



# Security Council

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## United Nations Support Mission in Libya

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2486 \(2019\)](#) and [2510 \(2020\)](#), covers political, security-related and economic developments in Libya, provides an overview of the human rights and humanitarian situation and includes an outline of the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since the issuance of my previous report on 15 January 2020 ([S/2020/41](#)).

#### II. Political, security-related and economic developments

2. Following a relative reduction in fighting in the immediate aftermath of the truce of 12 January called for by the Presidents of the Russian Federation and Turkey and accepted by the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army, fighting gradually resumed. Both parties redeployed forces along the front lines in the Tripoli area. As at 21 April, more than 850 reported breaches of the ceasefire had been recorded by UNSMIL, including an unprecedented increase in indirect fire observed in urban areas, resulting in civilian casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure and disruption of commercial air operations. At other flashpoints in western Libya, tensions also remained high. On 26 January, the Libyan National Army launched an offensive against the forces of the Government of National Accord in the Abu Qurayn area, south of Misratah, prompting heavy clashes and casualties on both sides. At the end of March, heavy artillery fire and rocket attacks were continued by both sides in parts of southern Tripoli and in the central and western regions. Locations along the western coastal road towards the border with Tunisia were seized by the forces of the Government of National Accord in mid-April. On 18 April, those forces launched a coordinated attack against the city of Tarhunah.

3. Reports continued of foreign mercenaries providing the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army with enhanced combat capabilities, amid persistent reports of military equipment and arms being supplied to both sides in violation of the United Nations-imposed arms embargo. Those developments undermined United Nations-led dialogue initiatives and added to more human suffering. From 1 January to 31 March, there were at least 131 civilian casualties in Libya, including at least 64 persons who were killed. Since April 2019, more than



200,000 persons have been forced to leave their homes in and around Tripoli owing to armed conflict.

4. To prevent the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the national authorities and the unrecognized “interim government” based in eastern Libya introduced preventive measures, including the closure of all air, land and sea borders; restrictions on movement between municipalities and regions; curfews; lockdowns; the suspension of Friday prayers and gatherings; the closure of schools and non-essential shops; and restrictions on public transportation. On 14 March, the Prime Minister, Faiez Mustafa Serraj, announced a state of emergency in Libya and allocated 575 million Libyan dinars (about \$406 million) to COVID-19 preparedness and response. Separate committees were established in the east and the west to address the impact of the disease.

5. Although prevention and preparedness measures taken with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic were introduced by authorities with the support of the United Nations, Libya remained at an extremely high risk. The situation was compounded by increasing levels of fighting and insecurity, political fragmentation and a weak and overstretched health system. The pandemic led to a loss of income for segments of society, food shortages and an increase in the price of basic commodities. In addition, measures to restrict the spread of COVID-19 hampered access to humanitarian aid and the movement of medical and humanitarian personnel.

6. The ongoing conflict and the current pandemic further weakened the already tenuous economic situation in Libya. The declaration of force majeure by the National Oil Corporation on 18 January as a result of a closure of oil ports in areas under the control of the Libyan National Army reduced oil production to less than a tenth of its prior output. The Libyan National Army-supported blockage of oil exports prompted the Government of National Accord to take austerity measures to reduce spending, including payroll reductions. The austerity measures will further exhaust coping mechanisms at a time when the population is facing tremendous additional economic pressures owing to COVID-19.

7. On 18 and 21 March, respectively, the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army responded positively to international calls for an immediate humanitarian truce and a halt to the continuing transfer of all military equipment and personnel to Libya in order to allow local authorities to respond to the pandemic. On 21 March, I welcomed the positive responses received from both sides. On 23 March, I called for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world in order for all efforts to be focused on addressing the pandemic and saving lives.

8. Respect for the humanitarian truce was short-lived. Armed confrontation intensified in southern Tripoli and spread to areas around the airbase in Watiyah, in the country’s north-west section. On 23 March, the Government of National Accord launched Operation Peace Storm, which it said was a response to the increased attacks by the Libyan National Army on civilian neighbourhoods in Tripoli. The military escalation complicated efforts by civilian authorities and the population towards putting preventive measures in place to address the pandemic.

9. Violence escalated unabated, even after the Security Council issued elements for the press on 26 March, in which concern was expressed about the significant escalation of hostilities on the ground and the possible impact of the pandemic in Libya. The parties were called upon to de-escalate the fighting, cease hostilities and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid throughout the country. The Council also reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations in facilitating a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned inclusive political process.

10. On 23 April, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Agila Saleh, announced a new political initiative, calling for the social and political constituencies in eastern, western and southern Libya to each elect a representative to a three-member Presidency Council under the supervision of the United Nations. On the same day, the Commander of the Libyan National Army, General Khalifa Haftar, reiterated that the Libyan Political Agreement and the current Presidency Council were no longer valid, requesting Libyans to empower an institution that was able to lead the country during the transitional period on the basis of a new constitutional declaration. On 27 April, General Haftar announced that he had accepted the mandate provided by the Libyan people to the Libyan National Army to lead the country. On 29 April, the Libyan National Army announced a halt to all military operations during the holy month of Ramadan.

11. Following the resignation of my Special Representative for Libya and Head of UNSMIL for health-related reasons, on 11 March, I designated his Deputy, Stephanie Turco Williams, my Acting Special Representative and Head of UNSMIL. The process of appointing a new Special Representative is continuing.

