



Conflict-Sensitive Assistance to Libya Forum

Summary of Discussions | 28th Meeting

13 December 2018, Acropole Hotel, Tunis

The Conflict-Sensitive Assistance in Libya (CSA) forum, convened by the Embassy of Switzerland to Libya and facilitated by the Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI), met for its 28th meeting (CSA 28) on 13 December 2018 at the Acropole Hotel in Tunis.

The meeting covered:

- Presentation of a refreshed conflict analysis framework for the CSA forum.
- Updating the joint conflict analysis of the CSA process and considering the conflict sensitivity implications of changes in the Libyan peace and conflict context since the last CSA forum meeting.

Summary update of analysis

In the first session of the forum meeting, PCI presented updates to the ongoing context analysis. The updates covered the period since the last CSA meeting on 18 October 2018.

Working in groups based on sectors, participants reviewed the updates, identifying issues that had been missed and discussing the conflict sensitivity implications of events over the update period. The updates, incorporating participants' comments, are included below.

Political

At the national political level, the update period saw significant shift in dynamics relating to the political process.

In his address to the UNSC on 9 November, the SRSG called for the holding of the National Conference as a way to proceed with the transitional process. Within the context of the failure of the HoR to establish the legislative framework for elections as agreed in the Paris meeting in May 2018, the National Conference has been framed as a way for the broader Libyan public, through the participants, to apply pressure on state institutions to advance with the political process. The SRSG announced the intention that the National Conference would be held early in 2019, with subsequent elections in the Spring.

On 11-13 November, the Italian-led Palermo conference that aimed to bring together Libya's major political actors to discuss progress towards elections and Libya's transitional process. The conference saw the participation of elements of the GNA, HSC, HoR and major security/armed actors, as well as international representatives. The conference itself led to statements reaffirming the Libyan participants' commitments towards the LPA and towards elections as the way out of Libya's political crisis, but did not appear to make any significant political break-throughs.

After Palermo, and amid the preparations for the National Conference, on 26 November the HoR passed amendments to the 2011 Constitutional Declaration that would allow for the holding of a referendum on the draft constitution under regional constituencies. A referendum law was

subsequently passed to HNEC which in turn announced the intention of holding the referendum in mid-February, subject to funding being made available, and was starting to prepare on that basis. Nevertheless, there remains a possibility that the referendum could be delayed due to legal challenges.

The referendum decision was a surprise to many observers and has added some confusion to the sequencing of the current political process. UNSMIL still intends to hold the National Conference in early January, presumably as a process in support of the referendum process.

At the same time as passing amendments to the Constitutional Declaration relating to the referendum, the HoR passed amendments relating to restructuring the PC, in line with agreements apparently established with the HSC as reported in the last snapshot update, though subsequent moves towards enacting this have not been reported.

In early December, the Central Committee for Local Government Elections announced that voter registration for municipal elections would open on 12 December for 76 municipalities that have expired mandates and are scheduled for elections in 2019. Subsequently, authorities in the Bayda-based Interim Government declared that members of the public in municipalities in the East of the country should not register to vote - building on previous statements that Eastern municipalities would not participate in elections. Municipal elections are also expected to be held under the context of Regulation 1363 of 4 October, which imposes a party bloc voting system - where a party list that receives the most votes in a municipality will win every seat in the local council.

Forum participants made the following observations concerning the interaction between their work and the changing political context:

- The development around the national conference and referendum remain unclear at the time of the meeting, including whether they will take place at all, how they fit together and what they will lead to. The lack of clarity adds uncertainty to the operating environment for international assistance providers and it is important to consider and plan for various scenarios.
- Participants reported that international assistance providers have been facing additional challenges in terms of accessing the East, tied into a broader political perception in the East that the international community favours the West.

Security

In terms of security, the update period saw ongoing insecurity in a number of areas.

Tripoli saw relative stability compared to the major violence of August and September. On 14 November, the 7th Brigade and Ghneiwa Central Security armed group reportedly clashed in Southern Tripoli, raising tensions. These were quickly deescalated.

