



**INSIDE
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FOREWORD

The Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean (PoDiMed) of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in cooperation with LIBYA DESK™ is delighted to continue our monthly reports on Libya for 2022. This format examines the most important political, economic and social developments of the previous month, which are of central importance for understanding the situation in Libya. The report is based on reliable Libyan sources and provides a summary and a contextualisation of developments in the wider Libyan context. The report is usually being published every first week of each month.

While much attention has been paid to the external and geopolitical dimensions of the situation in Libya, voices from within Libya are central to understanding local developments and the evolution of the Libyan conflict as well as its impact on the wider Mediterranean region. As an inclusive Libyan-led and Libyan-owned mediation with regards to the political, economic and military tracks are without alternative, these monthly reports emphasise the most important events within Libya and aim to give a better picture of what happens “Inside Libya”.

Based on existing KAS-PoDiMed formats such as the Libya Brief and the Libya Task Force, we consider it necessary to shed light on the dynamics within Libya and to emphasise the importance of continuing and facilitating a national dialogue process in the spirit of the UN-led Berlin process.

We hope that these monthly reports will give our readers a better picture of the dynamics of the ongoing Libyan conflict, its actors and multiple dimensions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.** In the heat of the summer, Libya barely avoided a full-on escalation into conflict. Yet, recent protests are more relevant than ever and clashes in Tripoli at the end of the month raised security risks once more.
- 2.** Several incidents taking place throughout the country point to stark disparities and difficult living standards that Libyans have to face as a result of divisive politics.
- 3.** Despite relative calm until the latter part of the month, the eruption of deadly clashes in Tripoli have shown that the pro-Bashagha coalition is not giving up on its objective to replace the Government of National Unity (GNU).
- 4.** Fathi Bashagha, the head of the Government of National Stability (GNS), is increasingly facing challenges as his objective of entering Tripoli remains unachieved. Some of his eastern coalition partners are attempting to make amends with Turkey, a key powerbroker in the capital.
- 5.** Despite the unstable political situation, the GNU Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba remains confident in his position and claims to pursue general elections. There is little indication that such claims are being actioned.
- 6.** With the departure of Special Advisor to the Secretary General (SASG) Stephanie Williams, the United Nations is going through the lengthy and contentious process of appointing a new head for the Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).
- 7.** Rumours of a rapprochement between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Dabaiba family have prompted the High Council of State (HCS) and House of Representatives (HOR) to renew discussions over a constitutional basis and even alternative governments.
- 8.** From Khalifa Haftar's trial in the United States to corruption cases unveiled by the Audit Bureau and the legal cases surrounding the National Oil Corporation (NOC), many of Libya's top issues are being dealt with in court. Yet, a legal solution to these challenges is unlikely, especially regarding national reconciliation.
- 9.** Over-optimism and good news from the new leadership of the NOC do not hide the fact that Libya's current politics are hurting the country's development.
- 10.** With a political class extremely divided and highly inimical to international bodies, the next UNSMIL Head will have a difficult task in bridging the gap between rival parties and ending the militarisation of politics in Libya.

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FUEL TANKER EXPLOSION HIGHLIGHTS LIBYA'S CHRONIC CHALLENGES

Several incidents taking place throughout the country point to stark disparities and difficult living standards that Libyans have to face as a result of divisive politics.

A month after nationwide demonstrations to protest against their politicians' inefficacy and their own difficult living standards, Libyans faced a painful accident on 1st August whose nature and consequences epitomise the predicaments of the country. The disaster occurred in the Bint Bayah area located in southern Libya where a fuel tank truck exploded whilst people were filling fuel from it. The deflagration, which killed 23 and injured another 140, was caused by an electric spark coming from a car-powered electric pump that locals were using to empty the truck from its fuel content. This summary of the event, corroborated by the Tripoli-based Criminal Investigation Agency, shows the difficult living conditions of a sizable portion of southerners, who in this case saw a broken down truck parked on the side of the road as an opportunity to plunder much-needed fuel. For years, Libya's southern Fezzan region has critically suffered from a lack of basic services, especially fuel, which has encouraged fuel smuggling and skyrocketed black market prices to levels unmatched in other parts of the country, particularly when compared to coastal and more densely populated areas where people have access to subsidised fuel. For instance, at the time of the incident citizens in Sebha had to pay €0.5 per litre for gasoline although the usual price is at least 3 times less under the subsidised rate. Hard to find fuel is not only needed for transport but also to power generators that serve as a stopgap solution to long-lasting electricity shortages.

The Brega Oil Marketing Company, which takes care of storing and broadly distributing oil products domestically, has time and again claimed that its Sebha warehouse in southern Libya is adequately supplied with fuel. The company has instead laid the blame for the lack of this commodity in the Fezzan on the inability of distribution firms to supply fuel to stations as a result of roadblocks set by smugglers and armed groups. Considering that the Fezzan remains under the de facto control of the Libyan National Army (LNA), this suggests that al-Rajma might not be doing enough to prevent disrupted supply lines to the Fezzan. Although the LNA may have pursued several anti-smuggling raids in the south, it is more invested in anti-terrorism campaigns which bolster its security credentials and rather benefits politically from the current situation as the fuel issue in the Fezzan may be an indirect way to put pressure on governments sitting in Tripoli and reinforce the narrative that the central government is not ready, willing or able in to service the southern region. In fact, continuing grievances of southerners who hold a majority of the country's hydrocarbon reserves but do not benefit from its windfalls may be very useful for political actors who can shift the blame toward their rivals instead of actively looking for a long-term solution.

As a result, illegal petrol stations and makeshift solutions such as jerry cans or any type of bottle filled with fuel are a common sight in the region and create situations where no health and safety standards are respected.

