

# 1. The Big Picture

## Turkey's Syria operation set to impact its posture in Libya



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This week, combat operations were dominated by a Libyan National Army (LNA) attempt to capture Aziziyah, the town between Tripoli and Gharyan. Controlling Aziziyah would enable LNA units to isolate Gharyan southward from remaining GNA forces in Tripoli. However, the LNA was pushed back by forces loyal to Tripoli's Government of National Accord (GNA) in a counteroffensive that reportedly led to the surrender of dozens of LNA soldiers and death of alleged foreign mercenaries. The LNA, however, countered these claims and stated airstrikes targeted multiple pro-GNA militias in Gharyan and Aziziyah, forcing them to retreat.

Away from Tripoli, this week's Turkish-led military offensive against Kurds in northern parts of Syria is directly relevant to the Libyan context. The links to Libya were first highlighted by the GNA's rejection of an Arab League proposal to reduce diplomatic representation and cooperation with Turkey after the Ankara-led military operation.

Further, Ankara's military operations in Syria are expected to have an influence on its levels of engagement in the Libyan conflict in the medium term. While combat operations in Syria are unlikely to deter Ankara from backing the GNA in Libya, support to the Tripoli government is expected to shrink in favour of the new operation dubbed "Operation Peace Spring". Yet, some analysts are of the view that Ankara is capable of sustaining operations across two simultaneous fronts and that support for the GNA will be untouched. Regardless, the GNA views Turkey's support as existential and international concerns over Ankara's actions will place the burden on the GNA by reinforcing the "guilty by association" narrative.

Meanwhile, the offensive against Kurdish elements drew significant criticism from international actors, which indicates a direct impact on Turkey's public image, and by extension, will help reinforce the LNA's narrative on the ground. The newly-announced Syria operation provides an opportunity for the LNA and its foreign supporters to fill the vacuum and anchor Turkey's involvement in Libya to international debates over Ankara's role. Singling out Turkey is also expected to have broader ramifications on the political front, especially ahead of the Berlin conference, slated for November but yet to be confirmed. More specifically, moves by

France and Germany to halt some arms exports to Ankara, and talk of a potential EU sanctions regime, have de facto reduced Turkey's leverage in any upcoming Libya conference.

In addition, analysts have highlighted the Turkish operation's detrimental impact on counterterrorism efforts and potential for Islamic State (IS) detainees to flee. For the Libyan context, this increases the likelihood of returning fighters making their way to join combat operations South of Tripoli.

On the oil & gas front, the rift continues to widen between parallel entities and subsidiaries of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), reinforcing the assessment that a disruption to the sector is likely in the short to medium term. On 08 Oct, the NOC stated the Eastern-based Brega Petroleum Marketing Company (BPMC), which recently set up a parallel board and broke away from Tripoli, attempted to block September payments of employees in the Eastern and Central regions. Later, the Tripoli-based BPMC confirmed it was able to process the salaries. In a statement, the BPMC declared it overcame an illegitimate attempt by the parallel board of directors in the East to obstruct payments. The statement concluded "We urge the so-called parallel board members to step aside so order can be restored".

Separately, the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) published its revenue statement covering the first three quarters of 2019. Despite the conflict, and against all odds, the statement was relatively positive with oil revenues up and state spending down. Oil and gas revenues stood at 22.7 billion LYD while total government spending was at 29.26 billion LYD. Government spending exceeded total revenues of 24.57 billion LYD. Revenues from the tax on the sale of foreign currency were at 16.9 billion LYD. Public sector wages continue to represent the largest percentage of government expenditure, representing approximately 54% of total government expenditure. However, spending on development projects was down while subsidies were up.

#### KEY POINTS

- LNA offensive to capture Aziziyah
- Turkey's Syrian op. to reduce its leverage
- NOC overcomes parallel entity obstruction

