

# Tripoli: Joint Rapid Situation Overview

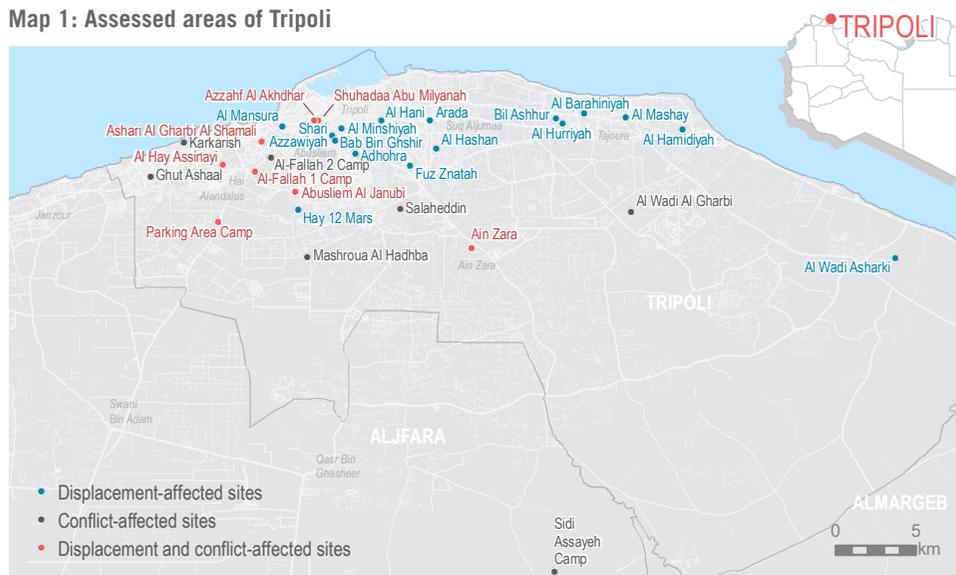
Libya, 21 September 2018

## BACKGROUND

On 26 August 2018, clashes broke out between rival armed groups in southern Tripoli, particularly in Salaheddin, Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and points south. These clashes quickly escalated and spread throughout Tripoli, with active fighting throughout the southern mahallas and shells falling on wide swaths of the city. Three weeks later, despite a period of relative calm following a ceasefire brokered on 4 September, fighting and shelling continued, and the situation remained tense. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), at least 3,845 Libyan households and an unknown number of migrants remained displaced by the fighting as of 18 September.<sup>1</sup>

To inform humanitarian response plans, members of the Libya Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) conducted a joint rapid assessment to provide a snapshot of the needs of displaced Libyan and migrant populations in the city of Tripoli. Between 11 and 16 September, participating partners, including Cesvi, DRC, IOM, REACH, and WFP, assessed the humanitarian situation in 26 mahallas across all 6 Tripoli baladiyas, as well as in 5 Tawerghan IDP camps. Data was collected through 106 multi-sector key informant (KI) interviews, 62 concerning Libyan IDPs and 44 concerning migrants, conducted with community leaders, NGO staff, municipal authorities and others. The information in this document refers only to the situation during the data collection period and should be considered indicative only.

Map 1: Assessed areas of Tripoli



## KEY FINDINGS

- The largest proportion of the 3,845 recently displaced Libyan households reportedly came from conflict-affected areas of Ain Zara, with the next largest proportions coming from Mashroua Al Hadhba and Salaheddin. According to IOM, roughly half of these households traveled to other cities to the south and east, while at least 1,950 households were displaced within the city of Tripoli.<sup>1</sup>
- The closure of the Salaheddin, Ain Zara, and Tariq Al Matar detention centres due to conflict led to large groups of refugees and migrants being displaced within the area. Some were transferred to new detention centres, while others departed for different areas of the city.
- Smaller groups of urban migrants were also displaced by the clashes, but reportedly remained within Tripoli for the most part, making their way to safer baladiyas such as Suq Aljumaa, Tripoli Centre, and other parts of Hai Alandalus.
- IDPs in all but a handful of assessed displacement sites were able to move freely. Refugees and migrants had much less freedom of movement.
- In nearly every assessed mahalla, an estimated 75-100% of IDPs who had arrived since 26 August were being hosted by friends and family. Recently arrived urban migrants, meanwhile, were reliant on a combination of rental and hosting.
- Recent damage to the water network was reported in all assessed baladiyas.<sup>2</sup> Disruptions to the electrical grid had also become much more frequent.
- KIs reported an increase in robberies, killings, and other types of crime in conflict-affected mahallas as a direct consequence of insecurity, raising concerns about residents' safety.
- Public and private health facilities, as well as pharmacies, had closed due to insecurity throughout the area of heaviest conflict, leaving residents with little access to medicines or healthcare. This access was further compromised as relief teams and paramedics in Tripoli were targeted by attacks, with ambulances looted for emergency medical supplies.
- In most parts of Tripoli, IDPs were reported to have consistent access to food. However, the situation in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Salaheddin was more precarious. Access to food was also less consistent among refugee and migrant populations.
- All assessed mahallas had functioning markets. However, recently displaced IDPs in some areas were unable to consistently access these markets.