The extent of fuel smuggling in the south varies over time and is difficult to pinpoint, but recent numbers from various sources show large daily amounts of state-distributed fuel that remain unaccounted for. According to Libya's Oil and Gas Minister Mohamed Aoun, about 1.2 million litres of fuel are allocated daily to the region. Conversely, the Brega Oil Marketing Company says that recent daily distribution levels were around 800,000 litres. In fact, it is generally known that Libyan fuel subsidies have encouraged arbitrage both within and outside the country, with many smugglers driving southward to export their illegal commodity to foreign buyers. The Government of National Unity (GNU) sitting in Tripoli has sought to put in place a fuel distribution mechanism to keep better track of such goods, especially in the south, whereby new fuel trucks should be equipped with GPS tracking devices and a metre showing the amount carried in real time, in addition to obligating owners of fuel stations to have email addresses and GPS locations. Nonetheless, the ministerial decision No.407/2021 going in this direction has so far had weak implementation and even Tripoli has at times, most recently in May/June, suffered from fuel shortage. This has pushed GNU Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba to form a committee to better collect data and identify which stations need supply. The Bint Bayah incident prompted GNU officials to call for an anti-smuggling campaign in the south, with Deputy Prime Minister Ramadan Abu Janah urging "military and security forces to take action against the owners of fraud fuel stations," without explaining how they could do so in a contested territory that remains off their control. Dabaiba himself pondered on the issue by stating that increased fuel transfers to the south would only worsen the smuggling situation and calling for the tracking down of smuggling gangs as well as gas station owners and security groups that work with them. The GNU Prime Minister also reminded that policies such as increasing the price of subsidised fuel or ultimately substituting subsidies with direct cash payment should be undertaken. However, any government implementing such policy risks facing a large backlash from current subsidy-recipients and it is implausible the GNU would want to take the chance of angering key constituencies in the western coastal region at such an unstable moment.

Other chronic challenges such as rivalry and lack of coordination between eastern and western forces were made clear in the aftermath of the Bint Bayah incident. Each side renewed their empty pledges to work toward improving the Fezzan's condition, but focused in reality on casting aside their political rivals by claiming to be the force bringing genuine help to the region. The House of Representatives (HOR) declared the Bint Bayah municipality as a disaster area and requested the Public Prosecutor and other relevant bodies to send reports to it on the incident. The LNA, directed by Khalifa Haftar, transported a large number of wounded to Benghazi for treatment including through military planes from Sebha Airport. Assistance from wes-

tern Libya was not allowed to operate unhampered in that airport, with local forces affiliated to the LNA intercepting medical teams and planes coming from Misrata according to the GNU Acting Health Minister. The plane of the GNU Foreign Minister, Najla al-Mangoush, was turned back from Sebha without being able to transport some wounded who were eventually taken care of by an LNA plane. Nevertheless, more than 20 victims were successfully transported to Tripoli's Central Hospital and there was also international support with several patients treated in countries like Italy.

Finally, the country's security situation has continued to deteriorate with militia clashes and human rights violations, particularly against activists, being a regular occurrence. Apart from politically-motivated clashes in Tripoli, which will be presented in the next section, western Libya saw several turf wars between competing armed groups, one of which taking place in the city of al-Ajailat between a group affiliated to the Zawiya Police Department Criminal Investigation Head and career militiaman Mohamed Bahroun (aka "al-Far" or "The Mouse") against the Ammar Belkour force. The main reason behind the heavy clashes was that the Zawiya armed men wanted to arrest a few members of the Ammar Belhour force. Of note, Bahroun who now enjoys an official position thanks to his appointment by the Chief of Intelligence Services, is wanted by the Attorney General for terrorism charges and has nevertheless managed to pursue his own interests against rivals. In Tripoli, a female supporter of the Gaddafi regime was violently manhandled for waving Libya's former green flag, which elicited a strong condemnation by Aisha Gaddafi, the daughter of the country's former ruler. In eastern Libya, tensions with former regime supporters were also recorded, with reports that the village of Buhadi south of Sirte was victim of a short-term siege by LNA forces. The reason provided by the latter was that its forces came under fire whilst raiding a farm run by fuel smugglers but the fact that the village is primarily inhabited by Qadhahfa tribesmen (Muammar Gaddafi's tribe) has additional social implications.

Additionally, arrests and calls for the liberation of arbitrarily jailed activists or their family members were particularly common this month in Cyrenaica. In fact, armed groups affiliated with the LNA are continuing to target critics of Khalifa Haftar by arresting their family members in their stead, with the example of Nada al-Farsi who was kidnapped with her two children to pressure her sister Nadine to close her Facebook account on which she criticised the General Commander. In Tobruk, a TV Correspondent from al-Arabiya was beaten and his equipment destroyed whilst covering the first HOR session after the eruption of protests last month which saw the parliament's building in the town torched. In Benghazi, the head of the Tawergha Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Organisation Omran Younis was arrested arbitrarily on 3rd August. Human rights organisations have also raised the alarm on the case of Iftikhar Boudraa, a female activist who had condemned Benghazi's socio-economic problems and has been detained since December 2018, first to be executed before her sentence was commuted to 10 years of internment. These incidents not only demonstrate arbitrary repression on

the part of the LNA but also the unwillingness of its upper ranks to police affiliated militias who approach critics and journalists with a heavy-handed approach.

SIMMERING SECURITY TENSIONS HIT PAUSE BEFORE BURSTING ONCE MORE

Despite relative calm until the latter part of the month, the eruption of deadly clashes in Tripoli have shown that the pro-Bashagha coalition is not giving up on its objective to replace the Government of National Unity (GNU).

As explained in the [twenty-fourth issue of Inside Libya](#), Libya had reached a boiling point in July when Osama al-Jeweili, a western military commander now supporting the Sirte-based Government of National Stability (GNS), issued several warnings to Tripoli armed groups and asking them to push GNU Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba out of Tripoli or face the consequences. Between end of July and early August, the military figure from Zintan planned for several meetings between western armed groups but only militias friendly to his position agreed to meet, including groups from Misrata, Zintan, Zawiya and Warshafena which all issued a statement in support of GNS Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha. Their statement also called for stability and unity by underlining the need to unify Libya's military institution and send back foreign troops present in the country, but it also cast Dabaiba and armed groups supporting him as people seeking "to undermine the peace process in exchange for power." Armed groups allied with Dabaiba refused to meet their rivals but unsigned statements coming from them were circulated, also calling for stability and unity in the country.