### **Implementation of the three-step initiative and the political process**

12. International efforts to de-escalate the conflict and pave the way for a political solution to the Libyan crisis continued. The United Nations and the Government of Germany organized the Berlin Conference on Libya on 19 January. Other participants included Algeria, China, the Congo, Egypt, France, Italy, the Russian Federation, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, as well as senior officials from the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States. All participants signed the press release, in which they committed themselves to assisting in ending the fighting, refraining from interfering in the conflict and implementing the arms embargo established in Security Council resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#). Participants called for the cessation of all hostilities and the start of ceasefire negotiations and urged the Libyan parties to resume the political process. In the press release, all parties were urged to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law fully, and support for security and economic reform was highlighted.

13. An international follow-up committee to the Berlin Conference, consisting of all countries and international organizations that had participated in the Berlin Conference, was established and tasked with assisting in the operationalization of the conclusions of the conference, under the auspices of the United Nations. On the margins of the conference, Mr. Serraj and General Haftar appointed their respective representatives to the UNSMIL-facilitated 5+5 Joint Military Commission.

14. On 13 February, the Security Council adopted resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#), endorsing the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya and expressing unequivocal support for the intra-Libyan dialogue.

15. On 6 January, UNSMIL facilitated the first meeting of the economic track of the intra-Libyan dialogue in Tunis, with 19 participants. At the second meeting, held in Cairo on 9 and 10 February and involving 28 representatives of Libyan economic institutions and economic experts, participants agreed to a draft terms of reference for a Libyan expert economic commission and the creation of three working groups to refine specific policy recommendations. All of the working groups have since met to develop policy recommendations on issues of immediate priority, including revenue distribution, the banking and private sectors and development and reconstruction. The third meeting of the economic track of the dialogue, scheduled for 15 March, was postponed owing to COVID-19. The working groups continued to meet in Libya, with remote participation from other locations, to develop the policy recommendations.

16. On 3 February, the Joint Military Commission held its first session in Geneva under the auspices of UNSMIL with the aim of reaching a lasting ceasefire and restoring security to civilian areas. The Government of National Accord and Libyan National Army delegations, each composed of five military and security officers, discussed provisional security measures and ceasefire arrangements. At the end of the second round of talks, held on 23 February, UNSMIL prepared a draft ceasefire agreement with provisions for the safe return of civilians to their areas of residence. It was agreed that the two delegations would present the draft agreement to their respective leaderships for further consultations and that the Joint Military Commission would reconvene in March to finalize the terms of reference of the subcommittees in charge of the implementation of the agreement. Because of COVID-19, that meeting was postponed. My acting Special Representative was in direct contact with Mr. Serraj and General Haftar to urge them to respond to the draft agreement.

17. On 26 February, UNSMIL convened a meeting of the Libyan Political Forum, the political track of the intra-Libyan dialogue, in Geneva. A total of 50 members of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State, other political representatives, women leaders and civil society representatives were invited to attend. Shortly before the meeting, the High Council of State reaffirmed its commitment to the political dialogue, but announced that the participation of its delegates would be contingent on progress made on military talks and on the return of displaced persons to their places of origin. Also on 26 February, members of the House of Representatives delegation representing the districts in eastern Libya and who were close to General Haftar withdrew amid disagreement over the selection of representatives of the House of Representatives at the talks.

18. The launch of the three tracks of the dialogue enjoyed significant support in Libya. On 4 March, 130 prominent Libyans, representing the business community, academia, technocrats, civil society and young people, called for a continuation of the three tracks as the only way to protect Libya from the spectre of war and destruction. As at 27 April, the meetings of the three UNSMIL-facilitated tracks had been postponed owing mainly to measures taken in response to COVID-19. UNSMIL, however, continued to engage with all Libyan representatives on the three tracks with a view to resuming the meetings as soon as possible.

#### **International follow-up committee to the Berlin Conference**

19. Under the co-chairmanship of the Government of Germany and UNSMIL, the international follow-up committee to the Berlin Conference held its inaugural meeting in Munich, Germany, on 16 February. Representatives of South Africa and Tunisia joined the committee as participants. As the executive secretariat of the Berlin Process, the committee is an essential tool for progressively turning the principles of the conclusions of the Berlin Conference into tangible action. Its next meeting, scheduled to be held in Rome on 19 March under the joint chairmanship of the Government of Italy and UNSMIL, was postponed owing to the pandemic.

20. On 2 April, UNSMIL chaired the second meeting of the follow-up committee, held on closed-circuit television. Participants reiterated their call upon both parties to cease military operations and commit themselves to a humanitarian pause to focus national efforts on addressing COVID-19. Participants stressed the need to maximize international efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire between the parties to the conflict and encourage the Libyan parties to continue their engagement on the three UNSMIL-facilitated tracks of the dialogue. Participants agreed on the co-chairs of three committee working groups (political, security and economic). The co-chairmanship of the international humanitarian law and human rights working group was opened to Member States outside the Berlin format after the Netherlands

and Switzerland formally expressed interest in co-chairing that group. Following the agreement on the co-chairmanship of the three working groups, the political and economic group each met once, while the security group met four times by videoconference.

