

Understanding the relationships between communities and armed groups

As a contribution to peaceful change in Libya

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Summary

Libyan society is undergoing a number of important changes as a result of the revolution / conflict in 2011.¹ This is most evident in the development of new governance and political systems. At the same time, experiences of the revolution / conflict have also created a range of peacebuilding challenges that need to be addressed for these changes to be successful. These challenges include grievances between communities, the desire for justice, and the need for transition from armed groups² to trusted national security and justice institutions.

In March and April 2012, the Peaceful Change initiative and AFAQ Libya undertook research at the community level in nine target areas along coastal Libya to help inform planning for the development and democratisation of security provision,³ so that such processes: (1) are responsive to the needs of local communities; (2) are 'conflict sensitive', in that they do not result in increased tensions or a return to violence; and (3) provide a platform for future reconciliation between different interest groups in the country.

This report captures the results for each target area in the following separate studies:

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This report does not attempt to provide an authoritative picture of the facts in each community, but is instead intended to give voice to local perspectives in diverse parts of Libya. Without an understanding of such perspectives, it will be difficult to identify the measures most effective for building a new and peaceful Libya. An analysis of findings and recommendations will be made available in a separate document in July 2012.

¹ A *conflict in change analysis for Libya: discussion document*, Peaceful Change Initiative, February 2012.

² The term 'armed group' is used throughout the report rather than 'catiba' (brigade) or 'militia' unless these terms were specifically used by research interlocutors, as the research team did not want to pre-judge the nature of such groups and their relationships with local communities. Similarly, the term 'fighter' is used rather than '*thuwwar*' (revolutionary or rebel) unless these terms were specifically used by research interlocutors.

³ Including *inter alia* Security Sector Reform, Small Arms and Light Weapons control, and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration initiatives.

Methodology

In the nine target areas, the Peaceful Change initiative and AFAQ Libya attempted to understand: (1) the main local level security concerns affecting communities; (2) the role of armed groups in the community and the motivations of their members; and (3) the perspectives of both communities and armed groups on what needs to happen for communities to feel safer in the future, and the role of armed groups in providing security. The research involved separate individual (key informant interviews – KII) and group discussions (participatory planning sessions – PPS) with armed group members and ‘civilians’ (those not belonging to an armed group) in each area. Minimal information is provided on the individual and group discussion participants so as to protect their identity.

All interlocutors were asked the same questions:

- What does ‘security’ mean to you?
- What are your hopes and fears for the future?
- What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?
- How can the role of armed groups be improved?
- What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

The nine target areas were identified through a broad conflict mapping of all communities in the coastal regions of Libya in March 2012 against pre-agreed criteria. The selection of target areas, as well as the research methodology, was tested in consultations with representatives of the transitional authorities and other key interlocutors. The overall characteristics of the target areas, as understood at the outset of the research, are captured in the following table. A map of the research areas is provided on page 50.

Overall characteristics of target research areas

Area – East to West	Main characteristics – as understood before research
1. Zuwarah and Al Jamel	There was a tense relationship between Zuwarah and Al Jamel (as well as Raqdalín and Zaltan), with confrontations between the towns’ armed groups since the end of the revolution / conflict. This is in part because of accusations that fighters from Al Jamel had breached human rights in Zuwarah during the revolution / conflict.
2. Zintan	Zintan played a significant role during the revolution / conflict, as an important front in the conflict and a main staging point for the training of revolutionary fighters from other towns. As a result, the town was highly militarised, with its armed groups still playing a significant role in the rest of Libya.
3. Tripoli, focused on Abu Selim and Suq al Juma	The city was host to a range of groups from different parts of the country, in addition to those formed by local residents. Also, different districts in the city were closely associated with one or other side during the revolution / conflict, with question marks over the strength of armed group-community relationships.

Area – East to West

Main characteristics – as understood before research

4. Bani Walid

Bani Walid had seen substantial unrest since the end of the revolution / conflict, and was seen by some to be outside the influence of the transitional authorities and to be 'pro-Qaddafi'. The town also appeared to have tense relationships with other areas, such as Suq al Juma in Tripoli and Zlitan.

5. Misrata

The city was on the frontline of the revolution / conflict and suffered a good deal of physical and psychological damage. Because of this experience, the city appeared to have tense relationships with some surrounding communities, including Tawurgha (whose population was displaced at the time of writing) and Sirte. Misrata's armed groups also continue to play an important role across the country.

6. Sirte

Sirte was the last city to see fighting during the revolution / conflict and also suffered a good deal of physical and psychological damage. There seemed to be a tense relationship between armed groups in the town, and between armed groups and the community. There were also question marks over the ability of people from Sirte to move freely outside the town. There seemed to be a tense relationship between armed groups in the town, and between armed groups.

7. Ajdabjiya

Ajdabjiya was a front-line city for part of the revolution / conflict period, and the Western part of the town was substantially damaged. At the same time, the town appeared to have received less development and recovery assistance than other towns. In addition, armed groups from the town appeared to have an important role regionally.

8. Benghazi

Benghazi was an important political centre in Libya, as it was the first city to 'rise up' and was the home of the National Transitional Council and the National Army during the revolution / conflict. It seemed that some in Benghazi felt politically marginalised after the revolution / conflict and called for greater local political control.

9. Derna

Derna saw significant revolts during the Qaddafi period, and suffered from coercive security measures by Qaddafi's security forces as a result. Since the revolution / conflict, some have expressed concern that there are 'extreme' religious groups in Derna and that they represent a threat to Libya. This concern may have resulted in political isolation of the city.

1. Zuwarah and Al Jamel – sacrifice and justice

In contrast with the other eight research areas, in Zuwarah and Al Jamel, the research team talked to two communities across a conflict divide, during a period of heightened tensions. This analysis endeavours to capture both perspectives, without prejudicing either.

1.1. What does 'security' mean to you?

“The real problem between Zuwarah and Al Jamel [as well as Raqdalín and Zaltán] is that Zuwarah sacrificed and Al Jamel refused to sacrifice”



(Civilian KII – Zuwarah)

“The thuwwar [who drove the revolution] want to keep control of the country. They feel they sacrificed more, deserve more and want punishments for those who did not actively support the revolution”



(Civilian KII – Al Jamel)

Threat of open fighting – all interlocutors stated that the conflict between Zuwarah and the towns of Al Jamel, Raqdalín and Zaltán (hereafter, the 'opposing towns') is the primary security issue facing their respective communities, as there is an ongoing risk of open fighting between the towns' armed groups. Indeed, the conflict erupted into confrontation in the days immediately preceding the research and, at the time of writing, peacekeepers appointed by the Ministry of Defence (Libya Shield) were deployed in the area: “We have a very bad security situation because of the war” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah); “We have a tense security situation with Zuwarah” (Armed group KII – Al Jamel).

Risk of violence against individuals and their property – all interlocutors also highlighted the risk of violence against individuals and their property, even at times when there is no open fighting between the two sides. A range of examples were provided, including theft, vandalism, physical attacks and, perhaps most importantly, detentions: “For one year they [armed groups from the opposing towns] capture anyone from our town who travels to theirs” (Civilian KII – Zuwarah); “11 days ago [our thuwwar] captured 30 people from Zuwarah that attacked shepherds, attacked houses and stole cars” (Civilian KII – Al Jamel).

Reciprocal actions deepen grievances – importantly, it appears that these incidents have taken on a 'fit for tat' nature with the armed groups of one side responding to the actions of the armed groups of the other side. This process of violent responses is evidently deepening the grievances felt by both sides: “We have no option but to capture their people for exchange. [If] they take one of us, we take ten of them” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

Inability to access farms and administrative services – because of this risk of violence against individuals, both sides felt that their communities were unable to undertake key livelihood tasks. In Zuwarah, interlocutors stated that farmers from the town do not have free movement to their farmlands, most of which are in or beyond the opposing towns. For their part, interlocutors from Al Jamel complained about the lack of access to administrative services, such as banking, which are provided through Zuwarah: “Most of our farms are on their [the opposing town's] side. Because of this we have not been able to reach our farms for one year – they capture anyone who travels there” (Civilian PPS – Zuwarah).

Widespread gun ownership among young people – further, both sides felt uneasy about the widespread ownership of guns in society and that these weapons were primarily in the hands of young people. This in turn was felt to have implications for the potential for peaceful resolution of the conflict between the sides: “It [the conflict] is due to the spread of weapons in Zuwarah. If they did not have weapons, how could they attack us” (Civilian PPS – Al Jamel); “One of the reasons for insecurity is the spread of weapons [in society]. Every house has three or four guns and unfortunately these guns are in the hands of the young, so we are talking with people that are not really reasonable” (Civilian PPS – Zuwarah).

Grievance at perceived human rights abuses / crimes in Zuwarah – in terms of the underlying issues driving the conflict, all interlocutors identified the perception in Zuwarah that ‘volunteers’ (those who chose to fight in defence of Qaddafi’s regime during the revolution / conflict) from the opposing towns committed significant human rights abuses and crimes in Zuwarah during the revolution / conflict; and that those responsible have not yet been held accountable for their actions. Significantly, the importance of this grievance as a driver of conflict in Zuwarah was well understood by interlocutors in Al Jamel, although they disputed its accuracy: “Even if there were some actions, they did not happen to the degree portrayed and were committed by individuals. What happened was a political issue between Zuwarah and the [Qaddafi] government” (Civilian KII – Al Jamel).

Risk to the revolution and country – in addition to the accusations of human rights abuses / crimes during the revolution / conflict period, most interlocutors in Zuwarah believe that the opposing towns are not supportive of the revolution and presently harbour well-armed pro-Qaddafi elements that continue to represent a risk, not only to Zuwarah, but to the whole country. As such, they rationalised the actions of their armed groups as a continuation of the revolution (see below): “We are surrounded by those who still follow Colonel Qaddafi, who believe that his regime will exist in one way or another. They have brigades and are preparing themselves to destroy Libya and not just Zuwarah” (Civilian PPS – Zuwarah).

Frustration with revolutionaries’ ‘sense of entitlement’ – for their part, interlocutors in Al Jamel felt that accusations of being a pro-Qaddafi stronghold are not fair as they do not recognise the anti-Qaddafi protests or actions prior to the revolution / conflict, or that the presence of significant Qaddafi forces inhibited overt protest in Al Jamel during the revolution / conflict. Indeed, there was a good deal of frustration with a perceived sense of entitlement on the part of those communities and armed groups that actively contributed to the revolution (e.g. Zuwarah) over those that did not (e.g. the opposing towns): “The *thuwwar* [who drove the revolution] want to keep control of the country. They feel they sacrificed more, deserve more and want punishments for those who did not actively support the revolution” (Civilian KII – Al Jamel).

Reflecting discrimination between the sides – interlocutors in Al Jamel also felt that, in the case of Zuwarah (which is a majority ethnic Amazigh / Berber community), this sense of entitlement was being used to justify discrimination against Arabs from the opposing towns. This discrimination was thought to manifest itself in two main ways: (1) in the actions by Zuwarah’s armed groups to stop Arabs from the area crossing the border into Tunisia; and (2) in the expulsion of Arab workers from the chemical factory at Abu Kammash. Importantly, these perceived acts of discrimination were given as justification for similar actions against Zuwarah’s residents: “All Arab people, around 150 families, have been kicked out of the Abu Kammash chemical factory... not gaining entrance to Tunisia has caused tensions. Hence we have stopped people [from Zuwarah] from coming to their farms” (Civilian KII – Al Jamel).

Belief that each side is discriminated against at the national level – finally, both sides were frustrated by what they saw as a lack of support by the transitional authorities and key political and security actors, and believed that this demonstrates that the revolution may be going in

the wrong direction. In the case of Al Jamel, it was felt that past interventions to manage the conflict had unfairly targeted the opposing towns: "The Misrata brigade came and we surrendered our heavy weapons to them... we thought they would take Zuwarah's as well, but this did not happen" (Civilian KII – Jamel). In the case of Zuwarah, it was felt that the revolutionary justification for Zuwarah's actions were being devalued because the majority of the town's population is ethnic Amazigh / Berber: "The facts are flipped to show people that the problem is a tribal one; to convince others that this is a problem with Amazigh" (Civilian KII – Zuwarah).

1.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Return to positive relations – importantly, both sides described a positive relationship between Zuwarah and the opposing towns before the events in 2011, and were at pains to state that the conflict was not tribal in nature. Indeed, it was felt that the same level of positive relationship could be achieved again: "There is no tribal conflict between us – this [conflict] relates to the wounds from the revolution in 2011" (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

However, interlocutors on both sides had consistent preconditions that they felt needed to be met before positive relations could be rekindled:

Zuwarah's preconditions – the preconditions consistently voiced by interlocutors in Zuwarah were: (1) the surrender of weapons (and heavy weapons in particular) by armed groups in Al Jamel, Raqdalín and Zaltan; (2) the surrender of those accused of crimes / human rights abuses from these towns; (3) return of detained persons from Zuwarah; (4) safe passage through roads and highways (especially to farmlands); and (5) the return of stolen possessions: "Only if they give back their weapons and wanted ones. Then we can go back to our lives, because then they will not be a threat to Libya" (Armed group PPS – Zuwarah).

Al Jamel's preconditions – the preconditions consistently voiced by interlocutors in Al Jamel were that : (1) weapons should be gathered from both sides; (2) the return of persons / possessions seized by both sides; (3) free movement across the Ra's Ajdir border crossing into Tunisia; (4) safe return to their home / workplaces for the Arab workers of the of Abu Kammash chemical factory; (5) direct discussions between the sides facilitated by the transitional authorities: "We want Zuwarah to give the border crossings back, give the homes back to the residents that were kicked out, the jobs back to the employees, and we want the government to control Ra's Ajdir [border crossing] and the factory" (Civilian PPS – Al Jamel).

Stability of ceasefire arrangements – one of the constant fears expressed was that the ceasefire in place at the time of the research would not be stable enough, both because deployed troops may not have the skills to manage the conflict and because there may not be commitment to keeping the troops in place for the required period of time: "The ceasefire may be broken at any moment due to the fragile situation and because the forces separating us are not specialised; they are just *thuwwar*" (Armed group KII – Zuwarah); "How long is the national army going to stay? Not long" (Armed group KII – Al Jamel).

More effective discussion formats – both sides also felt that the discussion formats for negotiating a solution need to be adapted so that they are more effective. At the time of research, discussions took place within the framework of traditional reconciliation committees. However, all interlocutors said that they would not be comfortable with direct discussions, instead emphasising the need to find an impartial facilitator: "At the moment we meet separately with the reconciliation committees to give our point of view. If both sides meet [directly] there are risks" (Armed groups PPS – Al Jamel); "There is no format for discussion at the moment. It should [in the future] be through a neutral committee from the Eastern part [of Libya]" (Civilian PPS – Zuwarah).

