

Tripoli Rapid Situation Overview

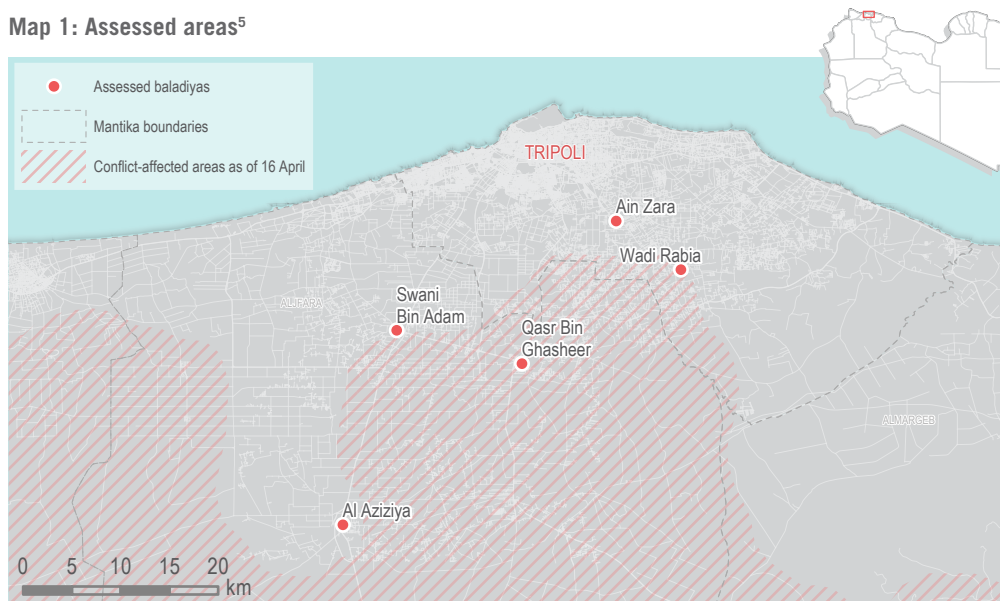
Libya, 17 April 2019

BACKGROUND

Starting on 3 April 2019, as a result of rapid military advances from the south, Tripoli's southern suburbs began to see levels of conflict they had not experienced since 2011. The deteriorating security situation pushed 4,870 households (approximately 24,350 individuals) from affected baladiyas in the Tripoli area to leave their homes, becoming displaced throughout Tripoli and west Libya.¹ As of 16 April, 14 civilians had been killed and 40 wounded in the fighting,² and increasing numbers of civilians were reportedly trapped in conflict-affected areas in the outskirts of the city, along with 2,700 refugees and migrants in detention centres near the frontline.³ Several attacks on medical workers, ambulances, and field hospitals had taken place, hampering the treatment of the wounded and the evacuation of those in distress.⁴

To inform response plans, between 12 and 15 April, REACH assessed the humanitarian situation across five conflict-affected baladiyas in Tripoli's southern suburbs. Data was collected through 24 multi-sector key informant (KI) interviews, 14 on Libyans and 10 on refugees and migrants, conducted with community leaders, aid workers, municipal authorities and others. The information in this document refers only to the situation during the data collection period and should be considered indicative only.

Map 1: Assessed areas⁵



KEY FINDINGS

- **Many IDP households had reportedly been displaced to areas in close proximity to the frontline**, where they remained at risk of shelling and violence. **Further displacement was expected** from all five assessed baladiyas due to fears that the current clashes would continue or intensify.
- **Movement out of the frontline areas was heavily restricted**, with nearly all main roads reportedly blocked by checkpoints and dirt barriers. Movement via both main roads and informal routes was difficult due to the widespread **risk of shelling and gunfire**. Residents were reportedly able to leave only during lulls in the fighting.
- **There is particular concern for the estimated 2,700 migrants being held in detention centres (DCs) near the frontline**, in particular Qasr bin Ghasheer, Abusliem, Al Sabaa, and Tajoura. Reports have emerged of these migrants being transported from the centres to armed group bases throughout the city to perform forced labour.⁶
- **Urban migrants in frontline areas tended to be at greater risk than Libyans**, as they did not have access to the same information about conflict developments, safe areas, or possible exit routes. **Most migrants' lack of private transportation made it nearly impossible to leave conflict-affected baladiyas without assistance.**
- **Tripoli's healthcare system was heavily disrupted** by the ongoing clashes. Many health facilities in conflict-affected baladiyas were reportedly understaffed and overwhelmed. First responders were at particular risk, with reports of both accidental and deliberate attacks on ambulances.
- Several KIs reported **robberies and kidnappings** in their areas, signalling a **general breakdown of order** in conflict-affected baladiyas. Houses of displaced families had reportedly been looted and on occasion targeted for destruction based on the presumed political affiliations of their owners.
- **Access to the few still-functioning marketplaces in conflict-affected baladiyas was impeded by heavy fighting**, and only 0-25% of the usual local traders were reportedly operating, affecting residents' ability to access food.
- KIs highlighted the need for a **secure humanitarian corridor** to allow people to leave frontline areas, or at minimum to be able to transit in and out of conflict-affected baladiyas to access markets.