### **International and regional engagement**

21. In addition to cooperating in the Berlin Process, the United Nations sustained its engagement with international and regional stakeholders to enlist support for a political solution to the Libyan conflict. My former Special Representative attended the eighth Summit of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya of the African Union, hosted by the President of the Congo in Brazzaville on 30 January. During a trilateral meeting with the Chair of the African Union Commission and the High-Level Committee, held in Addis Ababa on 8 February, I tabled a number of proposals to enhance cooperation and synergies between the United Nations and the African Union on Libya. On 9 February, I participated in the African Union summit, held in Addis Ababa, during which the Assembly of the African Union adopted a decision to support the convening by the African Union of an inter-Libyan reconciliation conference, in line with the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. On 11 and 12 March, my Chef de Cabinet represented me, heading a delegation, which included my Special Representative to the African Union and the Acting Special Representative for Libya, to the inaugural meeting of the Contact Group of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya of the African Union, held in Oyo, the Congo. The Contact Group decided that the reconciliation conference would be organized in Addis Ababa and expressed the determination of the African Union to cooperate closely with the United Nations to advance the implementation of the conclusions of the Berlin Conference.

22. On 31 March, the European Union officially launched a new Common Security and Defence Policy military operation in the Mediterranean, operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, effective 1 April, for an initial period of one year, replacing the European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean, EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, whose mandate ended on 31 March. The new operation's core mandate is to contribute to the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets. Inspections will be carried out of vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that are suspected to be carrying arms or related materiel to and from Libya, in strict accordance with Security Council resolution [2292 \(2016\)](#) and other relevant resolutions. The operation will also monitor illicit oil exports, build the capacity of and train the Coast Guard and Navy of Libya and support the detection and monitoring of human smuggling and trafficking networks through information gathering and patrolling by aerial assets.

23. On 8 April, at the request of the Security Council, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service briefed the Council EUNAVFOR MED operation IRINI.

### **Situation in the western region**

24. During the reporting period, armed clashes, shelling and air strikes continued along the front lines of southern Tripoli. The intensity of the attacks became acute during the political and military talks held in Geneva. Intense fighting also occurred in other cities in western Libya, including Abu Qurayn, Gharyan, Misratah, Qarabulli, Sabratah, Surman and Zuwarah.

25. In Tripoli, the Libyan National Army reinforced its positions in the Abu Salim, Salah al-Din and Ayn Zarah districts with personnel, armoured vehicles and

weaponry, including heavy artillery batteries, ammunition shipments and additional infantry elements. The Libyan National Army also targeted alleged Government of National Accord reinforcements, including from foreign sources. On 18 February, the Libyan National Army targeted the Tripoli port with a barrage of heavy artillery and Grad rockets aimed at destroying a cargo vessel allegedly delivering military equipment to the Government of National Accord. Later that day and on 29 February, uncrewed aerial vehicles operated in support of the Government of National Accord attempted to target Libyan National Army positions south of the Ayn Zarah district, but were shot down by Libyan National Army air defence systems. The concentration of forces by both parties was confirmed in the Zatarnah area and Qarabulli, where clashes had been reported, with the Libyan National Army unsuccessfully attempting to reach the eastern coastal road to disrupt the connection between Misratah and Tripoli. In addition, major Libyan National Army reinforcements reportedly arrived in Aziziyah and the Hayrah area north of Gharyan, which the Libyan National Army lost to the Government of National Accord in June 2019 and has been trying to reclaim.

26. On 22 January, the Libyan National Army further extended its previously declared no-fly zone southwards, towards Gharyan and Tarhunah, and threatened to shoot down any military or civilian aircraft approaching Mitiga Airport, in Tripoli. The airport was targeted with indirect fire in a string of Libyan National Army attacks with indirect fire by forces, with a peak of 50 shells on 28 February. The attacks disrupted the airport's operation and resulted in civilian casualties and damage to nearby civilian homes.

27. Notwithstanding initial positive responses by both sides to the call for a humanitarian truce by both sides, heavy artillery fire continued on 21 March along the front lines in Tripoli. On 24 March, repeated shelling, reportedly by Libyan National Army-affiliated forces, impacted the Ayn Zarah district, including the Ruwaymi prison. UNSMIL condemned the attacks, which had resulted in several injuries, reportedly including inmates and judicial police. On 25 March, an attack by Government of National Accord forces against the airbase in Watiyah was repelled by the Libyan National Army, aided by reinforcements from the strategic western coastal cities of Sabratah and Surman. Government of National Accord forces reportedly gained control over Surman and Sabratah, as well as Ujaylat, Raqdalim, Jumayl, Zaltan and Assah. The developments could endanger the previous fragile stability in towns close to the Tunisian border that have thus far not been affected directly by the conflict.

28. Thus far in 2020, 12 reported attacks have impacted 7 health facilities in Libya, while in 2019, 62 attacks impacted 19 health facilities throughout the country. On 4 March 2020, 10 schools in Ayn Zarah and all schools in Misratah that had been closed for more than a month reopened, allowing 127,000 students to return. However, on 8 March, eight schools near Mitiga Airport were closed owing to the risks posed by shelling. As at 16 March, at least 930 families (approximately 4,650 persons) were reported to have fled to neighbouring areas.

29. Vital services and civilian infrastructure continued to be impacted by the hostilities. On 6 April, an attack on the Great Man-Made River Project in Shuwayrif left some 2 million persons without water for more than a week. Following a mediated solution, the resumption of water distribution was complicated by the hindering of the supply of natural gas to power stations in Misratah and Khums by another armed group in a different area.