Development of confidence for sustainable peace – there was also a good deal of discussion on both sides on the need to develop confidence between the parties, so as to enable them to deliver on some of the preconditions outlined above. For example, people need to be confident that they will not be attacked before they hand over weapons. While there was greater willingness to explore how to build confidence in Al Jamel, in Zuwarah it was felt that the demands were too urgent to allow the time for confidence-building measures to bear fruit: “I understand that for the other side there is the feeling that if my weapons are removed who should protect me.... this [building trust] could take too long. 80% of our lands are there and in a year we have not gone to our farms” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

1.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Protection against threats from the other side – all interlocutors on both sides also described the primary role of the armed groups in their respective communities as protection from potential violence across the conflict divide. Indeed, some fighters said that they had returned to civilian life following the end of the revolution / conflict, but had taken up arms again to protect their community: “They [our armed groups] have to use force to stop attacks from the others side (Civilian KII – Al Jamel); “Our work as *thuwwar* had ended. We took up arms again due to the threat” (Armed group PPS – Zuwarah).

Preventing smuggling across the border – in addition, armed groups’ interlocutors from both sides saw one of their principle roles as preventing smuggling across the borders with Tunisia and Algeria, and accused the armed groups from the other side of involvement in smuggling activities: “This is a very dangerous border. Smuggling happens even now” (Armed group KII – Al Jamel); “They [armed groups from Al Jamel] don’t like any police or controls at the border as it will impact on their income. We have to close the border, as we are bleeding” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

Fighting for the revolution – the armed group representatives interviewed in Zuwarah argued that their actions were also in defence of the revolution: “Even the fighting of the last few days is a continuation of the 17 February Revolution... we moved through our own hand, as we are jealous of the revolution” (Armed group PPS – Zuwarah).

Contested status as ‘*thuwwar*’ – the civilian and armed groups’ interlocutors on both sides described the armed groups from their own communities as ‘*thuwwar*’, but challenged whether this was true of the armed groups across the conflict divide. In Zuwarah, most interlocutors referred to the armed groups from Al Jamel as comprised of pro-Qaddafi volunteers. In Al Jamel, most interlocutors referred to the armed groups from Zuwarah as comprised of former prisoners: “Some people calling themselves *thuwwar* in Zuwarah have another [criminal] agenda” (Civilian KII – Al Jamel); “The armies of Qaddafi are still there [in the opposing towns] they are just not in the uniform of Qaddafi” (Civilian PPS – Zuwarah).

Accountability to local councils through military councils – there was also a common narrative on both sides that the local armed groups were fully accountable to the local councils through directions given by the respective military councils: “The moment they [local council] told us to stop firing we stopped” (Armed group KII – Al Jamel); “The military council works in consultation with the local council. I decided the ceasefire” (Civilian KII – Zuwarah).

Not necessarily in full control – while the armed groups were accountable to local councils, this did not mean that their actions were fully authorised. Indeed, on a number of occasions interlocutors described a situation in which armed groups had ‘taken action’ in the heat of the moment without first coordinating with their respective local / military councils. These incidents

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

Al Jamel

- Social council members – two persons (male)
- Local council members – three persons (male)

Zuwarah

- Local council member (male)
- Civil society leader (male)

Armed groups

Al Jamel

- Military council member (male)

Zuwarah

- Military council member (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

Al Jamel

- Seven persons aged 32 to 53 (all male)

Zuwarah

- Seven persons aged 27 to 49 (all male)

Armed groups

Al Jamel

- Ten persons aged 17 to 38 (all male)

were attributed to the fact that armed groups are mainly comprised of young men with little experience of fighting and who may not think rationally in all situations. These incidents were more readily talked about in Zuwarah: “There could be independent action. In the last fight we made the decision. The fighters began fighting because of the heat” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

1.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Development of national security forces – the majority of interlocutors on all sides highlighted the need for independent national security forces to replace the armed groups currently operating in both towns. Indeed, it was felt that sustainable security was not possible until such forces are in place: “We need the army, police, justice system and courts to return” (Civilian PPS – Al Jamel).

Disband the armed groups – linked to the above point, most interlocutors on both sides did not see a long-term role for the armed groups in their community, but very much saw them as a temporary measure until the creation of trusted national security forces: “The *thuwwar*’s role is temporary. As soon as the military phase is ended, then they should return to their jobs or join the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

Increasing armed groups’ trust in local authorities – however, in Zuwarah, some interlocutors felt that local armed groups do not have sufficient trust in either the local or national institutions to enable them to feel that they can disband. As such, measures needed to be taken to build confidence that the local and national authorities will be able to promote local interests: “This is a psychological issue for *thuwwar*. We need to build trust between *thuwwar* and the authorities” (Armed group KII – Zuwarah).

Develop clear policing processes separate from armed groups – at the same time, in Al Jamel, most interlocutors were concerned at the threat of detention of local residents by armed groups from Zuwarah. They thought that such actions are not legitimate and that armed groups should not be permitted to detain persons, especially in the absence of a functioning criminal justice system: “Zuwarah is not the police force of Libya. Qaddafi [supporters] are not here now. If they were then the military council would have them arrested – there are also wanted people in Zuwarah” (Civilian PPS – Al Jamel).

1.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Reinforce state security provision on both sides – both through the presence of policing and military personnel, including peacekeeping divisions, and through local outreach / education programmes in the policing and justice reforms underway in the country.

2. Develop the right format and confidence for direct negotiations – all sides recognised the need for direct negotiations, but felt uncomfortable in engaging in such processes at the time of research. As such, there is a need to analyse the appropriateness of present formats, including: (1) the role of the mediator; (2) the questions under discussion; and (3) how to link discussions to mechanisms for consultation with community members and armed groups.

3. Develop parallel confidence-building formats that address practical needs – so as to create an environment in which a negotiated settlement can be achieved and to ensure that the results of the negotiations are sustainable. These formats should include information exchange at the community level on sensitive topics, as well as agreements on temporary measures that respond to immediate needs – such as access to farmlands and administrative services.

2. Zintan – burden of responsibility for national security

The research was conducted slightly differently in Zintan than in the other areas, as we were advised that most men in the town had participated in the revolution / conflict and were attached to an armed group. As a result, instead of conducting one civilian planning session and one armed group planning session, as in the other research areas, in Zintan two armed group planning sessions were conducted; one for those of high school or university ages, and a second session for older fighters.

2.1. What does 'security' mean to you?

“The challenges in front of Zintan are big and we want to build Zintan. However, when we rose up against Qaddafi our aim was justice, not just in Zintan, but across the whole of Libya”



(Armed group PPS – Older)

Security provided by a unified community – all interlocutors felt there is a high level of security in Zintan because of the 'unity' of the town's community. Importantly, this internal unity was contrasted with other communities in Libya, which were perceived to be divided along tribal lines or by differing levels of support for the revolution in 2011: "Most people [in Zintan] were fighting Qaddafi, and there are no divisions between them" (Civilian KII); "There are no tribal problems in Zintan. All the people [here] speak with one voice" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Militarised society due to its conflict experience – at the same time, Zintan was felt to have had a unique experience in three key respects: (1) it was under siege during the revolution / conflict; (2) there was a high level of mobilisation of the town's young men (with most continuing to participate in an armed group after the end of the revolution / conflict); and (3) the town plays a key role as a key security actor across the country (see below). Indeed, it was felt that society in Zintan had not yet been able to return to civilian life because of these experiences: "Zintan was under siege and surrounded from all sides, with women and children living in a war situation" (Civilian KII).

Widespread weapon ownership does not cause concern – one of the consequences of the militarised nature of Zintan is the widespread ownership of weapons, with estimates of up to 28,000 firearms of some form in civilian possession in the town. As a result, there was a good deal of discussion on whether and to what degree, these firearms pose a threat. The research interlocutors did not believe there to be any potential for armed confrontation in the town, or for the use of weapons in criminal activities, due to the unity described above. Instead, interlocutors perceived celebratory gunfire to be a problem, although the frequency of celebratory gunfire appears to have decreased since the revolution / conflict, due to an educational campaign led by local imams: "There has been a 70% or 80% reduction in firing in the air. The talks given at prayers reduced the amount" (Civilian KII).

Anger at lack of recognition of the town's sacrifice – interlocutors in the research were proud of the town's role in the revolution / conflict, believed that the town had sacrificed a good deal and felt a burden of responsibility for protecting the country through the transition process. At the same time, there was a good deal of anger at what was perceived as an attempt to undermine Zintan's contribution to the revolution, by either accusing the town of promoting its

political influence in the country, or accusing armed groups from the town of criminality and levering benefits in those places where they are stationed: “The challenges in front of Zintan are big and we want to build Zintan. However, when we rose up against Qaddafi our aim was justice, not just in Zintan, but across the whole of Libya” (Armed groups – older)”.

Belief in a coordinated campaign in the media – in particular, it was felt that the national media was being utilised to undermine the city’s armed groups by those who do not support the revolutionary events of 2011, as a way of destabilising the country. An example repeatedly provided was the negative coverage of the Zintan brigade controlling / protecting Tripoli’s international airport, which had resulted in public pressure being placed on it to withdraw. It was felt that this coverage did not recognise that the brigade was providing essential security, and that it unfairly singles out Zintan’s armed groups, when brigades from other towns are also controlling / protecting key infrastructure (such as the Mitiga airport): “There is a campaign in the media pushed by Qaddafi[’s supporters]. If Zintan leaves the places we protect, then they would be vulnerable” (Armed groups KII).

Grievances at ‘neglect’ and under-development – this perception that Zintan’s sacrifices and ongoing burden are not properly recognised, deepens a sense of injustice over perceived neglect of the town by the Qaddafi regime. This neglect was thought to be evident in the low level of development in the town: “Zintan suffered the injustice of Qaddafi. He did not neglect us, he completely forgot us – we have no water supply system, no good schools and no hospitals” (Civilian KII).

Tensions with the El-Mashasha tribe – all interlocutors referred to the tensions with the El-Mashasha tribe as a key challenge facing Zintan. It was felt that the tribe could not be allowed back to its villages near the town, because of the crimes attributed to the tribe’s fighters and because they could not ‘be trusted’ to uphold the peace: “We made three deals with the El-Mashasha to stay neutral [during the revolution / conflict]. We did not want there to be bloodshed between us. We have the ability to wipe them out, but we have not done so” (Armed groups KII).

2.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Desire to return to a civilian way of life – all interlocutors emphasised the desire for Zintan to relinquish its national security responsibility to allow the town’s residents to return to a civilian way of life. However, it was felt that such a change is not possible until there is a functioning government able to deal with the divisions within the country and the potential for violent conflict: “We want to return to civilian life. We want the thuwwar to return to civilian life. We want an end to the role of catibas. But only after the constitution is agreed and there is political stability” (Civilian KII).

Concern over potential for violent conflict, driven by tribes and Qaddafi supporters – indeed, while people felt unified and secure inside Zintan, there was a good deal of concern over the potential for conflict and instability in other parts of the country and even for civil war. The potential for violence was thought to be principally driven by tribal difference and the influence of Qaddafi’s supporters, rather than conflicts between armed groups that had fought for the revolution: “Inside Zintan thankfully we are secure. However, in the country there are some tribal and sensitive issues that make us feel unsafe” (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Increase in armed groups in the South – this was thought to be especially true in the South, where the long border and substantial movements of people across it was thought to provide an additional source of instability. Indeed, a number of interlocutors talked about an increase in the number of armed groups in the South, and that these armed groups are for the most

part not associated with the 2011 Revolution / conflict: "They are still importing armaments and forming brigades in the south. Tuareg and Tabu have contacts across the border, mostly in Mali" (Armed groups KII – older).

Concern about future religious diversity – most interlocutors felt that divisions in the country would increase if the revolution prompted greater diversity of religion. It was felt that one of Libya's unifying strengths is the fact that the majority of the population practise the same form of Islam. This unity of religious practice was offered as the main reason why Libya has avoided some of the pitfalls experienced in other countries undergoing changes of regime: "We don't want problems like in Iraq where there are different [religious] groups, or like in Egypt where they have the Copts. We are now one group, all Muslims. But in time we might have other groups" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Potential for 'degradation' of society – linked to the preceding point, some expressed concern that following the revolution / conflict there had been a notable decline in moral standards and were fearful about the potential for further 'social degradation' if activities, such as drinking, become widespread: "There has been an increase in drinking, which is associated with smuggling, as people don't drink local stuff" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Limited potential for economic development – one of the factors that interlocutors felt could drive social degradation and inhibit the return to a more civilian way of life in the town, is the high level of local unemployment, especially among young people: "The financial situation is worrying as we have high unemployment and young people have nothing to do but drink and sleep until the afternoon" (Civilian KII).

Potential for further 'neglect' to result in violence – (linked to the above) people in the town are concerned that Zintan will not see investments in local development and will continue to be 'neglected'. It was claimed that a scenario could result in frustrations locally and even a resort to violence, although interlocutors were not able to define the exact triggers for violence: "We started the revolution because of neglect and if we are neglected in the future we will start another. This not a threat, just the truth" (Civilian KII).

Concern over the fairness of the elections for a national congress – finally, some interlocutors expressed concern that such 'neglect' was inevitable as they believed the elections, and the whole transition process, were not set-up in a fair manner. At the heart of this belief was unhappiness with the allocation of seats for the national congress, which will be elected in July 2012, meaning that Zintan and other revolutionary areas could be outvoted on significant decisions on the future of the country: "The elections are not in the interest of the *thuwwar*, as the *thuwwar* will not get anything and the pro-Qaddafi [areas] could win. We are scared after all these sacrifices we will not get anything due to the numbers" (Civilian KII).

2.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

'City of *thuwwar*' – the interlocutors did not make a distinction between those in the armed groups in Zintan and other civilians. They considered all men in Zintan to be '*thuwwar*' and to have participated in the work of the armed groups. Indeed, the interlocutors described a shift system whereby they would serve in an armed group for a number of weeks, and then return home for a number of weeks: "When you say rebels and the community, there is no difference. At least not in Zintan" (Armed groups KII – older).

Anger at the 'false thuwwar' – as a result of this strong association of the whole town as the thuwwar, the interlocutors in the research expressed anger at the 'false thuwwar', categorised as those persons in armed groups that formed after the liberation of Tripoli. It was felt that these groups and their members are tarnishing the image of the revolutionaries through criminality and activities undertaken to promote their own benefit: "The difference between the false thuwwar and the thuwwar is that one wants to destroy the government and the other wants to build it up" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Key security role in the rest of Libya – the interlocutors in Zintan felt that the armed groups / fighters from Zintan will continue to play a key role as a stabilising factor during the transition, until the point at which a functioning and legitimate government is in place: "The thuwwar of Zintan, despite individual incidents, have undertaken a phenomenal role and they are still needed until the national government is formed and the police are in place" (Civilian KII).

National peacekeepers – one of the key roles described was as a national peacekeeping force, able to deploy to areas at risk of violent conflict; a role that it was claimed Zintan's brigades have already played in contexts as diverse as Sabha, Bani Walid and Zuwarah-Al Jamel / Raqdalain. The interlocutors also believed that Zintan's armed groups have a unique ability to act as peacekeepers, as Zintan does not have negative relationships with other communities, apart from with the El-Mashasha tribe: "We talked to two separate envoys from Tuareg and Tabu and we understand their problem. This is why we are always between conflicting parties. We don't have any animosity, apart from with the El-Mashasha tribe" (Armed groups KII – older).