In fact, rival parties held a double-talk, on the one hand highlighting the need for stability and de-escalation while saying that they would not hesitate to take arms to achieve their objectives, which for the pro-GNS forces means the GNU's dismissal and for the latter, the continuation of its rule until general elections are held. Responding to Fathi Bashagha's "honest patriotic invitation" to leave office and avoid military tensions, Abdulhamid Dabaiba said "if you care about the lives of Libyans, focus your efforts on running for the elections, and let go of the illusions of military coups." The GNU Prime Minister also sought to project an image of strength and confidence by assuring his population that Libya would not be faced with another military conflict. As aforementioned, armed groups supportive of Dabaiba affirmed they "dissociate themselves from political conflicts" and choose social peace over all forms of fighting. However, they also pledged armed support to the GNU should al-Jeweili "insist on war." The GNS Spokesperson retorted that his camp does not reject dialogue and placed the responsibility for any future conflict in the capital on the GNU's shoulders for insisting on remaining in power. In this tense context, the first weeks of the month saw redeployment of pro-GNU forces within Tripoli and its outskirts to better

defend the city in case of an attack. Likewise, the GNU Spokesperson called upon the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to send observers to Sirte, al-Jufra and Brak al-Shati to monitor the alleged westward transfer of important numbers of troops, including foreign mercenaries, sent by the LNA – a claim that was rejected by the military institution.

On his part, Khalifa Haftar has been more visible this month touring cities such as Tobruk and Kufra, thus raising concerns that al-Rajma expects a conflict to happen. The LNA Spokesperson General Ahmed al-Mismari issued statements in which he dissociated the military institution from “political conflict” and said it would not participate in any pro-Bashagha onslaught on the capital city in addition to stressing that bloodshed should be avoided. Nonetheless, the LNA continued to support the positions of the pro-Bashagha coalition, especially after Bashagha issued a statement saying he will not leave the country to “brokers and corrupt people who believe they will remain in office with weapons and by buying people with corrupt money.” In Tobruk, Haftar himself said the LNA would not allow the endless struggles of “power worshippers”, a statement which could be interpreted as condemnation of both Dabaiba and Bashagha. However, this term only applies to the GNU Prime Minister and shows that the LNA Commander attempts to politically benefit from the situation by raising his institution above current political fights which have hurt Libya and seeking to increase his popularity.

The latter goal was clear in his latest Kufra speech, where the military figure berated politicians and stressed on the link between “the people and the army” as the only tool capable of solving Libya’s predicament. His comments such as “the people and army should rectify the situation before it is too late” and “the people and army are capable of destroying the idols of politicians” are there to show that the LNA is ultimately an actor playing on its own and that it is ready to do so at any given time. Events such as the downing of an unidentified drone, which was later proven to belong to AFRI-COM, in Benghazi’s outskirts have also been used by the LNA to further propagate its narrative that it is the only force catering for national security. Members of parliament have also closed ranks with the military institution this month, not only congratulating the LNA for downing the drone but also denouncing any attack on the HOR as an offence against the military institution. In the current circumstance where Bashagha’s political fate remains uncertain and conflict is probable, the HOR evidently feels threatened and seeks to gain the backing of its traditional armed ally. Meanwhile, the Presidential Council (PC) in its capacity of Supreme Commander of Armed Forces pursued coordination with the western-based Libyan Army and put in place some policies in the hopes of maintaining security in the region. The most flagrant attempt at that was the dissolution of all Joint Military Operation Rooms which was presented as a step toward reunifying the military institution. Nonetheless, the policy was seen by the pro-Bashagha camp as a direct challenge to Osama al-Jeweili, who was Head of the Western Operations Room. Of note, this follows al-Jeweili’s dismissal by Dabaiba in May

as Chief of Military Intelligence and leaves him only with the official title of Commander of the Western Military Region - one of four military regions in the country.

Despite all the calls for de-escalation, Tripoli felt unsafe throughout the month and saw major clashes which resulted in twice more deaths than the fighting which occurred last month and was the year's worst. In the first week of the month, southern Tripoli saw fighting between forces affiliated to al-Jeweili who were seeking to seize a camp from a group loyal to the GNU. The attempt, which came after the PC dissolved Joint Military Rooms, was unfruitful and the pro-GNS force retreated to the April 7 camp in al-Swani after the elite Brigade 444 managed to stop the fighting between the rival groups, and the subsequent take over the disputed camp by them. Divided between armed groups either backing the GNU or GNS, Tripoli sits on a powder keg as any small difference or misunderstanding between local militias can escalate into dangerous clashes with heavy political dimensions. This is what happened on 27th August when the 777 Brigade of Haitham al-Tajouri, who has sided with the GNS, opened fire on a Stabilisation Support Apparatus (SSA) military convoy, which is one of Dabaiba's staunchest supporters and headed by Abdelghani al-Kikli (aka "Ghnewa"). Competing narratives emerged regarding the motives and catalyst behind the clashes, but converging reports suggest that the 777 Brigade opened fire first as they believed that the SSA was starting a "cleansing" operation within the capital as a response to Bashagha's comments. First occurring in central Tripoli where the 777 Brigade momentarily gained the upper hand and took control of the Internal Security Headquarters, the fighting quickly escalated throughout the capital and Tajouri saw his forces lose territory. It is important to state that neither Dabaiba nor al-Jeweili have a well-coordinated coalition of militias at their disposal, yet in this case, pro-GNU forces were far better placed to come to the help of the SSA whereas pro-GNS groups from either Misrata or Zawiya failed to adequately reinforce Tajouri's forces and the Nawasi Brigade. In fact, the Coastal Road between Khums and Zliten was closed by the pro-GNU Constitution Support Force and Joint Operations Room, thus preventing the arrival of pro-GNS forces from Misrata. The fighting nonetheless continued over the weekend and left 159 injured as well as 32 dead according to the GNU Ministry of Health. UNICEF added that at least one minor was part of the dead and four others were injured in the fighting that included medium to heavy arms as well as indiscriminate shelling. At least four public hospitals and health centres were targeted and medical teams were many times prevented from assisting civilians.