**Situation in the eastern region**

30. In the eastern region, there were continued reports of criminal activity and incidents related to explosive remnants of war. On 23 February, the police in Benghazi reportedly arrested a prominent drug dealer. Demonstrations in support of the Libyan National Army and against Turkish intervention were held in several cities, including at the United Nations hub in Benghazi, with one demonstration turning violent.

31. On 18 January, the National Oil Corporation declared a force majeure on oil exports from ports in eastern Libya following demonstrations that day accompanied by calls from the Libyan National Army for ports to be shut down. Oil exports from the eastern ports of Burayqah, Ra's Lanuf, Haraqah Zuwaytinah and Sidr were halted.

**Situation in the southern region**

32. The military operations of the Libyan National Army in western Libya continued to exacerbate the security vacuum in the southern region, with criminality and suspected terrorist-related activity continuing. In Sabha, Tebu-affiliated armed elements established checkpoints and imposed illegal taxation on the movement of people and goods. On 30 January, one civilian was reportedly killed in clashes between two unidentified armed groups on Mahdiah Road. Other reported criminal incidents included assassinations, carjacking, abductions and smuggling.

33. In a move coordinated between the Libyan National Army and local tribal actors, oil fields in the south-western portion of Libya were shut down. On 20 January, the National Oil Corporation extended the force majeure to all onshore ports following instructions from the Libyan National Army to shut down production at oil fields in Shararah, Hamada and Fil.

**Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Libya**

34. On 28 January, suspected members of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) reportedly attacked a checkpoint west of the southern city of Murzuq, killing one security element. While there was limited ISIL activity during the reporting period, observers assessed that ISIL and other terrorist groups may seek to take advantage of the general lack of security in southern Libya in order to expand their activities.

**Economic situation**

35. The sustainability of the economic situation in Libya is becoming increasingly tenuous, and the situation will be further exacerbated by COVID-19. Since the blockage of oil exports imposed by the Libyan National Army on 17 January, the primary export of Libya was reduced from 1.2 million to 72,000 barrels per day, resulting in accumulated losses amounting to more than \$4 billion. To offset the diminished revenues, the Central Bank of Libya and the Government of National Accord attempted to impose long-overdue austerity measures, including cuts to the public service payroll and a reduction in fuel subsidies. The blockage of oil exports also resulted in the shutdown of the country's domestic oil refinery capacity, thereby requiring the National Oil Corporation to purchase refined petroleum products. Although the Corporation had been providing sufficient refined fuel for commercial purposes, on 13 March, authorities in eastern Libya imported fuel from the United Arab Emirates to Benghazi, thus undermining the authority of the Corporation and marking the first time that fuel was imported outside normal Corporation channels.

36. The blockage of oil exports and the lack of agreement on a national budget caused delays in salary payments and a reduction in access to foreign exchange, leading to shortages and higher prices for goods. The branch of the Central Bank of Libya in Bayda' stated on 9 March that it was unable to finance the parallel

government beyond salaries, evidence of the growing reluctance of Libyan commercial banks to continue to finance questionable government bonds issued by the parallel Ministry of Finance in eastern Libya. If left unaddressed, the prices of staple goods are likely to increase further, and tensions within the banking sector could lead to its collapse.

37. UNSMIL, in coordination with international financial institutions, continued its efforts to address economic issues, including the worsening banking crisis. The UNSMIL-facilitated economic dialogue between the two branches of the Central Bank of Libya alleviated some stress on the banking sector, but workarounds are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. A lack of cooperation on the part of the Libyan authorities in facilitating the international audit review of the structure of the Central Bank also narrowed opportunities for the unification of that bank. Working groups, established during a second meeting of the economic track in Cairo in February, are working to find solutions, including by addressing deficiencies in development spending and revenue allocation.

38. Notwithstanding COVID-19, UNSMIL continues to address urgent economic issues, including with regard to resuming foreign exchange for basic commodities, facilitating public salary payments, ensuring adequate fuel supply, urging the disbursement of social benefits in exchange for a reduction in fuel subsidies and taking measures to support small and medium-sized businesses.

### **III. Other activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya**

#### **A. Electoral support**

39. UNSMIL, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to support the High National Elections Commission and the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections by upgrading voter registration systems. The new Commission compound was completed and is fully operational. The operations of the Commission and the Committee continued to be hampered by budget shortages and the prevailing security situation in Tripoli.

40. Following a dispute resolution process that lasted eight months, on 14 January, the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections announced the final results of the Municipal Council elections in Sabha, which had been held on 27 April 2019. That process was followed by the election of the new Mayor and the swearing-in ceremony of the new Council by the Minister of Local Governance in Tripoli on 23 January.

41. On 4 March, the Government of National Accord agreed to approve an amendment of the regulation governing municipal elections (decision No. 18/2019), which will allow the Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections to resume the holding of municipal elections that had been on hold since July 2019. While the amendment has not yet been published in the Official Gazette, the Government signed the respective decree on 18 March (decision No. 7/2020). A new series of elections is tentatively planned for after the holy month of Ramadan, which ends in May 2020, although it is subject to developments related to COVID-19.