Protecting infrastructure and borders – the second key role described was to protect infrastructure of national importance around the country, such as oilfields and borders (e.g. with Algeria and in the South). It was felt that, at the time of research, there were no legitimate and effective national bodies able to undertake this work: "We protect national infrastructure, as there are no government institutions able to do so" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Enabling accountability over security delivery – in addition, some interlocutors described how Zintan's armed groups had played a critical role in supporting security in other parts of the county by assisting the development of local councils and military councils: "We helped 25 areas to develop military councils and local councils without forcing them. We gathered weapons from people and gave them to local military councils" (Armed groups KII).

Coordination and accountability – for their part, local council and military council representatives believed that there was strong local accountability over the deployment of armed groups from Zintan to other parts of the country. It was explained that the military council has primary responsibility for assessing requests for assistance, with input and advice from the local council: "If the military council is tasked by the Ministry of Defence to provide troops to [for example] Bani Walid, Sabha and Zuwarah, we then go to the local council for approval" (Armed groups KII).

2.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Desire to reduce the burden on Zintan's young men – some interlocutors expressed frustration with some of the tasks being undertaken by the town's armed groups and the young men serving in them. While there was a greater acceptance of a peacekeeping role, some were not happy with deployments to protect borders or key infrastructure such as oilfields, especially if commensurate support is not provided by the transitional authorities: "I discussed with my colleagues to bring the brigades home, especially in the south where they are protecting the

border, as I believe this is a national security question" (Armed groups KII).

Desire to handover responsibility and weapons – indeed, there was a common desire for the armed groups from Zintan to hand over its national security responsibilities, and for the fighters in them to disarm and disband. However, as noted above, it was felt that this could only happen when the government and new national security forces proved able to manage security issues: "We will give up our weapons when the army is strong. Not just any army – one we can rely on" (Armed groups PPS – younger).

Direct contracts and more support from government – in the meantime, and until national security services are able to replace the town's armed groups, there was a request for greater recognition of and support for Zintan's fighters by the transitional authorities. One of the main means of support requested was the provision of central contracts to all fighters who are protecting national infrastructure or who are engaged in peacekeeping (which was thought not to be the case at the time of research). The second means of support requested was the provision of basic supplies, such as food and equipment: "Food [provided to fighters] is not from the government, but from a charitable foundation in Zintan and most people are not contracted [by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence]. Only those protecting the oilfields have contracts" (Armed groups KII – older).

Improvements in community liaison skills are not thought necessary – while recognising that inappropriate actions by fighters from Zintan sometimes take place, interlocutors were reluctant to talk about such incidents and did not feel that any specific measures were necessary to prevent them in the future. Instead, they felt that each armed group had sufficient expertise to manage community liaison, due to the diversity of backgrounds of the people in them: "They do not need better relationships. Anyone who makes mistakes, we take them home so that they do not spoil relations" (Civilian KII); "They [armed groups from Zintan] are reconciling parties, giving back rights and returning property. They are a mix of teachers, dentists and other occupations, and have the ability to solve problems" (Civilian KII).

An urgent need to de-militarise young people in Zintan – a number of interlocutors expressed concern that their experiences during and after the revolution / conflict had deeply impacted on the young men in the town, in that they now view a militarised life as normal. As such, they stated that there is an urgent need to challenge some of local young men's recent experiences and to prepare them for normal life: "Most of the thuwwar are young men from high school and their mentality has changed. They see themselves as military people and see books as part of the past. They want to talk about guns and bullets" (Civilian KII).

Anger at the lack of a clear process for reintegration – indeed, some of the younger fighters participating in the research expressed anger at the absence of a clear process to support them to reintegrate into society, or at least of communication of what support will be available: "99% [of young fighters] need education and rehabilitation, but we lack real communication of what support is there. I started hating TV as they don't tell us about these things" (Armed groups PPS – younger). Indeed, it was felt by some interlocutors that the young fighters needed to see tangible benefits in order to feel that their sacrifice had been recognised: "Students and young people that say we did not get anything out of the conflict will cause another revolution" (Civilian KII).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Local council member (male)
- Local council member (male)
- Civil society leader (male)

Armed groups

- Brigade leader (male)
- Military council member (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Armed groups

- Younger – eight persons aged 17 to 26 (all male)
- Older – six persons aged 36 to 47 (all male)

2.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Psychological assistance programme – for young fighters to prepare them for a return to civilian life. Such a programme should be delivered as part of the school and university curriculums.

2. Community-wide vocational development programmes – that provide re-training to all young people in the town, irrespective of whether or not they are registered with official bodies. The programmes should be delivered to the whole community so as to encourage reintegration.

3. Organisation of informal discussions with El-Mashasha residents – in order to rebuild relationships. These discussions should be informal in nature and should not touch on reconciliation.

3. Tripoli – protective cordons and ‘them and us’ perceptions

Tripoli's experience of armed groups has differed from the other research areas, in that the city has hosted a range of groups from different parts of the country in addition to those formed by local residents. Also, different districts in the city were closely associated with one or other side during the revolution / conflict. As a result, it was decided to research perspectives from two districts associated with different sides – Abu Selim and Suq al Juma – as well as the perspectives of those with some responsibility for security and armed groups-community relations on a city wide basis.

3.1. What does ‘security’ mean to you?

“There is a need to educate both sides; those of the 17th of February and those supporting Qaddafi. Qaddafi’s supporters should accept that they lost and the media should lessen its focus on the guilt of the other side”



(Armed Group KII – city-wide)

Districts divided by perceived affiliation – most interlocutors believed that each district in the city could be described as being primarily ‘pro-revolution’ or ‘pro-Qaddafi’ and that there are uneasy relationships between those districts with different affiliations. At the same time, city-wide interlocutors felt they had been successful in restricting the potential for violence between pro-revolution and pro-Qaddafi communities in the city: “We are communicating with the local military and local councils in Tripoli, trying to listen to reactions in areas loyal to Qaddafi. We have stopped fights” (Armed groups KII– city-wide).

Security cordons around communities – partly because of these divisions, it appears that Tripoli's districts have developed their own semi-autonomous security systems, comprised of local brigades that protect their communities from outside threats. Of the two districts visited, this was most apparent in Suq al Juma, in which local brigades are coordinated from a central hub at the Mitiga airport to provide security at all entry points into the district. However, some interlocutors felt this approach to security would be negative in the long-run as it reinforces divisions between communities and the association of armed fighters with a particular area: “They [armed groups] have been used in the wrong way since the 20th of August [‘liberation’ of Tripoli], as each area has only looked after its own” (Armed group KII – city-wide).

Security in Suq al Juma due to unified support for the revolution – all interlocutors in Suq al Juma felt secure within the ‘protective cordon’ provided by the district's armed groups and did not perceive any threats within the community. This was thought to be largely because of the widespread support for the revolution among people in the area. Indeed, interlocutors were proud of the history of Suq al Juma during the revolution / conflict and felt it had been a spur to revolutionary activities elsewhere in the city: “We feel secure in Suq al Juma as 99% [of the community] are rebels and were persecuted by the old regime” (Civilian KII – Suq al Juma).

Tentative calm in Abu Selim – the picture was more complex in Abu Selim. All interlocutors felt that Abu Selim (along with Hadba) was perceived to be the most pro-Qaddafi area in the city and had anticipated significant problems after the end of the revolution / conflict. Some felt that these problems had not occurred and indicated early reconciliation initiatives as the reason. On the other hand, others felt that the area was still tense, with ordinary people

threatened by the armed groups that they come into contact with: "After the 20th of August we expected many victims due to the hatred generated between neighbours. We expected 50% to die. And I was surprised at the attempt to reconcile" (Civilian KII – Abu Selim); "All I see now are civilian cars and they all have weapons. Some people ran away because they are scared and tensions are still high" (Civilian KII – Abu Selim).

Problematic relationships between districts – interlocutors from both districts described difficult relationships with other communities. In Suq al Juma, people talked about tensions with pro-Qaddafi areas in the city as well as a particular conflict with Bani Walid, expressing anger at the death of 15 armed group members from Suq al Juma who had been deployed to the town: "We also have a problem with Bani Walid. 99% of people there are pro-Qaddafi and 15 people from Suq al Juma died in Bani Walid. This added to the local hatred" (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma). In Abu Selim, there was some discussion of the fate of local residents that were detained in other areas and in Suq al Juma in particular: "The problem of captured people from these areas [causes concern]. There are people convicted of murder and looting in Suq al Juma. They need to be handed over to the court and maybe issued with a pardon" (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

Weapons create tensions, but do not result in injuries – in addition, all interlocutors expressed concern with the number of weapons in society. This was primarily because: (1) they are a source of tension, rather than because of substantial numbers of injuries; and (2) because Libyans do not have a developed 'culture' of gun ownership (e.g. know how to use and store weapons safely). At the same time, it was felt the threat of weapons had decreased due to a gradual reduction in shootings at night time since the revolution / conflict. Finally, some felt that widespread weapon ownership had in fact created a balance of power, in which people were afraid to attack each other through fear of repercussions: "It's not normal. Weapons are everywhere and cause tension in the community" (Civilian KII – Abu Selim); "In the time of Qaddafi no one had weapons. There was no culture of knowing how to use one. Now people want to have weapons. Everyone wants to show that he has a weapon" (Civilian KII – Suq al Juma).

3.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

High hopes, but need to overcome a 'culture of demand' – most interlocutors, especially those from Suq al Juma, expressed high hopes for the future of their community, feeling that the context is improving on a monthly basis. At the same time, some expressed concern that the potential for development in society is dependent on changing the mind-set of demanding responses to needs, rather than taking responsibility: "After Qaddafi, the new enemy is demands. Everyone says the government has not done this or that. We need an education process to tell people that we should be the government" (Armed group KII – city-wide).

Motivation and leadership – those who were concerned about a 'culture of demand' in society focused on two underlying causes. Firstly, it was felt that during Qaddafi's regime people had not been enabled to make decisions. As such, it was felt that there is a need to develop leadership skills across all parts of society: "In the previous government there was no leadership; all decisions came from the top" (Civilian KII – Suq al Juma).

Need to develop democratic awareness – secondly, it was thought that people do not have sufficient understanding of what living in a democracy entails, including fair transparent processes with multiple voices and human rights: "People do not understand the concept of human rights and please give them knowledge of politics. They [politicians] previously only had one face" (Civilian KII – Abu Selim).

Destroy the idea of 'them and us' – some interlocutors thought that educational processes should also challenge the notion of the 'them and us' that had developed during the revolution / conflict between those that supported the revolution and those that supported the Qaddafi regime. On this issue, it was felt that the media should move its focus away from the revolution period and instead develop a vision for the future that both sides could be part of: "There is a need to educate both sides; those of the 17th of February and those supporting Qaddafi... Qaddafi's supporters should accept that they lost and the media should lessen its focus on the guilt of the other side" (Armed group KII – city wide).

Problem of those who died fighting for Qaddafi – importantly, the question of the status of those that died defending the Qaddafi regime was thought to be a block to overcoming divisions in society. It was felt that the families of these people could not properly grieve for the deceased and were not able to refer to them as 'martyrs': "They [the families] wanted Qaddafi to be victorious so that the dead would be a mujahedeen. From the first day [after the end of the fighting] they found the media against them and they can't say 'my father was a martyr'" (Armed group KII – city-wide).

3.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Coordination and partnerships between armed groups – as noted above, Tripoli's experience of armed groups has been different from the other research areas, as it hosts a number of groups from other parts of the country. Interlocutors described how the presence of so many groups had been a significant problem directly following the end of fighting in Tripoli in August 2011. The groups did not have a clear structure for cooperation and had on occasions come into violent conflict with each other. However, it was felt that the situation had improved, partly due to the creation of protective cordons (described above) and partly due to improved working relations between the armed groups: "When we entered Tripoli, the first and second months were difficult, but the problems were solved by the brigade leaders themselves" (Armed group KII – city-wide).

Armed groups formed by local residents during the revolution – interlocutors in the two districts claimed that the armed groups working there are comprised of revolutionaries from the local community. It was explained that these groups had formed in secret during the revolution / conflict. As such, it was felt that the armed groups had a high level of local legitimacy: "Nearly every house has three to four *thuwwar*" (Armed group KII – Suq al Juma); "The *thuwwar* are from this area and the people know them" (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

Providing security and leveraging change in Suq al Juma – interlocutors in Suq al Juma described the role of the local armed groups as providing security until such a time as national security forces are fully functional (for example by conducting arrests, as the police were not thought able to do so at the time of the research). In addition, some felt that the district's armed groups also have national influence due to their 'revolutionary background' and the district's strategic situation in Tripoli (e.g. it encompasses one airport and a communications hub). This influence is sometimes used as political leverage, for example in the dispute with Bani Walid: "We know this [the period of armed groups] is a temporary time, but some groups are using it as a tool to pressure the government" (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma).

Collecting weapons, changing beliefs and promoting values in Abu Selim – interlocutors in Abu Selim described the primary objectives of local armed groups as collecting weapons from the community and detaining wanted persons. In addition, interlocutors from the armed groups felt that they are responsible for encouraging people to re-evaluate the perceptions of the Qaddafi regime and the new Libya, and for promoting Islamic values in the community:

"People who support Qaddafi are free to think what they want. We try to change these beliefs through how we deal with them. Also, the cultural and media committee give lectures at school to show Qaddafi's crimes and how bad Qaddafi was" (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

Strong coordination and accountability in Suq al Juma – all interlocutors from Suq al Juma felt that the district's armed groups are well coordinated through a single military council based in the Mitiga airport: "All 13 or so armed groups are part of one battalion under the control of one military council" (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma). In addition, people felt that, given that armed groups are comprised of local residents, residents are able to hold armed groups to account through informal and family channels. If necessary, people also felt they could hold armed groups to account through direct access to the military council: "I know where I can go to complain. I can go to the Mitiga airport" (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma).

Abu Selim's armed groups are based in the community – interlocutors in Abu Selim described how the district has two armed groups and two brigades, but that these are in effect merged into a single body that, as a result, was believed to be more accessible to local people: "We don't have brigades here, we have military councils. We see them as better than brigades, as they have a base here. Brigades are for big problems" (Civilian PPS – Abu Selim). Armed group interlocutors felt that they had worked hard to ensure that their members had the appropriate approach to dealing with community members: "We have very public support. They [the public] see how the old system worked and see that the *thuwwar* do not take bribes" (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

3.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Desire for trusted rule of law institutions – as noted above, interlocutors professed to feel secure, partly because of the protective cordons around their communities. At the same time, some interlocutors did not feel safe due to the absence of functioning rule of law processes that would deter criminality. As such, there was a consistent desire to strengthen policing and justice services locally, especially given the low level of trust in the police force in particular. In this regard, it was felt that the Supreme Security Committees formed under the Ministry of Interior had proved a useful stop gap, as they were felt to represent both the state and revolutionaries and hence to be more credible: "People come to complain to us, not the police, because they are afraid of corruption" (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

Crack down on rogue armed groups in Tripoli – all interlocutors distinguished between armed groups from their own community, over whom they felt there was some control, and armed groups from other areas. Interlocutors felt they rarely know who these groups are and where their legitimacy comes from. In addition, some were felt to be pursuing individual benefit (e.g. the acquisition of unprotected building) rather than revolutionary ideals. In addition, some felt that a number of armed groups are formed around a particular ideology (both secular and religious), which they try to promote: "Everything is mixed up – the thief, the *thuwwar* and the fake *thuwwar*" (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma).