In late October and early November, a number of targeted attacks against senior members of armed groups in Tripoli were reported. Some observers noted that this may be related to power struggles between armed groups and that this has raised tensions in Tripoli. However, this did not lead to significant clashes during the update period.

In early November, some clashes in the South-West of Libya were reported between local armed groups and armed groups that were repeatedly identified in the media as Chadian rebels. Reports suggested these clashes were local responses to criminal activity by groups which may include Chadians as well as Libyan members.

Between 15 and 18 November, a number of clashes occurred between Mashashiya and Magharba tribal communities in AbuQila region, south of Jufra. The clashes were related to disputes around land

and were deescalated through traditional dispute resolution processes, pending a formal resolution to the issue.

On 28 October, ISIS elements attacked the town of Fuqaha, near Jufra, fighting with local police forces. The attack saw the militants abduct and kill several police members and civilians. ISIS engaged in several attacks in the area over November, affecting local security.

On 29 November, US forces launched an airstrike against suspected Al Qaeda elements in South-Western Libya. The strike reportedly killed 11 people. The local Tuareg community condemned the strike, saying that it hit civilians.

Late October and early November saw Derna witness a number of clashes between Haftar-affiliated LNA forces and Derna Protection Forces around control of an area in the center of the city.

The lead up to 13 December saw a number of rumours of preparations by Ibrahim Jadran affiliated Petroleum Facilities Guards and the Benghazi Defence Brigades to launch another attack on Haftar-affiliated LNA controlled oil facilities in the Oil Crescent, where LNA forces have been reported to have strengthened defensive measures since the last attack on oil facilities in June.

Forum participants made the following observations concerning the interaction between their work and the changing security context:

- The violence in the South of the country greatly affects the activities of international assistance providers. Practically, movement is very difficult and limits work in only a few locations.
- It is tempting to feel that the lack of significant violence in Tripoli over the reporting period indicates an improvement in the situation. However, the root causes of insecurity remain and the situation could change at short notice, affecting international assistance providers.

Economic

In terms of the economy, the update period saw an improvement in overall economic conditions, potentially due to the implementation of economic reform efforts by the government.

The update period saw a significant increase in the black-market value of the Libyan dinar, dropping from around 5.5 LYD to USD in late-October to around 4.8 LYD to USD in mid-November. This brings it much closer to the official exchange rate which has hovered around 1.40 LYD to USD.

The liquidity crisis continued to ease during the update period, making it significantly easier for Libyans to access cash through the banking system.

In December, the GNA reportedly announced that from February 2019 all goods entering the country will have to be processed through official banks as a measure to undermine the black economy. It is expected that this will potentially disproportionately affect small businesses.

The update period saw Libya's oil production increase the highest level since 2014, reaching approximately 1.1 million barrels per day (bpd). However, on 8 December, armed protesters related to the Anger of Fezzan movement shut down the Sharara oilfields, leading the NOC to announce force majeure on 10 December. The closure at Sharara also affects the El Fil oilfields due to shared infrastructure. The shutdown of production at both fields totals approximately 400,000 barrels per day, or just short of 40% of Libya's total production capacity.

Forum participants made the following observations concerning the economic updates:

- It is unclear how changing dynamics such as the appreciation of the dinar on the black-market or customs decisions will directly affect conflict actors and to what extent different actors will benefit or lose from such changes. Targeted research should be undertaken to help international assistance providers understand how to engage on such issues.

Social

Socially, the update period saw an increase in tensions relating to perceived alienation of the South.

The Anger of Fezzan movement, a popular, youth-driven movement mobilising around the lack of services and infrastructure in the South of Libya, undertook continual protests in the South West of the country over the period. These protests have escalated to the closure of the Sharara oil fields. Protests and the movement have seen the support of community leaders in the South, as well as of some municipalities.