#### **B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law**

42. In response to the appeal by UNSMIL and other United Nations entities to release persons arbitrarily detained and to consider releasing pretrial prisoners in the

context of COVID-19, between March and April, the authorities reportedly released an estimated 1,900 prisoners and detainees. UNSMIL is providing technical guidance to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Supreme Judicial Council with regard to alternatives to detention to support the release of 4,200 detainees who have been awaiting trial for years.

43. On 27 January, UNSMIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a joint report on the air strike on the Tajura' detention centre on 2 July 2019, which resulted in the death of at least 53 migrants and refugees. In the report, accountability for violations of international law, as well as urgent action to prevent a repeat of a such an incident, were called for. On 13 March, the Group of African States, with the support of Libya, tabled a resolution at the Human Rights Council to establish a fact-finding mission on the human rights situation in Libya to document alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law by all parties in Libya since 2016. Owing to the pandemic, however, the session was suspended and voting on the resolution was postponed to a later session.

#### **Unlawful deprivation of liberty, detention and torture**

44. Some 8,800 individuals, of whom an estimated 60 per cent were in pretrial detention, were held in 28 official prisons nominally under the Ministry of Justice. In total, 278 women, including 184 foreign nationals, and 109 children were held in prisons and/or in judicial police custody. Thousands of others were held in facilities nominally under the control of the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Defence, as well as in facilities directly operated by armed groups.

45. UNSMIL and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to receive reports of arbitrary or unlawful detention, torture, enforced disappearances, overcrowding, a lack of sanitation and medical neglect, among others, in relation to detention facilities under the control of the Ministry of the Interior. During the reporting period, courts in Libya heard civil and personal status cases only. Criminal cases were postponed because members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor were unwilling or unable to investigate them owing to their fear of retaliation from armed groups. A declaration of emergency was issued on 14 March regarding COVID-19, and on 15 March, the Supreme Judicial Council issued a decision to postpone the proceedings of civil or criminal court cases until the end of May, with a possibility of further delay. The decision introduces limitations on attendance into court proceedings, including that of defendants in criminal cases. If implemented, the provisions would violate existing Libyan law.

46. UNSMIL documented an increase in abductions and enforced disappearances carried out by armed groups across Libya, including of professionals and civil society activists. The Mission continued to receive reports of gross human rights abuses, including killings and the destruction of private property by the armed group 9th Brigade (Kaniyat) in Tarhunah. UNSMIL also received credible reports of serious human rights violations in Sirte. Many families were reportedly forced to flee owing to looting and their being perceived as supportive of the Government of National Accord. On 6 February, UNSMIL issued a statement condemning the destruction of a Sufi shrine and the reported arbitrary arrest of Sufis in Sirte, calling upon the authorities in control of Sirte to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

47. UNSMIL received credible reports of hundreds of pretrial detainees and convicted persons being released from prisons in several towns, having been promised freedom following the end of the conflict in return for agreeing to fight against the Libyan National Army or the Government of National Accord. In addition, all 60 pretrial detainees at the prison in Sirte, all 60 pretrial detainees were released

after the Libyan National Army took over Sirte, reportedly owing to fear of indiscriminate shelling or a direct attack on the prison. UNSMIL noted with grave concern the break at Surman Prison of 14 April and the release of 401 prisoners without adequate legal proceedings or vetting shortly after the forces of the Government of National Accord recaptured the town.

48. From 14 to 16 January, together with the Libyan judicial police and the Legal Affairs Department of the Ministry of Justice in Tunis, UNSMIL and UNDP jointly organized workshops on prison reform aimed at improving services at the technical and operational levels by creating model prisons. A total of 19 participants, including 2 women, took part in the workshops.

### **Groups in vulnerable situations**

#### *Migrants and refugees*

49. More than 3,115 refugees and migrants were registered as rescued and/or intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coast Guard. Many were returned to detention in Libya. UNSMIL received credible reports of smuggling of and trafficking in asylum seekers and refugees at the Abu Isa and the Nasir detention centres in Zawiyah. More than 1,400 migrants and refugees are currently held in detention centres under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, a decrease from the more than 5,000 held in January 2019.

#### *Journalists and peace activists*

50. On 20 January, a Libyan journalist who had reportedly been abducted in Tripoli by the Special Deterrence Force on 15 January for allegedly sharing information with the Libyan National Army was released. Reportedly, the journalist had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. On 16 January, Libyan National Army forces set fire to the building housing the Sirte offices of the Information and Culture Authority and two radio stations.

#### *Women and girls*

51. Women and girls detained in prisons and detention centres continued to be exposed to sexual violence. During the reporting period, UNSMIL documented eight cases of women and girls who had been raped by traffickers and Libyan security personnel during captivity or arbitrary detention. Migrant and refugee women who had not been detained reported being subjected to sexual harassment by armed men in Tripoli.

52. Six months after the abduction and disappearance of a member of the House of Representatives, Siham Sergewa, in a statement and a Security Council briefing, on 17 and 30 January, respectively, UNSMIL reiterated its call upon the authorities in eastern Libya to do more to clarify the lawmaker's fate and whereabouts, in line with their international human rights law obligations. UNSMIL also welcomed the joint statement issued by several Member States in January echoing the same calls.