Need to integrate armed group members into national security forces – all interlocutors emphasised that over time the armed groups should be merged into national security structures. However, it was felt that fighters should join national security structures on an individual basis rather than as armed groups. It was felt that this was proving challenging, as individual fighters believe that they will lose their influence if they are not part of a larger group: "We are faced by problems to convince rebels to join the Supreme Security Committees as individuals and not groups" (Armed groups KII – city-wide).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

Abu Selim

- Local residents – four persons (male)

Suq al Juma

- Local council members – two persons (male)
- Local council employees – seven persons (male)

Armed groups

Abu Selim

- Military council members – two persons (male)

- Brigade fighters – two persons (male)

Suq al Juma

- Former brigade leaders – two persons (male)

City-wide

- Military leader (male)
- Military leader (male)
- Brigade leaders – seven persons (male)

Need for a clear process for reintegration – interlocutors felt that part of the problem in persuading fighters to integrate into national security structures is the absence of a clear procedure for this. It was felt that there had been a number of duplicated processes to register fighters and identify their future aspirations; with fighters feeling that they had completed a number of questionnaires without any visible result. This in turn was felt to have caused distrust among some armed groups: “We have returned to the time of Qaddafi. We are told to ‘go get this file’, ‘go fill out that form’, but what is the result?” (Armed group KII – city-wide)

Creating the right incentives for disarmament – at the same time, even if they do join national security services, interlocutors felt that fighters (and ordinary civilians) would be reluctant to hand over their weapons, for two principle reasons. Firstly, because they do not fully trust the national security services and worry that their weapons may be used against them in the future. Secondly, because people had paid money and made other sacrifices to acquire weapons, and would want to be reimbursed: “Some people brought weapons with their own money. Some sold cars so they could afford to buy weapons” (Civilian PPS – Suq al Juma).

Role of religion in supporting good practise – finally, a number of interlocutors emphasised the importance of religion in supporting good practice by armed groups and reintegration processes, both at a personal level and a social level. Indeed, there were a number of examples when sermons by local religious figures were believed to have improved the security situation; for example, in helping to reduce celebratory shootings: “The area is under Islamic legitimacy. It is against the law to sell drugs and alcohol. We work by our religion and conscience” (Armed group KII – Abu Selim).

3.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Local district education programmes – in both political awareness and leadership, so as to increase the ability of fighters and other community members to contribute towards the transition in Libya.

2. Local community security programming – that utilises the Supreme Security Committees' local legitimacy as being representative of both the state and revolution. These processes should build the capacity of SSC officers and local communities in rule of law standards through the development of initiatives to increase local security.

3. Development of discussion formats across the divide – so that community members are able to understand the experiences of people on ‘the other side’, as a stepping stone towards challenging ‘them and us’ perceptions.

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Abu Selim – seven persons aged 23 to 49 (male)
- Suq al Juma – seven persons aged 18 to 56 (male)

4. Bani Walid – isolation and disputed legitimacy

“The town is being held hostage in a fight for control between two sets of councils and catibas. As a result, the ordinary person is suffering from limited accountability over safety and security”



(Civilian PPS)

4.1. What does ‘security’ mean to you?

Lack of association with the 2011 revolution – people in Bani Walid feel cut off from the revolutionary events in 2011, emphasising instead the 1993 uprising against Qaddafi in the town. This is partly due to resentment that the 1993 uprising was not supported by the rest of the country: “Young people in Bani Walid are not satisfied with the change that happened [in 2011] and will not accept it, as they were not part of it – even though they are the people that most hated the regime since 1993” (Civilian KII).

Isolation from the rest of the country – all interlocutors felt that the city is isolated from the rest of the country – both physically, in terms of limited contact, but also in terms of weak communications. There was, however, disagreement over the degree to which the present isolation is attributable to an externally driven policy of marginalisation, or is self-enforced: “After the anniversary of the 17 February revolution, they stopped food and medicine [from entering the city]. The siege was in place for 2 weeks, until young fighters threatened to cut water from Tripoli” (Community KII); “Those in control [of Bani Walid] have created a barrier between people inside the city and outside” (Armed group KII).

Dispute over who has political legitimacy – on the one hand, the ‘28th of May’ armed group (presently based in As Saddadah) and the local council (presently based in Tripoli), argue that their legitimacy comes from the 2011 revolution. On the other hand, the ‘Shuhada Dina’ armed group and the social council of elders argue that their legitimacy is provided by a popular mandate from the local community and the 1993 uprising. Some community interlocutors argued that neither of these groups is fully representative of the local community and that the dispute between the two is the main issue facing the town: “The town is being held hostage in a fight for control between two sets of councils and catibas. As a result, the ordinary person is suffering from limited accountability over safety and security” (Civilian PPS).

Inability to access key services – all interlocutors agreed that important services are not presently being delivered into the city. However, different reasons were given for this. One set of interlocutors blamed this problem on an unwillingness of the transitional authorities to support local elections for a mandated body to provide services: “All economic and social problems are related to politics – we have been forbidden the right to choose our own local government” (Armed groups KII). However, a second set of interlocutors blamed the actions of

local armed groups as the main reason that services are not being delivered: "They [local armed groups] attacked the police HQ twice and the water lines twice, they burnt the local council offices twice and attacked the court." (Armed group KII).

The threat of detention – all those interviewed inside Bani Walid identified the threat of detention when travelling outside the town as a key security issue. There was also a good deal of concern over the inability of families to access information on persons who had been detained: "We cannot leave Bani Walid freely, as we could be kidnapped. There are gangs around the city that steal, loot and harass people" (Armed group PPS). This threat was, however, downplayed in interviews with representatives from the '28th of May' armed group and the local council.

Threat of future violence against the town – some interlocutors in Bani Walid felt that there is the potential for violence against the city in the future, and that this threat is demonstrated by negative media coverage of the town and the Warfalla tribe in general (Bani Walid is considered the main town of the Warfalla tribe, which some Libyans believe to be closely associated with the Qaddafi regime), as well as by strong statements by transitional authority representatives: "Abdul Jalil told Bani Walid to give up weapons or they would send in the national army" (Armed groups KII).

Development of prejudice against the Warfalla tribe – indeed, some interlocutors believed that the Warfalla tribe is suffering from increasing discrimination, which is being justified on the basis that the tribe is perceived as pro-Qaddafi. It was felt that this discrimination was evident in the absence of Warfalla representatives in the National Transitional Council and in the allocation of 'only' two seats to majority-Warfalla areas in the forthcoming elections: "They threaten every day to comb the town of Qaddafi[-era] officials. It is becoming prejudice. Go into any area in Tripoli and you would be arrested because you are Warfalla" (Civilian KII).

The threat posed by armed groups inside the town – by contrast, some interlocutors believed that the armed groups presently inside Bani Walid represent a threat, both to supporters of the revolution inside the town – resulting in the displacement of over 300 families from the town – and in terms of the movement of guns and fighters: "Weapons come into Bani Walid, fighters come into Bani Walid and criminals move freely in and out – especially to Tripoli" (Armed groups KII).

Conflicts with other communities – some interlocutors were concerned by conflicts between Bani Walid / the Warfalla tribe and other communities in Libya, most notably Misrata, the Suq al Juma district of Tripoli and Zlitan: "The communications company is in Suq Al Juma. We had coverage before the civil conflict. It has been purposely cut by Suq Al Juma" (Armed groups KII).

4.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

In line with the different positions described above, there are three main sets of aspirations for Bani Walid:

1. Remove the threat of violence and enable local elections – the first set of aspirations entailed measures to reduce the threat of violence, measures to reduce the perception that violence would be used against the town and for the transitional authorities to sanction local elections in the town: "The main problem is the lack of local elections. We reject any form of leadership from outside" (Civilian KII).

2. Increased action by the transitional authorities to control the city – by contrast, the second set of aspirations entailed actions by the transitional authorities to 'regain control' over the town through the establishment of checkpoints, the introduction of large numbers of police into the town and even the use of military forces to 'capture' the town. Indeed, it was felt that neither local or national elections could be free and fair in Bani Walid until these steps had been taken: "Force must be used against these groups [in control of Bani Walid]" (Civilian KII).

3. A negotiated solution between two parties contesting legitimacy – finally, a third set of interlocutors suggested that the issues facing the town could only be resolved through a negotiated solution between the two parties contesting legitimacy of action – the '28th of May' armed group and local council on one hand and the Shuhada Dina armed group and social council on the other: "As such we need a negotiated solution between the sides" (Civilian PPS).

In addition, there were some aspirations shared by all interlocutors:

More international attention to Bani Walid – some argued that the international community should do more to fulfil its obligations to monitor human rights and ensure protection after the revolution / conflict in Libya: "The biggest blame is on the United Nations, the international community and the media, not the government – they have not come to the area to ask people what is happening" (Civilian PPS).

Development of clear justice processes – it was felt that concerns over arbitrary / systematic detention of people from Bani Walid could be addressed through the development of clear justice processes for those detained: "Justice only after the justice institutions are established. Now all prisons have prisoners from Bani Walid because they were born here" (Civilian KII).

Reduction of the number of guns in society – a key aspiration for some community members is a reduction in the circulation of guns in society. It was felt that arms control measures are essential for successful democratic development: "Freedom of speech will not happen with weapons" (Civilian PPS).

4.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

The role of the armed groups in Bani Walid is highly contested:

Dispute over the role of the '28th of May' armed group – which was formed by a group of relatives of the protesters killed on 28 May 2011. Some accused this armed group of using heavy handed tactics against those in the town accused of being pro-Qaddafi and argued that this resulted in a popular movement to force the armed group out of Bani Walid. Importantly, these interlocutors saw the '28th of May' armed group as the main threat of detention: "The thuwwar [from the '28th of May' armed group] used the same approach as Qaddafi. It led to a boiling point on 23rd of November [2011]" (Civilian KII). Others claimed that the actions of the '28th of May' armed group were measured and that a couple of high profile arrests were utilised for political ends: "28th of May Brigade protected people in our town, as there were no police. One or two incidents were used as an excuse to push them out of town" (Civilian PPS).

Dispute over the role of the Shuhada Dina armed group – which formed after the town's liberation. Some felt that the Shuhada Dina armed group is unique in providing a protective service within Bani Walid: "The objective of this brigade [the Shuhada Dina] is different from the others. It is to protect Bani Walid, its border and people; not like the other groups that are here

for an invasion" (Civilian KII). At the same time, others disputed its legitimacy as a revolutionary brigade: "It is not legitimate – only brigades formed before the liberation of Tripoli are legitimate" (Civilian KII).

Dispute over the degree of social control over local armed groups – in addition, there were two very different pictures of the level of coordination amongst, and control over, armed groups presently within Bani Walid. On the one hand, it was claimed that the Shuhada Dina armed group has control over all armed groups in the area and is itself accountable to the social council of wise men: "We are protecting all important areas in Bani Walid in coordination with the social council" (Armed group PPS). On the other hand, it was claimed that the Shuhada Dina had split into three (Shuhada Dina, the Martyrs of 1993, and the Lions of Bani Walid), with a number of smaller groups also operating, and that the social council has minimal control over their actions: "In reality there are more than 20 organisations each with no legitimacy and they all act on their own accord" (Civilian KII).

Grievances relating to the actions of armed groups during the fight for Bani Walid – in addition, some expressed anger at the actions of armed groups from other parts of the country in Bani Walid during its liberation in 2011, in terms of looting and violent behaviour. Indeed, it was felt that these actions had reinforced people's perception that the 2011 revolution does not belong to them: "When the *thuwwar* entered Bani Walid, some looted and stole cars. If we had known that this would happen, we would have stayed so that our honour was not defiled" (Civilian PPS).

Frustration with the rule of armed groups and 'false *thuwwar*' – finally, a good deal of frustration was expressed at the proliferation of armed groups in Libya, and those comprised of 'false *thuwwar*' in particular – explained as those that exploit the title of 'thuwwar' to assist their 'illegal' activities. Indeed, it was felt that the real revolutionaries had returned to their former lives and that the transitional authorities were not doing enough to control the actions of the groups comprised of 'false *thuwwar*'. Some also felt that radical Islamists were also using armed groups as a front to promote their own ideology in the country: "Armed groups set-up fake checkpoints and raid houses in the name of the 'thuwwar'. Then the Ministry of Defence says they are not part of us" (Civilian PPS).

4.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Replace armed groups with neutral national security forces – there was a general consensus that ultimately security could only be ensured in Bani Walid when the local armed groups are replaced by neutral national security forces: "Bani Walid is asking for a national army instead of the *catibas*. We want weapons under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence" (Civilian KII).

Support from transitional authorities for armed groups in Bani Walid – however, for some the main issue was to remove the 'threat' of armed groups outside the town (e.g. those implicated in detentions) and increase the effectiveness of those presently active in Bani Walid, principally through increased support from, and formal lines of communication with, the transitional authorities: "[We need] financial support and formal relationships rather than *ad hoc* personal contacts" (Armed group KII).

Measures to control the 'threat' from armed groups inside the city – however, as noted above, a second set of interlocutors viewed the armed groups inside the city as a principal threat both for residents in the town, and as a stimulus to instability and criminality. These interlocutors felt that the transitional authorities should look to crack down on the armed groups in the city: "Groups there [in Bani Walid] are not under control. They are militias and do not believe in control from the Government" (Armed group KII).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Social council members – eight persons (male)
- Local council member (male)
- Former prisoner (male)
- Humanitarian worker (male)

Armed groups

- Military council members – two persons (male)
- Brigade Leader (male)
- Brigade Leader (male)
- Brigade Advisor (male)
- Brigade Advisor (male)
- Former fighter (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Six persons aged 40 to 65 (all male)

Armed groups

- Eight persons aged 24 to 54 (all male)

Agreement between the town's armed groups – finally, a third set of interlocutors felt that, until national forces are established, the main issue to be dealt with is the ongoing conflict between the Shuhada Dina and the '28th of May' armed groups. These interlocutors wanted an agreement between the armed groups on who provides security in the town and how: "We want an agreement between the brigades now" (Civilian PPS).

4.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Opening of an international human rights presence in Bani Walid – so that there is more independent and objective monitoring of the context in the town and hence greater understanding of how security can be improved.

2. Create understanding between the two factions – that is the Shuhada Dina armed group and social council of wise men on one hand and the '28th of May' armed group and local council on the other. This understanding should include an agreement of how security is provided / services delivered in the town.

3. Increase communication channels with the rest of the country – including: (1) increased media coverage of local perspectives; (2) direct lines of communication with the transitional authorities; and (3) the development of civil society discussion processes with those communities that Bani Walid has difficult relationships with (e.g. the Suq al Juma and Misrata).

5. Misrata – justice and the thuwwar as a political movement

“This is not our revolution, we have not done this to gain position, but for justice”



(Armed group KII)

5.1. What does ‘security’ mean to you?

Psychological impact of the city’s siege – all interlocutors described Misrata as a secure town, in which they do not feel threatened. At the same time, they felt that the experience of the 2011 revolution / conflict had dramatically changed local society, as it adapted to the demands of the siege on the city and that people are now finding it difficult to return to a normal way of life: “In the period of six months, our mentality changed from civil to military” (Armed group KII).