A complete overview of the updated analysis can be found by logging into the OPSECA online platform at: <https://opseca.humanidev.tech/opseca/#p=dashboard?a=6>. To register a profile and use of the platform, please contact tim.molesworth@peacefulchange.org. Only organisations participating in the forum have access to the online platform (one login profile per organisation).

Conflict Sensitivity Considerations for Working in the South

In the second session of the workshop, PCi invited two presenters to speak about working in the South of Libya. The speakers included a Libyan peace worker from the South of the country and a member of an international organisation who is involved with several peace initiatives in the South and across the Southern border.

The presentations and the follow-on discussions identified several important dynamics affecting the South which have relevance for international assistance providers engaging in the area.

Firstly, there is a wide feeling that the South of the country is left behind the rest of the country in terms of development, distribution of resources and service-delivery. Communities in the South feel marginalised by the rest of Libya and also by the international community. This perception has contributed to increasing anger towards national institutions, most recently demonstrated by the Anger of Fezzan movement. Feeling of marginalisation also encourage Southern actors to engage in transactional negotiations with national political actors around promises of resources and support, which ties the South into the broader national level conflict.

Secondly, significant demographic changes are seen to have occurred since 2011 within the South. These changes represent movements of people within Libya as a result of conflict, as well as movements across Libya's southern border. Demographic changes have contributed to inter-communal tensions and stressed existing mechanisms for dealing with local conflict. They have also fuelled narratives around the legitimacy of communities' rights and Libyan identity which further contributes to divisions between communities.

The presence of populations and armed groups from across Libya's border is often reported. Such groups undoubtedly are present in Libya, however their presence is particularly complex. Chadian and Sudanese armed opposition groups are present in the country and have been involved in fighting both at a local level and alongside national political actors. In some cases, fighters from these groups have been implicated in criminal activities. However, particularly for Tabu armed groups (which are often accused of being Chadian), the distinction between foreign and Libyan is often unclear. Groups often including locally recruited members and are embedded within local power structures. Tabu, and other communities, are also regularly generally accused of being 'foreign' as a way of delegitimising their claims, regardless of their geographic background.

Through the presentations and discussion around these dynamics, five key considerations for how international assistance providers should engage in a conflict sensitivity manner emerged:

- It is important that international assistance providers work in a culturally appropriate manner, being particularly sensitive to a strong sense of dignity by local communities and avoiding treating local communities as disempowered beneficiaries in need of assistance.
- International assistance providers should seek to engage in the South in a way that helps address Southern concerns around marginalisation, such as by more clearly communicating what assistance is provided and helping to address fundamental development inequalities between the South and other parts of the country.
- It is essential for international assistance providers to consider how their activities may interact with the local concerns around identity and demography. While international assistance providers are unlikely to be able to resolve issues arising out of demographic changes, it is important that they avoid inadvertently supporting or mirroring divisive narratives that could contribute to inter-communal tensions or be seen to be favouring one community over another.
- International assistance providers must undertake a nuanced assessment of local power dynamics and relationships between various actors to avoid inadvertently contributing to conflict. Such assessments should take into account the perceived representativeness of governance authorities, perceived demographic changes, the presence and role of armed groups and interactions with national actors, with a view to ensuring that activities are not seen to engage with one side over another.
- International assistance providers should do more to utilise existing capacities and people in the South who understand their own context and have significant influence over their communities. International reliance on national staff who are not drawn from local communities undermines their effectiveness and may contribute to feelings of alienation and disempowerment among local communities.

The Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya (CSA) initiative, funded by the Government of Switzerland and the European Union and facilitated by the Peaceful Change initiative, aims to support the ability of international assistance providers working in and on Libya to undertake their work in a conflict sensitive manner – minimising the risk of harm caused by their programming and maximising opportunities to promote positive peace.

The CSA initiative includes: a bimonthly forum bringing together international organisations, donors and implementers to consider how the changing context in Libya affects and is affected by their programming; the Leadership Group made up of senior representatives of diplomatic missions and the UN, which aims to consider policy responses aimed at enhancing conflict sensitivity; and technical support to implementers, through training and advice related to conflict sensitivity.