



Conflict-Sensitive Assistance to Libya Forum

Summary of Discussions | 31st Meeting

4 July 2019, Acropole Hotel, Tunis

The Conflict Sensitive Assistance in Libya (CSA) forum, convened by the Embassy of Switzerland to Libya and the European Union and facilitated by the Peaceful Change Initiative (PCi), met for its 31st meeting (CSA 31) on 4 July 2019 at the Acropole Hotel in Tunis.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Update the joint conflict analysis of the CSA process and apply the analysis to specific areas of practice;
2. Present and discuss a new CSA resource regarding Conflict Sensitivity Risks for International Assistance Providers working in Libya.

Summary update of analysis and conflict sensitivity considerations

In the first session of the forum meeting, PCi presented an update to the ongoing context analysis. The update covered the period since the last CSA meeting on 2 May 2019.

Working in groups based on sectors, participants reviewed the update, identifying issues that had been missed and considered conflict sensitivity implications. A summary of the update, incorporating participants' comments and outlining points of awareness for conflict sensitivity, is included below.

The update period saw a continuous worsening of the overall conflict situation in Libya, with impacts on the political process, social relations and local dynamics.

Political

The update period saw a further polarisation of institutions in response to ongoing fighting in Tripoli, with political elements in both the East and the West hardening their opposing narratives and cementing their positions in terms of refusing to deal with the other side.

Mediation efforts by UNSMIL have concentrated on encouraging a ceasefire and returning actors in Libya to the negotiating table. However, the UNSMIL led process faces significant challenges and limited capacity to influence the situation, as the two parties show minimal interest in mediated talks as a way to resolve the situation. Shuttle diplomacy efforts by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Ghassan Salame, and Deputy SRSG (Political), Stephanie Williams, during the update period, have included meetings with major actors, including key Government of National Accord (GNA) and High Council of State (HSC) figures as well as with Haftar and President of the House of Representatives (HoR) Age

elah Saleh. The lack of expected military success by the Haftar-affiliated Libyan National Army (LNA) forces may provide an opening to allow UNSMIL to engage.

Nevertheless, over the update period, the GNA and LNA have both refused to consider ceasefires called for by the international community. The GNA calling instead for the complete withdrawal of LNA forces and the LNA for the disbandment of all armed groups in Tripoli before such talks.

In early May, 32 Tripoli-based Members of the HoR established a rival House of Representatives in that city, rejecting the Eastern-based HoR. The formation of, and any actions by, the Tripoli-based

rival HoR have been rejected by the Eastern-based HoR as illegal and on 24 May Haftar-affiliated LNA forces shelled the Rixos hotel where the Tripoli-based rival HoR was located.

On 16 June, Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj proposed a process to establish peace, calling for a conference and elections to be held by the end of the year. The proposal was welcomed by international actors, including the UN, EU and European states, but was rejected by Haftar, the Interim Government and the Eastern-based HoR. The proposal offered no concessions on behalf of the GNA and would exclude Haftar and LNA-affiliated representatives from the process. As a result, the proposal is seen by some to be largely a strategic display of good-will by the GNA towards the international community in an attempt to solidify its political position.

On 20 June, Haftar made statements outlining his plans for a political transition after the capture of Tripoli, which would see any institutions established under the Libyan Political Agreement disbanded.

Internationally, regional political positions have also hardened, as military support from regional states to both GNA- and LNA-affiliated forces has become increasingly visible. In late July, the effective admission by Turkey that it had supplied arms to GNA-affiliated forces in contravention of the UN arms embargo has seen threats issued by the LNA to Turkish people and assets in Eastern Libya. Egypt closed the Suez Canal to Turkish shipping. This has contributed to heightening regional tensions.

At the local level, many communities have been seen to be polarising along the lines of national level conflict, contributing to divisive local political dynamics in some areas. Several communities, particularly in the South, have seen changes in authorities supported by the LNA. In early July, the Eastern Interim Government announced the establishment of a parallel commission for local elections and the intention to hold elections in affiliated municipalities.