Importance of weapons for the city – it was felt that this change in attitude was evident in people’s approach to weapons and weapon ownership. Interlocutors described that during the revolution / conflict, there were not enough weapons to properly defend the city and that acquiring weapons became a matter of life or death. As a result, following the end of the siege of Misrata, fighters from the town went to great lengths to gather and store weapons for the future. Indeed, some felt that weapons are the primary reassurance of security for Misrata, at both personal and social levels: “I feel these weapons to be security and I only feel comfortable when I sleep next to guns” (Armed groups PPS).

Belief that Misrata’s suffering has not been recognised and addressed – interlocutors also expressed anger at what was seen to be a lack of recognition of the difficult experience that the people of Misrata lived through. It was felt that this lack of recognition was manifest in a failure, by both the transitional authorities and the international community, to provide appropriate psychological and rehabilitation support. Interlocutors felt that such support is not fairly distributed between communities in Libya, which in turn fuels a feeling of discrimination: “We have a feeling that we sacrificed a lot, our families and our mental health, and all for nothing. Most organisations work in Tripoli and Benghazi, but the post-conflict trauma is here. This does not make sense” (Civilian PPS).

Importance of justice for returning to normal life – all interlocutors also felt that their community’s ability to return to normal life was inhibited by the absence of punishment for those accused of crimes and human rights abuses during the city’s siege. Residents of the town of Tawurgha were singled out as being particularly culpable of committing (or indirectly supporting) significant crimes during the revolution / conflict, including systematic rape: “How can residents that have had injustices committed against them return to a normal life... when

those that committed injustice are free? How can oppressed people go back to their normal lives?" (Armed group PPS).

Desire for justice before reconciliation – other interlocutors displayed more awareness that developing justice mechanisms takes time and that investigating war crimes is a difficult task. These interlocutors were also aware that bringing to trial those accused of rape is particularly difficult, given the associated social challenges (such as witnessing). Nevertheless, all those spoken with felt that justice is necessary before people in Misrata can engage in reconciliation processes. It was also felt that the transitional authorities and international community are trying to force reconciliation on Misrata, when its residents are not willing or able to engage in such processes: "I can forgive, that's ok. But I need [to see] punishment first" (Armed group PPS); "We have the feeling that the government and the National Transitional Council is forcing reconciliation, and in doing so is jumping over justice" (Civilian KII).

Anger at accusations of human rights abuses – interlocutors also expressed a good deal of anger at claims that Misrata's armed groups had also committed human rights abuses. A recent investigation by an international NGO into detention facilities in the city was the cause of special resentment. It was felt that such accusations are not appropriate, given the level of suffering in Misrata: "The people of Misrata have been depicted as if they are the people that breached the Tawurgha's rights" (Civilian KII).

Belief that Qaddafi's supporters are influential in the transitional authorities – interlocutors in Misrata also expressed low levels of trust in state institutions, in terms of their capacity to respond to Misrata's particular needs and to deliver the overall objectives of the revolution. This is a key source of insecurity. There were three main reasons for this lack of trust. Firstly, people felt that Qaddafi's 'people' (supporters or former officials) still play important roles in the transitional authorities and in the new national security services: "Qaddafi's people are in the government. It needs another revolution" (Armed group PPS).

Distance of transitional authorities' officials from revolutionary events – Secondly, it was felt that many officials in the transitional authorities do not have a good understanding of the hopes and aspirations of people in Misrata and in Libya in general, and do not understand the motivations that drove the revolution. This was explained as stemming from the fact that many were out of the country during Qaddafi's regime and did not live through the violence in 2011: "They [the transitional authorities] don't understand the general public in Misrata. They have not witnessed death, the loss of a child and the death of loved ones" (Armed group KII).

Lack of visible improvement on corruption issues – people lack trust because they perceive that the transitional authorities have not tackled corruption and that some individuals in the authorities may even be benefitting from corruption. In this regard, lack of transparency of how money is spent was felt to be a particular problem: "The money [Libya has] abroad is stolen. We don't have any information on this money" (Armed group PPS).

Concern over the borders and clashes in the country – finally, some interlocutors were concerned that instability in other areas of the country represents a threat to both Misrata and the revolution. In particular, people were worried about the clashes between different communities (such as in Kufra, Sabha and between Zuwarah-Al Jamel and Raqdalín) and the potential for armed groups to move across Libya's borders. Indeed, it was felt that the international community should provide more support to the protection of Libya's borders: "The land borders are open... yet we have no help from the world. If the world wanted to get rid of Qaddafi, it should also help in all fields including border management" (Armed groups KII).

5.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

To 'move beyond the conflict' – all interlocutors in Misrata expressed a desire for their community to 'move beyond the conflict'. It was also clear that a good deal of energy has been invested in thinking about what this means in practice and how it can be achieved. For example, a city charter developed by local residents, the Union of Revolutionaries and local council, articulates clear benchmarks that, if reached, will enable people to feel more secure in their future. Some of these benchmarks relate to the national level, while others relate to more local issues. Importantly, the charter also includes measures designed to build bridges with other communities, including to 'make ourselves accept the point of view of others' and to 'develop a committee for communication with other cities': "We are tired and we want a rest. We want to return to normal life" (Armed group PPS).

Concern that the revolution will fail – a number of interlocutors expressed deep concern that the objectives of the revolution, as they understood them, would not be achieved. In broad terms 'failure' was understood to mean the continuation of corrupt practices, the continued presence of Qaddafi regime representatives in official structures, the inability of the transitional authorities to control all communities in Libya and the lack of improvements in the quality of life of Libyans: "We gave a lot of trust to the National Transitional Council, but Sirte is still there, other places are still there and there are still green people [Qaddafi supporters] out there" (Civilian PPS).

Hope that a functioning government will develop over time – other interlocutors emphasised the importance of supporting the development of government legitimacy and institutional capacity. It was felt that without such support, and if undue demands and pressure is put on the transitional authorities, this could lead to additional problems in the country: "We must be realistic. Everyone wants benefits quickly. However, the French Revolution took 12 years to build a government" (Civilian KII).

A clear and locally-relevant process for transitional justice – as noted above, all interlocutors in the research felt that reconciliation is being pushed on their community, when people desired a greater focus on justice. As such, there was consistent demand for the development of a clear transitional justice process, to be enshrined in law, as the basis for dealing with human rights abuses and crimes committed during the revolution / conflict. At the same time, there was a desire that the laws should balance Libyan culture and experience of conflict, rather than strictly adhere to international norms: "[Regarding the rape cases] we might not do things so they are acceptable internationally, but [they will be] acceptable locally" (Civilian KII).

Communication with surrounding cities – at the same time, there was a consistent message that Misrata needs to develop formats for communication and dialogue with neighbouring communities, especially those with whom the city has difficult relationships: "We need communication with surrounding cities as we need to say that the past is over, we want to build a better Libya and we can't do it by ourselves – we are only after justice" (Civilian PPS).

5.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

No distinction between armed and unarmed *thuwwar* – all interlocutors emphasised that it is incorrect to distinguish between the '*thuwwar*' that comprise the armed groups from Misrata and the rest of the community. Firstly, it was argued, because all people that stayed in Misrata endured the same suffering. Secondly, because those without weapons provided material (including financing) and psychological support to those with weapons. Indeed, people felt that the success of the city's armed groups was dependent on the support provided by their

civilian counterparts: “The *thuwwar* has two faces – one civilian and [one represented by] the armed cars” (Civilian KII).

Strong distinction between ‘real’ and ‘fake’ *thuwwar* – partly because of this experience, interlocutors made a strong distinction between those armed groups in Libya who they felt could legitimately refer to themselves as ‘*thuwwar*’ and those that could not. The main distinction was that the ‘real *thuwwar*’ had gathered together during the revolution and had direct experience of fighting, while the ‘fake *thuwwar*’ gathered together after the end of fighting because of various incentives offered for being a *thuwwar*: “When the government formed and started throwing money, those that did not fight claimed to be *thuwwar*” (Civilian PPS).

Armed groups formed spontaneously – interlocutors also described how Misrata’s armed groups were formed on a natural basis by local residents, with little strategic intent other than to defend their community. As a result, the actions of armed group members were highly autonomous, with management structures developed later on during the fighting: “When they [the *thuwwar*] went out to fight, they did not take orders from anyone. After a month and a half, there was a need for organisation and leadership” (Armed group KII).

Strong accountability channels with the community – it was felt that the dependency of the armed groups on their communities for success during the revolution / conflict had engendered strong accountability channels. Indeed, it was felt that while there are probably 236 armed groups from the city, only five groups were outside community control: “Those holding guns realised they were useless without family and friends. Therefore, they pay a good deal of attention to the needs and opinions of family. This support made people very careful about how they treat citizens” (Armed group PPS).

Developed formats for collaboration – it was also felt that the particular way in which the armed groups from Misrata were formed and relate to their communities had engendered a robust spirit of collaboration among armed groups, and with civilian actors. The main manifestation of this spirit of collaboration was felt to be the Union of Revolutionaries, which assisted coordination of the defence of the city during the fighting, but has since looked to provide services to rebels and to facilitate cooperation on specific issues. An example repeatedly given was the coordinated planning for local elections in the town: “As the Union is close to all rebels, we have the capacity to give them a link to the institutions” (Armed group KII).

Increased ability of older fighters to relate to young people – in addition, it was felt that the experience of fighting together had increased inter-generational understanding. Importantly, it was believed that older fighters are now more aware of the perspectives of their younger colleagues and are more able and willing to assist young people with issues of importance to them: “Compare how we deal with young people now with six months ago. We have become more experienced at dealing with [their] issues” (Armed group PPS).

National peacekeeping and security role – all interlocutors in Misrata felt that the city’s armed groups play a key national role in keeping peace between divided communities in other parts of the country and in ensuring national security. It was stated that the military council is trying to coordinate all actions by the city’s armed groups with the transitional authorities, so that they have national legitimacy: “They [Misrata’s armed groups] feel that they belong to the whole of Libya and not just to Misrata. That is why they are proud” (Civilian PPS); “Sometimes we are not as fast as we want to be, as we need to wait for officials to provide the go ahead” (Armed group KII).

5.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Desire for the burden of ensuring security and peace to be shared – while there was pride at the role that it is believed Misrata's armed groups play in ensuring peace and security across the country, and a desire to protect the revolution, there was also frustration that too much burden was being placed on the city's armed groups. Apart from the question of whether this role is fair, interlocutors felt that the ongoing involvement of the city's men in military work impacts on the psychology of the wider community: "I was surprised students could not come to class. It turns out they were sent to Sabha. They come back and their psychology is affected and affects the rest of the class" (Civilian PPS); "Our youth have finished; why not use others. They are using Misrata like the police of Libya" (Civilian PPS).

No need for increased accountability inside and outside the city – there was a good deal of discussion of the need for formal accountability processes over deployment of the city's armed groups to other parts of Libya. Within Misrata, it was on the whole felt that such deployment was a military matter, for which it was sufficient that the military council had oversight: "Accountability is through the media and TV... it is a military question and we don't have time to inform action" (Civilian PPS). There was little support for increased accountability over Misrata's armed groups by communities outside the city, especially in those places that may not have fully supported the revolution: "Some places should not have the privilege of accountability over the *thuwwar*" (Armed group PPS).

Desire for a comprehensive rehabilitation programme – there was a consistent desire among all interlocutors to see a comprehensive programme of rehabilitation of the city's fighters. There was, however, disagreement as to whether the programme should be focused on immediate physical and psychological needs, or should also include other benefits. Some felt that this programme should deliver life and career skills through tailored education programmes. Interlocutors felt this was necessary for the fighters to feel valued and would also be an important step towards civilian life by taking them out of a weapons-based environment: "They [fighters in my brigade] have an ambition to gain knowledge and to work. I have a job waiting for me, but I need to get them a job first. These young men are my responsibility" (Armed group KII). Others felt that such benefits would create inequalities in society: "We don't want to give some groups benefits over others. That would be discrimination. Let's incorporate them into society. They should not feel they fought for some specific right" (Civilian KII).

Disillusionment with official rehabilitation processes – in either case, there was a consensus that the transitional authorities' thinking of rehabilitation was not the most appropriate. This was partly because it was felt that fighters in the armed groups have a range of aspirations, which were not being matched by the options being offered in rehabilitation policies / programmes. Secondly, it was felt that the present approach was to 'buy support' through incentives, rather than providing a vision for their future role: "In Misrata the *thuwwar* come from middle-class homes... some of them are doctors. The option of either the police or the army is not the right one" (Civilian KII); "All the government does is try to buy [our] silence with money. We don't want money, we want the mind to grow" (Armed group PPS).

Little readiness to give up weapons – interlocutors felt that, given the importance of weapons and fears about the direction of the revolution (outlined above), it would be difficult to encourage the city's residents to give up their weapons, especially before people believe that justice has been achieved for suffering during the revolution / conflict and the formation of trusted national security institutions: "Why do we want weapons? To feel secure and weapons mean security – give me security and my rights" (Armed group KII).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Civil society leader (male)
- Civil society leaders – nine persons (8 male; 1 female)

Armed groups

- Military council members – two persons (male)
- Former brigade leaders – five persons (male)
- Supreme Security Committee members – four persons (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Ten persons aged 20 to 40 (5 male; 5 female)

Armed groups

- Ten persons aged 30 to 55 (all male)

Leadership of a *thuwwar*-based political movement – finally, due to concerns over the direction of the revolution, some interlocutors felt that it is important for the *thuwwar* to mobilise as a political force, so as to influence the decisions being made on the direction of the country. Indeed, it was felt that Misrata's *thuwwar* had a particular responsibility to ensure the revolution's objectives are delivered. A number of actions had already been taken in this regard, including organisation of national *thuwwar* conferences and development of shared demands for the transitional authorities: "We could have controlled all of Libya by force. We left it to the politicians. It was not our task. Now if we need to, we will do a military coup" (Armed group PPS).

5.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Monitoring of Misrata's city charter by the transitional authorities – so as to identify whether such a process would be helpful in other cities in the country, especially those that were more directly affected by the fighting.

2. Development of communication processes with other towns – through the establishment of communication committees (as included in the city charter). However, such committees should also be created in the communities that Misrata is looking to dialogue with.

3. Support and training in justice and reconciliation – for fighters and community representatives, so that they are more informed on what these concepts entail, and feel they are better able to participate in discourse / policy making on them.

6. Sirte – searching for a new community identity and future

“The security situation needs some time. People who used to support Qaddafi ask ‘what will the government bring’. The government must help local council and civic institutions, so that people know that the new regime is better than the other”



(Civilian PPS)

6.1. What does ‘security’ mean to you?

Frustration at not feeling part of the new Libya – interlocutors in the research consistently expressed a feeling that Sirte is isolated from the rest of Libya, because it was the last city to see major fighting and because it is perceived as being a ‘pro-Qaddafi stronghold’. This means that many people in the city believe it is being purposefully marginalised from political processes and denied development resources: “People here feel punished by the new government and they want the government to pay them more attention” (Civilian KII).