The aftermath of the fighting is rather positive for Dabaiba in that local forces inimical to him have lost territory, especially their most central positions within the capital which are now being turned into a public beach and a media building. The pro-GNU forces made good use of drones which were the focus of a new defence strategy presented a few months ago by the GNU Prime Minister. Importantly, this use of drones raised concerns that Turkey was actually directly involved in the conflict. While Turkish officials

have categorically stated they are neutral and asked their Syrian mercenaries not to engage, the fact is that al-Jeweili's forces now believe that Turkey has taken a direct stance against them. This could lead to tensions between pro-Bashagha western forces and Ankara, make current rapprochement efforts between the HOR and Ankara more difficult, and raise the alarm in both Cairo and Moscow, two actors who can also get involved militarily in Libya. Similar to Bashagha's attempt to enter Tripoli in May, Dabaiba sought to present this episode as a victory that "irreversibly ended plans to attack Tripoli and extend the rule of an interim government controlled by HOR Speaker Agila Saleh, the High Council of State (HCS)." However, and despite Bashagha's clear threats throughout the month, the August clashes in Tripoli were not the GNS' grand attempt to seize Tripoli but rather a misunderstanding between local militias which escalated into deadly fighting because political tensions are so high in the capital. This means that Dabaiba may not have "irreversibly" counteracted Bashagha's plan to evict him from power. For now, the GNU Prime Minister believes he has managed to gain greater security credentials and is using this event as a way to paint the GNS as the party which categorically refuses peace. In fact, the Libyan Military Prosecutor in Tripolitania called on the country's Passports, Citizenship and Foreigners Affairs body to place Bashagha, his spokesperson, al-Jeweili and some other of his supporters on a travel ban. Dabaiba also directed top security officials to roundup any individual, whether civilian or military, suspected of any involvement in the clashes against pro-GNU forces. Importantly, the event could give Dabaiba more potential to outcast his enemies, by for instance dismissing al-Jeweili as Commander of the Western Military Region and solidifying his forces' new gains within Tripoli to stay in power. However, his consolidated power in Tripoli does not hide the fact that al-Jeweili forces are still present outside the capital and the fact that it is the Special Deterrence Forces (aka RADA) which has occupied most of the bases left by pro-Bashagha forces. This is an important detail, since RADA is not considered a pro-GNU force but rather presents itself as a neutral armed group – something that remains suspicious for Dabaiba who needs the unconditional support of local militias. Finally, Dabaiba's success in creating solid links with armed groups depends on his ability to pay them and give them more positions. While the former part is easy considering the GNU's financial access, the latter will require political aptitude and a continuous restructuring of allies.

FATHI BASHAGHA AND HIS EVER-OUTLYING POLITICAL GOAL

Fathi Bashagha, the head of the Government of National Stability (GNS), is increasingly facing challenges as his objective of entering Tripoli remains unachieved. Some of his eastern coalition partners are attempting to make amends with Turkey, a key powerbroker in the capital.

Arguably, the GNS had been solely focused on building ties with various actors and calling for the dismissal of the GNU instead of actively pursuing the role of a government. This can be explained by the fact that its revenues remain sparse despite the approval of a 2022 budget and by the fact that Bashagha sees governing away from Tripoli as a situation that legitimises Dabaiba. Yet, thrown into crises such as the Bint Bayah accident and compelled to show some results for his position, the political figure and his ministers have taken a more active role, with the GNS Deputy Prime Minister Ali al-Qatrani contacting Agila Saleh to discuss mechanisms and steps to be taken to improve services for citizens throughout Libya. With decision No.20/2022, the GNS allocated 50 million LYD (€10m) to come to the urgent aid of southern municipalities. Later in the month, the government added 425 million LYD (€85m) to be divided between Libya's three regions, with Tripolitanian municipalities receiving 200 million LYD (€40m), municipalities in Cyrenaica getting 150 million LYD (€30m) and Fezzan municipalities obtaining 75 million LYD (€15m). The goal of such expenses, taken from the miscellaneous category of the GNS' 2022 budget, is to quickly provide basic services such as water, sanitation, and road maintenance. However, it remains to be seen whether all benefiting municipalities will cooperate with the GNS as some mayors remain attached to the GNU in terms of allegiance, even in areas under the effective control of GNS partners. Moreover, the sums provided remain extremely low to make any real change in hard-hit geographies and rather reflect the GNS' difficulty in accessing funds. As explained in the [twenty-third issue of Inside Libya](#), the Sirte-based government's main financing means is to take out loans from eastern-banks since it does not benefit from oil revenues that are deposited into the Central Bank of Libya's (CBL) accounts in Tripoli. Another source of financing has been tax collection which has so far been 130 million LYD (€26m) according to GNU officials who are anxiously monitoring the situation and have referred the matter to the Attorney General, accusing the GNS of transferring 20 million LYD (€5m) of customs fees and taxes from the eastern Customs Authority accounts to the LNA. On a side note, Bashagha has called upon the CBL to develop a plan to curb stagflation and enhance the value of the local currency to better control commodity price levels domestically. In late 2020, the CBL chose to devalue the LYD exchange rate against the USD from 1.34 to 4.48, which worsened inflation. However, the CBL's Chairman Sadiq al-Kabir is on bad terms with Bashagha and his institution is in no po-

sition to revalue the currency as it would put extra strain on state finances during an uncertain period.

In early August, an interesting development took place with the first trip of Agila Saleh to Turkey, with which he had so far held difficult relations as a result of the latter's support to western Libyan institutions. Rapprochement already started last year when Ankara saw the unified rule of the GNU as an opportunity to extend a hand to Cyrenaica, the region with which it had the most commercial contracts before the 2011 revolution. In April 2021, the Turkish parliament created a friendship group with its Libyan counterpart and in January of this year, the Turkish ambassador Kenan Yilmaz had been to Saleh's stronghold of Qubba. In Turkey, the HOR Speaker met with his counterpart Mustafa Şentop who expressed his support for a united Libya and said that Turkey was "equidistant to all regions and strata of the Libyan society." During his trip, Saleh was accompanied by PC Deputy Head Abdullah al-Lafi with whom he met the Turkish President. Overall, Saleh lobbied for the return of Turkish investment and the reactivation of on-hold contracts in Libya, in addition to asking for a normalisation of relations with Turkey. This is particularly important considering that eastern Libyan actors such as Saleh have for long demonised Turkey and opposed its presence in the country, mainly due to Ankara's military support to the Government of National Accord (GNA) during the LNA's war on Tripoli and its signing of a memorandum of understanding on maritime sovereignty with former PM Fayez al-Serraj in November 2019. Saleh hinted that such MoU could be re-discussed in coordination with the HCS so as to put this difference behind. Nonetheless, this visit to Turkey should not be seen as a Turkish full endorsement of the pro-Bashagha bloc and even less a rapprochement with the LNA, which remains inimical to Ankara. Turkish military and intelligence officials have kept their warning they would defend Tripoli "in case of an attack", meaning if Haftar decides to take up arms once again against the capital. The Turkish ambassador to Libya also said his country's consulate in Benghazi would reopen only if "conditions in the region become favourable" and added that Ankara was attached to its mediatory role between the GNU and GNS.

