



Top UNSMIL Official Visits Conflict-Struck Cities in Libyan East

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The top United Nations official in Libya visited East Libya on a three-day trip ending Monday to assess how the region's conflict-affected cities – some of them still littered with mines and unexploded missiles – are rehabilitating as they deal with a fresh wave of internally displaced persons and prepare for national elections in June.

"In New York as I was planning ahead for the United Nations post-conflict role in Libya I was constantly watching on the television the battle that was going on on the road that we've come on today," Special Representative of the Secretary General to Libya Ian Martin told the Breqa local council on his first stop. "I have some idea of what Breqa and its people suffered but I wanted to see that for myself and understand it better."

Mr Martin visited Breqa's heavily damaged university and watched a slideshow documenting local efforts to clear away up to 22,000 mines still littering the ground after the end of hostilities. He rounded off his visit with a visit to a local school, one of 16 out of a total of 22 still functioning. He met with local and military councils as well as civil society organizations to discuss the upcoming national elections, public security, the human rights situation and ongoing demining efforts.

In Ajdabiyah, a town of 170,000 which changed hands four times, Mr. Martin visited the town's war museum, the hospital, and the local substation of the Great Man-Made River water-distribution system.

"One of the most impressive things was the way that local people have very quickly started addressing their own needs without waiting for any type of international assistance and indeed before the interim government has been able to assist them," Mr. Martin said.

Ajdabiyah local council members said that their city has received thousands of fresh internally displaced refugees in recent days following inter-tribal clashes in the southeastern city of Kufra. They are an addition to large numbers accommodated in the city during the war in addition to refugees from the city of Tawargha and – more recently – Syrians fleeing their own country's civil war.

"Both in Ajdabiyah and in Benghazi the local councils were very concerned in the problems they have in caring for people who've been displaced, in some cases going back several months," Mr. Martin said.