<sup>1</sup> IOM DTM, [Libya: Tripoli Flash Update #5](#), 18 Sep 2018.

<sup>2</sup> In Libya, baladiya = admin level 3 and mahalla = admin level 4.

## FINDINGS BY SECTOR

### Displacement and Intentions

#### IDPs

- Following the outbreak of clashes on August 26, **at least 3,845 Libyan households were displaced** from conflict-affected mahallas of southern Tripoli.<sup>3</sup> The largest numbers of IDP households were reportedly displaced from conflict-affected areas of Ain Zara mahalla, with the mahallas of Mashroua Al Hadhba and Salaheddin not far behind.
- **Roughly half of these households were displaced to other cities to the south and east**, with the largest numbers heading to Bani Waleed, Tarhuna, and Garabolli. Meanwhile, **at least 1,950 households were displaced within the city of Tripoli.**<sup>3</sup> Those from Ain Zara were likely to travel to the city centre or Qasr Bin Ghasher, but those from Mashroua Al Hadhba and Salaheddin generally travelled to Abusliem baladiya, itself a site of heavy clashes—suggesting that some of these households may have lacked access to resources that would have enabled them to reach safer areas.
- KIs in the mahalla of Al Wadi Al Gharbi also reported sizable displacement since 26 August, with the majority of IDPs moving east to Al Wadi Asharki.
- **A majority of women and children temporarily left the Tawerghan IDP camp Al Fallah 2 after shelters in the camp were struck by mortar fire in early September.** These households and partial households were displaced variously to Azzawya, Espeaa, and elsewhere in Abusliem Al Janubi. Smaller numbers were displaced from the Al Fallah 1 and Parking Area camps during the same period.
- **According to official estimates, roughly 30% of the local population in conflict-affected areas had opted to remain in their homes to prevent looting.**<sup>4</sup>
- Due to the continued instability in Tripoli, KIs disagreed on the intentions of recently displaced IDPs. Most reported that, given the calmer situation in the wake of the 4 September ceasefire, many of the displaced were expected to return to their homes; others stated that IDPs had chosen not to return out of a fear that clashes would start again.

#### Refugees and Migrants

- On 27 August, due to the deteriorating security situation, **the detention centres in Salaheddin and Ain Zara** were abandoned by staff. Of the 915 refugees and migrants being held in Ain Zara and the 400 being held in Salaheddin, about two-thirds immediately departed for other areas, including a group of 100 that was transferred from Salaheddin to the detention centre at Tariq Al Matar. However, **a group of about 400 detainees remained in the Ain Zara detention centre**

**for several days afterwards, largely without food or water**, until being released or transferred to the detention centres at Tariq Al Matar and Abusliem.<sup>5</sup>

- **The detention centres at Tariq Al Matar and Abusliem were subsequently closed on 4 September** due to the spread of conflict. Tariq Al Matar's residents were divided between the detention centres at Janzour, Zintan, and Qasr Bin Ghasher, and an ad hoc facility in Al Krimiyya. Detainees at Abusliem, meanwhile, refused to leave due to a lack of other options, and have effectively begun to manage and supply the detention centre on their own behalf.<sup>5</sup>
- **Small groups of urban migrants were displaced** from the conflict-affected mahallas of Abusliem Al Janubi, Ain Zara, Al Wadi Al Gharbi, and Azzahf Al Akhdhar, as well as from several mahallas of Hai Alandalus baladiya. These urban migrants reportedly remained within Tripoli for the most part, making their way to safer baladiyas such as Suq Aljumaa, Tripoli Centre, and other parts of Hai Alandalus. Smaller numbers left for nearby cities including Janzour, Azzawya, Garabolli, and Sirt.
- In addition to the detainees who were transferred from one detention centre to another, **some urban migrants had reportedly returned to detention centres**, in particular Tariq Al Sikka. According to KIs, some of these urban migrants had been forcibly seized from farms outside of Tripoli where they were working.
- Across nearly all assessed mahallas, KIs estimated that **fewer than 10% of the refugees and migrants displaced since 26 August had already moved on to other locations.** However, KIs reported that it was difficult in general to ascertain the movements of refugees and migrants, partly because many sought to remain undetected to avoid detention (see "Freedom of Movement").

