya to study the past and interpret it with realism and rationality rather than reimagine it as a mythical era where everything was better. This exercise will go far in reconciling the population with its history and with its search for a political system rooted in the identity and aspirations of all Libyans, not just a few of them. Gadhafi and Gadhafism have become a symbol for the dissatisfaction with the new situation, not an assertion of the superiority of the old regime." said Mezran.

# About Whispering Bell



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