¹ IOM DTM, "Libya – Tripoli Flash Update #7", 16 April 2019.

² Health Sector Working Group, "Libya – Situation Report No. 11", 16 April 2019.

³ OCHA, "Libya: Tripoli Clashes. Situation Report No. 9", 15 April 2019.

⁴ Health Sector, 16 April 2019.

⁵ Conflict-affected areas: Suriyak, "Guerra civil Yemen y Libia", 16 April 2019.

⁶ The Guardian, "Fear and despair engulf refugees in Libya's 'market of human beings'", 15 April 2019.



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FINDINGS BY SECTOR

➔ Displacement

- KIs estimated that **roughly 2,415 households had come from the five assessed baladiyas of south Tripoli**: 825 from Swani bin Adam, 550 from Ain Zara, 540 from Al Aziziya, 250 from Qasr bin Ghasheer, and 250 from Wadi Rabia. Numbers are likely to have increased since 14 April.
- **Many IDP households had reportedly been displaced to areas in close proximity to the frontline, where they remained at risk of shelling and violence.** The conflict-affected baladiyas of Azzahra, Ain Zara, Abusliem, Swani, and Qasr bin Ghasheer were all among the most commonly reported destinations for IDPs from assessed baladiyas, suggesting that some IDPs were unable to move to more secure locations.
- **The majority of IDPs, however, had moved farther from the frontlines**, dispersing to the baladiyas immediately surrounding Tripoli as well as to more distant parts of west Libya such as Alkhums, Bani Waleed and Jebel Nafusa. Roughly 15% of displaced Libyans moved farther in towards the less affected areas of Tripoli city, particularly the baladiyas of Hai Alandalus, Abusliem, and Tajoura.⁷
- The main reported push factor driving IDPs to leave the affected area was the fighting itself, which encompassed the presence of **armed group activity, shelling, and airstrikes**; the threat of frequent shifts in the frontlines; and the destruction of housing, particularly in Swani and Al Aziziya. KIs in Ain Zara also reported that **the lack of key services such as electricity and water** played a role in IDPs' decision to leave.
- Meanwhile, residents of affected baladiyas who chose to remain mostly did so to protect their assets, or because they reportedly had no family or friends outside the conflict-affected area with whom they could stay.
- Local authorities and community groups in Tajoura, Ain Zara, and Al Aziziya, among other areas, had repurposed community buildings as **collective shelters** to house about 1,500 incoming IDPs.⁸ However, not all of these collective shelters were located in safe locations; on 11 April, 167 IDPs had to be evacuated from the Al-Asma school in Ain Zara due to shifting frontlines.⁹
- **Further displacement was expected** from all five assessed baladiyas due to fears that the current clashes would continue or intensify.

Refugees and migrants

- Urban migrants displaced from assessed baladiyas **most commonly travelled further into Tripoli**, particularly to Abusliem and the Al-Wadi Ash-Sharqi area of Tajoura. Both of these areas are home to sizable migrant communities and workers' accommodations that serve as a pull

factor for urban migrants seeking shelter.

- **There is particular concern for the estimated 2,700 migrants being held in detention centres (DCs) near the frontlines**, in particular Qasr bin Ghasheer, Abusliem, Al Sabaa, and Tajoura. Reports have emerged of these migrants being transported from the centres to armed group bases throughout the city to perform forced labour.¹⁰
- IOM and UNHCR have made efforts to evacuate the residents of DCs near the frontline, successfully relocating more than 150 individuals from the Ain Zara DC and another 150 from Abusliem DC. Efforts to do the same for the 893 residents of Qasr bin Ghasheer DC have been unsuccessful. These migrants remain in the midst of heavy fighting and are at particular risk.¹¹