Mediation between the two rival governments remains a far-off goal. So far, the international community has failed to create incentives for either Bashagha or Dabaiba to back off. For the former, the seizure of Tripoli is an absolute political necessity as anything else would create a warped legacy for Bashagha who would have failed at his ambition of being the last-minute player who scored political unity and general elections for Libya. For Dabaiba, recent restructuring of armed support within Tripoli, the LNA's refusal to get drawn into Tripoli clashes and al-Jeweili's loose coalition of armed groups mean that the GNU Prime Minister believes he can hold on power for much longer. Both Prime Ministers believe they are in the right, with Bashagha seeing his government as sanctioned by the only elected Libyan entity, i.e. the HOR - albeit the HOR's legitimacy has been questioned by Secretary General Special Advisor (SGSA) Stephanie Williams herself and

in spite of a questionable vote of confidence to Bashagha. Benefitting from the international community's unease toward the GNS' formation, Dabaiba continues to see himself as vested with a UN-mandate to hold general elections - despite the fact that such mandate expired over the summer and he was alongside the HOR a key spoiler to the holding of planned elections in December 2021.

Notwithstanding his invitation for Dabaiba to leave power "out of patriotism" and "reason", Bashagha has also upped his rhetoric against the GNU Prime Minister in several statements this month. The head of the GNS has laid the blame for any violence on Dabaiba's insistence to stay in power and accused him of "imposing himself on Libyans by force of arms." Other claims were raised by Bashagha which resemble more propaganda than a proper assessment of the situation: "Those who are supporting Dabaiba are a minority group that is working for its own personal interests. They do not exceed 200 people"; "Only three to four companies owned by the Dabaiba family control the Libyan economy." These comments follow similar statements made in earlier months by both political figures that highlight the exacerbation of their rivalry and the unlikelihood of a political settlement. Contrary to what was claimed by Dabaiba, the two figures were no way near an agreement to hold elections by the end of the year prior to the 27th August fighting in Tripoli. Instead, both leaders seek to portray themselves as supporters of elections facing an insisting spoiler but in the meantime Libyans are losing hope for any sense of stability, let alone hope for the holding of general elections. Following the deadly clashes, Bashagha is now faced with a travel ban which will hamper his movement to Tripolitania and with greater anger in western cities like Misrata where some protesters asked for pro-GNS armed supporters to leave the city. Bashagha should be concerned with the fact that both the LNA and HOR, his key coalition partners, are casually looking elsewhere due to his inability to enter Tripoli. However, it cannot be said that the GNS Prime Minister is done for and will give up on his objective to govern Libya from the capital and organise general elections by the horizon of mid-2023.

TRIPOLI REMAINS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ABDULHAMID DABAIBA

Despite the unstable political situation, the GNU Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba remains confident in his position and claims to pursue general elections. There is little indication that such claims are being actioned.

Prior to the late August clashes in Tripoli, Dabaiba had made a statement in which he reassured Libyans that no new wars would occur to destroy the country and called upon the other side "to learn from the past." As seen in previous Inside Libya reports, the GNU Prime Minister presents himself as a political figure whose main objective is to organise general elections and

oppose status-quo parties for whom elections are not in their interests, i.e. HOR, HCS, LNA. Indeed, Dabaiba has continued to manifest the idea of general elections being held in the next few months. However, as long as the HOR and HCS do not agree on a constitutional basis and the current political tensions are not abated, there is no chance for elections to be held any time soon. The year 2022 has been full of empty deadlines for the holding of elections which have gradually become less serious and therefore less respected by the Libyan population. The lines are too blurred for the population to see which actor is genuinely interested in elections and which figure just parrots the need to hold elections.

This has led to a general antipathy toward politicians, Bashagha and Dabaiba included, which culminated in early July protests and could further create tensions in the future. In the current situation where it is difficult to imagine elections, Dabaiba is a step ahead because according to him, it would only take HCS Chairman Khalid al-Mishri and HOR Speaker Agila Saleh to lay aside their few differences over the legal draft and approve a constitutional basis to hold elections. In this sense, Dabaiba might present himself as a better alternative than Bashagha, who first needs to install the GNS in Tripoli as an exclusive government before organising general elections next year. In fact, by stressing on the need to solve the current political crisis through the ballot box in the next few months, Dabaiba is making sure to keep the tacit support of the international community which helps him remain relevant on the Libyan political field. However, Dabaiba also benefits from the current situation in that the delay in holding elections and growing political divisions would allow him to keep governing from Tripoli, where all the oil money is deposited, through next year.

Controlling only a fraction of the country and suffering from lower investor confidence does not make the prospect of governing Libya for longer attractive. However, this may be a better option for the GNU Prime Minister than risk an overhaul of Libya's political scene that could have great costs to him and his family. In the meantime, Dabaiba pursues business as usual and continues to meet mayors from all around the country, even geographies under the de facto control of the GNS. The GNU Prime Minister reiterated his support for decentralisation in the country as a way to empower local municipalities. He also made progress on the file to unify the salary scale of all Libyan state employees but received a letter from the Audit Bureau Chief explaining that measures were needed to fix the bloated public sector. With 2.5 million employees accounting for close to 40% of the population, the Libyan state is a behemoth that costs governments half their budget and remains inefficient on many grounds. This inefficiency makes it prone to fraud as explained in a recent statement by the Attorney General that there were 88,819 forged IDs used by criminals to receive salaries from the state since 2017.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY READIES ITSELF FOR A FACELIFT

With the departure of Special Advisor to the Secretary General (SASG) Stephanie Williams, the United Nations is going through the lengthy and contentious process of appointing a new head for the Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

Considering their intensity, the clashes starting on 27th August were everything the international community has sought to avoid over the last six months. Every major country involved in the Libya file issued statements condemning the fighting and calling upon de-escalation and the focus on peaceful means toward the organisation of general elections in the country. The Tripoli Municipal Council itself made appeals to the international community to come to the rescue of Libyan civilians, but there is very little that foreign chancelleries can achieve in this current circumstance. This is a critical moment for the international community. Not only is it faced with a real risk of deflagration in Libya but is also in the midst of a leadership change as a result of Stephanie Williams' departure as SGSA. UNSMIL is now headed by Raisendon Zenenga as Acting Head but its higher echelons in New York are working to replace Williams as soon as possible. However, this process is likely to be contested as the former SGSA has made a lot of enemies within Libya, particularly with the status-quo politicians. Russia was also a staunch opponent of the American diplomat and had strongly pushed over the last few months for her exit as Moscow claimed her leadership of UNSMIL endangered the UN's role in Libya. This is a very conceited perspective from Russia that stems from Moscow's enmity to Washington and its allies.

