

KEY FIGURES

12,000 IDPs

received humanitarian aid in Libya

2 million people

risk food and medical supply shortages if fighting continues in Libya

108,000 people

arrived in Italy since January 2014, most departed from Libya

PRIORITIES

- Assess humanitarian needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs
- Provide counseling support and share information through UNHCR's hotlines in Libya
- Facilitate access into Libya in order to carry planned activities and assistance on the ground

LIBYA CRISIS

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

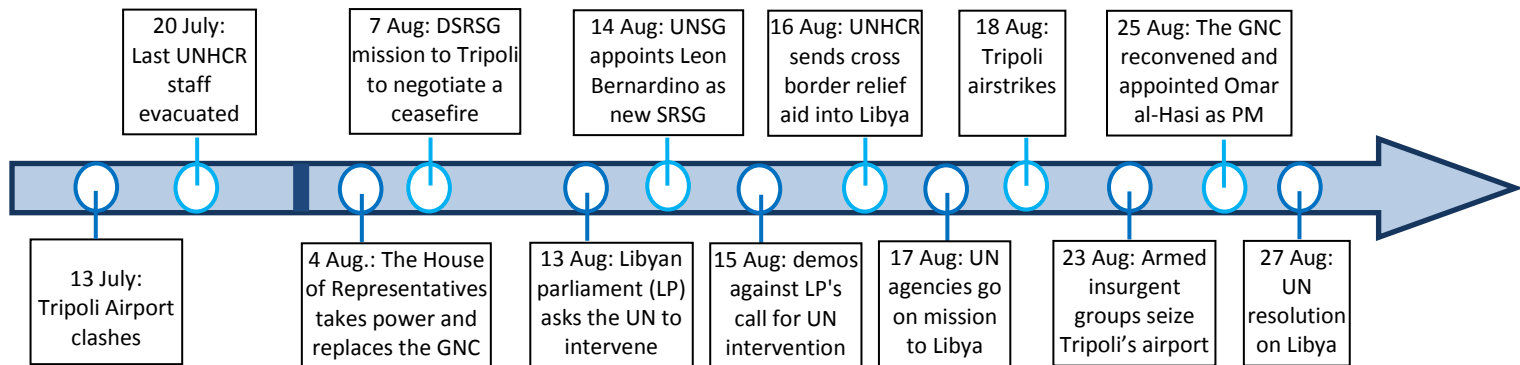
18 – 24 August 2014

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- On Monday 25 August, Libya's former parliament, the General National Congress (GNC) reconvened and appointed Omar al-Hasi as Prime Minister, leaving the country with two former leaders and two legislative bodies, the House of Representatives and the GNC.
- Tripoli is gradually returning to normal after armed insurgent groups reportedly secured areas between Tripoli and Ras Jedir border point with Tunisia, including Tripoli International Airport
- Six weeks of continuous fighting in Tripoli have generated severe humanitarian needs, as the city was almost isolated and basic supplies and services were not reaching the capital.
- Fresh fighting has erupted in Benghazi between opposing factions.
- Foreign Ministers of Libya's neighbouring countries met in Cairo on 25 August. Libya appealed for international support to protect of its oilfields and airports, saying it lacked the capacity and power to stop armed groups.
- The number of irregular boat departures from Libya towards Europe keeps rising. Since January 2014, more than 108,000 people have arrived in Italy. About 90 per cent departed from Libya.
- Since the beginning of the current crisis on July 13, it is estimated that more than 400,000 people have crossed into neighbouring Tunisia (est. 300,000) and Egypt (est. 95,000). The majority are Libyans and Egyptians. Less than 100 people have approached UNHCR to seek international protection.
- On 21 August, Tunisia and Egypt announced the closure of air space with Libya, as a precautionary security measure.