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

- The policy so far adopted by the international community, which recognizes and engages predominantly with the GNA and less with the government in the East, affects International Service Providers' ability to deliver assistance in the East. With the hardening of positions on each side, this is likely to pose an even bigger challenge going forward. Participants urged the need to collectively reflect on and revisit this largely one-sided approach to political engagement with the conflicting parties.
- Through interaction with international actors, Haftar has become recognised as a political actor while civilian actors in the East have been side-lined, effectively strengthening and legitimising military actors at the expense of civilian. International Assistance Providers can seek to demilitarise interactions by increasingly looking towards civilian engagements in the political process.
- The establishment of a parallel commission for local elections in the East provides an opportunity but also a risk to International Assistance Providers. On the one hand, the prospect of local elections in the East enables avenues for working with credible and legitimate authorities rather than military leaders. On the other hand, this could serve to legitimise parallel institutions, strengthening the institutional divide.

Security and Justice

The update period saw an overall worsening of the security and justice situation, with increased fighting around Tripoli including use of aerial weapons along with an overall increase in weapons supplies on both sides, channelled through regional actors.

The majority of the update period saw increased violence between LNA- and GNA-affiliated forces along the front lines in Tripoli. The actual lines of control remained relatively stable, with small areas being swapped periodically due to fighting and neither side really able to make significant gains. As a result of this, the period saw increased use of airstrikes and shelling of areas by both sides. The relatively stable areas of violence resulted in growing confidence in other parts of Tripoli not directly affected by fighting, with people more readily engaging in business and social activities.

A major advance occurred on 26 June, when GNA-affiliated forces were able to recapture Gharyan, which had been used as the forward headquarters for LNA operations in Tripoli. The attack saw a high number of casualties on the LNA side and a retreat of the LNA headquarters to Jufra.

The recapture of Gharyan discovered weapons left by the LNA, including US made anti-tank missiles sold to the UAE. The US Congress has announced an investigation to find out how it got into the hands of LNA forces. The update period has seen an increase in the supply of weapons to both sides, with increasingly visible signs of weapons coming into the country through regional actors despite the UN arms embargo. The UAE has repeatedly been accused of supplying equipment and weapons to the LNA though it has denied it. However, at least one prominent accusation of UAE support, concerning a drone allegedly shot down by GNA forces, appears to have been fabricated. The update period also saw reports of large numbers of Turkish made armoured vehicles and weapons systems, including trainers, being provided to the GNA. At the end of June, Turkish authorities effectively admitted that they had sold arms to the GNA despite the arms embargo.

On 2 July, an airstrike hit a detention centre at Tajoura, killing at least 53 migrants, receiving widespread international condemnation and triggering calls for a closure of migrant detention centres. The LNA is widely believed to be behind the airstrike, though LNA spokesman Ahmed al-Mesmari has denied LNA responsibility. SRSF Salame announced that the attack may constitute a war crime and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an independent investigation of the bombings.

The update period saw increased attacks against LNA forces in other parts of the country. In Derna, at least three improvised explosive devices were detonated against LNA targets in June. The LNA on its part has accused GNA affiliated forces of killing LNA prisoners, something the GNA has denied.

A number of attacks were claimed by the Islamic State organisation in South Libya, where a security vacuum may contribute to increased capacity by violent extremist groups.

Major clashes also occurred in Murzuq between Ahali and Tabu communities in June and reportedly saw around 15 killed. Violence between the two communities has ratcheted up since April, triggered by the LNA advance in the South.

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

- Escalating violence is restraining access for assistance providers adversely affecting operating space and service provision. Participants reflected on the need for a coordinated access strategy covering the East, West and South of the country and working at all levels.
- Surfacing weapons provision by regional actors contributes to segmenting positions and worsening polarisation. In the highly polarised and fragile context, International Assistance Providers should collectively seek to understand the implications of engaging with different actors to avoid assistance and legitimisation being instrumentalised.

Economic

The update period saw the economic situation worsening, with increased vulnerability of key services and oil infrastructure to the fighting.

