

PROTECTION RAPID NEED ASSESSMENT Qararat al-Qataf



PROTECTION SECTOR- LIBYA
28 February, 2018



BACKGROUND ON THE RETURN OF TAWARGHA

On 26 December 2018, the Libyan Government of National Accord ratified an agreement that allowed the return of the displaced population of the city of Tawargha to their area of origin, to take effect and allow the return as of 1 February 2018. The agreement was concluded after seven years of forced displacement of around 40,000 Tawarghan from their area of origin (the city of Tawargha). They became internally displaced, residing in makeshift settlements across Libya. As per the terms of the agreement, which assured the right to return, Tawarghan families began making their preparations to return. Tawarghans from eastern Libya commenced their journey (by car convoy) in late January 2018.

On 31 January 2018, a statement was issued by the Misrata council re-confirming their rejection of the return agreement, hence, the Tawargha plans of return. On 1 February, all attempts by the Tawargha to return back failed without justified reasons, which forced them to stay in a nearby location. Many stayed in the open without proper protection from the elements and limited access to basic services.

There is an estimated 300 internally displaced families (IDPs¹) from Tawargha are currently staying in very vulnerable conditions that are far below the minimum standards. According to the field missions which have been conducted UNHCR protection team, the IDPs live in the open unprotected from the elements (very difficult weather conditions) and with very limited availability of basic services available in an area called Qararat al-Qataf , some 40 km from Tawargha city, and in an area called Harawa (20 HHs), 280 Km from Tawargha.

The humanitarian community cannot access the current IDP location due to high risk security concerns, therefore, the UN agencies have been providing assistance through national partners who work in this area.

Objective

This assessment aims at summarizing key protection concerns faced by the Tawargha IDPs in Qararat At-Qataf site and come up with initial recommendations for immediate action. The results of this assessment would serve as a reference for future programming and data collection initiatives.

Assessment methodology

The assessment was carried by the UNHCR protection team and based on five Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) during the period between 4 and 24 February 2018. The discussions were held with various IDP profiles including women, youth and elderly to ensure the inclusiveness of the findings.

¹ The number of IDPs in the site continue changing in daily basis due to the fact not all IDPs sleep at the site and some stay for few days and leave. Many IDPs from Tarhona, Bani Wwalid and Tripoli sleep during the weekend (Thursday to Saturday) and leave back to their place of displacements during the week.

Key Findings and Recommendations

PHYSICAL SAFETY and **LIFE-THREATENING GAPS IN ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES IN PARTICULAR HEALTH** are the key protection concerns highlighted by the Respondents to the FGDs. Despite the on-going emergency response by the UN agencies and host communities, significant efforts must be done to address the basic needs of this group.

The assessments highlighted that despite the safety concerns, IDPs are adamant not to leave the location except for the return to their area of origin. By continue staying the site, IDPs leaders and community members' intention is to put pressure on the government, community leaders from Misrata and international community to end the displacement and allow them to return to Tawargha. Families coming from far are the most vulnerable as they stay on site while it seems the others have a rotational system or go back at night.

In-Kind assistance has been provided by the spontaneous generous support of local initiatives –tribes, municipalities, etc. The IDP in Qararat Al-Qataf formed a committee to coordinate the provision of assistance and rented two warehouses.

Lack of safety was the protection concerns highly flagged by the respondents due to the following:

- I. The open location and its proximity to armed/military groups make them highly exposed to attacks. Reference was made to earlier attacks against the IDPs upon arrival to the site. Specific concerns and fear to the proximity from ISIL troops (50km from their site).
- II. WASH facilities: women and girls informed that they do not feel safe making use of the latrines, even during the day. Toilets are not protected enough and very close to the community. As a result, women and girls mentioned that they prefer waiting until the night.
- III. No lighting system (e.g.: Solar lamps): some respondents shared concerns on this which impact their movement including to WASH facilities at night time.

Lack of information sharing with the community members, many of the IDPs are not fully aware of the details on the ongoing negotiation with Misrata and/or any other alternative plans.