Psychological impact of the media – the psychological distance from the new Libya was partly attributed to the Qaddafi administration’s media coverage of the revolution / conflict. Interlocutors said that this coverage made people afraid of the revolutionaries and of the negative impact on the lives of people in Sirte of a change of government. Further, it was felt that the present media consistently uses images from the revolution / conflict period, rather than focusing on the future: “The problem was the media – it made people think ‘NATO will occupy Libya for oil’, ‘the Christians are invading’, and that rebels will abuse human rights and commit rape. It created fear that they [the people of Sirte] will be punished. As such, it was like petrol for a car” (Civilian KII).

Physical damage to the city – this psychological distance was thought to be reinforced by the physical damage sustained by the city during the conflict. Slow progress in redeveloping the city was seen as proof that people in Sirte are to be punished and are not included in the new Libya: “This [rebuilding the city] is a psychological need, as people constantly compare their present lives with their past lives” (Civilian PPS); “When I go around Sirte, they all ask me ‘what will the new government do, ‘what will we do’. Look around and where is the government to help with the buildings and income” (Civilian KII).

Different analysis on tensions with neighbouring cities – the feeling of isolation from the rest of Libya was described by most interlocutors as being most evident in the tense relationships with neighbouring cities and with Misrata in particular: “In this city we are afraid from the other cities in the region. Three weeks ago there was conflict between Misrata and Sirte” (Civilian KII). However, other interlocutors strongly disputed the existence of such tensions, arguing instead that some are trying to leverage assistance with their personal problems with other cities, by describing them as communal ones: “The problem is not between Misrata and Sirte, but between individuals” (Civilian PPS).

Inability to move freely outside the city – as a result of these tensions, most interlocutors from Sirte felt that it was not safe for people from their community to travel outside the city, especially westward towards Misrata or Bani Walid, because they are worried about detention by armed groups from other communities. A number of interlocutors were particularly worried by armed groups from Misrata at As Saddadah. This physical isolation is considered another driving factor in the town's psychological isolation: "We are worried about leaving the city, especially on the road going to Tripoli because of the *thuwwar* from Misrata. I was arrested for five days and I was a *thuwwar*" (Armed group KII).

Raids on communities in Sirte – a small number of interlocutors also stated that armed groups from other towns also make irregular raids on communities in Sirte, with the intention of detaining 'wanted persons' – those accused of human rights abuses / crimes during the revolution / conflict, or closely affiliated with the Qaddafi regime. Indeed, people were worried that the town as a whole could be attacked in the future: "Misrata armed groups still visit Sirte from time to time and kidnap people" (Armed group PPS).

Information about detained persons – the issue of detentions elicited a good deal of anger, as people felt that the families of detained persons had virtually no access to information on the rationale for detention and the status of the detained person (or did not know how to access such information): "We do not have news of them [detained persons], do not know if they are alive, or where they are kept (Civilian KII)".

Divisions within families and communities – the interlocutors in the research also described a situation in which families and communities were torn apart by revolution / conflict, with some fighting against Qaddafi and some fighting for Qaddafi. It was thought that these divisions run through all aspects of life in Sirte, making it difficult for the city to move beyond the recent violence. At the same time, all interlocutors felt that these divisions had become less worrying since October 2011: "There are tensions between those who are pro- and anti-revolution. We see it through the writing on the walls [in public institutions], but it is getting better week by week" (Civilian KII).

Potential for use of weapons to settle disputes – most interlocutors were worried by the presence of guns on the street, as they felt that these weapons could be used to settle dispute. These disputes could involve individual administrative decisions (e.g. on business permits) or communal issues, such as the results of national and local elections. The potential for weapons to be used in disputes was thought to be a substantial risk given the divisions in the city: "I feel that I can't do my job; that those who lose out could use violence" (Civilian KII).

Different assessments of local security – finally, for the most part interlocutors in the research thought that the level of security inside the city was quite high, given the recent war and issues outlined above: "The crime rate is very good, especially when you consider the absence of police and court rooms (Armed group PPS)". Some, however, were concerned by violent incidents in the town, including disappearances and killings: "There are no police, only militia. People fear there is no security" (Civilian PPS).

6.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Development of a vision for the future – there was, for the most part, a consensus that the transitional authorities and key political actors needed to develop a clearer vision of what life will look like in the future, and how places such as Sirte will be included. It was felt important that this vision should be clearly communicated through the media: "The news is focused on the war. [Instead] the media should focus on the future and not how bad things were under Qaddafi" (Civilian KII).

Demonstration of interest through practical support – in the meantime, and as a contribution to this vision for the future, interlocutors hoped for more practical demonstrations of the interest of the transitional authorities (and by extension wider society) in the city, through improvements in service delivery and programmes to rebuild infrastructure. Importantly, these services should be coordinated in partnership with the local authorities: “The security situation needs some time. People who used to support Qaddafi ask ‘What will the government bring?’ The government must help the local council and civic institutions so that people know that the new regime is better than the other” (Civilian PPS).

Acceptance of diversity of thought – most interlocutors hoped for space within Sirte for different perspectives on the Qaddafi regime. That is, strong local democracy would mean that people feel safe enough to openly state support for the past regime and voice concerns about the direction of the country. Local democracy was also thought to entail the involvement of pro-Qaddafi elements of society in local / community politics: “In my opinion, instead of making the people who used to be with Qaddafi an enemy and pushing them into another trench, we should work with them so that they feel part of the same process” (Civilian PPS).

No reductions in detentions – at the same time, most interlocutors were fearful that there would not be a reduction in detentions or an increase in access to information on, and physical interaction with, detained persons: “[We are worried that] more young people will disappear and be kidnapped” (Armed groups PPS).

Prevention of ‘discrimination’ against the town – (linked to the previous point) some hoped that the transitional authorities would be better able to control the actions of other towns’ armed groups and ensure that the rule of law is applicable to all people in Libya, irrespective of the city they come from: “People feel abandoned by the National Transitional Council and transitional government. They feel that the aggression from Misrata is not being balanced by central authorities. They feel they are being punished” (Armed group PPS).

Local Islamic groups may prevent local elections – there was a clear division between those civilian interlocutors that supported local elections and those that did not (there was a universal acceptance of national elections). Some interlocutors were worried that local elections would not be permitted to take place as they were against the interest of ‘certain groups’. These interlocutors made it clear that these were religious groups who have a more austere interpretation of Islam and who believe that elections would reduce their ability to control the city: “Some here think that local people don’t need elections; that elections are not in their interest” (Civilian KII).

6.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Tribal-based armed groups – it seems that armed groups in Sirte are for the most part associated with particular tribes. That is, they are comprised of representatives of a particular tribe and consequently mostly operate in the areas where their respective tribes live and work: “We have almost 30 tribes in Sirte and the brigades / thuwwar are built on a tribal basis” (Civilian KII).

Protection of tribes and communities – for the most part, interlocutors felt that the armed groups in the city are not necessarily associated with the 2011 revolution, but were more likely formed for self-defence and defence of their tribe: “There are two types of thuwwar – genuine thuwwar from the 17 February and fake thuwwar whose role [in their armed groups] is to protect themselves and their tribes. They don’t want to get arrested, so they join a brigade” (Armed groups KII).

Dispute over the nature of community / armed groups relations – very different opinions were expressed during the research on the nature of community / armed groups' relations within the city. Some felt that the armed groups work for the collective good of the city, are well coordinated through the military council (see below) and are consequently accountable to the entire community within the city: "All citizens of Sirte are equally considered and protected by revolutionary groups in the city (Civilian KII)". Others felt that, due to the fact they were mostly organised along tribal lines, armed groups were mostly accountable through traditional processes: "We go to the family first and then the tribe. It was similar before the revolution, but not to this degree" (Civilian KII).

Dispute over relations between armed groups in the city – given the large number of armed groups in the city (if each tribe has an associated group), it is essential that mechanisms for coordination are sufficiently robust. Again, very different opinions were expressed on this topic. Some interlocutors, especially those representing armed groups, felt that coordination takes place through the local military council and is effective: "We have many meetings with commanders of smaller armed groups in order to define missions" (Armed group PPS). Others felt that there was a clear competition between the armed groups and even the potential for conflict: "In Sirte they [the armed groups] fear each other. They fear that one tribe will control the city, and [as a result] the city is divided by the tribes" (Civilian PPS).

Lack of accountability over external armed groups – there was, for the most part, consensus amongst interlocutors that the armed groups from other cities (and especially Misrata) represent a problem because there are no clear processes for accountability over them by people from Sirte: "Anyone can kill anyone without any questions asked. Civil society treat the *thuwwar* [from outside Sirte] very carefully, as we could be lost" (Armed group KII).

Concern over 'political' or 'ideological' armed groups – most interlocutors expressed concern that armed groups could become influential in Libyan politics. This fear is partly fuelled by the lack of accountability mechanisms for other cities' armed groups. In addition, some interlocutors expressed concern at the role of local armed groups that have a more austere interpretation of Islam and believed that these groups would try and promote this interpretation locally: "We are afraid of militias. Like in Lebanon. We fear that the militia will be involved in politics and that politics will not be able to control the militia. This is because almost every part of the country has its own military system" (Civilian PPS).

6.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Replace armed groups with unified security services – there was a general agreement, certainly amongst civilian interlocutors, that the armed groups present in the city should be replaced by a unified security service. For some, this meant a focus on rule of law standards (rather than military might), for others it meant a military system that cuts across tribal boundaries: "It should depend on the law, rather than who has the biggest weapon" (Civilian PPS); "[We need a] clear military system to replace the tribal one" (Civilian KII).

Negotiations with armed groups from other cities – it was also thought that there was a need for formats for negotiation with armed groups in surrounding cities and with Misrata in particular. It was felt that the purpose of the negotiations would be to agree modalities for movement to and from Sirte: "We need peaceful negotiations with Misrata on movement around the country" (Civilian KII).

Civilian monitoring of detention facilities – some interlocutors also felt that it is important to promote civilian (and objective) monitoring of detention facilities where Sirte's residents are held: "The institutions of government have not been active [in monitoring detention], so civil society should try to monitor the operations of the *thuwwar*" (Armed group KII).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Civil society leader (male)
- Civil society leader (male)
- Public servant (male)
- Public servant (male)
- Local council member (male)
- Local council member (male)
- Local council member (male)

Armed groups

- Former fighter (male)
- Military council member (male)

Exclude armed groups from politics – finally, there was a consistent message that armed groups, irrespective of whether or not they are comprised of ‘genuine thuwwar’, should be excluded from the political arena. “The Union of Revolutionaries should be cancelled. All these names should be cancelled. They sound just like the [Qaddafi-era] revolutionary committees” (Civilian PPS).

6.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Dialogue with neighbours – by the creation of communication mechanisms on practical issues, such as freedom of movement and processes for detained persons. These mechanisms would not touch on reconciliation issues.

2. Dialogue within the city – through the creation of open processes for planning the future of the city. These planning processes should draw on existing resources, such as the tribal networks.

3. Development of a unified security system – based on planning / cooperation between local authorities and the central transitional authorities. This would also entail psychological and social rehabilitation of armed group members.

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Seven persons aged 29 to 44 (all male)

Armed groups

- Seven persons aged 20 to 34 (all male)

7. Ajdabjiya – returning to civilian life

“We are concerned about postponing the elections, as well as about the electoral process itself and the results – people are not used to elections”



(Civilian PPS)

7.1. What does ‘security’ mean to you?

Safe streets – all interlocutors in Ajdabjiya were positive about the security situation in the city. Ajdabjiya was for a large part of the revolution / conflict period on the front line of the fighting, with the population in the city largely mobilised in its defence. However, people felt that, since the violence, the city had, on the whole, been able to return to normal civilian life and that, as a result, the town now is now safe: “Security means that streets are now safe” (Armed groups PPS).

The need to rebuild the city – while the population has felt able to return to civilian life, the city is in need of substantial redevelopment, as it was heavily damaged during the revolution / conflict. This is especially true of the western parts on the road to Sirte. Rebuilding the city was thought to be important, both for psychological reasons and for the provision of services to the town’s residents, as a large number of administrative buildings were damaged. At the same time, people were proud of the communal response in filling the gap and enabling public services to continue: “Although 80% of administrative buildings are destroyed, the population now hosts the [city’s] public services” (Civilian KII).

Liquidity and economic development – apart from rebuilding the city, people thought that the challenges facing the city are more economic in nature. This means that return to civilian life is being held back by the lack of available money and as a result, the inability of local businesses to operate normally and provide jobs: “The main problem is the lack of cash in banks” (Civilian KII)002E

Dispute over the importance of widespread weapon ownership – interlocutors believed that most families owning some form of weapon. The impact of widespread weapon ownership on society and feelings of security was, however, disputed. The armed groups’ interlocutors did not feel that weapon ownership represents a particular threat: “The fact that weapons are spread widely in town isn’t a problem to us” (Armed groups – PPS). At the same time, civilian interlocutors felt uncomfortable with widespread gun ownership. It was felt that it would be difficult for society to develop and democratise with significant numbers of weapons in civilian hands: “Security means no weapons on the streets, no weapons outside of the authority of the National Transitional Council in civilian hands” (Civilian PPS).

Concern over gunfire – indeed, the civilian interlocutors expressed disquiet at the regular gunfire that is heard in the city. It was recognised that shootings are mostly celebratory in nature and do not pose an immediate physical threat. Nevertheless, such incidents still cause concern: “Security would mean no more shootings, even for celebrations” (Civilian PPS).

Concerns about the elections – perhaps most significantly, given the importance attached to the elections for a national congress planned for the end of June / early July 2012, some civilian interlocutors were concerned that elections could not be safely conducted with a large amount of weapons ‘on the streets’, due to the risk that some people might resort to guns to ‘solve’ disputes: “[We feel] that it is impossible to hold elections in such conditions” – (Civilian PPS).

Reduced opportunity for women’s participation – female interlocutors in the research expressed frustration with what they perceive to be a reduction in the room for women’s participation in the city’s political life since the end of the revolution / conflict. This caused particular anger, given the prominent role that it was felt Ajdabjija’s women played during the fighting in providing supplies to the front line and organising basic services within the town. In particular, it was felt that local political actors were not supporting women’s calls for a stronger role in politics and, in some cases, actively blocking such a role: “We were on the front line (bringing food) but there is no one to support us now” (Civilian PPS).

7.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

High potential for development – the interlocutors in the research were hopeful about the prospects for Ajdabjija’s development in the future, due to the presence of substantial oil reserves near the city. It was felt that the revenue from oil sales could be used to rebuild the city and develop local businesses so as to deal with the underlying problem of unemployment: “There are 20 oil fields in Ajdabjija. We will use this wealth” (Armed groups KII).

Timing and quality of the elections for a national congress – the forthcoming elections for a national congress proved to be a key issue for all interlocutors in the research, who expressed two basic concerns. Firstly, there was a concern that people would become demotivated or disillusioned if the elections are postponed. The elections are thought to be a key indicator of whether the revolution ‘is going in the right direction’, and, if they do not take place, then people may start to doubt the integrity of the transition process. Secondly, there was a concern that, due to the community’s lack of experience of elections, there is ample opportunity for electoral fraud: “We are concerned about postponing the elections, as well as about the electoral process itself and the results – people are not used to elections” (Civilian PPS).