↕ Freedom of Movement

- Libyan KIs who remained in assessed baladiyas reported that **movement out of frontline areas was heavily restricted**. Aside from ongoing armed group activity and a lack of personal safety, KIs noted that **nearly all main roads out of the conflict-affected areas had been blocked by checkpoints and dirt barriers**.
- Narrow passages between houses, as well as agricultural roads, provided **alternate ways of getting in and out** of certain areas. Movement via both main roads and informal routes was difficult, primarily because of the **widespread risk of shelling and gunfire**. **Explosive hazards** were also reported as a risk in Ain Zara, Qasr bin Ghasheer, and Wadi Rabia.
- **Residents were reportedly able to leave conflict-affected areas only during lulls in the fighting**. Many opted to move only at night or in the early morning to reduce the risk from gunfire or shelling; however, given increases in night-time shelling during the days prior to publication, movement at night was reportedly no longer an option.
- **Shortages of vehicle fuel** throughout the Tripoli area made it more difficult to rely on private transportation to leave.
- Freedom of movement in some conflict-affected areas, particularly Al Aziziya and Qasr bin Ghasheer, improved during the data collection period as the frontlines moved farther away; some displaced households in these areas had reportedly begun to return home, suggesting more **fluid displacement patterns**. KIs in Swani bin Adam, however, reported that the number of people able to leave had decreased significantly as the area of active fighting and shelling drew closer.
- As of 16 April, **humanitarian actors had only been able to reach 60% of the 1,400 households who had requested evacuation** from conflict-affected baladiyas, with thousands of civilians remaining trapped in conflict-affected areas. Low evacuation rates were attributed to ongoing

⁷ IOM DTM, 16 April 2019.

⁸ OCHA, "IDP Collective Shelter Matrix", 10 April 2019; OCHA, 15 April 2019.

⁹ OCHA, "[Libya: Tripoli Clashes, Situation Report No. 5](#)", 11 April 2019.

¹⁰ The Guardian, 15 April 2019.

¹¹ OCHA, 15 April 2019.

clashes, indiscriminate use of weaponry, and reports of both accidental and deliberate attacks on ambulances.¹²

- Tripoli's only functional airport, **Mitiga International Airport**, was targeted by airstrikes, disrupting flights and eventually causing a multi-day suspension. At the time of publication, the airport was only operational during evenings and nights, making it more difficult to leave the city or to evacuate foreign nationals.¹³

Refugees and migrants

- Urban migrants in frontline areas faced many of the same physical risks as Libyan residents under fire. However, many migrant KIs emphasised that their status as non-Libyans and non-Arabic speakers left them less able to escape their situation, as **they did not have access to the same information about conflict developments, safe areas, or possible exit routes**.
- Migrant KIs highlighted the fact that **most migrants' lack of private transportation made it nearly impossible to leave conflict-affected baladiyas without assistance**. Those who received assistance from Libyan friends or co-workers found it easier to reach safety, but those without such connections reported being dependent on rescue by the Libyan Red Crescent or other humanitarian organisations.
- **Urban migrants' lack of freedom of movement severely limited their ability to cope with the effects of the conflict**. Because migrants in Libya face significant barriers to saving or borrowing money, many are financially dependent on securing a constant daily income.¹⁴ Urban migrants who were unable to access their workplaces due to conflict were therefore **at high risk of running out of resources to meet their basic needs within 1-2 weeks**, highlighting the differential impact of the crisis on Libyans and migrants.



Shelter

- **Damage to shelters, community spaces, and public infrastructure** was reported throughout conflict-affected baladiyas, due in large part to **indiscriminate shelling of residential neighbourhoods**. Schools, mosques, markets, and police stations, as well as parts of the local road network, electrical grid, and telecommunications infrastructure, were all reported to have been partly damaged or destroyed by shelling and airstrikes.
- **Damage to the electrical grid** was particularly severe in Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam, with all KIs reporting power cuts of at least 16 hours per day and some reporting 24-hour blackouts. In other conflict-affected baladiyas, a median of 0-5 hours of power cuts per day was reported.
- An estimated 95-100% of Libyans remaining in **Ain Zara, Qasr bin Ghasheer, and Wadi Rabia** were staying in properties they **owned or rented**.

- In **Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam**, the situation was reversed, as only an estimated 15-20% of remaining Libyan residents continued to rely on owned or rented accommodation. Residents of these mahallas were more likely to be **hosted by friends or family** (an estimated 25-35%) or to have moved to **informal collective shelters** (25-30%).
- According to refugee and migrant KIs, around 55% of **refugees and migrants in assessed baladiyas** were being hosted by friends or acquaintances. An additional 20% were sheltering at their workplaces, and 10% rented their own accommodation.