Stating her experience in Libya, Williams said the country's political class was "only looking for positions instead of redirecting the country to the elections' track" and added that such politicians "love to court external actors, travel the world, receive red carpet treatment" but "they hypocritically and publicly blame external actors for what are in the end mostly Libyan failures to reach a needed consensus." Naturally, these comments were not well-received by the HOR, whose Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee replied that Williams' comments were "generalisations" and that she had "wasted great opportunities to support politicians' efforts in Libya to end the divisions." He also accused her of "lacking objectivity" and not understanding the "difficult circumstances in which Libyan politicians operate." This is the general environment which Williams' successor is expected to join, one where both Libyan politicians and people have low-levels of trust for UNSMIL and have become too suspicious to cooperate with it, either because of UNSMIL's pressures on politicians unhappy to make a change for the better or for its inability to bring its political roadmap to the finish line. Objectively, Stephanie Williams spearheaded much of Libya's political progress in late 2020 and returned to the scene in late 2021 to try and salvage the political roadmap. Despite months of discussions and mediation with a

wide range of Libyan political actors, her tenure saw UNSMIL falling behind the political track it once led and failing to improve its negative image within the country. As seen in previous Inside Libya reports, Libyan politicians have increasingly used a nationalistic stance blaming internationals for the political deadlock and rejecting UNSMIL's initiatives as "unconstructive." This antagonism toward UNSMIL is not only shared among MPs close to Saleh and the broader pro-Bashagha bloc but also within the more radical elements backing Dabaiba, such as Mufti al-Gheryani who called for the mission's expulsion from Libya. Overall, the negative view is shared among many Libyans who do not forget accusations of bribery at the LPDF, nor do they want to excuse the mission for its part in failing to bring general elections in December 2021 during Jan Kubis's tenure as head of mission.

Media reports throughout August brought up Abdoulaye Bathily, a Senegalese diplomat and former UN Special Representative for Central Africa, as the next Special Envoy to Libya and Head of UNSMIL. Despite initial opposition to his candidacy among domestic and international actors, the Senegalese diplomat was eventually appointed on the first day of September. As Williams' successor, he is unlikely to make much difference to the Libyan file as the country's fate is not so much tied to one personality belonging to the international community but rather to a myriad of competing local actors who gradually become more bellicose and less inclined to use the UN's good offices. Moreover, as explained by HCS member Abdul-Qassim Qazit, the next UNSMIL Head will need at least six months to get acquainted with the Libyan file and create a good rapport with its main protagonists. The problem is that we are already seeing Libya at a breaking point with more militarisation of politics and little room for fruitful political dialogues. Since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has so far seen 7 UN Envoys who sought to steer the country away from instability toward a democratic transition - so far in vain.

LEGISLATIVE BODIES RENEW INFORMAL CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS

Rumours of a rapprochement between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Dabaiba family have prompted the High Council of State (HCS) and House of Representatives (HOR) to renew discussions over a constitutional basis and even alternative governments.

Legislative bodies in Libya have both bad and good news to deal with under the current circumstances. On the one hand, as explained by most observers, they are the main actors on whom the fate of general elections depends since they are currently the only bodies that can bring a constitutional basis to such polls. This central role in Libyan politics has helped them get enough leverage to remain relevant and interact with powerful actors, both domestically and internationally. For instance, both Egypt and Turkey have competed to bring the constitutional track to its conclusion with Anka-

ra and Cairo hosting both al-Mishri and Saleh this month for constitutional discussions. Although there has been no progress so far, the resumption of discussions gives a glimmer of hope with the HOR voicing its willingness to amend the draft constitution and Saleh claiming that 90% of the consensus is reached and that the only points to review are the case of dual nationals and the participation of the LNA in elections. Whilst engaged in their rising tensions, both Bashagha and Dabaiba have called upon the HOR and HCS to finalise their consultations in addition to renewing their willingness to support the legislative bodies' efforts to reach consensus.

On the other hand, the overall atmosphere in Libya seems decreasingly bright for bodies without their own military wing as tensions are on the rise and politics shift toward the military field. Both the HCS and HOR are aware of such developments, with Saleh unsure of his own Libyan-led political roadmap that brought Bashagha to the forefront. In fact, the GNS Prime Minister has so far failed to reach his potential and behind-the-scenes discussions between the Dabaiba and Haftar families have left a bad taste in the HOR Speaker's mouth, so much that rumours emerged this month that him and al-Mishri may want to seriously push for the formation of a third government or at least pressure Bashagha to accept a cabinet reshuffle with more representation from Tripolitania armed groups so as to weaken Dabaiba's grip in that region. Albeit at just a preliminary stage, the discussion of such topics show that both the HCS and HOR know their positions are frail and they need to move their pawns on the Libyan chessboard before being sidetracked by those who pull the real strings in times of war, i.e. armed groups. The two bodies have also registered Williams' goodbye comments where she stated that their mandates had expired a long time ago. This point remains one of the most preoccupying for Libyan politics, especially considering that Saleh has been in his post for the last 8 years while al-Mishri just got reelected for a fifth term of one year in office. Both are aware of rising criticism across Libya about their unclear willingness to hold elections and have concerns that other Libyan institutions could be sponsored by members of the international community and domestic critics to not only challenge but sidetrack them.

This challenge could come from the judiciary. In the [twentieth issue of Inside Libya](#), Dabaiba's desire for the Supreme Court to reactivate the Constitutional Court was introduced and this is exactly what happened in August with Chief Justice Mohamed al-Hafi reactivating this constitutional circuit to decide on appeals as well as adjudicate cases and disputes about executive and legislative bodies' decisions. The body was discontinued in 2016 and had not issued any decision since 2014, when it said some elements of the constitutional declaration behind the 2014 legislative elections were unconstitutional and ultimately created a split in the legislative function which is now divided between the HOR and the advisory body known as the HCS. Of note, this decision by al-Hafi elicited the HOR's Resolution No.8/2022 which obliges members of the Supreme Court to make their legal oath at the parliament's eastern headquarters to exert control over the body. The result

is a judiciary being weaponized at the hand of Dabaiba, Saleh, and al-Hafi although the latter pledged the Constitutional Court would act fully independently – an implausible claim in a country where judges can potentially be pressured or bribed to assuage a political camp's concerns. In fact, the reactivation of the court could be a turning point for the country, allowing citizens a recourse to the judiciary in challenging the constitutionality of laws, particularly liberticide regulations that stifle civil society. As aforementioned, the court could also act as a counterbalance to the legislative bodies that have so far taken Libya's political future hostage by deciding on the authorities of current bodies and facilitating Libya's democratic transition. However, the fact remains that the court is being reactivated at a time of and through political manoeuvring that endanger the independence and unity of the judiciary.