Disagreement over the potential for electoral violence – in addition, there were mixed perspectives on the potential for violence during and after the elections. On the one hand, the majority of interlocutors (including all those from armed groups) believed that there was no risk of violence, given the unity within the town and the desire for a successful transition: “Elections will not be a problem in Ajdabjija” (Armed groups KII). On the other hand, some civilian interlocutors felt that, given the lack of experience of elections, those that are unsuccessful might contest the validity of the elections through violence. This was one of the main reasons that some civilian interlocutors were concerned about widespread weapons ownership (see above): “The losers may not accept the results [of the elections]” (Civilian PPS).

Role of tribes in political life – finally, it is important to note that civilian interlocutors hoped that tribes would not be an important factor in political life in Ajdabjija. People saw a role for tribes as a secondary format for consultation and political discussions, but did not want to see the

political spectrum divided along tribal lines and hence decisions on important issues made on the basis of tribal interest: “We want the tribes out of political life. They are [however] good for traditions” (Civilian PPS).

7.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Shared ‘civilian mentality’ in the city – some armed groups’ interlocutors underlined what they perceived to be the strong ‘civilian mentality’ of Ajdabjija’s armed groups. That is that they do not have political, ideological or religious ambitions. Interlocutors explained this by highlighting that fighters come from the local community and are representative of the local community: “The whole society here is very ‘civilian’ ... and there are no signs of Islamist groups in Ajdabjija” (Armed group KII).

Significant reintegration of fighters – all interlocutors in the research in Ajdabjija believed that the town had made significant steps in returning to a normal civilian way of life. It was felt that this equally applies to the city’s fighters, who were for the most part believed to have returned to their previous jobs. It was felt that those young men that remained in the Ajdabjija’s armed groups mostly did so due to the lack of local employment opportunities: “Most young men are now back in civilian life” (Armed groups PPS).

National control over armed groups in the city – all armed groups’ interlocutors were at pains to emphasise a high level of control by the national transitional authorities over all armed groups in Ajdabjija, with the military council described as the primary vehicle for exercising this control: “All revolutionaries are now in camps and all armed groups are under [the control of] the National Transitional Council and the Ministry of Defence” (Armed Groups PPS).

Strong coordination between armed groups – in addition, the armed groups’ interlocutors described a strong working relationship between the different armed groups operating in Ajdabjija. They felt that they coordinate their patrols and work together as much as possible. It was also felt that this high level of coordination was one of the reasons for the speed with which the city had returned to a normal way of life. Good coordination and joint working by armed groups was confirmed by the civilian interlocutors: “Firstly, they [armed groups] are able to organise their patrols and, secondly, the patrols secure the city” (Armed groups KII).

Importance of tribal relationships for coordination – finally, the armed groups interlocutors felt that the strong coordination between armed groups witnessed in Ajdabjija is based on a positive working relationship between tribes in the city, which has developed over a longer period of time: “We are lucky with the very strong relationship that tribes have developed over many years” (Armed groups KII).

7.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Greater involvement in planning for the elections – due to the positive relationship between the armed groups and ordinary residents of the city (described above), it was felt that improving the role of armed groups is not a priority issue for the city. The main suggestion for improved relations was that the armed groups should be involved in preparations for the elections for the national congress, through joint planning with the civil authorities and the local residents of the city. It was felt that, through this experience of civic engagement and planning, the fighters remaining in brigades would be more able to reintegrate into society: “The brigades could be involved in election preparation. That would be a way to get the *thuwwar* back to civil life, by [experience of] working for the community” (Civilian PPS).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Civil society leader (female)
- Civil society leader (male)
- Local council member (male)

Armed groups

- Brigade leader (male)
- Military council member (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Abu Selim – seven persons aged 23 to 49 (male)
- Ten persons aged 25 to 50 (6 male; 4 female)

Armed groups

- 15 persons aged 20 to 34 (all male)

Involvement of fighters in community participation and education programmes – in addition, it was felt that the young men in the armed groups operating in the city should be involved in community participation and education programmes. These programmes would be designed to prepare young people, including women, in the city to play an active role in the transition process, with a focus on the elections for the national congress, and would also give them the opportunity to put these skills into practice: “We consider it important to bring the youth and women into the electoral process as participants and to educate them on elections” (Civilian PPS).

7.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Preparation of local residents for the electoral process – through the organisation of training for local election observers as well as for voters' education. Such training should be focused on young people and women in the city. While such training will be of benefit in advance of the elections for a national congress, they will also be of relevance throughout the transition process.

2. Support for women's political participation – it was felt that support for women's political participation should involve the provision of information and resources and could be delivered through an awareness raising / education centre.

3. Programme of support for leaderships skills – in conjunction with the previous two measures. It was felt that leadership skills would be essential for further development of the city.

8. Benghazi – decentralisation and displaced persons

In this area, the research team spoke to a mix of local residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Tawurgha. The Tawurgha IDPs have been displaced since the end of the siege of Misrata in August 2011. As such, this analysis provides information on two distinct dynamics – the context inside Benghazi, and the context in the Tawurgha IDP camps.

8.1. What does 'security' mean to you?

“We will not be at the service of Tripoli anymore”



(Civilian KII)

Feeling of security inside the city – all interlocutors described Benghazi as physically secure and did not feel in any way threatened in the city. Instead, respondents described a range of more political or identity-based issues (see below) as causes for concern for the future: “Security is good now in Benghazi. The city has never been as safe as today” (Armed group KII).

Lack of evidence of decentralisation – one of the main issues of concern among civilian interlocutors was the lack of evidence of decentralisation or of willingness to enable decentralisation during the transition period. It was felt that the lack of clear markers of decentralisation represents a critical hurdle for political stability in the region: “We will not be at the service of Tripoli anymore” (Civilian KII).

“We feel safe (and guarded) in the camp and that we can leave anytime. We also feel safe in Benghazi, where we can move freely, protected from racism”



(Tawurgha civilian PPS)

‘Lack of vision’ from the transitional authorities – concern over the potential for decentralisation was linked to a perceived ‘lack of vision’ by the transitional authorities. It was argued that this lack of vision is both resulting in a number of critical policy errors, including decisions relating to payments for fighters and the elections laws, and is also translating into reduced trust amongst ordinary people: “The National Transitional Council and the transitional government have made multiple mistakes. They act too late and are too weak. [for example] They distribute money in an opaque and anarchic manner” (Armed group PPS).

Role of political and militant Islam in society – a number of interlocutors, especially from armed groups, also expressed deep concern over the threat of political and militant Islam in the city, and across the whole country. For example, at the local level, it was claimed that one Islamic party had attempted to change the composition of the Local Council at the end of 2011 without a proper electoral procedure. At the national level, there was some concern that the decisions of the transitional authorities are often made under duress from lobbying by Islamic parties: “They [the National Transitional Council] are under directions from Islamists” (Armed groups PPS).

Influence of the former regime – in addition, a number of interlocutors believed that figures from the Qaddafi regime still represent a risk to the transition process. There is a perception that these figures continue to have political and economic influence: “The former regime still has its people everywhere. They are still in the administration. They have money and try to control the country using that money” (Civilian KII).

Threat of harassment of Tawurgha IDPs outside of Benghazi – interlocutors from Tawurgha's internally displaced persons (IDPs) community felt that they are safe in their camp and in the city of Benghazi. At the same time, they believed that there was the potential for harassment and even physical risk from brigades from Misrata if they travel outside of Benghazi. The reason for this threat is the perceived desire for revenge against Tawurgha's population for the serious crimes and human rights abuses that Tawurgha's fighters are accused of: "We feel safe (and guarded) in the camp and that we can leave anytime. We also feel safe in Benghazi, where we can move freely, protected from racism" (Community PPS).

Actions against Tawurgha's IDPs are thought to be driven by racism – interlocutors attributed the threat of harassment and physical risk to 'racism'; that Libyan society allowed the entire Tawurgha community to be punished for crimes committed by some Tawurgha fighters, because they are black Africans. It was felt that fighters from other communities had committed similar crimes in Misrata, but that their communities were not targeted because they are Arabs. It was argued that this racism stems from the use of black African mercenaries by Qaddafi's regime during the revolution / conflict and hence the association of black Africans with mercenaries: "Although some of our young men served Qaddafi, Misrata's assailants came from all areas [of Libya], and yet we are the only ones persecuted" (Civilian PPS); "Racism developed at the beginning of the revolution because Qaddafi used coloured mercenaries" (Civilian KI).

8.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Potential for armed action in the East – some interlocutors (both civilian and from armed groups) described growing frustration in Eastern Libya because of the perception that communities there are being neglected by the transitional authorities and hence that the revolution has not achieved its goals. There was a concern that this sense of frustration could result in the use of violence. However, these interlocutors were not able to identify precise triggers for such use of violence, other than a substantial delay in the timing of the elections for a national congress: "We are tired of them [the transitional authorities] and are starting to think of a counter revolution against the National Transitional Council" (Armed group PPS).

Lack of skills to deal with a diversity of opinions – some civilian interlocutors expressed concern that the explosion of civic energy in Libya after the revolution / conflict could become a negative force, due to weak societal skills in listening to others and analysing opinions. As a result, even if the electoral timetable is kept to (and hence the frustrations described above are eased), there could be an increase in tensions between those with different perspectives on the transition process: "We face a lack of communication skills" (Civilian KI).

Low youth and women's participation in the transition process – in addition, there was a feeling that the transition process would be made more difficult due to low levels of participation by young people and women. In terms of the former, there was concern that young people do not understand the steps that need to be taken to develop a new state and do not see it as 'their job to be involved'. In terms of the latter, it was felt that the election process is not being conducted in a manner that either encourages female voters or candidates: "It is even the case that women will not vote for women" (Civilian KI).

Inability of Tawurgha's IDPs to participate in the elections – the Tawurgha IDPs did not feel that they would be able to vote in the elections for a national congress. As a result, they felt cut off from the transition process and the decisions being made about the future of Libya. This is because Tawurgha's IDPs are not able to vote in Benghazi, as it is not their constituency, and they feel that travelling home to vote would put them at risk: "The elections are a problem for us. First, we are not at home and cannot vote. Second, it would also be very unsafe for us to go

home to vote (Civilian PPS).

Loss of the Tawurgha homeland – all the IDPs spoken to described a deep desire to return home, but felt that this was not possible in the immediate future because of the risk posed by armed groups from Misrata. It was also felt that the Tawurgha community would lose its homeland in the long-run, as Misrata communities take the land they have been displaced from. This was partly attributed to the perceived influence that Misrata has at the national level and in the transitional authorities, and the perception that this influence would be used to prevent the return of the Tawurgha IDPs: “We do not really see changes in the last months in the attitude of Misrata militias towards us. We fear that everyone (the transitional authorities, the international community and civil society) is supporting Misrata, and not conducting real investigation into the rapes and the other crimes that happened there [in Misrata]” (Civilian PPS).

Desire for increased interaction with the community in Misrata – at the same time, some Tawurgha interlocutors expressed a desire for greater opportunity to talk with people from Misrata, as a stepping stone to building bridges. It was, however, felt that this is very difficult at the present time due to the limited number of contacts that the Tawurgha community has in Misrata: “There are good people on both sides and we could meet and discuss. It already happens at a low level because some have relatives in both communities” (Civilian PPS).

8.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Armed groups do not represent a problem – all interlocutors believed that there are very few cases of tensions between communities and armed groups, and that there is limited potential for increased tensions in the future. This lack of tension was mostly attributed to the fact that the armed groups come from the community: “We are all revolutionaries and work towards a common goal” (Civilian KII). In this regard, all interlocutors were at pains to point out the difference in community / armed groups relations in the East and the West of the country: “We have a very good relationship with the population, although strains in these relationships are evident in the West” (Armed group KII).

But no dialogue between the community and armed groups – at the same time, some thought that the armed groups in Benghazi are not really accountable to the local community and often take actions that are not supported by ordinary people. This was attributed to the lack of dialogue, and agreed processes for managing such dialogue, between the community and armed gangs: “There is a lack of dialogue between civil society and the catibas” (Civilian KII).

Potential for misunderstandings during security reform process – the absence of dialogue could prove an additional problem in the future, as the community has quite optimistic expectations of the pace at which reform of the security sector will take place. If such expectations are not met, then it was felt that the community in Benghazi could become frustrated with the role of armed groups in the city: “It takes a long time to turn from armed groups providing security to the state providing central security. People are in a hurry to normalise, which leads to misunderstandings” (Civilian KII).

Desire to leave armed groups – linked to the above point, the armed groups' interlocutors stated a desire to leave the armed groups they are associated with, but felt unable to at present because of the weakness of state security structures and the police in particular. At the same time, they were hopeful that handover of security responsibilities would be possible in the near future, as the launch of the local Supreme Security Committee in March was thought to

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Political activist (male)
- Political activist (male)
- Tawurgha IDP community leader (male)
- Political and civil society activist (female)
- Public servant (female)
- Former public servant (female)

Armed groups

- Brigade leader (male)
- Brigade member (male)

have been a success: “Most of us want to quit the brigade, but the police ask for help, as they lack weapons and personnel” (Armed group KII).

Concerns about militant Islamist groups – while there was a desire to quit their brigade, the armed groups’ interlocutors felt that (irrespective of local police capacity) they could not do so at the moment, due to the perceived threat to the city represented by militant Islamist groups. The research team was not able to unpack the detail of such threats: “We need to reinforce military forces against the [militant] Islamists” (Armed group PPS).

Tawurgha feel protected by armed groups from Benghazi and Ajdabjiya – as noted above, the Tawurgha IDPs feel threatened by armed groups from Misrata, due to fear that they will suffer from revenge actions. At the same time, the IDP interlocutors were grateful for the protection provided by local armed groups in both Benghazi and Ajdabjiya, who they feel provide a protective cordon and with whom they profess to have strong working relationships: “We do not have problems with the population of Misrata. Both communities have always lived and worked in good intelligence. The problem comes from their armed groups” (Civilian PPS); “The whole population of Tawurgha fled the city in August. We went to Heshha, then Sokna, Hun, Jifra and finally found safety in Benghazi. Armed groups from Eastern Libya (especially a group called Al Jazeera, from Ajdabjiya) stopped militias from Misrata chasing us” (Civilian PPS).

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Tawurgha IDP - six persons aged 35 to 70 (all male)

Armed groups

- Six persons aged 35 to 60 (all male)

8.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

No need for particular measures other than increased dialogue – no particular measures to improve relations between the community and armed groups were identified by interlocutors, other than the potential benefit of accessible dialogue mechanisms (see above). This was because people believe there is already a close relationship between armed groups and the wider community: “We have a good relationship with the population in general. We are here to support them” (Armed group KII).

Measures to counter racism and harassment – the Tawurgha IDPs focused on measures to counter the racism that they perceive is directed against Tawurgha. It was felt that this meant both countering the stereotype that black Africans fought for Qaddafi as mercenaries and challenging the idea that the entire Tawurgha community is responsible for the crimes committed by individual fighters. Emphasis was placed on international organisations as objective actors who can support such measures: “We absolutely need to reduce racism and international organisations should help us in that respect” (Civilian PPS).