53. On the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March, UNSMIL and its partners held a panel discussion, in coordination with the Legal Aid Coalition for Conflict-related Cases, to discuss challenges to protecting human rights defenders in Tripoli with the aim of developing a baseline protection strategy. UNSMIL and United Nations agencies also issued a joint statement marking the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), reiterating that Libyan women need to be at the forefront of peace efforts in the country.

### **Reconciliation and transitional justice**

54. Under the Mission's national reconciliation project, implemented with UNDP, some 145 persons, 30 per cent of whom were women registered as members of the project's network of mediators. Through the project, 70 members, including 21 women, will enhance their skills in conflict analysis, conflict resolution and mediation by participating in a two-week training course, the first week of which was completed in Tunis on 5 March.

55. United Nations agencies continued to provide technical expertise on reconciliation and mediation. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) facilitated 13 meetings with the Libyan Women Network for Peacebuilding and supported coordination efforts among women activists, civil society organizations, academics and lawyers. As a result, prior to the Libyan Political Forum, held in February, the Network issued a statement reinforcing the important role played by women in the Forum.

### **Human rights due diligence policy**

56. The United Nations system in Libya continued its efforts to implement the human rights due diligence policy, including by providing support to non-United Nations security forces (see [A/67/775-S/2013/110](#), annex), with a view to mitigating the identified risks of grave violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law.

## **C. Security sector**

### **Support for Libyan plans for interim security arrangements and the unification of security forces**

57. UNSMIL and UNDP continued to build the capacity of staff of both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice through the Policing and Security Joint Programme, with special attention given to promoting a gender-sensitive approach in the security sector. The Joint Programme organized a workshop, held from 27 to 30 January, on the model police station, at which job descriptions and structure, as well as human rights and gender-sensitive approaches, were discussed. About one third of the participants were female police officers.

### **Arms and ammunition management**

58. UNSMIL continued to assist Libyan authorities and communities in addressing the increasing threat of explosive hazards and the proliferation of weapons and ammunition through the technical assistance of the Mine Action Service. In Benghazi, teams from the Service conducted clearance activities in residential areas and at 11 sites. An estimated 9,455 residents benefited from the removal of more than 500 items of unexploded ordnance and small arms ammunition. Non-technical surveys conducted in Sabri and Laythi benefited some 23,900 persons through the mapping of explosive hazards to inform future activities. In Tripoli, two new teams from the Service removed unexploded ordnance from the Janzur, Abu Salim and Tariq al-Matar areas. The Service also provided training in capacity development to young people and women to help to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

### **Advancing a possible ceasefire**

59. During two rounds of meetings in the context of the Joint Military Commission, held from 3 to 8 and 18 to 23 February, respectively, delegations from the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army made progress towards a ceasefire

agreement. At the end of the second round, UNSMIL prepared a draft ceasefire agreement on the basis of the nine points that the parties had agreed on. The points included the need to preserve the sovereignty of Libya and to protect its borders; ending foreign interference; the need to expel foreign fighters; the importance of countering United Nations-designated terror organizations that would be exempt from any ceasefire; and the need to continue to take confidence-building measures, such as the exchange of mortal remains and prisoners.

60. Five subcommittees were envisaged by the Joint Military Commission to oversee the implementation of a ceasefire agreement, namely, on a ceasefire and monitoring, the mapping and dismantling of armed groups, the cantonment of weapons, the repatriation of foreign fighters and interim security arrangements. Both parties agreed that the next meeting of the Commission should develop the terms of reference for the subcommittees in order to outline the mechanisms necessary for their implementation.

#### **D. Empowerment of women and young people**

61. UNSMIL sought to mainstream gender into and ensure the meaningful participation of women and young people throughout the three-track dialogues. After only 1 woman had been selected to attend the Libyan Political Forum, 10 additional seats were made available for women therein. In partnership with UN-Women, they were provided with technical support that was focused on the gender perspective in political dialogue.

62. In Sabha, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched a joint pilot project on 26 January, in which 57 women were provided with skills to strengthen leadership and livelihood. From 16 January to 16 March, UNFPA undertook a number of initiatives, including the provision of psychosocial support and the raising of the awareness of vulnerable women and girls in Tripoli and Sabha of gender-based violence, as well as holding consultations with young female entrepreneurs in Sirte.

#### **E. Coordination of international assistance**

63. The humanitarian response in Libya continued to be coordinated at the field level by the area coordination groups covering the eastern, southern and western regions of the country, as well as through sectors and the Inter-Sector Coordination Group, under the leadership of the humanitarian country team and the Humanitarian Coordinator and supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

64. Through the 2020 Libya Humanitarian Response Plan, sector coordination will be strengthened through an emphasis on the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and supporting the co-leadership of sectors by international NGOs as well as the increased participation of local actors.

#### **F. Humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance**

65. As at 27 April, there were 61 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including two deaths, in Libya. The United Nations system, chiefly the World Health Organization (WHO), engaged closely with health authorities in Tripoli and in western and eastern Libya. Technical support was extended to the Ministry of Health, the National Centre for Disease Control and others, focusing on prevention, preparedness and response

measures, including through increasing the COVID-19 testing capacity and providing adequate training to health workers. United Nations country team members, together with national and international NGO partners, provided technical support to enhance national surveillance, early warning systems and alert and response networks; upgrade laboratory capacity; improve public information; and establish isolation wards in several hospitals.