# 2. National Security Map

## Six doctors kidnapped in Al-Zintan; LNA airstrikes target Sirte's Airport & Airbase

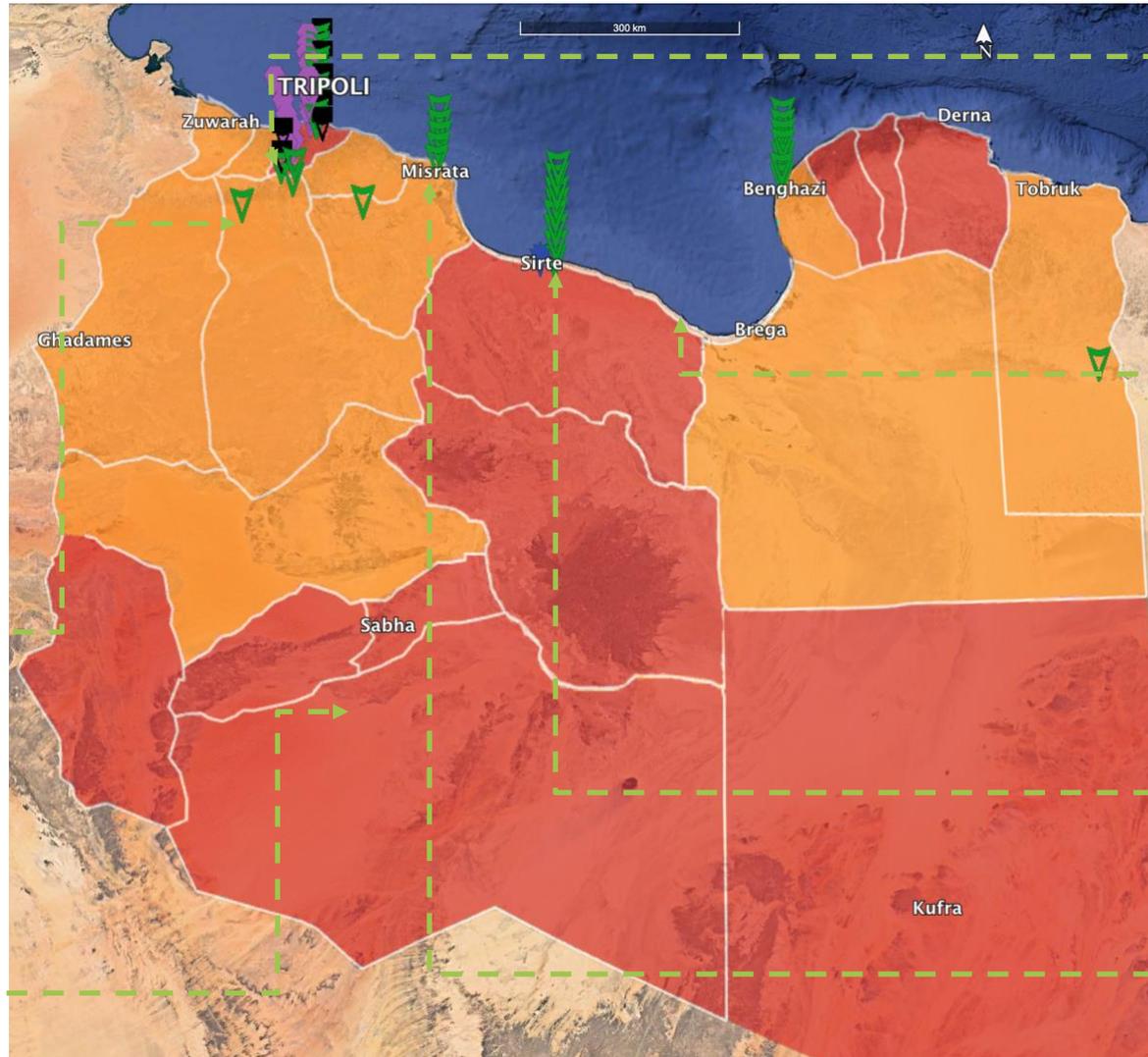
### Key

#### THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

#### EVENT INDICATORS

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



Reports suggest at least six doctors were kidnapped in Al-Zintan en route to Gadamis on 11 Oct. The doctors were reportedly on their way to offer free medical treatment to patients in Gadamis. The latest reports suggest the kidnapers released some doctors while those originally from Tripoli remain in detention. Local reports suggest the kidnapers are demanding the release of a relative currently being held by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) in Tripoli.

An unidentified US defense official was quoted stating that recent US Africa Command (AFRICOM) airstrikes in Libya have had a "devastating effect" on the Islamic State (IS) group. According to the defense official, a third of the group's fighting force was eliminated by recent AFRICOM airstrikes. The official added that there are only about 100 fighters operating in Libya.

Mohamed Gonounou, the GNA Volcano of Rage spox, stated GNA forces repelled an attack by Russian mercenaries affiliated with the Wagner Group in Aziziyah. Gonounou declared that LNA forces, supported by various mercenaries, were encircled and later surrendered to the GNA. The spox added that GNA forces downed a military aircraft attempting to rescue LNA units in Aziziyah. Meanwhile, LNA spox Ahmed Al-Mismary, stated LNA air defence systems downed a GNA military aircraft over Aziziyah.

On 08 Oct, Ras Lanuf's Oil and Gas Processing Company (RASCO) announced the official resumption of production of the polyethylene plant following a seven-year hiatus.

The Tunisian Ministry of Defense (MoD) issued a statement announcing the arrest of 15 Sub-Saharan African nationals attempting to illicitly cross through the Tunisian-Libyan border on 07 Oct. The ministry stated that military units operating in Tunisia's Tatawin province carried out the arrest and the detainees were handed over to the National Guard Units.

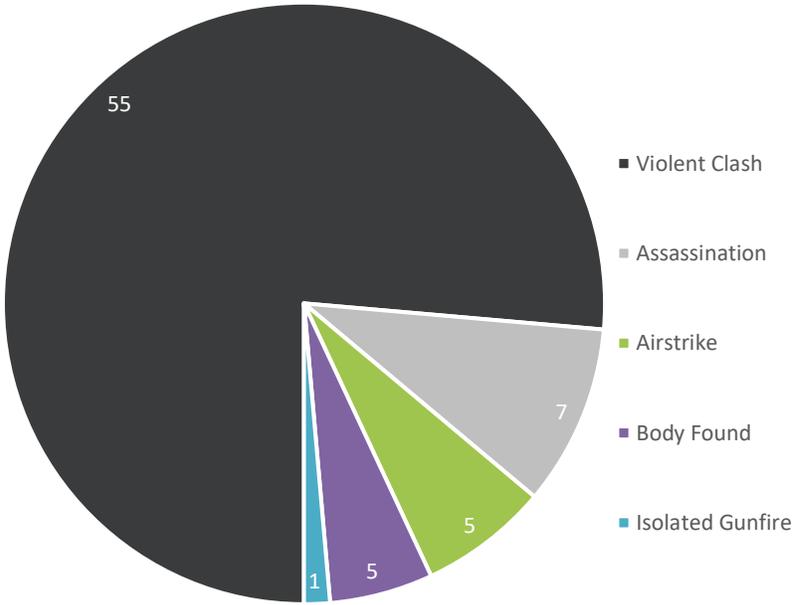
Local reports indicate airstrikes targeted Sirte's Qardhabiya Airbase and Sirte International Airport on 07 Oct. The airstrikes reportedly targeted a former military site used to store ammunition in an area called "African Union" and Qardhabiya Airbase area in Abu Hadi, as well as Sirte's International Airport.