Food Security

- Within the 7 days prior to data collection, Libyan KIs in all assessed baladiyas but Qasr bin Ghasheer reported that access to food in their baladiyas had worsened. This was mainly linked to **widespread closures of stores and markets**, which caused shortages of core food items and bottled water, as well as to restrictions on movement that made it **difficult to physically access food**.
- To acquire food, Libyan households **relied primarily on markets and stores in other areas of Tripoli**, despite the difficulty of reaching them, or **on food that had been previously stored for emergencies**—the primary food source reported in Wadi Rabia. In most assessed baladiyas, these emergency stocks were expected to last for less than one week after data collection.
- **Refugees and migrants in detention centres** continued to be at particular risk of food shortages, as disruptions in staffing had in many cases led to a breakdown in the DCs' food supply chains.
- **Urban migrants**, meanwhile, faced many of the same physical access barriers as Libyans, but had **fewer ways to cope with localised food shortages due to their more precarious financial situations** (see Freedom of Movement). This problem became more acute due to the movement restrictions imposed by active fighting, as many urban migrants were unable to reach their workplaces or travel outside their baladiyas to find functioning markets.
- As a result of clashes causing damage to the electrical grid, **many bakeries in Swani bin Adam and Wadi Rabia had reportedly closed**. Nonetheless, at the time of data collection, KIs in all baladiyas reported a median price of 0.25 LYD per piece of bread, which has remained unchanged for several months.



Cash and Markets

- All assessed baladiyas except Wadi Rabia were reported to have at least one still-functional marketplace. However, **access to these few functioning marketplaces was reportedly impeded by heavy fighting**.
- Trade was deeply impacted by the conflict, especially in Al Aziziya, Swani bin Adam and Wadi

¹² OCHA, 15 April 2019.

¹³ Financial Times, "Tripoli airport targeted as battle for Libyan capital rages", 8 April 2019.

¹⁴ REACH, "Access to cash and the impact of the liquidity crisis on refugees and migrants in Libya", June 2018.



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Rabia. In these baladiyas, **only 0-25% of the usual local traders were reportedly operating** during the period of data collection.

- **Physical barriers, widespread business closures, safety and security concerns on the main roads, and a lack of fuel for personal transportation** were the most reported barriers which prevented residents from accessing markets.
- **Access to core food and non-food items** was reportedly more difficult in Al Aziziya, Swani Bin Adam, and Ain Zara due to the unavailability of many items, particularly bread, flour, vegetables, fruits, and baby milk. Diapers, detergent, and vehicle fuel were among the core non-food items that were most difficult to access.
- The most commonly used means of payment across all baladiyas was cash. However, **to cope with severe liquidity shortages**, reported mainly in Al Aziziya and Swani Bin Adam, people also bought food on credit in marketplaces and, less frequently, used prepaid cards.
- According to KIs, the worsening access to cash was explained by the **closure of banks and financial institutions** in Al Aziziya, Qasr bin Ghasheer, and Swani Bin Adam, as well as damage to some banks and the inability of people to reach banks or ATMs.



Health

- **Tripoli's healthcare system was heavily disrupted by the ongoing clashes.** Many health facilities in conflict-affected baladiyas were reportedly **understaffed and overwhelmed**.¹⁵ First responders were at particular risk, with reports of both **accidental and deliberate attacks on ambulances**, resulting in the deaths of two doctors and one ambulance driver. Some medical professionals had reportedly pulled out of rescue operations due to unsustainable levels of risk.¹⁶
- As a consequence of the healthcare system being stretched to its limits, **emergency care was widely unavailable** and was prioritised by nearly all KIs as the most needed health service, followed by **chronic disease treatment** and **skilled maternity care**.
- Except in Wadi Rabia, where KIs reported healthcare to be wholly unavailable, KIs in all assessed baladiyas reported that **hospitals, primary health centres, and/or private clinics remained operational**, as did public clinics in Qasr bin Ghasheer and Al Aziziya and mobile clinics in Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam. **Access to the health facilities** in Swani bin Adam and Al Aziziya, however, **depended on the intensity of fighting** in the area.
- Due to restricted access to hospitals, both frontline and referral hospitals inside and outside Tripoli were reportedly **receiving casualties on a daily basis**. The Tarhouna and Ghiryan hospitals had been converted into trauma centres by the World Health Organisation (WHO).¹⁷
- **Migrant KIs reported decreased access to healthcare** in many areas, due to heavy fighting, restrictions on movement, and the closure of local private health facilities, which are the type of