This means that it is not yet clear whether the reactivation of the Constitutional Court could be a welcome last-minute solution to Libya's current predicament or rather make the situation more complex and create another institution whose decisions are neither binding nor respected nationwide. Certainly, appeals raised against the candidacy of some figures last December created a major roadblock to the holding of elections as it was not clear which court had the final jurisdiction to adjudicate on such cases. Now that the Constitutional Court is active, it may be that challenges to a candidate will be dealt with much quicker to allow a smoother holding of polls. The Director of the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) Emad al-Sayeh said this month that "the force majeure that made last December elections impossible has now ended," without clearly explaining why he believed so but the activation of the constitutional circuit may be one reason. The other is that al-Sayeh may be pressured to say there is no obstacle whatsoever and brush over the sad truth that under current circumstances, polls are highly unlikely. In fact, there is still no constitutional basis and elections law coming from the legislative bodies and the Attorney General has recently announced that the Public Prosecution had found 3,829 forged ballot cards from the failed 2021 elections and was going through close to 115,000 national ID numbers for double-checking their validity. The relatively small number of forged ballots found by Public Prosecution may be an encouraging sign however since spoilers to elections had claimed earlier this year that the number of frauds was above the mark of 100,000s.

A LOOK INTO ONGOING COURT CASES RELATED TO LIBYAN POLITICS

From Khalifa Haftar's trial in the United States to corruption cases unveiled by the Audit Bureau and the legal cases surrounding the National Oil Corporation (NOC), many of Libya's top issues are being dealt with in court. Yet, a legal solution to these challenges is unlikely, especially regarding national reconciliation.

At a time when political issues are gradually being dealt with weapons, it is important to remember the role that the Libyan judicial system could play in abating tensions, rising people's confidence in their politicians, and improving governance. Since the start of the LPDF roadmap in late 2020, which also aims at bringing national reconciliation to the country, there has been low progress in terms of bringing justice to victims and moderate advancements in terms of overturning the more immediate effects of conflict such as displacement. According to UNDP, a war-torn town such as Tawergha has about 45% of its people who returned in the past 3 years. Yet, when it comes to justice, the current political tensions and powerful positions of potential war-criminals have made it so that accountability for human rights abuses has been low despite UNSMIL's gathering of testimonies throughout the country. Despite the inauguration of a High Commission for Libyan National Reconciliation by the PC in April 2021 and the existence of a draft Transitional Justice Law, there is simply not enough tools or even political will at the PC's hands to make progress on the matter. Alternatively, court cases have been filed in other jurisdictions and are slowly getting to their judgement phase with the example of a federal U.S. court entering a default judgement against Khalifa Haftar for his failure to appear to court in several war-crime cases filed during the Tripoli war. While this lingering court case has allegedly pushed the Haftar family to accelerate the sale of its Virginia assets, there is very little likelihood for such a trial to have effect in Libya. Court cases in Libya over human rights abuses have often lacked high standards of judiciary independence, been prone to pressures from powerful factions, and been postponed indefinitely. For instance, Abdullah al-Senussi, the former Gaddafi Chief of Intelligence, has remained captive and his trial continuously deferred, thus raising concerns among his Mgerha tribe regarding his health and internment conditions.

Courts have also been utilised for corruption and mismanagement cases, which have recently been on the increase. This is reminiscent of the last months of the GNA in power when supervisory institutions in Tripoli felt more confident and brought charges against the government to the fore. Now that the GNU is perceived as an "outgoing" government, a similar process is happening with the Administrative Control Authority accusing the GNU Economy Minister of wasting public money and incurring unnecessary expenses in the budget. On his part, the Attorney General Sadiq al-Sour has once again referred the Minister of Culture and Education to court, respec-

tively on charges of financial as well as administrative corruption and mismanagement. Moreover, al-Sour has also ordered the detention of 5 hospital directors, 7 GNU Ministry of Health officials due to embezzlement cases in addition to referring a large number of state employees and teachers for administrative investigation. As aforementioned, the Libyan state has many inefficiencies which often lead supervisory bodies to make investigations and refer cases to courts. However, the overall governance levels remain the same as trials do not generally impact public officials' behaviours.

Finally, some of the most important court cases are those from and against former National Oil Corporation (NOC) Chairman Mustafa Sanalla. The case brought by him against Dabaiba for pushing him out of office and replacing him with Farhat Bin Gdara has now been deferred twice by the South Tripoli Appeals Court and should take place on 7th September. This case is high profile and its development could not only have important consequences on Libya's economy, but also show whether courts can carry out their duties unhampered when it comes to highly political cases. For the economic impact of such a case, an invalidation of Bin Gdara's appointment as NOC Chairman could put the corporation's new management under strain, lead to a review of the tacit agreement between Dabaiba and the LNA regarding the lifting of the oil blockade, and bring back Sanalla to an industry which he has dominated since 2014.

AN ECONOMY KEPT HOSTAGE TO POLITICAL WRANGLINGS

Over-optimism and good news from the new leadership of the NOC do not hide the fact that Libya's current political predicament is hurting the country's development.

The month started with reports that the NOC had managed to bring back its daily oil production to 1.2 million barrels per day, with Oil Minister Mohamed Aoun saying that despite claims by some parties trying to mislead international public opinion, the country's energy sector was doing very well and could reach 1.3 million barrels per day soon. The minister added there were no technical problems in the oil fields, added that performance levels had improved and that delayed projects would be completed. Overall, monthly state revenues are now slated to double compared to the last two months as a result of the lifting of the oil blockade and the resumption of exports. However, not everything is rosy for the oil and gas sector. Starting with the technical side, there are still critical issues of maintenance and safety relating to the energy infrastructure. There are still issues with the supply of gas to power stations, with the example earlier this month of 1.1GW in Tripolitania being momentarily inaccessible due to a technical failure at the gas fields of the Mellitah O&G Company. An explosion also occurred at a power plant in Bani Walid due to a rise in electrical energy load, and another explosion occurred at the al-Intisar field belonging to Zueitina Oil Company,

killing one worker. Earlier over-optimistic statements from Bin Gdara that oil production would reach 3 million barrels per day within the next two years have been rolled back following an extraordinary oil budget follow-up committee meeting. The goal is now to reach 2 million barrels per day within 3 to 5 years, and 3 million barrels per day over the next decade per Oil Minister Aoun.