Misrata-based Libyan Iron and Steel Company (LISCO) issued a statement announcing the signing of a cooperation agreement with the Turkish company "Gemkom" to supply electric power to steel plant No.1. LISCO noted that the agreements aim to raise and maintain the production and capacity at the steel plant.

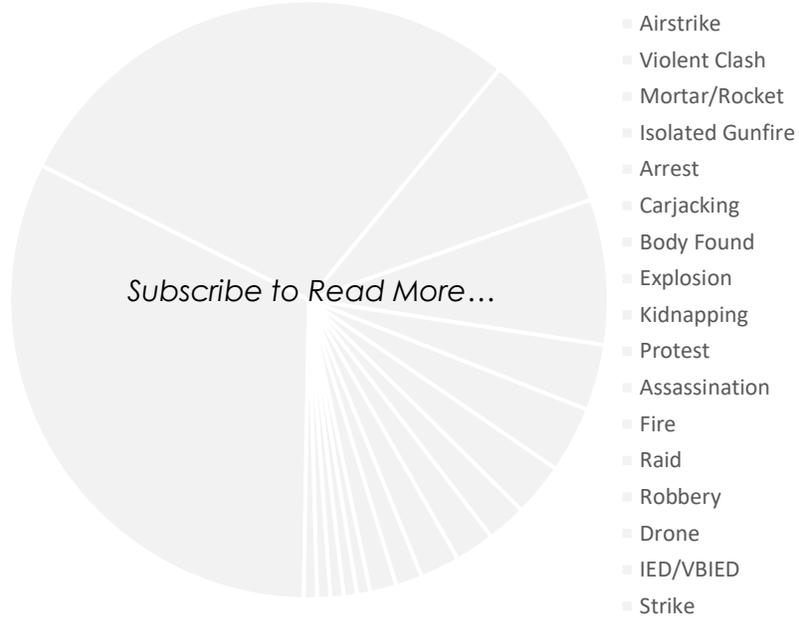
# 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

## Violent clashes in Western region continue to account for majority of fatalities

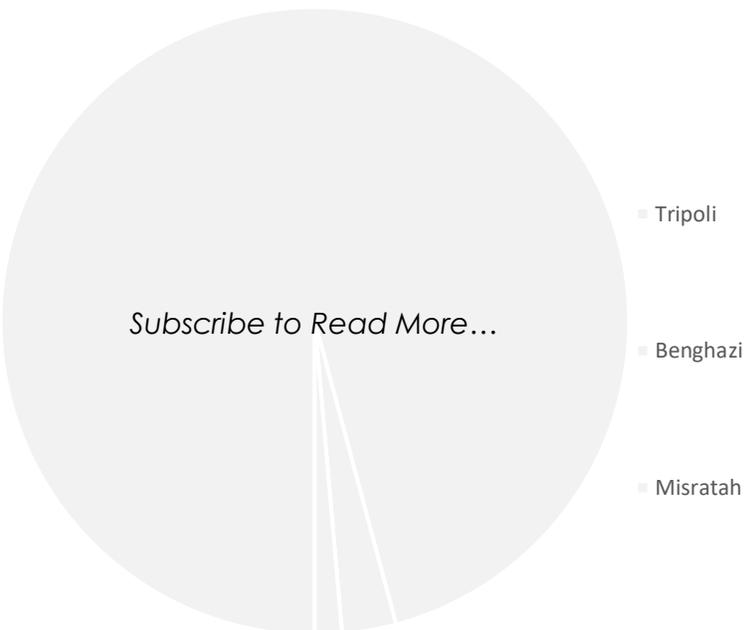
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



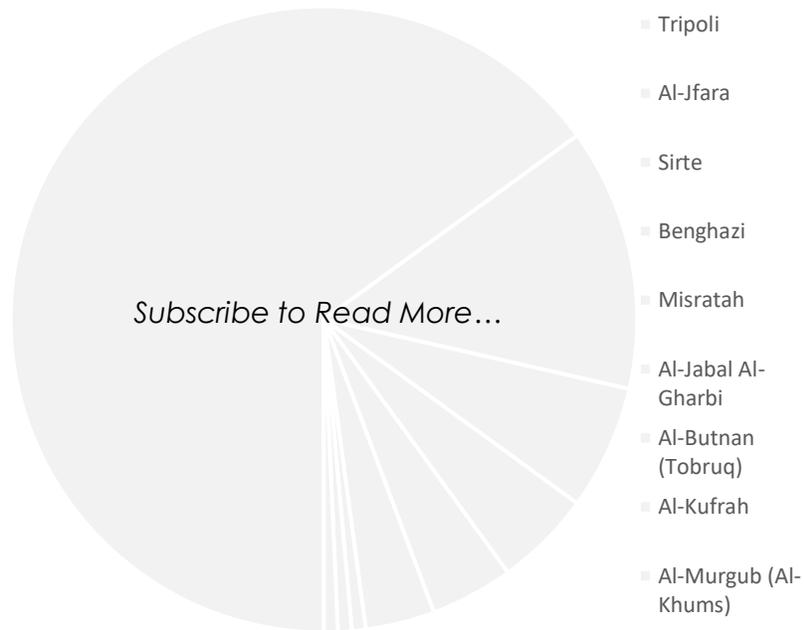
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