Tawargha community members have agreed between themselves to implement a rotational system to sleep at the site. Not all IDPs sleep at the site and some stay for few days and leave. Many IDPs from Tarhona, Bani Wwalid and Tripoli sleep during the weekend (Thursday to Saturday) and leave back to their place of displacements during the week.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There is a need for immediate, strong, joint and sustained international community advocacy to the authorities to ensure the right to a safe and dignified return for IDPs who wish to return.
- Engagement by the humanitarian community for this group of IDPs who is now facing a new set of adverse circumstances must be premised on the **obligation to ensure the best protection outcome including voluntary relocation of IDPs to safer place**. The proximity to insecure elements pose is a severe threat to the IDPs.
- Under the circumstances, **emergency response to meet assessed critical needs must continue**, including maintaining the monitoring of the protection concerns. It is critical that assistance is coordinated and evaluated on a case by case basis to ensure that humanitarian principles and the principles of do-no-harm guide the response.
- Spontaneous support by local tribes or Municipalities needs to be factored in the response –i.e. not to duplicate and aim to complement.
- The establishment of an IDP camp /transit site in urban and semi-urban areas of Tawargha and Misrata city should not be encouraged unless absolutely necessary for operational reasons, as this could incite people to return to an environment not conducive to provision of assistance and services in a safe and dignified manner and might perpetuate sub-standard living conditions.
- Clear communication emphasizing security risks must be provided by the authorities or agencies on the ground to prevent any misunderstanding or misconception on the part of the displaced population
- Appropriate levels of services and adequate assistance are maintained in IDP sites on the places of displacement until conditions are conducive for returns, to mitigate any factors affecting the voluntariness of IDP decision-making towards a durable solution.

Until a durable solution found or voluntary relocation to safer site the humanitarian community shall continue key life-saving intervention only:

- Ensure access to **HEALTH CARE** for people with specific needs, including pregnant women elderly and IDPs with chronic diseases.
- Provide dignity kits for **WOMEN** and **GIRLS**;
- Provide more (solar) **LIGHTS**, lights around WASH facilities and household lights.
- Establish protection monitoring activities (at households and community levels) on the site, informal settlements and urban areas across Libya to

ensure timely identification of protection and humanitarian gaps and identification of the most vulnerable individuals and households from IDPs;

- Maintain appropriate levels of services and adequate assistance in IDP sites on the places of displacement until conditions are conducive for returns, to mitigate any factors affecting the voluntariness of IDP decision-making towards a durable solution.
- Provide psychosocial support services to the most vulnerable IDPs community including children, women and elderly;
- Improve the **safety distance** between units in site settings and to minimise the risk of fire spreading between shelters in case of fire
- Reassess assistance, access to service and protection concerns in the current sites, especially Sidi Aloseyeh and other IDPs settlements in Tripoli and take action if required. It seems that assistance currently provided in the sites exceeds the assistance in the site of origin.
- This initial assessment confirmed that the IDPs continue to face a wide range of significant protection concerns. To further inform protection programming, **ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS** is urgently required to enable prioritisation of resources, including on gaps in coverage of existing support structures, presence of risk factors by site and the proportion of vulnerable groups. Follow up data collection activities should specifically focus on the most vulnerable groups identified in this assessment

METHODOLOGY

The rapid assessment was conducted by UNHCR protection teams. The teams conducted five focused groups discussion (FGDs) with IDPs and conducted three field visits to the site, each for a duration of five days. The team also undertook bi-lateral discussions with the community leaders and community members.

Limitations of the assessment findings:

The following considerations should be borne in mind:

- **Qualitative data:** Given its purpose, the assessment was designed to collect qualitative data on the 'what' and 'why' rather than the 'how many'. The findings therefore do not include information about how many people are affected by the issues identified.
- **Extrapolation:** The findings of the assessment pertain only on Qararat site that was visited for the FGDs. They cannot be extrapolated to be applicable to other sites, where the situation may vary greatly.
- **FGDs:** The set-up of FGDs can discourage certain people from participating, particularly those who have special needs. Moreover, people may refrain from sharing personal or sensitive information in group settings, and group pressure can suppress dissenting opinions.
- **Privacy:** It was not always possible to conduct FGDs in a fully secluded and safe space due to congestion in the site. Several FGDs took place in family

shelters, which do not provide full privacy. As a result, it is possible that concerns about sensitive issues, such as SGBV, were not raised by participants.

