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# New displacement in east, south and west of Libya

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Intense fighting among rival armed groups in Libya's eastern towns of Benghazi and Derna, as well as in the country's southeast at Ubari and in the west at Kikla, is fuelling a displacement crisis. At least 106,420 people have fled their homes in the past month alone, meaning that displacement amid the violence since May now exceeds 393,400 people.

Insecurity meanwhile is hampering humanitarian operations. Aid agencies are still trying to calculate the true scale of internal displacement. We have confirmed reports from our NGO partners of 56,500 people having fled Benghazi in the past few weeks (including 2,500 Tawerghans who had previously sought shelter there fleeing earlier waves of violence in 2011). Still more people have fled from Derna (some 170 km from Tobruk) though we have no confirmation yet on how many. Local crisis committees in southeast confirm some 11,280 people have fled fighting in Ubari, while in the west civilian groups report 38,640 people have been displaced by fighting in Kikla, including many women and children.

Libya's displaced are scattered across 35 towns and cities, and are in dire need of shelter, health care, food, water and other basic commodities. The fighting has been fiercest in Benghazi, from where people have fled to the nearby towns of Al Marj, Ajdabiya, Al Bayda, and Misrata. These towns are now reaching the limits of what they can do to help the displaced. Al Marj has had to close its schools to accommodate people unable to stay with host families. Al Bayda and Tobruk are also straining to house the rising tide of displaced people seeking shelter there (from Derna as well as Benghazi). Schools in Tobruk will also be closed so they can host the displaced people.

Of particular concern to UNHCR is the situation of some 2,500 Tawerghans who fled their camp in Benghazi in mid-October, and are now staying in parks, schools and parking lots in Ajdabiya and neighbouring towns, with only thin plastic sheets and some tents for cover.

Winds and rains over the coming winter months will be hardest on women, children and the elderly who lack warm clothes, heaters and insulated tents and shelters.

Cross border aid convoys are the only way to get in supplies. While UNHCR and its partners have delivered aid to some 19,000 displaced people through cross-border convoys in August and September, we face constraints with funding and access.

UNHCR is also concerned about the welfare of some 14,000 of the 37,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers (almost half from Syria) in Libya stranded in conflict zones or unable to provide

food for themselves and their families. During times of conflict, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are often viewed with suspicion and suffer from animosity towards all foreigners. With no alternatives, many have irregularly departed by boats to Europe. So far this year, more than 156,000 have arrived in Italy - over 85 per cent departing from Libya.

UNHCR released yesterday its latest position paper on returns to Libya, which calls on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Libya access to their territories, and urges all states to suspend forcible returns to Libya until the security and human rights situation has improved considerably.

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