UPDATE

Timeline of Main Events



Operational Context

LIBYA

Identification of needs

- According to Tripoli Local Council there are currently 75,750 people displaced. However, estimates by humanitarian agencies and local organizations report up to approximately 107,000 people displaced from or within Tripoli.
- The Yefren Crisis Committee submitted a report and request to UNHCR for assistance to the 6,136 persons (including 1,289 children) displaced by fighting in Tripoli. Yefren is a town 127 km southwest of Tripoli. The Yefren Crisis Committee has requested urgent supplies of medicine and described increasing difficulty to accommodate displaced people from Tripoli due to limited shelter capacities.
- A missile from Tripoli clashes hit Fallah camp for Tawerghan internally displaced people (IDPs) on 22 August, setting fire to the warehouse, and injuring some IDPs. UNHCR is trying to confirm the number of injured persons. A large number of people from the Fella IDP had already left a few weeks earlier due to the heavy fighting.
- UNHCR reached out to all five Tawerghan IDP camp representatives to assess needs and protection concerns. All but one camp in the Marine Academy have been newly displaced. As of 21 August, approximately 2,900 Tawerghans IDPs are re-displaced. Most have sought shelter from friends and families. The majority of re-displaced Tawerghans have evacuated to the west of Tripoli, seeking shelter in Zawiya, Sabratha, Surman, Al-Ajelat, Tiji and Bader. Tawergha IDPs remaining in the Marine Academy have reported difficulties in purchasing food items and other supplies as shops nearby are closed. UNHCR is assessing how best to provide assistance to these groups.
- As of 22 August, residential areas where most refugees, asylum-seekers and other vulnerable groups live have been the hardest hit. Many have not eaten for days and are afraid to leave the area. UNHCR has asked the International Medical Corps (IMC) to assess the situation and determine potential assistance channels.
- UNHCR has reports of increasing displaced people in Benghazi, including families displaced from Tripoli. The umbrella NGO "We are Benghazi" has set up shelter in an additional four schools to host the displaced families. There are approximately 492 people (82 families) hosted in the schools. One of the schools is set up for third country nationals and so far, Egyptians and Chadian nationals are seeking shelter there. The NGO is privately funded and is not receiving assistance from the Government. There is concern that as schools are due to re-open at the end of the summer holiday, there will be a need to seek alternative shelters for the displaced population.

Humanitarian Assistance Responses

- UNHCR and partners IMC and Taher Al-Zawi completed the first cross-border delivery of relief items in Zawiya, a town west of Tripoli. The distribution reached some 12,000 people displaced by the fighting in and around Tripoli. Items included medical supplies and UNHCR relief items such as blankets, sleeping mats and nappies.

- Refugees and asylum-seekers in Benghazi and Tripoli reported the very difficult situation they are facing with limited access to food, water and other necessities. Vulnerable people such as people with disabilities are at particular risk.
- UNHCR continues to receive calls from Sudanese, Eritreans and Congolese trapped inside their houses; many are extremely vulnerable individuals or families with young children who have not eaten, some in days. UNHCR has reached out to the International Medical Corps (IMC) to assess the situation and determine possibility of assistance.
- UNHCR Tripoli and Benghazi offices continue to assist asylum-seekers and refugees calling through the emergency hotlines requesting for assistance.
- UNHCR Benghazi is coordinating with NGOs to assess the needs of the displaced. They have called for funding assistance from international organizations to continue to support IDPs and displaced migrants. The Government has reportedly started paying a housing allowance. However, with increasing number of registered IDPs, the allowance is not keeping up with the demand. So far, the local council has informed UNHCR that there over 4,800 people (800 families) are displaced in Benghazi.
- UNHCR Tripoli Field Team conducted a phone verification exercise of nine detention centres in Al-Krareem (Misrata), Brake Shati, Sabha, Gheryan (two centres), Zliten, Al-Khoms, Al-Gowaa, Abu Selim and Zawiya. Approximately 2,200 people are detained in these nine centres. The head of the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) reported difficult conditions in all detention centres after fighting broke out in Tripoli. Reportedly, the DCIM main warehouse in Tripoli was looted and centres are in severe shortage of basic items, such as hygiene kits and blankets.
- UNHCR Libya facilitated the second Protection Working Group meeting on 19 August attended by representatives of the European Union, US Embassy and the Canadian Embassy, along with NGOs, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Human Rights' Section. The main topics of discussion were: 1) mapping of humanitarian needs inside Libya and agencies' capacity to respond, and 2) potential responses to humanitarian needs inside Libya.