facility most commonly accessed by non-Libyans.¹⁸



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

- **Bottled water** was reportedly the main source of drinking water used by residents of Ain Zara, Qasr bin Ghasheer and Wadi Rabia. In Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam, on the other hand, residents relied mainly on **protected wells**. Other main sources were, in order of use, **the public water network and water trucking services**.
- **Water from the public network was reportedly only available 1-3 days per week in Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam.** The water in these areas was reported to have a bad taste and, according to one KI, was undrinkable without purification. Residents of Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam were reportedly **unable to access enough water** to meet their needs.
- **The breakdown of the waste management system** in conflict-affected baladiyas raised major health concerns. Across all assessed baladiyas, waste was mainly reported to be burnt, buried, or dumped in inappropriate spots.



Education

- As a result of the ongoing conflict, **most schools in conflict-affected baladiyas were reportedly closed**. Several schools were **damaged by shelling**, and one was reportedly hit by an **airstrike**. All KIs reported that the security situation on the roads was too dangerous to consider sending children to school.
- **Multiple schools in the conflict-affected baladiyas were reportedly being used for non-educational purposes.** Among others, Al-Asma School in Ain Zara was briefly used as a collective shelter for IDPs before shifts in the frontlines rendered the area too dangerous. Another school in Wadi Rabia had reportedly been commandeered by an armed group.
- On 14 April, a **targeted airstrike on Ministry of Education warehouses** destroyed approximately 5 million school textbooks and national exam results, creating severe **textbook shortages** and affecting students' progress toward graduation.¹⁹



Protection

- KIs reported an **increase in safety and security incidents** linked to intensifying clashes, with frequent shelling, gunfire, and airstrikes leading to shelter damage and casualties in the assessed areas nearest the frontline. As of 15 April, there had been at least 12 reported airstrikes throughout the city that led to civilian deaths.²⁰
- KIs in Swani bin Adam and Al Aziziya reported particular concern about **robberies and kidnapping** in their areas, signalling a **general breakdown of order** in conflict-affected baladiyas. According to these KIs, **houses of displaced families were often looted and on**

¹⁵ The New Humanitarian, "[The humanitarian fallout from Libya's newest war](#)", 15 April 2019.

¹⁶ OCHA, "[Libya: Tripoli Clashes, Situation Report No. 8](#)", 14 April 2019.

¹⁷ Health Sector, 16 April 2019.

¹⁸ REACH, "Area-based approach: Azzawya", forthcoming.

¹⁹ Reuters, "[Millions of school books destroyed during fighting in Tripoli](#)", 15 April 2019.

²⁰ Airwars, "[Civilians in peril as rival air forces target Tripoli](#)", 15 April 2019.

occasion targeted for destruction based on the presumed political affiliations of their owners. Dynamics such as these were **likely to encourage residents of frontline areas to remain in place** to protect their assets, exposing them to further risk.

- All KIs reported that some residents of their baladiyas had gone **missing** as a result of the conflict in the 7 days prior to data collection. While some of these cases might have been due to kidnappings or political detention, others may have reflected the high numbers of individuals who remained in conflict areas with poor access to the electrical grid and phone network, making it difficult to use electronic devices or communicate with family members elsewhere. Evacuation to safe areas remained a priority.
- KIs in Ain Zara, Al Aziziya, and Swani bin Adam reported that some residents of their baladiyas had been injured or killed by **explosive hazards** in the 7 days prior to data collection.

✦ Priority Needs and Assistance

- Across all assessed baladiyas, the top reported need for **non-displaced Libyans** was **safety and security**. In particular, KIs highlighted the need for a **secure humanitarian corridor** to allow people to leave frontline areas, or at minimum to be able to transit in and out of conflict-affected baladiyas to access markets.
- **Healthcare** and **food** were respectively the second and third highest priorities, with KIs citing fully functional health facilities, the provision of common medicines and core food items, and a restoration of the electrical grid as particular needs.
- The highest-priority need reported by **refugees and migrants** who had left conflict-affected areas was **shelter**, followed by access to **healthcare**. **Food** and **non-food items (NFIs)**, in particular blankets, mattresses, and hygiene kits, were also cited as priority needs.
- Residents of Ain Zara, Qasr bin Ghasheer and Wadi Rabia reportedly had a strong preference for in-kind aid. Those of Al Aziziya and Swani bin Adam, on the other hand, preferred mixed interventions (both in-kind and cash).

About REACH

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