On 19 May, an armed group cut off Tripoli's water supply. The GNA accused the LNA, though reports suggest that it was a small armed group attempting to force the GNA to release a family member. Water was restored on 21 May. Tripoli has seen periodic electricity cuts as electricity infrastructure has been affected by the violence. Nevertheless, there does not yet appear to be systematic targeting of basic services by either side in the clashes.

The oil sector appeared to be increasingly dragged into the conflict. At least two more attacks on oil facilities around Tripoli occurred over the update period. In early May, the National Oil

Company (NOC) head, Sanalla, warned of increasing threats to the sector, with 95% of production vulnerable due to violence. Despite this, May saw increased revenue from oil sales through the NOC, amid reports of increased efforts to smuggle oil out of Eastern Libya.

In mid-June, Sanalla announced that NOC staff at Ras Lanuf had been threatened by LNA forces. This was denied by the LNA and the Eastern based rival NOC. The Interim Government then declared that Sanalla was not the head of the NOC and rejected the statement.

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

- Participants observed that the deteriorating economic situation alongside escalating violence and polarisation heightens incentives for actors to instrumentalise assistance provision and increases competition for local resources, posing increased risk to activities. Decreased border control as security forces engage in fighting and lack of rule of law opens up to smuggling and illicit trade across the border.
- In this situation responding to basic services and humanitarian need is becoming more difficult in terms of cost, logistics and coordination. Access to the South is particularly difficult. International Assistance providers need to collectively reflect on the way forward for service delivery and ensuring conflict sensitivity.
- Participants also noted that there is a bottleneck at the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) which International Assistance Providers can seek to address by advocating for restructuring.

Social

The situation worsened regarding a number of social factors during the reporting period, including a continued polarisation of the media and social media spaces.

Highly polarised narratives, combined with fabricated news and politically motivated interpretations of events, are contributing to hardening divisions both between parts of Libya and within communities.

At the same time, space for civil society and independent media is shrinking. Civil society actors, including Libyan peacebuilders, who have attempted to speak or act towards reducing tensions have reportedly faced threats and intimidation by armed groups on both sides.

On 2 May, two Libyan journalists covering fighting in Tripoli were arrested by the LNA. Their condition remains unknown.

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

- Participants reported that violence is adversely impacting vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, minorities and women. As a cause of insecurity, travel restrictions limit women's ability to participate in programming. The current situation has led to disappointment and loss of hope among communities further entrenching the social legacy of conflict and increasing inter-communal cleavages and resentment towards governance institutions.
- To address these issues international service providers should continue to work with a wide variety of stakeholders locally, be mindful to avoid contributing to increasing tensions and disillusionment, seize opportunities to promote intercommunal and trust-generating activities and work with media to prevent hate speech and divisive narratives and spread peace messages.

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 risks, opportunities and dilemmas in Libya

During the second half of the meeting, PCi presented the first edition of a newly developed resource for international assistance providers working on Libya “*Conflict Sensitivity Risks, Opportunities and Dilemmas in Libya: A paper for assistance providers*”.

Participants reviewed the material and provided feedback on what could be adjusted and how they may be able to use it within their organisations.

The paper captures key conflict sensitivity risks, opportunities and dilemmas faced by international political, humanitarian and development assistance providers in the current Libyan context. It presents those risks, opportunities and dilemmas within a matrix describing the potential interactions, mitigations, responses and monitoring mechanisms.

The risks, opportunities and dilemmas addressed are not exhausting and are, by nature broad. They may play out in different ways in different programmes and local contexts or not at all. Other risks, opportunities and dilemmas may also be faced by assistance providers, particularly at the local level. Elements identified build on insights from PCi’s work providing support to conflict sensitivity, including consultations, analysis and support to implementing partners.

The paper is intended to be a living resource, updated based on the changing peace and conflict context in Libya and based on feedback by implementers regarding how it’s used.

The resource is not a substitute for agencies undertaking their own conflict sensitivity analysis. Rather it is intended as a starting point for discussions and deeper analysis relevant to both donors and implementers, which can be referred to when considering conflict sensitivity risks in intervention design, planning and management.

The resource document is attached to this report for reference.

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 activities include: 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.