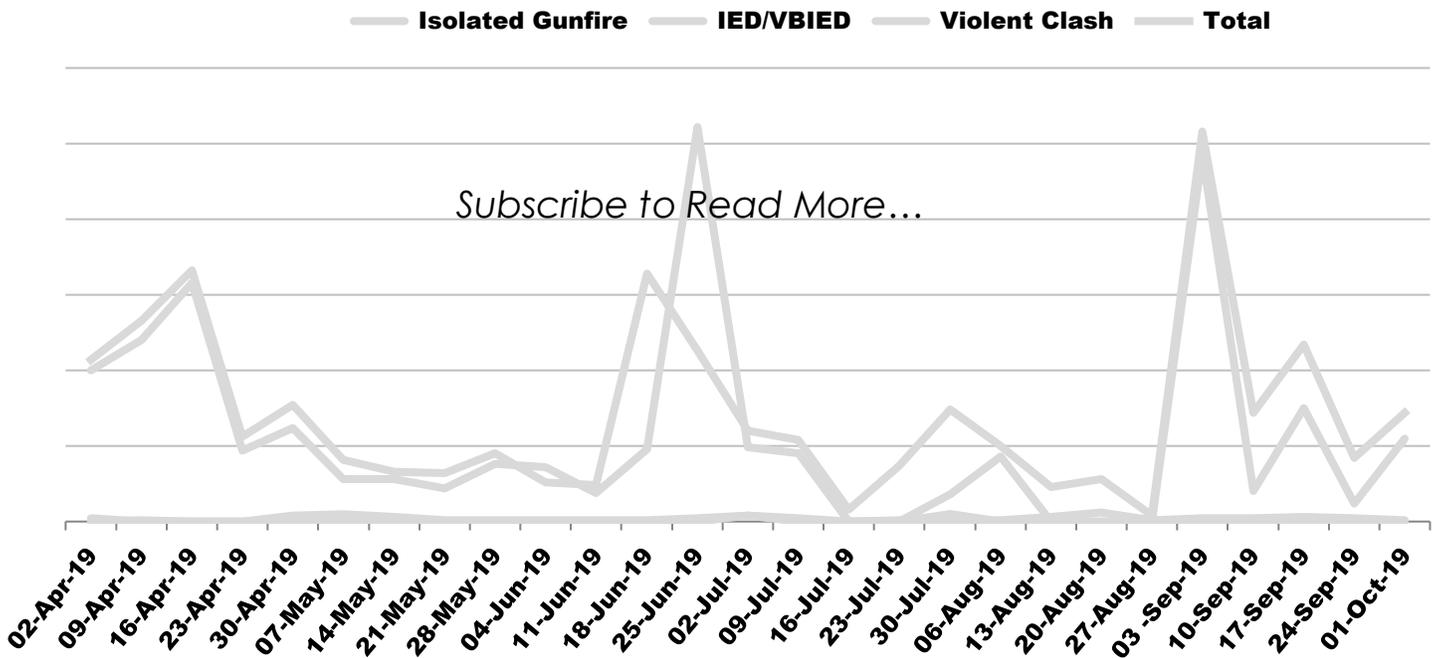
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)



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



### Data Analysis

WB recorded this week a total of 72 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 42 deaths reported last week and 117 the week before. This week, the GNA's Field Ops Room commander, Ahmed Abu-Shehema, claimed GNA forces killed approximately 50 LNA units on the Al-Twaisha frontline on 08 Oct. Violent clashes in the Western region accounted for 55 fatalities this week. Meanwhile, this week saw 7 fatalities as a result of killings in the wider Tripoli district, with 6 fatalities recorded as a result of Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) members killing six Egyptian labourers during interrogations. Beyond, five bodies were found across the country this week, with three bodies found in Benghazi. The highest number of fatalities was recorded in the Tripoli district, followed by Benghazi and Misratah. Unlike the previous week, no fatalities were recorded in the Southern region following a gradual calm after a series of recent US Africa Command (AFRICOM) airstrikes targeted Islamic State (IS) positions in the area. Meanwhile, in contrast to the previous week, the second highest number of fatalities was recorded in Al-Jfara district as a result of increased clashes on the Aziziya frontline as the LNA attempted to advance. Intensified military operations were corroborated by an increase in airstrikes and violent clashes. Several security incidents were recorded throughout the country including 45 airstrikes, 40 violent clashes, 12 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 11 cases of isolated gunfire, 5 carjackings, 4 cases of bodies found, 3 kidnappings, 3 protests, 2 assassinations, 1 robbery, 1 raid, 1 strike and 1 IED/VBIED removed.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 122 incidents, including 91 in Tripoli. In Tripoli, criminal activity remains widespread across the capital city corroborated by 8 isolated gunfire cases, 4 carjackings, 2 assassinations, 2 protests, 1 body found, 1 raid and 1 robbery recorded throughout the reporting period. Reports indicate a Sub-Saharan African laborer was found killed in Al Serraj area, near Al-Tallajat Traffic lights, at approximately 0730hrs on 08 Oct. Initial reports indicate the labourer attempted to rob an electronics shop in the area, after which locals initially assaulted him and later shot him dead. Separately, pro-LNA media outlets reported Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) members killed six Egyptian laborers and wounded others in an unidentified location in Zanatah on 07 Oct. Initial reports indicate the Egyptian labourers refused to allow the TRB to interrogate them for not carrying their IDs. Meanwhile, reports suggest the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) attempted to cover up the incident. In the wider West, local reports indicate Al-Salam Charitable Society in Bani Walid located an unidentified body on the road to Fadraj area near the "Chinese Company" HQ, East of Bani Walid, on 04 Oct.

