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Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 - Human Rights Priority Country update report: July to December 2016 - Libya

The human rights situation remained a serious concern in the second half of 2016 due to the unstable political and security situation. The deteriorating humanitarian situation saw the continued conflict affecting the civilian population; crimes by the terrorist group Daesh; attacks on journalists and human rights defenders; arbitrary detentions and summary executions; and destruction of civilian infrastructure.

Civilians continued to suffer from ongoing hostilities and armed groups acting with impunity as a result of the volatile political and security situation. From 1 August to 31 December, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) documented 252 civilian casualties, including 109 deaths and 150 injured, during the conduct of hostilities across Libya. In October and November, UNSMIL recorded a sharp rise in the number of civilian casualties, with 67 deaths and 124 injured during this two-month period. Of these, 37 deaths and 101 injured were in Benghazi, with 16 civilians killed and 13 injured due to hostilities in Sabha. Casualties during this 2-month period also included a Dutch journalist killed by a sniper in Sirte, a woman killed and 6 injured in a Tawergha internally displaced persons camp and 4 civilians killed and 18 injured by an explosion in al-Kish square in Benghazi. One of the civilians was Muhammad Bugaighis, an anti-corruption activist. Civilians were also caught in the fighting in Zawiya.

The intense conflict in Benghazi continued to endanger civilians, as reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW). A total of 10 men, 2 women and 5 children were killed during October and November by airstrikes on Qanfouda, a neighbourhood of Benghazi where civilians are trapped because of fighting between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC). On 21 November, a car bomb at the al-Jalah hospital in Benghazi killed 2 men, 2 women and 2 children, and injured 23 others, including 7 children. Random shootings are common in Benghazi.

In December, heavy clashes took place in Tripoli between rival militias at several locations. At their height, the fighting involved tanks and heavy weapons. At least 8 civilians were reported killed.

In Sebha (South Libya) in November, 16 Civilians were killed and many injured following tribal clashes and the security situation there continues to threaten civilian lives.

Arbitrary killings and apparent summary executions continued to be recorded during the period under review. On 21 September, video footage circulating on social media appeared to show ill-treatment of a captured Daesh fighter in Sirte and there were allegations that the prisoner was then executed. This followed allegations in August of executions of captured Daesh fighters. A video circulated on social media in December appearing to show Bunyan Marsous fighters interrogating a Daesh fighter, after which photographs on social media suggested the man was decapitated.

On 27 October, 10 bodies were found with their hands tied and gunshot wounds in a rubbish dump in the Sheibna neighbourhood of Benghazi, which is under the control of the LNA. On 25 December, the bodies of 2 policemen from the Criminal Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior were found in Tripoli with gunshot wounds. On 8 December, the bodies of 2 male detainees from the "al-Rwiemi" prison were found in Ain Zara, Tripoli, close to the prison. The bodies had gunshot wounds to the head, chest and stomach. On 28 December, the bodies of 2 men were found in Sabha.

Civilians continued to be subject to abduction and kidnapping for ransom across Libya.

Daesh remained a serious threat and committed violations against, and systematic persecution of, civilians including abduction, murder, punishment by amputation, stoning and arbitrary execution.

NGOs, including Amnesty International reported that prospective migrants on the smuggling routes to and from Libya suffered abuses including detention, rape and sexual violence, killings, torture, religious persecution, and inhumane conditions. The mistreatment of migrants by traffickers and armed gangs in was highlighted in a UN report published on 13 December. The UN reported that conditions in detention centres where migrants were being held were 'generally inhuman' and also noted that UNSMIL had received reports of the participation of some state employees and local officials in the smuggling and trafficking process.

Displaced communities, such as the Tawergha, remained vulnerable to persecution. In October 2016, one Tawerghan man was killed and 7 injured including children, after indiscriminate shelling near a camp for Tawerghan displaced people.

Civil society organisations faced continued pressure from intimidation, abduction and violence. Libya remains 164 out of 180 countries in the 2016 World Press Freedom Index. It is still difficult for women to participate equally in society. In October, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court reported its determination to prioritise investigations into this unacceptable situation in 2017.

During this period the UK continued to express its concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Libya. On 27 September, at the 33rd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UK joined UN member states and senior UN human rights officials at the interactive dialogue on Libya in urging the Libyan government to ensure protection of human rights. UK diplomatic efforts remained focused on encouraging all Libyan parties to engage meaningfully in continued political dialogue, and to support the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord in pursuing national reconciliation and a peaceful transition to an elected and unified government that represents all Libyans.

The UK programme support for Libya between 2016 and 2017 includes support for peace mediation and stability, women's rights, civil society, municipalities, and freedom of speech. We will continue to encourage the GNA to ensure that as a single Libyan governing authority is established across the nation, respect for universal human rights are prioritised, especially for the most vulnerable such as migrants and minorities.