### Freedom of Movement

- KIs reported that **IDPs in all but a handful of assessed displacement sites were able to move freely.** The exceptions were in the conflict-affected mahallas of Abusliem Al Janubi, Salaheddin, Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Al Wadi Al Gharbi, where many IDPs were sheltering in place due to the risk of ongoing fighting and shelling. In Salaheddin, Ain Zara, and Mashroua Al Hadhba, the presence of road blockages and checkpoints was also reported; in many cases, armed groups used these to impose restrictions on IDP movement. The presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) was reported as a restriction on movement by one KI in Mashroua Al Hadhba.
- **Refugees and migrants reportedly had much less freedom of movement.** While refugee and migrant KIs also reported concern about fighting, shelling, and the presence of checkpoints—the last of which was listed as a restriction both in mahallas affected by conflict and in those



<sup>3</sup> IOM DTM, [Libya: Tripoli Flash Update #5](#), 18 Sep 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Masrawy, 4 Sep 2018:

[اشتباكات طرابلس تتصاعد... ٥٠ قتيلًا وسجناء هاربين وأسر نازحة وتحذيرات من حرب أهلية - تقرير](#)

<sup>5</sup> OCHA, Libya: Humanitarian Snapshots, 5, 7, 12 Sep 2018.

that were not—they were primarily worried by **the elevated risk of being kidnapped and/or returned to detention centres**. This risk was perceived as ubiquitous in many public spaces, including hospitals, stores, schools, and public transportation.

- Refugee and migrant KIs in the baladiya of Tajoura were particularly likely to list detention, verbal and physical harassment, and confiscation of documents as risks associated with entering and exiting their mahallas. Tripoli's refugees and migrants often face such threats, but since 26 August, the risk was perceived to have increased.
- **All operations at Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport were suspended** between 1 and 7 September, and again from 12 September onwards, due to armed group activity and shelling in the vicinity of the airport. During these periods of suspension, all operating flights have been diverted to Misrata, 200 kilometres to the east. At the time of publication, the coastal road to both Misrata and Tunis remained accessible; however, major routes to Qasr Ben Ghasher and points south were blocked by armed group activity.<sup>6</sup>

## Shelter

- In nearly every assessed mahalla with recently displaced IDPs, **an estimated 75-100% of those who had arrived since 26 August were being hosted by friends and family**. Exceptions included the baladiya of Hai Alandalus, where KIs reported a greater reliance on owned and rented accommodations, and Al-Hamidiyah in Tajoura.
- Recently arrived refugees and migrants in assessed mahallas were equally reliant on rented accommodations and on being hosted by others in their communities. These two options reportedly accounted for 60-100% of the newly arrived in most assessed mahallas. **Those refugees and migrants arriving in Abusliem and Tajoura baladiyas were in a more precarious situation**; in 6 of the 8 assessed mahallas in these two baladiyas, an estimated 30-50% were living in collective shelters, informal settlements, abandoned houses, unfinished buildings, and other similar situations.
- **Collective shelters for IDPs** were reportedly concentrated in Tajoura baladiya, as well as in Al-Mansura mahalla (Tripoli Centre) and the conflict-affected mahallas of Abusliem Al Janubi, Ain Zara, and Mashroua Al Hadhba. In four mahallas—Al Hamidiyah (Tajoura), Al Wadi Asharki (Tajoura), Al Mansura (Tripoli Centre), and Abusliem Al Janubi (Abusliem)—KIs estimated that 10-20% of the recently displaced population was being housed in collective shelters.
- KIs identified **at least five schools in these mahallas where IDPs were staying**, housing at least 360 IDP individuals and possibly more. The top reported need for these IDPs was for bedding items, followed by food, drinking water, and cooking NFIs.
- A minimum of 60 additional IDP individuals in Ain Zara, Al Hamidiyah (Tajoura), and Al Wadi Asharki (Tajoura) were living in **other ad hoc collective shelters**, including hotels and

commercial buildings. Food and sanitation were the top reported needs in these *ad hoc* shelters; local authorities had been able to fill some, but not all, of the stated needs.

