

Media Monitoring Report

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1. Violence and protest as country holds election

Election Highlights

First free election in 60 years
2.8 million registered voters from around 3-3.5 million eligible (45% women)

2,639 individual candidates (competing for 120 seats in 69 constituencies)

374 party lists from more than 100 political entities (competing for 80 party seats in 20 constituencies)

559 women registered for party seats (44%)

88 women registered for individual seats (3%)

Source: The UN and the Libyan Electoral High Commission (HNEC)

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“Libyans turn out big, then celebrate historic election” By Jomana Karadsheh and Moni Basu, CNN, Sun July 8, 2012

- Overall the election was met with excitement. People waited patiently in long lines in cities and towns across Libya. Voters proudly waved their right index finger smudged in purple indelible ink as proof of their participation. Saturday night, there was celebration as drivers honked their horns around the capital of Tripoli as they and other Libyans rejoiced. The city's main square, now known as Martyr's Square for all those who fell in last year's revolution, became the central hub for the celebrations, streets packed with cars.
- Despite celebrations and preparedness (more than 13,000 soldiers were on the streets for Election Day), violence occurred. Two polling centers were set ablaze in the eastern city of Benghazi, said Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, head of the EU election assessment mission. Lambsdorff said it is too early to tell whether the election had been compromised by the violence: "Again, we are talking about single isolated incidents." Seven other polling stations in and around Benghazi were also closed due to pro-federalist threats against voters. In two other cities, polls did not open until 2 p.m. (six hours before they were set to close). In the eastern city of Ajdabiya, five polling centers opened but four others on the outskirts did not. Protesters earlier this week attacked a warehouse and torched ballots and other election materials.
- On Friday, anti-aircraft fire hit a Libyan air force helicopter transporting ballot boxes from the eastern city of Benghazi to nearby areas, the Interior Ministry said. One person was killed. It is unclear who was behind the attack.
- The eastern region felt largely neglected and marginalized. Benghazi emerged as the cradle of the Libyan uprising but many of its residents now feel their revolution has been usurped by the National Transitional Council based in Tripoli. Mohammed al-Sayeh, a member of the National Transitional Council, dismissed the disruptions as "minor" and said there was no lack of trust between east and west.

“Libya election: Count under way after historic vote.” By African Outlook Sunday, 08 July 2012

- Gunmen disrupted voting in several locations in eastern Libya. One person was killed in a shooting near a polling station in Ajdabiya.
- Some former rebels targeting the oil industry, shutting down several oil terminals, including those at Brega, Ras Lanuf and Sidra, and a significant part of Libya's oil exporting capacity has been disrupted.
- NTC has said the new parliament will no longer be responsible for naming the panel that will draft Libya's new constitution.

“Party time for unsure voters.” By Tarik Kafala BBC News, Tripoli, July 7, 2012

- The election has been tainted by violence and protests. An election worker was shot in Benghazi and in Ajdabiya a building housing election materials was set alight. Some polling stations have not opened and reports said at least one was sacked. About two-thirds of the way through Election Day, the electoral commission reported that just over 100 out of 1,500 polling stations had not opened for business on time. Those that opened late opened voting late into the night.
- Most of the feeling against the election and the attacks has been in eastern Libya where the revolution began. There, many feel marginalized and fear being under-represented in the national assembly. In Dirna a poster that has been widely circulated on social media appeared threatening attacks. It read: "Elections = bombings."

Seat Distribution

The 200 seats are allocated by population, reserving 100 for the western Tripolitania, 60 for Cyrenaica in the east, and 40 for the south.

“Libya to Hold Historic Free Election, First in 60 Years: Hardcore Islamists are expected to seal a victory following a similar trend in Egypt and Tunisia” By Vasudevan Sridharan July 7, 2012

- On the eve of the election incidents of violence were reported across the country especially in eastern Libya. The violence has reportedly been triggered by fears among people in the east that they may not be treated well by the elected parties since Gaddafi controlled the region for decades.
- Reports also suggest in some parts electoral workers have been attacked by gunmen while ballot papers were also set on fire in a few other regions.
- Hundreds of protesters have also gathered in the eastern city of Benghazi threatening to boycott the elections. Activists have also closed terminals affecting oil exports to Africa.

2. Amnesty International Report

- Amnesty International reports that the government is failings and delaying

addressing militia abuses. Militias have accumulated their own caches of weapons and amalgamated control over entire neighbourhoods and areas. These militias refuse to disarm or join the army or police, and do not answer to the central authorities. Officials cite security concerns and the widespread availability of weapons to justify their approach of negotiating with the militias rather than opposing them, and to explain delays. The Deputy Minister of Interior Omar al-Khadrawi, told Amnesty International that the Ministry of Interior had dismantled four “lawless” armed militias in Tripoli by early June 2012. Amnesty reports this is not a significant number. Currently there are no known records of members of militias being prosecuted for human rights abuses.