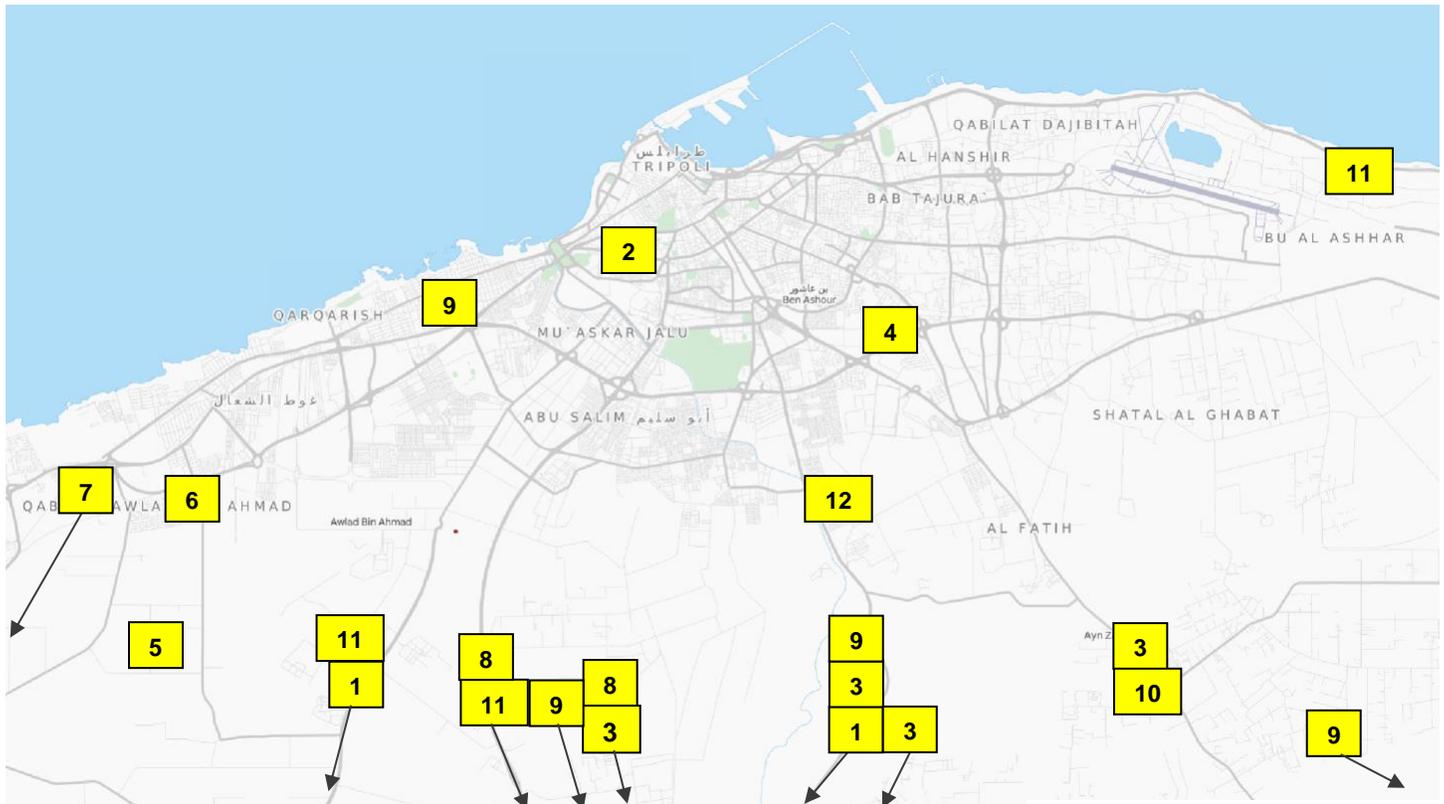
In the central region, the area remains dominated by ongoing LNA airstrikes targeting GNA positions across the city. WB recorded a total of 8 LNA airstrikes throughout the reporting period targeting Sirte's Qardhabiya airbase, the airport, and other positions in the city. These airstrikes come as part of LNA attempts to widen the rift between Sirte and Misrata. The remaining incident recorded in Sirte included demining teams locating explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the gardens of the city's government complex.

Turning to the Southern region, indiscriminate gunfire injured a man in the Ribyana area, approximately 150 kms from Al-Kufra. No further incidents were recorded in the region.

In the East, sporadic security incidents persist in Benghazi with 2 arrests, 2 cases of bodies found, 2 kidnappings, and 1 protest recorded throughout the reporting period. Separately, the LNA's Tobruk Military Region Media Office reported its units seized two trucks loaded with fuel attempting to flee through the Libyan-Egyptian border, South of Al-Jaghub area.