Risks of a resumption of an oil blockade, whether nationwide at the behest of the LNA or locally due to regional grievances, remain high. This month, protesters in the Fezzan blocked the road between Sebha and Ubari to momentarily prevent trucks from passing through and getting to Libya's largest oil field named el-Sharara. Topical due to the Bint Bayah's accident, the protesters' demands included additional fuel and gas supply, the construction of refineries, the re-operation of airports for international flights, jobs in NOC subsidiaries, new road projects as well as the holding of general elections by no later than June 2023. On his part, Haftar does not seem to give much importance to a tacit agreement reached with Dabaiba as current tensions make any rapprochement of sorts unworkable. This means that the LNA could quickly close once more the taps on the oil revenues which currently flow to the GNU. According to the CBL, such oil revenues represent 56.1 billion LYD (€11.5bn) since the start of the year and have easily covered spending amounting to 45 billion LYD (€9bn). One needs to add 21 billion LYD (€4.2bn) to state coffers to account for the country's total revenues over the first seven months of 2022, and represent oil-related income and tax income. Overall, this is 77.2 billion LYD (€15.4bn) of state revenue, a figure which could have actually been close to €19 billion without this year's oil blockade.

Despite Sanalla's sidelining, the former NOC Chairman and current Minister of Oil continue to trade barbs, with Aoun accusing Sanalla of having caused 11 billion LYD (€2.4bn) of financial loss due to his failure to supply revenues of foreign companies to the state treasury. Aoun has also accused Sanalla of having stalled drilling in the maritime demarcation agreed with Turkey in late 2019 - an accusation that does not consider the fact that most Mediterranean nations reject the Turkish MoU which would have caused international legal challenges for Libya if drilling had started. In turn, Sanalla has criticised ongoing plans to scrap the Ras Lanuf oil refinery which is in dispute with an Emirati company and could therefore be closed despite its value-added to Libya according to the former NOC Chairman. Speaking of the UAE, the federation has increased its economic participation in Libya and sought to dial down tensions with former critics in Tripolitania. Abu Dhabi Ports Group and Horizon have inaugurated a shipping line between the two countries and in June, an energy subsidiary of Abu Dhabi Holding signed an MoU for the development of photovoltaic energy in the North African country.

Some positive news include the re-operation of the Dahra oilfield by Waha Oil Company. This field was inoperable since an Islamic State attack in 2015. USAID has also announced a cooperation framework with the General Electricity Company in Libya (GECOL) to develop an operational plan to stabilise the country's electric grid by advising a fairer distribution of electricity. The new NOC Chairman has also held discussions with both France's TotalEnergies and Italy's Eni to boost investments in the country's oil, gas, and renewables sector. The continued interest by international oil companies in Libya's energy sector despite political turmoil reflects more a bullish attempt by European energy suppliers to find enough feedstock in the case of long-term tensions with Russia, rather than confidence that Libyan instability will subside soon. The GNU Minister of State for Economic Affairs made apt remarks this month, stressing the fact that ongoing political divisions negatively affect all development processes, agreements signed with other countries, and make signed contracts difficult to be activated and brought to fruition. In fact, Inside Libya reports throughout a good two-third of 2021 were full of economic plans and agreements between the GNU and foreign countries or companies to rebuild Libya and reactivate pre-revolution contracts. Unfortunately, Libya is no longer in that heyday and is slowly moving toward darker times where the situation is so tense that no actor has the bandwidth to discuss economic development.

CONCLUSION & FORECASTS

Libya is not entirely doomed to experience another bout of extreme violence. In fact, there are a few potentially positive developments that emerged in August that could provide an exit to current tensions. The resumption of constitutional discussions between the HOR and HCS as well as the reactivation of the Constitutional Court still need to be taken into account as possible ways forward to bring Libya to general elections. Moreover, international concerns and statements from Libyan political rivals supporting stability and the holding of elections are a welcome development. Despite the deadly clashes in Tripoli, both Dabaiba and Bashagha expressed their continued desire to discuss political matters with "opponents" and to prioritise the safety of the population. Local notables such as the Head of Misrata Council of Notables Mohamed al-Rajobi have stated their opposition to war and fighting, thus playing somewhat of a calming role in regards to tensions. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and foreign ambassadors in Libya have also raised the alarm and sought to bring Libyan parties to maintain the October 2020 ceasefire. Guterres also pointed out that the UN would continue to work with the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) to implement all terms of the ceasefire agreement.

However, if past experience is any indication for Libya, the extreme levels of tensions in western Libya and the propensity of armed groups on either side of the rivalry to come to arms first before asking questions may very much lead to a deflagration. Taher el-Sonni, Libya's ambassador to the UN,

has warned that the late August clashes were likely not to be the last in the capital. This is a correct assessment as there is little indication that pro-Bashagha forces have been knocked out and will not seek to regain their positions within Tripoli. Politicians and security actors alike are seeing less utility in pursuing talks and are more attracted to a military solution, despite their public claims in favour of maintaining stability. Grievances are at their highest levels since the start of the October 2020 ceasefire. In the south, the Fezzan Municipal Council has once more threatened to form a parallel government should their region continue to be disregarded economically and politically. Despite its statements that it will not get involved in Tripoli clashes, the LNA understands that the underplaying dynamics are in its favour as they create an environment where armed groups are privileged, and the LNA remains one of Libya's most potent forces. The situation in Tripoli remains very tense despite recent consolidation by Dabaiba. In fact, al-Jeweili's forces surround the capital and remain capable of a multi-front offensive to overwhelm its defences. In this situation, the role of the 5+5 JMC is much-needed, but it has not been very active in August - a development which could show that the armed parties behind the JMC, i.e. the Libyan Army and LNA, do not have the incentive to use this mechanism to decrease tensions. It is important to note that unless a serious concerted diplomatic effort is launched soon, politics may very well become nonexistent in Libya and armed actors step forward as the primary authors of Libya's fate.

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