- KIs in 12 assessed mahallas, as well as in the Al Fallah 2 camp for Tawerghan IDPs, reported that **shelters in their mahallas had been recently damaged since 26 August**. For the most part, however, this damage was estimated to be relatively light—fewer than 10 shelters per mahalla—and could likely be attributed to the sporadic shelling affecting much of the city. KIs near the frontlines in Mashroua Al Hadhba and Salaheddin, however, reported more extensive damage on the order of 50-250 shelters in each mahalla.

## Utilities

- **Recent damage to the water network was reported in all assessed baladiyas**. Disruptions to Ain Zara's water supply were reported in early September, but by the time of data collection, KIs reported that the network was again functioning.
- **Disruptions to the electrical grid had become much more frequent**, with daily power cuts lasting for long periods of time. Official sources from the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) stated that the grid had been damaged by conflict and was close to collapse, which had led to multiple blackouts affecting most of west and south Libya.<sup>7</sup>

## Protection

- **KIs reported an increase in crime throughout the city of Tripoli as a direct consequence of insecurity**. In 10 mahallas affected by the clashes, the risks of **robbery** and **killings** had reportedly increased, especially in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, Al Wadi Al Gharbi, and the Tawerghan camps.
- Refugees and migrants were also reported to face heightened risks of **robbery** and **detention**, particularly in Abusliem Al Janubi and parts of the baladiyas of Hai Alandalus and Tajoura.
- Additionally, refugees and migrants in 11 assessed mahallas were reportedly **not free to leave their accommodation and move to other parts of the city**. KIs explained that migrants stayed home due to the fighting and a fear of being arrested and kidnapped (see "Freedom of Movement"). However, KIs considered Hai Andalus, Suq Aljumaa, Tripoli Centre and Tajoura to be relatively safe areas of the city for refugees and migrants.
- On 2 September, **around 400 prisoners escaped from the Ain Zara prison** after forcing open the gates.<sup>8</sup> Most of the former prisoners dispersed throughout the city.

<sup>6</sup> Mercy Corps, Libya Humanitarian Access Team: Tripoli Situation Report, 19 Sep 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Defense Post, [Libya rival militias clash south of Tripoli, causing power outages](#), 18 Sep 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Rami Musa (AP), [Libyan police say 400 prisoners escape amid Tripoli clashes](#), 3 Sep 2018.



## Health

- Among both IDP and refugee/migrant populations, KIs reported that across Tripoli, **the most needed health service was treatment for chronic diseases** such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart and kidney problems, and the like. **Refugees and migrants were also reported to lack access to common antibiotics.**
- **Access to healthcare was reported to be intermittent** in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Salaheddin, with **service provision dependent on the intensity of fighting.** Gaps in access to emergency care were additionally reported in Mashroua Al Hadhba, Salaheddin, and parts of Tajoura and Suq Aljumaa, as well as in the Parking Area camp for Tawerghan IDPs.
- **Public and private health facilities had closed due to insecurity throughout the area of heaviest conflict,** particularly in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Salaheddin, though most facilities remained undamaged. The Abusliem Health Complex and facilities in the Al Fallah 1 camp were also reportedly affected by conflict.
- **Pharmacies had also reportedly closed,** some temporarily and others for longer periods, leading to shortages of many medicines in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Salaheddin. KIs in Abusliem Al Janubi and the Tawerghan camps at Al Fallah, as well as throughout Tajoura baladiya, reported shortages of medicines used to treat chronic disease. Access to medicine in affected areas was further complicated by the high proportions of Libyans and refugees/migrants in these mahallas who were sheltering in place and unable to travel outside their immediate areas.
- Roadblocks remain a major challenge to accessing healthcare facilities, as well as to ambulances trying to deliver assistance to those in need. Additionally, **relief teams and paramedics in Tripoli have been targeted by attacks,** with ambulances looted for emergency medical supplies, further hindering access to injured civilians.<sup>9</sup>



## Food Security

- In most parts of Tripoli, IDPs displaced since 26 August were reported to have **consistent access to food.** However, **the situation in Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, and Salaheddin was more precarious,** with very low levels of own production and markets inaccessible to some residents who were sheltering in place.
- **Access to food was also less consistent among refugee and migrant populations,** particularly in Abusliem Al Janubi, Ain Zara, Al Hay Assinayi, and several mahallas throughout Tajoura baladiya.
- In cases where food could not be purchased from markets, IDP households relied primarily

on **emergency food stores,** with smaller numbers of KIs reporting a dependence on gifts from family and friends. While refugees and migrants also relied heavily on these two coping mechanisms, it was reportedly more common for them to borrow food from neighbours or others in their communities.