Mixed Migration Challenges

- The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers are becoming increasingly desperate to leave Libya. They have few other options than irregular sea migration as the Tunisia-Libya border is generally open only for Libyans and those with valid documents and the Algerian and Egyptian borders with Libya remain closed for third-country nationals.
- More than 300 people have died while trying to make irregular sea crossings from North Africa to Europe during the reporting period, bringing the death toll this year from sinking vessels on the Mediterranean to almost 1,900.
- The Libyan Coast Guard informed UNHCR on 22 August that a shipwreck occurred off the coast of Tripoli (near Garabouli port, approximately 45 km east of Tripoli). As of 25 August, Coast Guard reported 19 survivors (18 men and one woman) and recovered some 100 bodies, including children and women. The Coast Guard reported that there were "bodies floating everywhere in water" but authorities lack equipment and man-power to provide search and recovery operation. UNHCR also reported two additional tragedies near Italian waters involving boats departing from Libya with some 52 deaths and many missing, presumed lost.
- As of 25 August, Italy reported 108,172 arrivals, of whom some 97,350 people departed from Libya (90 per cent). In comparison, less than 43,000 people arrived in Italy in 2013, of whom approximately 24,500 departed from Libya.
- UNHCR receives daily reports of boats departing from Benghazi with a majority of Syrians and Palestinians. UNHCR provided information to the Syrian and Palestinian communities on the dangers of irregular sea travel; however, this has not had much effect.

TUNISIA

Border Movement and Access to Asylum

- On 23 August, as a consequence of the deteriorating situation in Libya, Ras Jedir border witnessed an increase in the influx of people entering Tunisia. Vehicles had to wait several hours before crossing to Tunisia. Sporadic shooting could be heard on the Libyan side.
- Some 40,000 individuals crossed the border into Tunisia in the last week, with an average 5,500 per day through the two official border crossings with Libya. The vast majority are Libyans.
- All people holding valid travel documents and a transit visa, flight ticket, or arrangements with respective embassies are systematically admitted into Tunisian territory. All Libyans were admitted so far.

- UNHCR is working in close collaboration and coordination with the Tunisian Government to facilitate access to humanitarian cases and persons of concern to UNHCR. This includes people arriving by land and by sea.
- UNHCR is registering persons of concern who arrived by land or were rescued at sea.

Prepositioning Humanitarian Assistance

- Deployment of UNHCR teams in Medenine and Tataouine governorates is now complete. The UNHCR team deployed in Southern Tunisia continue to closely link with local authorities and other agencies.
- Since 3 August, the Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC) has deployed staff to Ras Jdir crossing point and is providing food assistance to all people at the border. TRC coordinates with the Libyan Red Crescent (LRC) in order to identify potential people of concern to UNHCR who are stranded on the Libyan side of the border.

Rescue-at-Sea and Mixed Migration

- On 21 August, a boat in distress was rescued off the Tunisian coast and disembarked passengers in Zarzis. The boat had been drifting at sea for days after leaving Libya in an attempt to reach Italy and carried 75 survivors on board.
- Survivors were immediately assisted by Tunisian authorities at disembarkation. They received first aid assistance (water, food, healthcare) through the Tunisian Red Crescent.
- Most of the 75 survivors are from Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria and are thus expected to return home voluntarily with IOM's assistance. In the meantime, they are receiving assistance from the Tunisian Red Crescent and IOM.
- UNHCR organized counselling sessions by community for survivors from the boat rescued off the Tunisian coasts on 9 August, to clarify UNHCR's mandate regarding asylum in Tunisia and raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration. Refugee Status Determination is scheduled to start next week.

Contingency Plan and Coordination

- UNHCR teams deployed to the south of Tunisia held several meetings with local authorities in order to establish UNHCR's presence in Dehida.
- On 19 August, the first regional meeting with working groups was held by the Governor of Tataouine, to discuss the Libya situation and response. UN agencies were invited to participate. Participants discussed protection, shelter and wash, non-food items, security and health.
- In Medenine governorate, similar working groups met on 14 August.

EGYPT

Border Movement and Access to Asylum

- The border between Egypt and Libya is closed, except for the return of Egyptian nationals.
- Some 500 to 600 Egyptian and Libyan nationals crossed into Egypt through Salloum border point on a daily basis. The majority are Egyptians (75 to 80 per cent).
- The current population at the border is 45 people, including Sudanese, Nigerians and Jordanians. This group is currently not receiving any material assistance.
- UNHCR is advocating with the Government of Egypt on behalf of persons of concern stranded at the border.

Humanitarian Assistance

- The Egyptian army provides medical services and 300 lunches per day for Egyptians.
- UNHCR continues to advocate for permission to provide food and water to those stranded at the border.
- UNHCR has two staff in monitoring the situation in Salloum, and has prepared a contingency plan should the situation change and the border be re-opened.