- On June 7 The Minister of Justice, Ali Ashour, said that approximately 3,000 detainees were being held in prisons under the control of the Directorate of the Judicial Police. Ashour is unable to estimate the number of detainees and detention facilities outside of government control. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) estimated it is 4,000 people being held outside of government control. According to the Minister of Justice the transitional government has made some progress in bringing prisons under the oversight of relevant ministries. By early June 2012, 33 prisons had been transferred to the Directorate of the Judicial Police. The Local Supreme Security Committees, also oversee a number of detention facilities.
- Detainees have been victims of torture, specifically those held by victims or relatives of victims of human rights violations under al-Gaddafi forces or when held in cities where they allegedly committed the violations. This practice is common increases the risk of torture, and further undermines their right to fair trial.
- The most commonly reported methods of torture include suspension in contorted positions and prolonged beatings with various objects, including metal bars and chains, electric cables, wooden sticks, plastic hoses, water pipes (known locally as Tube PPR) and rifle butts. Some detainees also said they were given electric shocks, burned with cigarettes and had hot metal applied to their flesh. At least 20 people have died in custody after they were tortured or shot in detention.
- Sporadic clashes between armed militias using weapons such as machine-gun and mortars in residential areas have led to deaths and injuries of bystanders and others not involved in fighting. These clashes are caused by both long-standing animosities and power struggles over strategic routes or infrastructure. These clashes cause or exacerbate divisions along regional, tribal and ethnic lines. Armed clashes between Arab and black Tabu communities in the south of Libya in February and March 2012 resulted in dozens of deaths, including bystanders. The clashes regular lead to arbitrary detention and torture by both sides.
- Amnesty states the authorities have also failed to solve the situation of entire communities displaced during the conflict and unable to return to their homes, which were looted and burned by armed militias. Entire towns and villages were deliberately destroyed by the militias, which accused the displaced communities of supporting the former government and of committing crimes on its behalf. Misratah militias drove out the entire population of the city of Tawargha, estimated at 30,000. The IDPs are scattered across Libya, including in camps in Tripoli and Benghazi.

- The Mashashiya community from the areas of Awaniya, Zawiyat al-Bajoul and Omer in the Nafousa Mountain were destroyed by Zintan militias. In June armed assaults occurred on Sgeiga and Mazda, home to Mashashiyas. According to government estimates 105 deaths, according to government estimates.
- IDPs continue to face arbitrary arrest and other reprisals. Foreign nationals, particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa, remain at risk of abuse. The large-scale arrest on suspicion of being “foreign mercenaries” for Colonel al-Gaddafi have stopped, they are still being arrested from their homes or seized at checkpoints or from streets by armed militias. They are accused entering or remaining in the country “illegally”. They are held without any possibility to challenge the legality of their detention.
- Public criticism of the thuwwar (revolutionaries), widely hailed as heroes, is rare. Even officials, activists, journalists, lawyers and victims of human rights violations who privately acknowledge the prevailing lawlessness and abuses committed by the thuwwar do not raise their concerns in public because they fear reprisals. Those who speak out are dubbed the “fifth column”, an al-Gaddafi loyalists, and faced threats and intimidation. Prosecutors and criminal investigators willing to address violations by thuwwar lack the capacity to enforce summons or arrest orders. Several have faced intimidation and even violent attacks at the hands of armed militias. The NTC’s promised to investigate all human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law brought to its attention, however they have passed legislation granting immunity from prosecution to thuwwar for military, security and civilian acts committed with the “purpose of rendering successful or protecting the 17 February Revolution”. This law also gives legal weight to interrogation reports and other information collected by thuwwar, legitimizing their actions of seizing, detaining and interrogating detainees outside the framework of the law and disregarding evidence of the widespread pattern of torture or other ill-treatment during interrogations.

3. Detentions

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Al-Jazeera TV, Doha, in Arabic, July 14, 2012

- Sulayman al-Furtiyah of the NTC says detention centers are being judged based on European standards although Libya is in a transitional period. Prisoners remain in detention for a long time because there is no judicial system in place.

“Pro-Gaddafi Supporters In Libya Are Being Tortured, Says United Nations” Elite Daily, July 16, 2012.