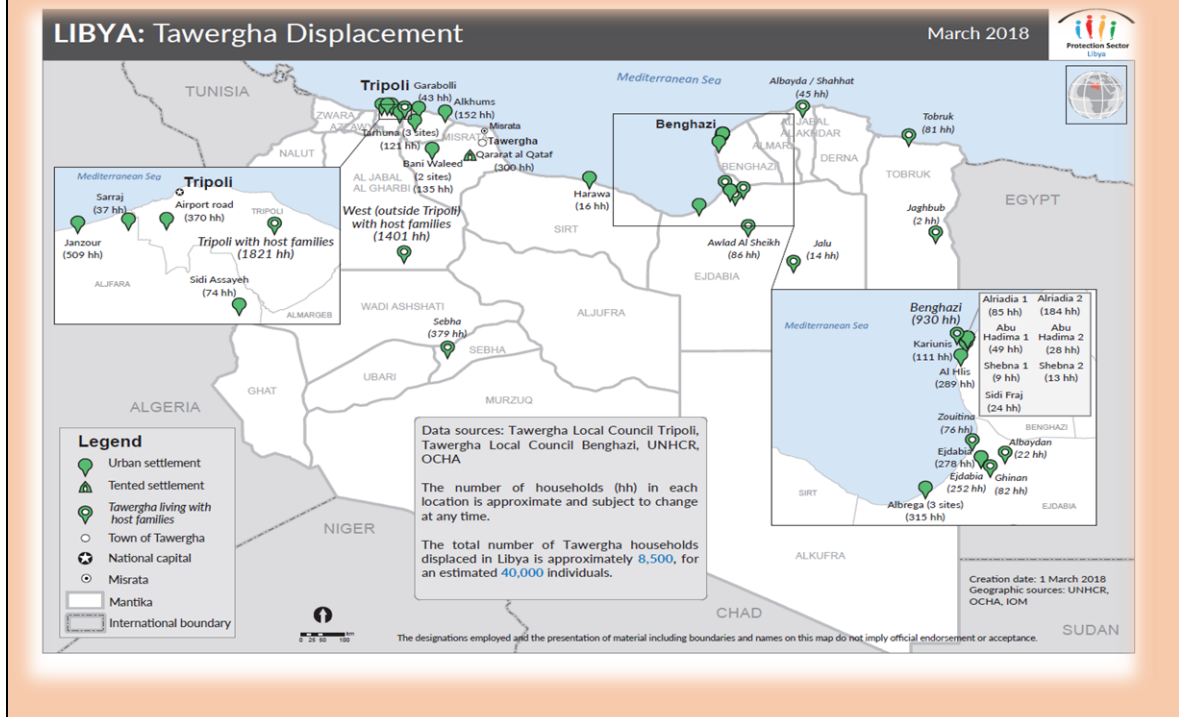
- **Representativeness and gender/age bias:** The findings are based on FGDs with 5 groups of women and men. There may therefore be a bias in the findings towards issues that are of particular concern to women. No children under 12 were consulted within this assessment.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Safety concerns

- The majority of respondents indicated that they felt relatively unsafe, unsafe and very unsafe in the site, compared to the situation in their places of displacement. Respondents informed that they are currently being protected by the Bani Walid community (which cannot be determined as a sustained protection approach to IDPs in Qarart Al-Qataf).
- Safety concerns are mainly due to fear of attacks from military/armed groups, as well as risks associated to lack of protection from the elements (weather conditions (heavy raining and storms) and fire).