8.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Develop joint civil society projects between East and West – so as to engender common understanding of the needs in both parts of the country and of what decentralisation means in practice, as well as common goals. Such projects could help to combat frustration with political process and absence of clear indicators of decentralisation.

2. Dialogue processes between armed groups and wider society – focused on the provision of information on the nature and pace of the reform process. Such dialogue should help maintain positive relations between communities and armed groups.

3. Develop a process of dialogue between Tawurgha’s IDPs and Misrata – such discussion should occur at the community level and be non-political in nature (they should attempt to ‘reconcile’ communities).

9. Derna – rebuilding trust in state institutions

“The youth have to leave their weapons and continue their studies. The revolution time has ended and now it is the time for development. We don't need weapons and want security to be done by the authorities and not the revolutionaries”



(Civilian KII)

9.1. What does 'security' mean to you?

Belief that the city is purposefully marginalised and isolated – most interlocutors believed that the city has been marginalised by the transitional authorities because it is perceived to be under the control of extreme Islamic groups. Interlocutors also thought that the depiction of the city as a 'hotbed for militant Islam' in the media is isolating its community from the rest of Libyan society. The identification of Derna with militant Islam was thought to be inaccurate and to be a continuation of Qaddafi's policy to discredit the revolutionaries in the city as a front for Al Qaeda. The perception that the town is isolated is also strengthened by the belief that the city is under ongoing surveillance: "The accusation that Al Qaeda [is in the city] is used to isolate the city and as an excuse to deny it proper services" (Civilian KII).

Deep mistrust of state security institutions and the police in particular – interlocutors in the research also stated that the community in Derna distrusts state security institutions because of oppressive operations targeted against the city by the Qaddafi regime. This distrust was manifested, for example, by the burning of police stations in the city during the revolution: "The police [from the Qaddafi regime] who worked in the city, they killed people here in Derna. We have a specific issue and we want a different police" (Armed group PPS).

Concerns that the objectives of the revolution will not be achieved – most interlocutors also expressed concern that the revolution is 'going in the wrong direction'. This belief was partly based on the fact that former Qaddafi-era officials were believed to continue to occupy important positions in the transitional authorities. Importantly, this concern about the direction of the revolution was partly used to justify the continued existence of armed groups in the city – i.e. that the armed groups provide insurance that the objectives of the revolution will be achieved: "Some of Qaddafi-era people are still holding office, acting like Qaddafi is still around" (Civilian KII).

Security, but no rule of law – it was felt that the portrayal in the media of the city as dangerous is not correct and that the majority of people living in Derna are secure. At the same time, it was felt that there was no rule of law in the city, as evidenced by assassinations (including of the first Supreme Security Committee president), bomb attacks (up to five since January 2012) and disappearances (around six since the end of the revolution / conflict). These incidents did not worry community interlocutors directly, as they were felt to target political figures. Instead,

people were concerned by the lack of institutions and processes to investigate and prosecute those responsible: “The catibas are not doing their work well. They can’t capture a guilty man” (Armed group KII).

The role of Islamic groups in society is contested – while there was agreement that the media’s depiction of Derna as a ‘hotspot for Islamic militants’ is not true, some interlocutors expressed concern about the growing influence of extreme Islamists in the city and one overtly Islamic armed group in particular. Examples of this growing influence included: (1) attempts to attract young men into the extreme Islamic armed group; and (2) a recent attempt to take-over the city’s court by this group, so as to turn it into a Koran school. At the same time, the potential for fighters to become a tool for extreme Islam caused enough concern for the major armed groups in Derna to agree on preventative measures: “The catibas agreed that they would arrest any Al Qaeda members they became aware of [in the armed groups]” (Civilian PPS).

Presence of weapons and (untargeted) shootings – the participants in the civilian discussion expressed concern over the wide distribution of weapons in society and shooting incidents, which occur most nights. While shootings were on the whole not believed to be targeted at people and were mostly celebratory, such incidents were still thought to represent a safety threat: “Shooting is regular by reason or not. It is mostly celebratory, but they make people feel afraid, as bullets go both up and down” (Civilian PPS).

9.2. What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Developing trusted governance institutions (locally and nationally) – there was a consistent narrative that, for Derna to move beyond the conflict, it needed to see the appointment of accountable officials at local and national levels. For some, this desire for accountable officials was one of the reasons for the renaissance of Islam in the city and the promotion of those demonstrating strong Islamic virtues: “We have been fighting against the Qaddafi regime for a long time. The regime did bad things against these people and their families, and that is why we want someone clean to run our city. We believe that he should be a religious person, not a Qaddafi supporter” (Civilian KII).

Devolution of decision-making to the city – linked to the previous point, some interlocutors expressed the desire for devolution of decision making to the local level in Derna, to ensure that people in the city have greater ability to influence decisions that will affect their lives. This desire is partly due to a feeling that life in Derna was more controlled during Qaddafi’s regime than in other parts of the country: “Even in the field of education we have had enough of outside control” (Civilian KII).

Development of media and civil society capacity – there was also a feeling that the media and civil society were in acute need of development in Derna. This was thought to be essential for raising awareness on the key transition processes occurring in the country in general and how they impact on Derna in particular: “We need civil society to be active, as people are not informed and do not know how to participate” (Civilian KII).

Discussion of the role of Islam in society – finally, some interlocutors felt that more needs to be done to support an informed discussion on the role of Islam in a democratic society. This discussion was felt to be important so as to ensure that young people within the city are not attracted by extreme Islamic groups. At the same time, in the long term it was felt that success in promoting moderate Islam within the city ultimately depends on economic development: “The main reason for extreme religion is the role of Qaddafi and the economic situation” (Civilian KII).

9.3. What role do armed groups play in, and what is their relationship with, the community?

Isolation of the city's armed groups from national security structures – there was a consensus that the city's armed groups are being isolated from national security structures. It was felt that national officials were not willing to negotiate with local armed groups on security issues affecting the town because they are believed to be 'extreme Islamists', rather than genuine revolutionaries. This perception was thought to be incorrect and to undervalue the contribution made by local armed groups to the revolution: "We made the revolution specifically in Derna, without any religious agenda" (Armed Group KII).

Armed groups are comprised of 'thuwwar' who are part of the community – it was felt that the armed groups are on the whole comprised of 'real thuwwar' who are working for the good of the community, because they are part of it. The main role of the armed groups, as expressed by both civilian and armed groups' interlocutors, was to protect local infrastructure. However, they have also played a role in providing key services, such as ensuring that the grain storage is well stocked and rebuilding damaged infrastructure: "We cannot call them 'militia'. They are our families and friends. It [to call them 'militias'] would be an insult" (Civilian PPS).

Frustration with the multiple armed groups – at the same time, civilian interlocutors expressed frustration with the fragmentation of fighters into different armed groups for a number of inter-related reasons. Firstly, because of the challenges in coordinating actions between the different armed groups and their members: "We find it difficult to cooperate. An order is given [by the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Defence], but we might not all receive it" (Armed Groups KII). Secondly, because of the potential for the use of violence between groups: "We are fed-up – there are many catibas and sometimes they disagree. We don't want to lose the blood of the martyrs" (Civilian KII).

Concern over legitimacy and accountability – in addition, some civilian interlocutors expressed concern that the armed groups do not have the legitimacy or accountability for some of the tasks they undertake: "Catibas take on police work without order. They arrest and make the law by themselves" (Civilian PPS).

Concern over some groups – while they expressed frustration, the civilian interlocutors felt that the four major armed groups operating in the city were attempting to respond to local concerns and had, for example, improved their coordination. However, civilian interlocutors were concerned that three other groups had not made such positive steps. These other groups, one of which is thought to promote an austere version of Islam, were described as 'militias' – i.e. they are believed to focus on criminal or ideological activities, rather than the protection of the local community: "There are two types of catiba – those that came back [from the front line], made a list of weapons and put them in a safe place and those that did not fight, but gathered weapons and have stored them in dumps across Derna" (Civilian KII).

Moves to disrupt rule of law – civilian interlocutors expressed concern that some of these 'militia' groups may benefit from the absence of functioning government institutions and, as such, may be trying to prevent their development in the city: "The Supreme Security Committee president was killed. This makes us think that some are against security in Derna" (Civilian KII); "The youth who made the demonstration [against the catibas – see below] were warned. This creates fear in the city. People are afraid to speak out against the catibas out of fear for their families" (Civilian KII).

Key informant interviews (KII)

Civilian

- Civil society leader (male)
- Civil society leader (male)
- Civil society leader (female)
- Civil society leader (female)
- Civil society leader (female)
- Local council member (male)
- Senior religious figure (male)

Armed groups

- Former frontline fighter (male)
- Former frontline fighter (male)
- Former brigade leader (male)
- Former brigade leader (male)

Participatory planning sessions (PPS)

Civilian

- Ten persons aged 18 to 55 (8 male; 2 female)

Armed groups

- Eight persons aged 20 to 34 (all male)

9.4. How can the role of armed groups be improved?

Unification of armed groups under one security force – all civilian interlocutors expressed a desire for all of the city's armed groups to merge under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior (and / or the Ministry of Defence). Indeed, local civil society had organised a demonstration in April, 'Derna asking for safety and security', which had two main demands: (1) end the independent role of the armed groups in the city; and (2) create a shared security association under the Ministry of Interior. The demonstration focused on greater coordination rather than disbanding the groups, as it was believed that there would be a security vacuum if they were disbanded immediately. It was felt that public pressure had led to the four major groups agreeing to coordinate under the Supreme Security Committee and to adopt a standard uniform: "The thuwwar partly joined the Supreme Security Committee because of the push from the people" (Armed group KII).

Increase trust between armed groups and the Ministry of Interior / Ministry of Defence – however, it was recognised that fighters would not at present be willing to merge with national institutions because they did not have trust in them, partly because of the legacy of the treatment of the town by Qaddafi's security forces and partly because of the (presumed) presence of Qaddafi-era officials in senior positions: "The lack of trust makes everyone hold onto weapons, as we are afraid of a return to another dictatorship. The solution is not taking away weapons, but taking the reason why he [armed group member] holds the weapons" (Civilian KII).

Demonstrate that objectives of revolution are being achieved – it is important to note that, aside from questions over an immediate security vacuum, some civilian representatives did not want the armed groups to be disbanded at the present time, because they were worried that the revolution may be 'hijacked'. As such, the armed groups were thought to be an essential mechanism for pressurising political elites in Tripoli to deliver on the aspirations behind the revolution: "Do I want the catibas to hand over their weapons? No – because we have not achieved the objectives of the revolution" (Civilian KII).

Focus on registering weapons – the participants in the civilian planning session felt that security in the city ultimately depends on greater control of guns, but recognised that collecting weapons is a long-term process. As such, they felt that it is important to establish a process for registering all the guns in the city – both those owned by the fighters associated with groups and those owned by people who are not part of a particular group: "Guns are the real problem. Security means that we need to control them" (Civilian PPS).

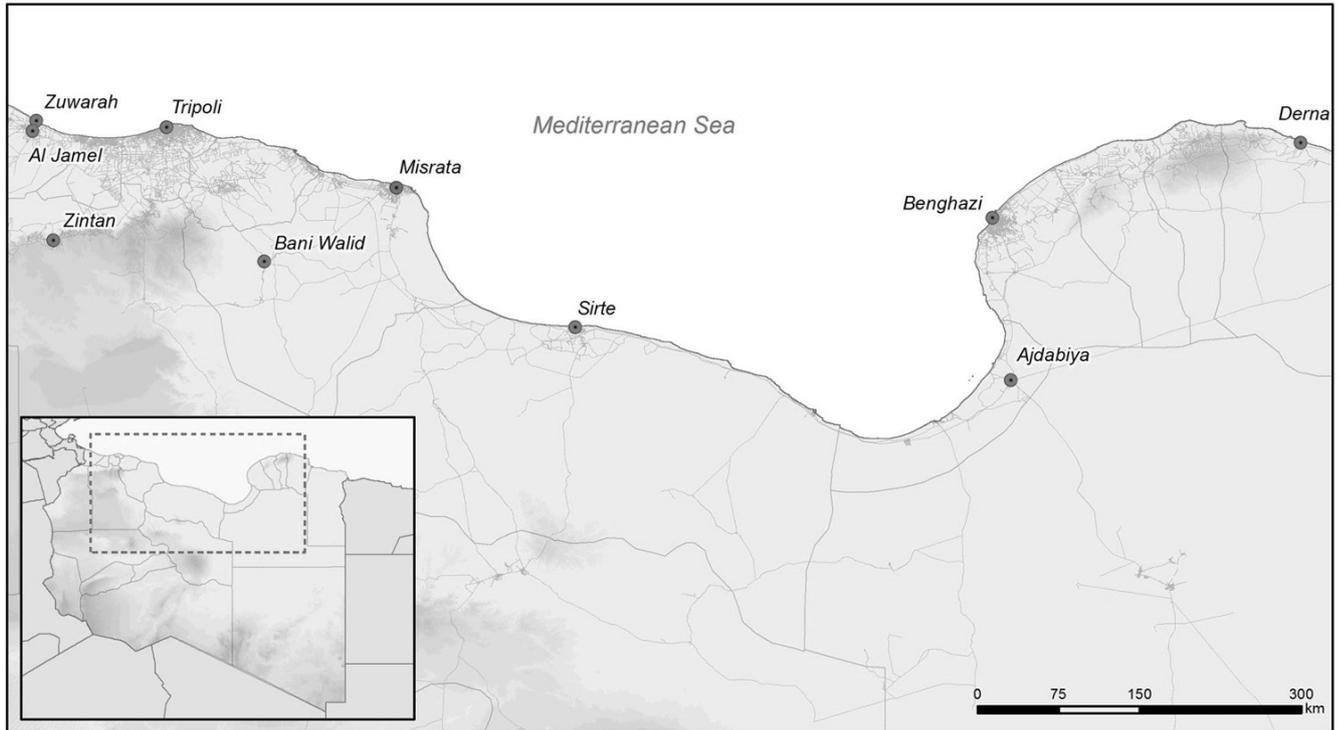
9.5. What practical measures can be taken to improve local community security?

1. Greater engagement by transitional authorities' officials – on safety and security development in the city. This could include, for example, public discussions and workshops by senior Ministry of Interior / Ministry of Defence officials in Derna on the processes in place to develop security and justice institutions in the country, and how they will impact on Derna.

2. Refurbishment and re-opening of police stations – while police stations were destroyed in many parts of the country, it was felt that Derna was a particular case given the lack of trust towards state security institutions. It was felt that the development of "model police stations" could be an entry point to building trust in the police as an institution inside the city.

3. A programme of lectures by influential clerics – so as to assist a more informed debate on the role of Islam in a democratic society and so as to contest the influence of extreme Islamist groups.

Map of research areas



Map provided by Acted Libya

This report summarises research by the Peaceful Change initiative and AFAQ Libya in March and April 2012 into community-armed group relations in nine areas along coastal Libya, from Zuwarah / Al Jamel in the West to Derna in the East. The findings are intended to give voice to ordinary people at the community level, as a contribution to more effective policy and practice during the transition period. An analysis of findings and recommendations will be made available in a separate document in July 2011.

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The **Peaceful Change initiative** is a network of peacebuilding practitioners who specialise in working in societies experiencing significant change.

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