# 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

## Criminal activity on upward trend; allegations of imminent MJI reopening



### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (06 Oct) LNA advances on Khallat Al-Furjan and Aziziya frontlines
2. (06 Oct) Masked gunmen carjack vehicle near AlJumhuriya Esrem branch
3. (08 Oct) Clashes intensify in Wadi Al-Rabei, Ain Zara, Khallat & Hadba fronts
4. (07 Oct) LNA claim TRB members kill 6 Egyptian labourers in Zanatah
5. (07 Oct) Gunmen carjack female driver's vehicle b/w Kreyimiya & Serraj
6. (08 Oct) African laborer shot dead after attempting to rob electronics shop
7. (08 Oct) Skirmishes between Al-Zawiya & Misrata militias in An-Najila
8. (09 Oct) Clashes cont; Al-Furjan tribe from Tarhuna confirm support for LNA
9. (09 Oct) SDF deny raiding café in Hai Al-Andalus
10. (10 Oct) GNA claim advances, capturing LNA units & killing 5 Russian mercenaries
11. (11 Oct) Local man's body found near Ispan Roundabout
12. (11 Oct) Shots fired ivo OYA Clinic prompting clinic's temp closure

### Reports emerge over MJI possibly resuming ops

Reports emerged suggesting Mitiga International Airport (MJI) will resume operations on 17 Oct. WB sources reported competent authorities noting the possibility of MJI resuming operations on 15 Oct. Of note, a meeting was recently held between the UNSMIL Deputy SRSR for Political Affairs, Stephanie Williams, and the GNA's Minister of Transport, Milad Maatoug, where the two sides discussed the humanitarian crisis associated with MJI's indefinite closure, as well as available options to reopen the airport.

### SDF deny raid targeting opposite sex gatherings

The Special Deterrence Force (SDF) denied any involvement in a raid of a café in the Hay Al-Andalus area at approximately 1400hrs on 09 Oct, after allegations that it took part in the incident and forced locals sitting with individuals of the opposite sex to provide marriage certificates. The SDF spox, Ahmed Bin Salem, denied any wrongdoing and claimed the allegations against the militia are fabricated. Locals took to social media to voice their anger after the incident. The identity of the group is unknown, though allegations suggest a faction within the SDF might be involved. Some analysts suggest the incident highlights the growing influence of the Madkhali Salafi current in daily life across Tripoli.

### Skirmishes between Pro-GNA militias

Sources reported skirmishes erupted between two pro-GNA militias, including one from Zawiya and the other from Misrata, in the An-Najila area in the evening on 08 Oct. Unconfirmed reports suggest a Zawiya militiaman accidentally killed a Misrata militiaman while preparing to join its forces on the Al-Aziziya front.

### Carjacking incidents

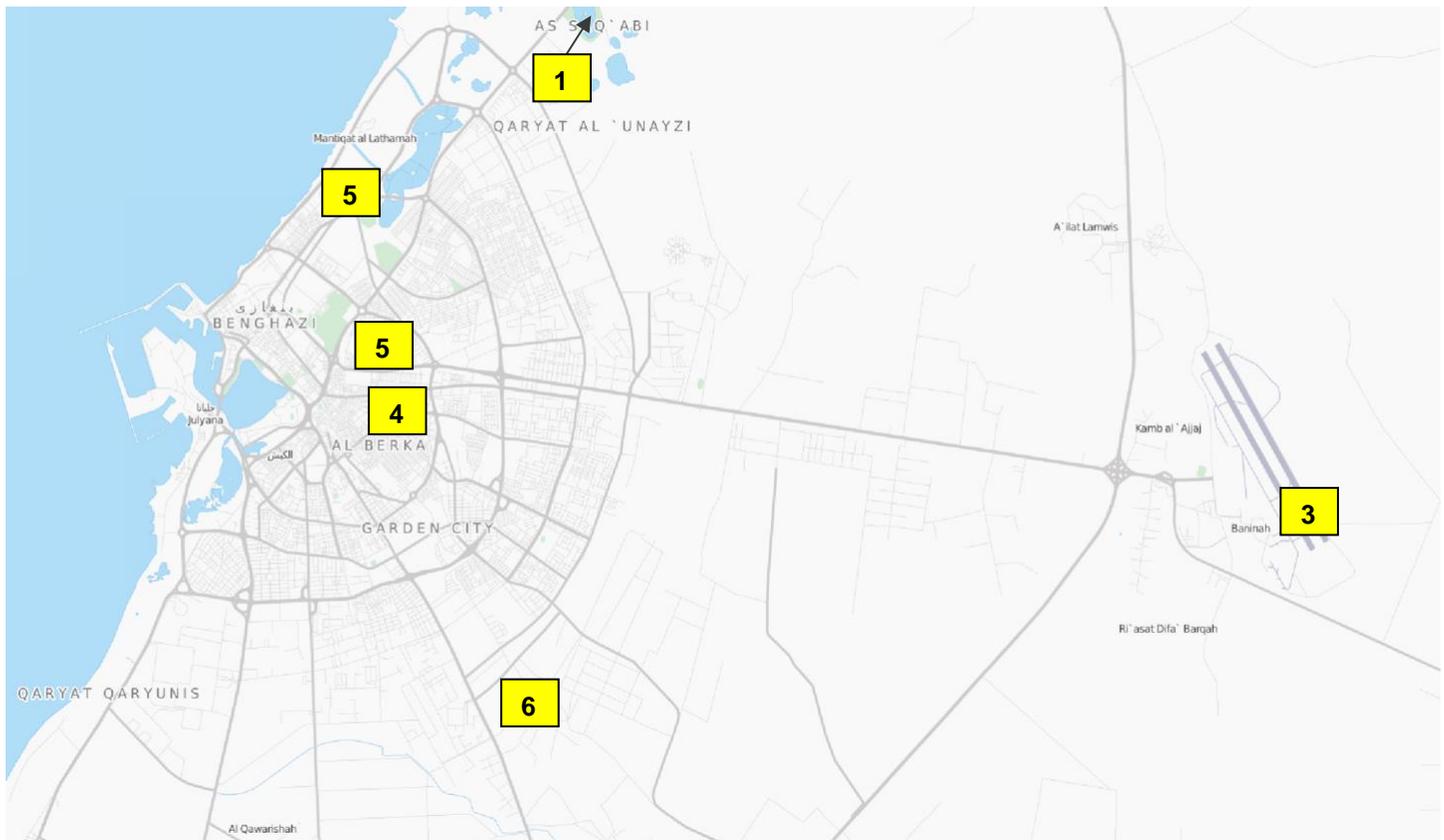
Four masked gunmen driving a dark-grey Hyundai Elantra carjacked two vehicles, including a white Mercedes, on the Tuesday Mall Bridge on 05 Oct. Separately, gunmen driving a Toyota pick-up carjacked a white Samsung belonging to a man in his fifties after a traffic collision. The gunmen shot the victim in the leg twice and kidnapped him.