## Cash, Markets, and Livelihoods

- **All assessed mahallas had functioning markets.** However, a majority of KIs in 5 mahallas (Ain Zara, Mashroua Al Hadhba, Salaheddin, Al Wadi Al Gharbi, and Al Minshiyah), as well as in Suq Aljumaa baladiya, reported that recently displaced IDPs were unable to consistently access these markets. The same was true for refugees and migrants in Abusliem Al Janubi, Ain Zara, Al Wadi Al Gharbi, Ghut Ashaal, Al Hamidiyah, and Al Mashay mahallas.
- **Generalised insecurity and temporary market closures in times of conflict were the most commonly cited barriers preventing IDPs from accessing markets,** followed by physical constraints preventing travel (which include roadblocks and checkpoints). The barriers faced by recently displaced IDPs and by refugees/migrants were similar, though migrants were reportedly more affected by physical constraints due to the perceived risk of being detained.
- **Six of the 13 basic market items assessed have reportedly become more expensive since 26 August.** More specifically, eggs, chicken, lamb meat, flour, cooking oil, and cooking fuel (LPG) were reported to have increased in price in over half of assessed mahallas. According to KIs, though, **prices in conflict-affected mahallas can best be interpreted as erratic;** during active clashes, many traders stop operating and prices increase rapidly, only to decrease again when the clashes subside.
- KIs in nearly all assessed mahallas reported that both IDPs and refugees/migrants faced difficulty accessing basic items on the market, most often because **prices were too high to afford.** The only essential item reported to be inaccessible was bread, a result of increased prices stemming from Tripoli's ongoing shortage of subsidised wheat flour.<sup>10</sup>
- In every assessed mahalla, cash was reported to be the most common payment modality, as is the case throughout Libya.
- Since the outbreak of clashes on 26 August, **refugees and migrants have reportedly found it far more difficult to engage in income-generating activities.** KIs attributed this primarily to an inability to move safely throughout Tripoli, a concern that has become acute in the context of refugees and migrants being **forcibly seized from their places of work.**
- According to KIs, recently displaced people from both the IDP and refugee/migrant populations relied primarily on their savings to meet their basic needs. IDPs were additionally able to rely on borrowed money and in-kind support from friends and family; refugees and migrants had less access to these two coping mechanisms.



<sup>9</sup> Rami Musa (AP), [Libyan police say 400 prisoners escape amid Tripoli clashes](#), 3 Sep 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed Elumami and Ayman al-Warfalli, [Bread price hike sharpens economic pain for Libyans](#), 12 Jul 2018.

## Priority Needs and Assistance

### IDPs

- Across all assessed mahallas, the top reported need for recently displaced IDPs was **cash**, followed by **safety/security** and **food**. KIs also cited electricity, access to healthcare, and access to water as areas of significant need.
- KIs in most assessed mahallas reported that **Libyans in their mahallas had received some assistance** since 26 August, with the exception of those in Shari Azzawiyah, Arada and Fuz Znatah. This assistance has mainly come from community members and international organisations, which have mainly provided food, water, medicine, and non-food items such as blankets.
- In most mahallas, targeted populations were reported to have **a strong preference for cash-based interventions**. The only exceptions were in Al Fallah 2 camp, where residents reportedly preferred food aid, and Shari Azzawiyah, where other types of in-kind aid were preferred.

### Refugees and migrants

- KIs reported that refugees and migrants' most essential need was **cash**, followed by **food** (particularly bread and flour) and **shelter**. Safety/security, access to water, and access to healthcare were also cited as important needs.
- As refugees and migrants were infrequent targets for aid from Libyan sources, it was reportedly **rarer for displaced refugees and migrants to have received aid** since 26 August. Aid was reportedly only received in five assessed mahallas, mainly in Hai Alandalus baladiya, and came predominantly from international organisations.
- Like recently displaced IDPs, refugees and migrants in nearly all assessed mahallas reportedly **preferred to receive cash assistance**, except in Bab Ben Ghasher and Al Hay Assinayi, where food aid was preferred.

### About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions. REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For further information, contact [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org).