The assessments highlighted that despite the safety concerns, IDPs are adamant not to leave the location except for the return to their area of origin. By continue staying the site, IDPs leader and community members intention to put pressure on the government, community leaders from Misrata and International community to end the displacement and allow them to return to Tawargha,



Citing the dire conditions in the site, IDP and elders informed the protection team that they wish to leave the camp as soon as they are allowed to return to Tawargha because it is located middle of nowhere with very limited access to services. When asked where they would like to go, they mentioned they would like to return to Tawargha. However IDPs were not consulted by their community leaders about other solution in case the return will not happened. Some mentioned that the leaders are communicated this information only with few members of the community. Many of the IDPs are not fully aware of the details on the ongoing negotiation with Misrata and/or any other alternative plans.

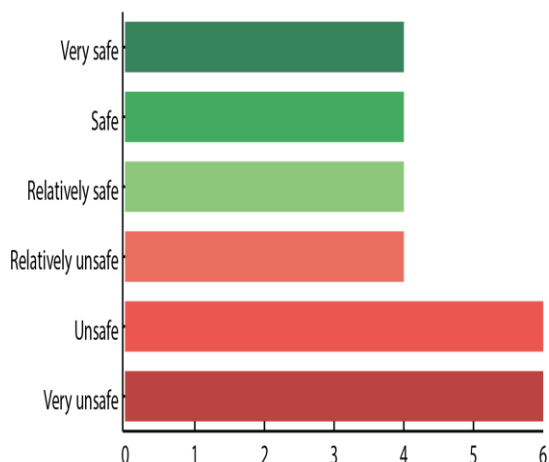
At the moment, the host communities in Bani Walid have been hosting the IDPs, demonstrating a high level of communal support, the Bani Walid community and the municipality have been providing assistance to the IDPs since the first day of arrival. There have been no reported conflict or tension arises between host and IDPs

Areas perceived as unsafe

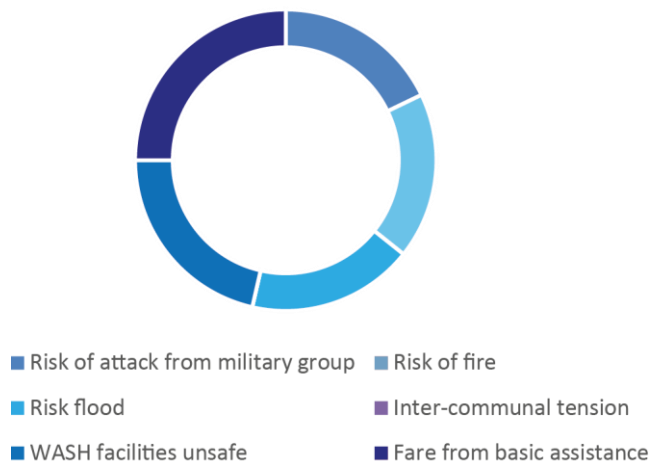
Respondents summarized the following main reasons for the people feeling that they are unsafe

- **Site location:** The majority of all groups, male, female, adult and adolescents, indicated that the location of the site is unsafe, due to being in a distant location without easy access to any urban area where services are available. Despite this, few respondents indicated that this location, where they are, would still be a better option from being exposed to the risks associated and extreme humanitarian conditions in places of former displacement (informal settlements);
- **Latrines:** Women and girls do not feel safe at the latrines because there are very closed to the gathering and they are not protected enough; they also raised concern on lack of lights around the latrines, IDPs also raised concern about the sewage hole gathering, the hole is open and they are afraid some children will fall in the hole;
- **The risk of fire:** All participants raised concerns on the risk of fire in the site, due to living in overcrowded temporary structures, using unsafe cooking and heating appliances or open fires, and inability to provide constant childhood supervision. The community already witnessed a fire incident in the site and they are afraid that fire incidents will continue.

How would you describe the safety of the location?



If unsafe or very unsafe, why?



Specific Vulnerabilities and Child protection

There are physically challenged persons including disabled people. All disabled people interviewed by UNHCR had relatives to take care of them, who expressed particular difficulties and additional burden in ensuring their welfare given the situation in the site. There are also pregnant and lactating mothers on site.