### TPF threatens officials with information

The Tripoli Protection Force (TPF) issued a statement referring to "criminal gangs that have wreaked havoc on the ground" and noted the LNA's use of Russian mercenaries to forcibly enter Tripoli. Meanwhile, the force welcomed a statement by the Municipality of Janzour calling on the UNSMIL to take a neutral stance and openly condemn the "aggression" on the capital and refrain from language that serves the interest of the "aggressor". The force also condemned LNA airstrikes targeting MJI, Misrata International Airport (MRA), and more recently Janzour's Equestrian Club. To conclude, and of particular importance, the force noted that it possesses evidence implicating high-level officials, particularly those in the oil fields and ports, in corruption cases. The development is a clear indicator of the rift within the GNA camp. Of note, since its formation in late 2018, the TPF's statements have recurrently highlighted corruption among the political class, including the tampering of the state's financial and economic institutions.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Bodies of 2 Sudanese women found, whilst 3 others reported kidnapped



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (08 Oct) Body of elderly woman found stabbed to death
2. (09 Oct) CID arrest four individuals in possession of drugs in Serti area
3. (09 Oct) Air traffic temp suspended at BEN due to maintenance works
4. (10 Oct) Lawyers protest against kidnapping of former head
5. (10 Oct) Bodies of two Sudanese women found with signs of torture
6. (12 Oct) Mass grave found in Al-Hawari area
7. (Unknown) Armed group kidnap three Sudanese women

#### Bodies found

Local reports indicate the bodies of two Sudanese women were found with signs of torture in Benghazi on 10 Oct, whilst separate reports indicate three other Sudanese women were kidnapped this week in the city. The first body was found on the shore in Al-Sabri area and belonged to a Sudanese woman residing in Sharif Street, whilst the second was found near Al-Jalaa Hospital and belonged to a Sudanese woman residing in the Salmani area. Initial reports indicate the two women were initially arrested by an armed group dressed in the LNA's Al-Saiqa Special Forces military uniform. There is no further information available. Separately, Sudanese families residing in Benghazi reported that unidentified gunmen kidnapped three Sudanese women in an unidentified area. Their fate remains unknown.

Further, local reports indicate security forces found the body of an elderly woman wrapped in cloth and tied with ropes in the Ras Al-Mingar area, East of Benghazi, in the morning on 08 Oct. Forensic reports revealed that the woman was stabbed several times leading to her death. There is no further information available.

#### Drug-related arrest

The Benghazi Security Directorate's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) arrested four

individuals in possession of cannabis resin (hash) in Benghazi's Serti area. One of the suspects is believed to have smuggled the narcotics from Tobruk to Benghazi. Drug-related arrests are common in Benghazi and the East.

#### Mass grave found

Reports indicate a mass grave was found in Benghazi's Al-Hawari area on 12 Oct. Initial reports indicate the grave contains bodies belonging to civilians and LNA forces killed by the Islamic State (IS) between 2015-16 during the battle between the LNA and IS in the city.

#### Temporary air traffic suspension at BEN

Benghazi's Benina International Airport (BEN) administration announced commercial flights will resume as per schedule on 10 Oct after maintenance works to rehabilitate the runway halted air traffic for approximately 15 hours. Airport management stated on social media that maintenance works were completed at approximately 2200hrs local time on 09 Oct.

#### Lawyers protest kidnapping of ex-official

On 10 Oct, lawyers reportedly protested in front of the Southern Benghazi Court against the kidnapping of former Lawyers Association head, Abu Bakr Al-Sahouli, from his office on 09 Oct. The protestors gave a deadline of 24hrs to reveal Al-Sahouli's fate or face legal action.