- The United Nations released a report stating militia groups in Libya were holding up to 8,000 pro-Gaddafi supporters. Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay says detainees are being held in appalling conditions and are being abused and tortured.
- Christopher Stokes, General Director of MSF, reinforced the UN's assertions saying: 'Patients were brought to us in the middle of interrogation for medical care, in order to make them fit for more interrogation.' MSF has pulled out of Misrata.
- The UN's Mrs Pillay said the problem was down to militias working outside of government control. She added: 'the lack of oversight by the central authorities creates an environment conducive to torture and ill treatment. My staff has received alarming reports that this is happening in places of detention that they have visited.'
- Rights groups continue to raise concerns about torture being used against people, many of them sub-Saharan Africans, suspected of having fought for Muammar Gaddafi's forces during the civil war.

"Saif al-Islam will not get fair trial in Libya, says lawyer" BBC World, 6 July, 2012

- Australian national Melinda Taylor, a member of Saif al-Islam's defence, was accused of passing Saif al-Islam coded documents allegedly written by his former right-hand man. She and her interpreter Helen Assaf are detained by militia in Zintan on suspicion of endangering national security.
- The ICC told Libya it will investigate the claims of wrongdoing
- Taylor says it will be impossible for Saif al-Islam's to be tried in an "independent and impartial manner" in Libya.

"Lybia: military prosecutors discuss detention issues and international humanitarian law" By ICRC, dated July 10, 2012

- Between January and May this year, the ICRC visited over 9,200 people held in 66 different places of detention.
- ICRC held a workshop in Benghazi on 10 and 11 July for 20 military prosecutors from the east of the country.

"Human rights worse after Gaddafi" By Inter Press Service By Mel Frykberg, dated July 14, 2012

- Nasser al-Hawary, researcher with the Libyan Observatory for Human Rights, says at least 20 people have been beaten to death in militia custody since the revolution; the real figure is probably far higher.
- Despite the interim National Transitional Council's (NTC) pledge to bring the more than 6,000 detainees currently in detention to trial or to release them, only some have been freed while the atrocities committed by pro-revolutionary rebels have been overlooked.

4. Clashes

Privately-owned media

“Rights group: Rein in Libyan militias” By Moni Basu and Jomana Karadsheh, CNN, dated 5 July 2012

- Alaaldin, a senior analyst at the Next Century Foundation, described chaos over the past week: the seizure of Tripoli's airport, attacks on a U.S. diplomatic office in Benghazi, an attack on a British convoy, and violent tribal clashes in the south. “The current security environment, dominated by militias, does not constitute a proper security framework: It lacks coordination and creates gaps that allow for conflict between rival groups, as well as criminal activities like smuggling -- and terrorism, which appears to be a new factor in the east.”

“Human rights worse after Gaddafi” Inter Press Service, Mel Frykberg, dated 14 July 2012

- Reports of abductions, random killings, torture and robbery continue as militia men take the law into their hands.
- Armed militias continue to control the streets enforcing their law and order.
- Former rebel fighter Suheil al Lagi says gunfire can be heard at night regularly in Tripoli, and sometimes in the day. Suheil al Lagi explains all young men have guns and have learned to handle political differences and squabbles with their guns. The rate of high unemployment and financial hardship has increased this and robberies.
- In the provinces, militiamen dressed in military attire are extorting people in set up checkpoints, specifically individuals who are foreign or black. Scams have included forcing individuals to take HIV tests.

5. Use of Landmines and other remnants of war

Privately-owned media

“MAG played a vital role in guaranteeing safe and secure voting in Zintan when Libya’s first post-Gaddafi parliamentary elections took place on July 7th.”

- Mines Advisory Group removed remnants of war from the grounds of a school being used for polling station.

“Libya: Good Start on Landmine Destruction Intensification of Mine Demolitions Needed” Human Rights Watch

- Steve Goose, arms director at Human Rights Watch, announced that Libya’s 2011 pledge to destroy the hundreds of thousands of landmines in their possession is progressing.

- Approximately 20,000 mines weighing two tons have been destroyed since mid-February, representing a small fraction of all mines inherited from the Gaddafi government.

6. The role of women during the elections

Privately-owned media

“Libyans turn out big, then celebrate historic election” By Jomana Karadsheh and Moni Basu, CNN, Sun July 8, 2012

- Samer Muscati, of Human Rights Watch, states the “election is changing women’s participation not only in politics but also in a larger scale.” Women campaigning in the streets speaking to men and women have demonstrated this. Pictures of women posted outside in public spaces where uncommon prior to the revolution, however it is becoming normal in Tripoli and a few other areas to see women’s campaign posters.

“Partytime for unsure Libyan voters” By Tarik Kafala BBC News, Tripoli, July 7, 2012

- There has been a varied of candidates, campaign posters of women candidates, most in tight, colorful headscarves. There have been a few posters of women without headscarves; some of these have been defaced.