Many of the participants mentioned that several families left their children and female behind in the places of displacements to continue access to education and also to avoid having female/adolescent with no protection in the site; however the families who arrived from long distance areas and who used to rent houses arrived with their children and all family members, some of the children missed the final school exams.

Vulnerable groups

The following groups were identified by FGD participants as being the most vulnerable:

- Elderly
- IDPs with chronic diseases
- Women without a male member in the family
- Children under 6 years old;
- Disabled and IDPs with chronic diseases
- Pregnant/lactating women

Access to information

The IDPs noted that access to the mobile phone network is not regular due to poor mobile coverage. Their main access to information they have is through community leaders, family men head of households and visitors. The IDPs also raised concerns about the lack of information of the reconciliation process and if there are any impending solutions, the lack of information mainly to vulnerable individuals and groups increases their vulnerabilities as they don't have enough information to take informed decisions about their future.

Psychosocial distress and support mechanism

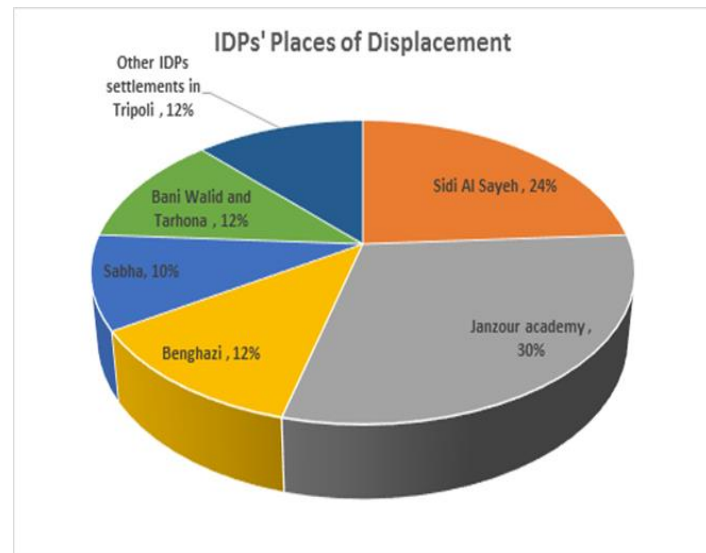
Civilians are traumatized. During discussion FGD with women, some of them were crying while narrating their situation. Despite the number of pregnant women, vulnerable elderly persons the particularly challenges and risks of these civilians has not been properly identified or addressed. The IDPs noted that the conflict situation and seven years of displacement in and now preventing them to return have exposed them to much distress and lack of dignity. The team observed that most people were looking very sad/distressed of their unknown future and lack any means to support on deciding the follow up steps.

Pull/ Push factors

All participants on the FGDs confirmed that main pull factor to come to the site is mainly to return to Tawargha. Some IDPs suggested that the lack of assistance in the places of displacement and the inability to pay for the rent are push factors.

Few women mentioned that the humanitarian situation in the site is better than the situation in their place of displacement.

IDPs who arrived from Sidi Alsayeh and Janzour academy informal settlements expresses their intention to stay, because of the security situation in the informal settlements areas in Tripoli. During the last period, West and South Tripoli areas where the IDPs sites located witnessed armed conflict between several military groups and residents from both settlement indicated that they did not receive enough services in the last two years.