## 6. What's next

### Mitiga Airport could resume operations; LNA narrative to focus on Turkey

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

The prospect of a negotiated settlement or breakthrough at the Berlin Conference seems remote, especially amid conflicting reports over the Conference's schedule and agenda. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, expressed hope over the upcoming Berlin-hosted International Conference on Libya with regards to producing a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution aimed at committing foreign powers to prevent an escalating proxy war, as well as enforcing the UN arms embargo. In an interview, Salame was quoted stating "expressions of hope and encouragement and verbal support are not what I'm looking for - I'm looking for a clear expression of the will to end the war in Libya." Salame added that the latter should be expressed in a UNSC resolution and a follow-up mechanism aimed at protecting its implementation. In addition, Salame and, Deputy for Political Affairs, Stephanie Williams, met with a delegation of parallel Tripoli-based House of Representatives (HoR) members to discuss the political process, including the upcoming Berlin-hosted International Conference on Libya, and the role of MPs in ending the political conflict. Meanwhile, GNA PM Fayez Sarraj continues to face challenges at home. The National Project Coalition called on the GNA, High Council of State (HCS), and House of Representatives (HoR) to urgently appoint a new defence minister to strengthen GNA forces' posture and repel LNA forces. The Coalition also called for multiple other reforms. The development should be viewed within the context of growing dissatisfaction with the GNA and accusations that Sarraj is not doing enough to repel LNA forces. These accusations have been previously voiced by multiple field commanders and pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) elements. Of note, GNA PM Fayez Sarraj is also the GNA Defence Minister.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In a Chatham House article, Libya expert Tim Eaton writes a comprehensive review of the state of Libya's fuel smuggling and the entire supply chain contributing to fuel shortages, growing fuel prices for Libyans, and corruption. Tim first begins with an analysis of demand generation and notes that Libya's fuel problems begin here because demand is calculated based on stated requirements, not real requirements as per the market. This leads to manipulation, according to the NOC. Then, at the refineries, multiple individuals are involved, even local employees, in diverting fuel from legitimate petrol stations to the black market, writes Tim. In the South, Tim reported that fuel smuggling is on a business as usual course, despite the LNA's recent presence. The article also explores how fuel is diverted with the use of "ghost stations" that do not physically exist or are no longer operational, but remain recipients of imported fuel and products. Meanwhile, truck drivers are also believed to be involved in diverting fuel to the black market. On the smuggling front, Tim Eaton noted a relative decrease in fuel smuggling activity between Tunisia and Libya, primarily due to a tightening of security controls at the Tunisian border. However, fuel continues to be smuggled to Niger, Sudan, Chad, and Malta. The author concludes by exploring the broader ramifications on the governance system: "Libya's governance crisis exacerbates flawed governance structures within state-run and -owned institutions, providing ample opportunity to mask the diversion of fuels into the black market and for the individuals involved to make major profits while defrauding the state. In many cases, managers of state-run institutions are selling fuel to private companies in which they have a personal stake: a clear conflict of interest. Indeed, the absence of profit and loss considerations allows the state-run institution to continue making losses, while the private enterprise profits. Furthermore, the state's lack of enforcement ability also provides opportunities for armed groups to profit. Such dynamics indicate that greater emphasis should be placed upon increasing the transparency within the fuel system and attempting to fix flaws in its governance, rather than expecting the removal of subsidies to bring a halt to smuggling and theft. In the absence of such attempts, as these trends continue, it is Libyans who will foot the bill: at the pump in the short term and in less direct ways in the longer term as the state's resources are depleted."

#### SECURITY FORECAST

WB sources confirmed that some MJJ airport employees have been called back to work during the past week, in anticipation of a potential resumption of operations in the short term, possibly between 15-17 Oct. Regardless of the prospect of a resumption at MJJ, there is little to no mechanism in place to prevent the LNA from carrying out additional airstrikes against the airport. Criminal activity, including carjacking, kidnappings and killings remain on an upward trend in Tripoli, and are more noticeable in the suburbs and ivo combat areas. Meanwhile, Tripoli Protection Force's (TPF) latest statement includes firm language directed at the Serraj-led Presidential Council (PC), tacitly highlight some of its perceived failures. The statement contains a direct threat to expose unidentified senior government officials, including within the oil and gas sector. The development is a clear indicator of the rift within the GNA camp. Whispering Bell sources confirmed that some GNA militias in Tripoli are suffering from a lack of manpower and are forcing former member to enlist, which casts doubts over the GNA's capabilities to maintain its defensive posture in the medium term. LNA forces pushed south-west of Tripoli in Al-Swani and Al-Aziziyah during the past week, in an indication of LNA ambitions to encircle the capital from Warshaffana and cut crucial supply lines with Al-Zawiya. If the LNA succeeds and secures further advances, GNA forces would lose direct supply lines with important allies such as Al-Zawiya, Zintan and Gharian. This would leave Misrata as the only main GNA ally with ground supply lines to Tripoli. In the central region, the LNA continues to target Misrata forces in Misrata and Sirte. This forces Misrata to reinforce its defensive positions, limiting its presence in Tripoli and decreasing the likelihood of a Misrata-led assault on the LNA in the central regions. Ground confrontation between the LNA and Misrata remains possible in the short to medium term, specifically near Sirte and Al-Jufra, which could expand to the Oil Crescent.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

Writing for *The Cario Review of Global Affairs*, Riccardo Redaelli, discusses a way forward in the Libyan crisis and stalemate. He begins his analysis by exploring factors that have led international actors to view the Libyan landscape as a zero-sum game. The author then explores the potential for a negotiated settlement. He writes "The failure of any military solution should suggest to the parties that a return to the negotiating table is unavoidable. However, Prime Minister Al-Sarraj demands a complete withdrawal of LNA forces from western Libya, a condition which Haftar cannot accept since it would undermine his already shaken prestige and position. From his side, the general insists on depicting Tripoli authorities as hostages of a bunch of radical Islamists connected with "terrorists". In such a situation, all international attempts to end the current conflicts risk appearing futile. But this dangerous stalemate is entirely due to the lack of political will of the international community and the weakness of the UN, whose progressive decline in prestige and credibility is a geopolitical tragedy of the new century. Both the GNA and Haftar's camp are heavily dependent on external political, economic and military support. However, they are fully confident that they still have the upper hand: although their supporters and patrons might—under certain conditions—pressure them into a ceasefire, they will not withdraw their support, or work for a comprehensive political agreement yet, since the geopolitical game their patrons are playing is more important than the stabilization of Libya. And here we are facing the main obstacle which prevents the end of these clashes: that is, the fact that the international system is focusing on reaching a ceasefire without addressing the need for a new, comprehensive political and security architecture for Libya."

# About Whispering Bell



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