66. The WHO assessment of the detection and response capacities of Libya for COVID-19 revealed several weaknesses. The health information system functioned poorly, and only a limited number of health-care facilities were reporting the disease to the Early Warning and Response Network. Contact tracing capacity was assessed as extremely weak. Although authorities could perform basic influenza tests on clinical specimens, there was no adequate capacity to test for COVID-19. In many hospitals, isolation units were either non-existent or inadequate.

67. The National Centre for Disease Control continued to monitor the COVID-19 situation closely and took steps to prevent and control the possible importation of the virus from other countries. Screening points were set up to monitor arrivals at points of entry and isolate suspected cases. WHO, in collaboration with the health authorities and health partners, prioritized six technical areas for urgent support: enhancing surveillance, strengthening rapid response teams, supporting health control offices at points of entry, improving laboratory capacity, increasing health information and communication and supporting the establishment of isolation wards in selected hospitals and quarantine areas at points of entry.

68. Nearly 345,000 civilians remain in front-line areas, with an additional 749,000 persons estimated to be residing in areas affected by clashes. Internally displaced families that remain close to areas of conflict, as well as host communities providing them with shelter and migrants and refugees in urban communities or detention centres, remain at significant risk.

69. From 1 January to 25 March, UNSMIL documented at least 131 civilian casualties (64 deaths and 67 injuries). The victims included 82 men (43 deaths and 39 injuries), 22 women (9 deaths and 13 injuries), 19 boys (7 deaths and 12 injuries) and 8 girls (5 deaths and 3 injuries). During the first three months of 2020, ground fighting was the leading cause of civilian casualties (73 per cent of the total). UNSMIL documented 78 civilian casualties (32 deaths and 46 injuries) resulting from the use of heavy weapons and 18 civilian casualties (12 deaths and 6 injuries) resulting from the use of small arms fire. Targeted killings were the second leading recorded cause of civilian casualties, with 20 victims (14 deaths and 6 injuries), representing 15 per cent of total civilian casualties. Air strikes were the third leading cause thereof, with 9 victims (6 deaths and 3 injuries), followed by improvised explosive devices, with 6 injuries.

70. In response to the fighting in Tripoli and near Sirte and Abu Qurayn, more than 24,000 internally displaced persons were provided with humanitarian assistance during the reporting period. There are currently more than 654,000 migrants and refugees in Libya, according to the International Organization for Migration.

71. United Nations agencies and partners continued to provide assistance to migrants and refugees, reaching more than 10,000 since January. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to support the evacuation or resettlement of refugees from Libya. Since January, the Office supported the evacuation or resettlement of 289 refugees from Libya. As a result of the closure of borders in Libya and other countries owing to COVID-19, voluntary humanitarian return of migrants and the evacuation and resettlement of refugees were suspended temporarily as at 18 March. Similarly, ongoing humanitarian activities were affected by restrictions on movement owing to COVID-19, in addition to

existing challenges to access owing to insecurity and bureaucratic requirements. The United Nations will continue to engage with all relevant counterparts regarding possible exemptions to allow critical humanitarian operations to continue.

72. Since 16 January, the International Organization for Migration has facilitated the voluntary humanitarian return of 1,466 vulnerable migrants (275 women and 1,191 men) from 19 countries of origin, surpassing the 50,000 mark in terms of the overall number of vulnerable migrants assisted since the start of the programme.

73. From 16 January to 16 March, UNFPA medical teams provided life-saving maternal and newborn health services in Tripoli to 1,242 women and 474 children; advice to 219 men; life-saving medications to several hospitals for about 640 women; and, with other United Nations agencies, held eight consensus-building workshops on developing an action plan for the national strategy on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.

74. WFP reached nearly 108,000 persons in need in Libya. The WFP-supported emergency telecommunications sector launched a feedback mechanism on 16 February, providing affected populations with free access to information on humanitarian assistance programmes.

#### **IV. Deployment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and security arrangements**

75. The United Nations maintained a continuous international civilian staff presence in Tripoli on a rotational basis of generally between 80 and 90 persons, reviewed and adjusted regularly on the basis of the security situation and growing humanitarian requirements. The remainder of the international staff worked from the Mission's Tunis office. National staff living in areas affected by the conflict worked from home or were advised to move to safer areas. All international staff in Tripoli continued to be accommodated at the compound in Oea, which was protected by the United Nations Guard Unit. UNSMIL maintained a small international staff presence at the Benghazi hub. Ground movements in Tripoli and Benghazi were conducted following case-by-case assessments.

76. The security situation in the wider Tripoli area resulting from the armed conflict, including the Libyan National Army-imposed no-fly zone and increased Army attacks on Mitiga Airport, required United Nations flights to use Misratah Airport, approximately 220 km from the United Nations compound in Oea.

77. With the spread of COVID-19, Libya and Tunisia imposed restrictions on movement in March as part of their preventive measures. The United Nations crisis management team in Libya met regularly since 28 February, taking a range of measures aimed at protecting staff based in the two countries from contracting and potentially spreading the disease. United Nations staff in Tunisia were also guided by the decisions taken by the Resident Coordinator for that country. The rotation of the military personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit, initially scheduled for March, was put on hold until conditions allow for it to be conducted safely.