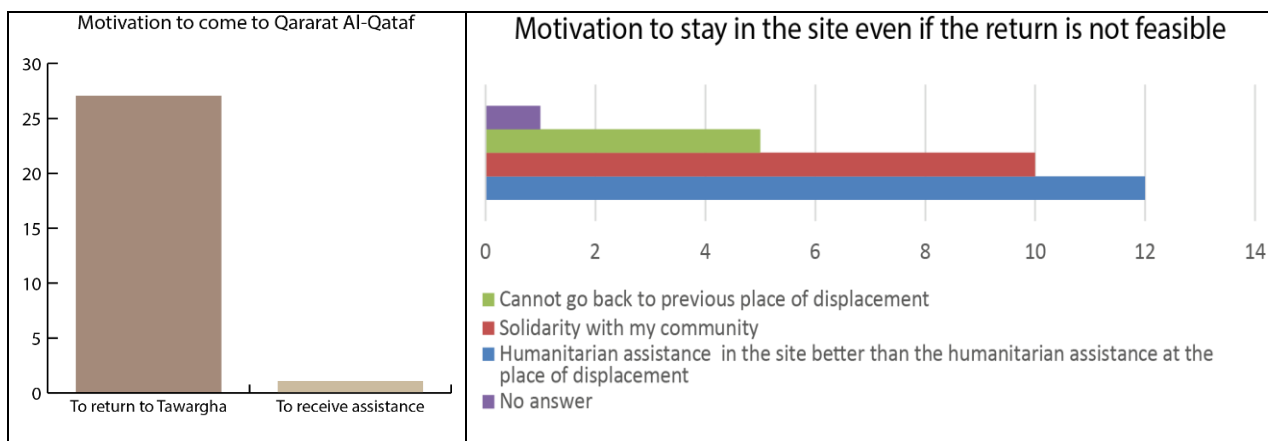
IDPs Intention

When UNHCR asked about the IDPs intentions (including to stay in the site, return to place of displacement and go to other places) many of them confirmed their intention **TO STAY** in the site until the return to Tawargha is feasible.

Other participants mentioned that Tawargha community members have agreed between themselves to implement a rotational system to sleep at the site.

Many of the families stay during the day time and leave back to their place of displacement before dark to the place of displacement.

For many IDPs, continue staying in the site despite the difficult situation is important to put pressure on the authorities, the international community and Misrata to allow and support them on their demand to return.



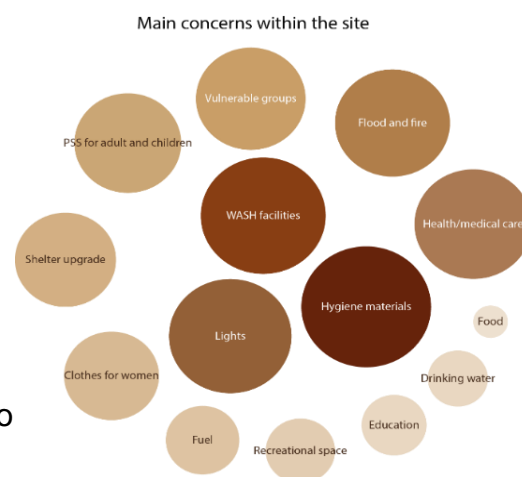
Interventions

All participants expressed urgent needs and suggested a range of interventions to address them. The most frequent pertained to Health, WASH, NFI and shelter, namely

- Access to secondary health services and provide medicine to people with chronic diseases;
- Provide more and higher quality segregated sanitation facilities
- Immediate access to drinking water;
- Access to hygiene materials;
- Provide fire extinguisher to fight fires;
- Create Flood/wind Barrier from sand to protect the site from flood and strong wind;

Access to services and aid

- When asked about services that help most venerable persons to cope with the current situation in the site, participants answered that the services provided did not cover all the needs of the IDPs;
- Participants identified distance to the secondary medical services as the main concerns, IDPs have to travel at least 70 KM to access to secondary health services;
- Female participants identified a lack of information on services and aid distribution;
- Participants identified that the groups facing the most difficulties in accessing aid and services are those with restricted mobility, such as female-headed households with small children, pregnant women, the elderly, and women without men in the family.



- All male FGD-participants expressed concerns about the fact that they had not yet received any Government support.

During the field visits, UNHCR protection team observed that many tribes and various towns in Libya provided donation and assistance to the IDPs in the site. The IDPs' community in Qararat established a committee to manage the provision and distribution of assistance. The committee is undertaking registration of IDPs and distribution of assistance, and has rented two warehouses in Qararat to store the food and NFIs. During the first two weeks, some IDP families returned back to their places of displacement and carried out the assistance they received during their stay, the IDP committee in the site decided to prevent IDPs to take the items with them and establish a checkpoint at the main road to ensure no IDPs take the assistance out of the site.

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