#### **V. Observations and recommendations**

78. I reiterate my call of 23 March for an immediate global ceasefire and urge the warring parties in Libya to lay down their weapons without delay in support of the greater battle against COVID-19. A ceasefire would allow humanitarian actors to reach the populations most vulnerable to the pandemic. Given the already dire

humanitarian situation in Libya and the possible impact of COVID-19, I call upon the parties to combine efforts to address the threat and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid throughout the country. Continuing violence will continue to obstruct preventive efforts by the civilian authorities and the population to address the global threat of COVID-19.

79. I am disappointed that the positive response by the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army to my call for a humanitarian pause in the context of the pandemic has not translated thus far into a ceasefire. However, I am encouraged by the constructive discussions held by the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, as well as the development of a draft ceasefire agreement. I reiterate my call upon the respective leaderships to accept the draft ceasefire agreement and move forward with its implementation. I am deeply concerned that a further escalation of violence risks reversing the fragile progress that has been achieved and further complicating a peaceful resolution of Libya's protracted conflict. In due course, I intend to report to the Security Council on the conditions necessary for an effective ceasefire monitoring mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations. I also intend to make detailed recommendations to the Council on possible ceasefire arrangements when a ceasefire is agreed by the Libyan parties, in accordance with resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#).

80. The international community has a vital role to play in ensuring that progress achieved on the tracks of the intra-Libyan dialogue is sustained. The momentum generated by the adoption of resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#), the endorsement of the conclusions of the Berlin Conference and the Council's elements for the press, released on 26 March, should not be squandered. I thank the participants in the Berlin Conference for agreeing to co-chair, with UNSMIL, the upcoming meetings of the international follow-up committee. In the face of continuing hostilities in Libya, I remind Member States of the commitments made at the Berlin Conference and urge them to spare no effort and use all of their influence to help to secure a ceasefire and an environment conducive to political talks, in line with resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#). Cohesive and strong support for the sustained engagement of the United Nations with the parties and key constituencies on outstanding issues is vital to pave the way for a comprehensive political solution to the conflict in Libya.

81. I welcome the important efforts of the African Union to support the resolution of the Libyan conflict, including the decisions taken during the Assembly of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa on 9 and 10 February. I reiterate the United Nations commitment to working with the African Union to enhance cooperation and synergies between the two organizations on Libya, including through supporting the work of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya of the African Union, as well as the organization of the African Union-led inter-Libyan reconciliation conference.

82. I remain deeply concerned by the persistent violations of the arms embargo. To prevent the continued escalation of violence and support efforts to end the conflict and its consequences for Libyans, it is essential that there be strict adherence to the embargo, in accordance with Council resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#). I also remind Member States of their obligation to not sell or supply arms to the Libyan parties and urge them to implement all measures related to the embargo, in accordance with resolutions [2473 \(2019\)](#), [2509 \(2020\)](#) and [2510 \(2020\)](#).

83. I strongly condemn the indiscriminate shelling and air strikes affecting civilians and residential areas, as well as the repeated targeting of medical personnel and facilities. I remind all parties of the strict prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under international humanitarian law and appeal to all of them to refrain from conducting aerial bombardment or shelling of residential neighbourhoods and other civilian areas. I also recall the obligation of all parties to ensure respect for and the protection

of medical personnel and hospitals and other medical facilities. I stress that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, violate international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

84. Armed groups throughout Libya hold thousands of men, women and children in prolonged arbitrary and unlawful detention and subject them to torture and other human rights abuses. I call for those detained arbitrarily or otherwise unlawfully deprived of their liberty to be released immediately and unconditionally and for all those lawfully deprived of their liberty to be transferred to official detention facilities and treated in accordance with applicable international laws and standards. The decision on 15 March by the Supreme Judicial Council of Libya to postpone all cases until the end of May is a matter of concern because it extends the detention of thousands of persons for another 11 weeks, pending trial.

85. The lack of accountability for serious crimes has had a clear impact on peace and stability in Libya. I reiterate the need for credible investigations into alleged systematic violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in the country to hold accountable the perpetrators of those violations and to provide justice and remedies to victims and survivors.

86. The blockage of the export of oil imposed by the Libyan National Army is negatively affecting the country's already weakened economic and financial situation. The recent efforts by the parallel unrecognized authorities in eastern Libya to import fuel violate resolution [2509 \(2020\)](#) with regard to the integrity and unity of the National Oil Corporation.

87. I encourage all Libyan actors to implement resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). Women and young people have a critical role to play in dialogue and peacebuilding efforts, and I welcome the continued efforts towards ensuring their inclusion in the intra-Libyan dialogue process.

88. The situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, including those being held in detention centres, remains an issue of grave concern. Refugees and migrants in Libya should be released and provided with safe shelter until those with asylum claims can have their claims processed or those who are willing to be repatriated can be provided with repatriation assistance. Libya is not considered to be a safe port of disembarkation for refugees and migrants, and I urge Member States to revisit policies that support the return of refugees and migrants to that country.

89. I urge Member States to support the Libya Humanitarian Response Plan to enable humanitarian partners to respond to the immediate and growing needs of persons affected by the conflict and to address in particular the possible spread of COVID-19 in Libya.

90. I express my gratitude to my former Special Representative for Libya for his accomplishments and his tireless efforts to return peace and stability to Libya. I thank the staff of the United Nations system in Libya for its hard work in support of peace and security in the country and reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for providing the personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit. I also thank the Government of Tunisia for supporting UNSMIL staff and providing assistance to the office in Tunis.