



# Progress Elusive in Libya

*Product of the Research & Information Support Center (RISC)*

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*The following report is based on open source reporting.*

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## **Instability Continues**

More than a year has passed since the uprising against General Muammar Qaddafi began, and nearly five months have lapsed since the long-time Libyan leader met his end. While the pitched battles that characterized Libya's civil war are a thing of the past, instability and violence on a smaller scale continue. Tripoli and Benghazi remain in an uneasy, but largely peaceful, state with periodic protests against the Transitional National Council (TNC). Clashes between the Tabou and Zwaya tribes erupted in southeastern Libya on February 12 and killed more than 100, according to the United Nations. Damage from the war has only begun to be repaired. Sirte, Qaddafi's final stronghold, lies in ruins; its residents complain that the TNC has abandoned them. Some in Libya appreciate that rebuilding a new Libya from the ashes of its civil war will take time, while others grow increasingly frustrated at the lack of discernable progress. Myriad issues confront the new Libya, but several stand out as sore points that remain to be addressed.

## **A Confederation of Militias**

Though the TNC is making slow progress in fostering national reconciliation and building a central government, autonomous military councils control Libya's cities, and individual militias control specific districts within each city. Checkpoints, which help to keep the few remaining Qaddafi loyalists out of Libya's major cities, also serve to stifle trade and provide a chance for unscrupulous militiamen to extort those who pass through. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have both alleged militias are responsible for widespread human rights violations, and that the TNC is powerless to stop them. On January 26, Doctors Without Borders suspended its operation in Misrata, claiming detainees held by the Misrata militia were being tortured and denied medical care. Libyan and UN authorities do not know the location of all detention centers or how many alleged Qaddafi loyalists are being held.

TNC efforts to centralize authority and incorporate militias under its control generally have failed thus far, highlighting the continued dominance of local militias and the fragmented nature of the national security profile. Until a legitimate political process is put in place, most militias will retain their positions, and their arms, out of hopes of eventually securing greater prominence at the national level. If successful, nationwide elections slated for June 2012 may succeed in generating a legitimate central government that can enjoy greater success in bringing coherence to the Libyan security structure.

## **Radical Islamists**

In late December 2011, reports indicated that al-Qa'ida leadership in Pakistan had sent "experienced jihadists" to Libya to build a new base of operations in the country. Between May and December 2011, one of these jihadists had recruited 200 fighters in the eastern part of the country. Documents seized in Iraq indicate that many foreign fighters who participated in the Iraqi insurgency hailed from eastern Libya. This small batch of fighters would have been dealt with quickly by a central authority, were it in place.

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Until a stronger national army or guard force is developed, rural Libya will remain fertile territory for terrorist groups such as al-Qai'da in the Islamic Maghreb.

### **Implications for the Private Sector**

The lack of an effective national government will continue to present a challenge for businesses operating in Libya. Transportation will require in-depth knowledge of the local human and geographical terrain. Moving internally within Libya may require passing through multiple checkpoints monitored by militias with varying requirements for passage. Until state institutions are developed, rules and regulations governing private business in Libya may remain unclear.

While it may take years to establish an effective system of governance, Libya has much going in its favor. As the process of building a new Libya continues, the private sector will have to share the burden of its growing pains. If Libya is able to hold inclusive elections that give a voice to the communities that have felt excluded in the post-Qaddafi era, it will be milestone on the path to a more stable environment.

### **For Further Information**

Please direct any questions regarding this report or the general security situation in the region to [OSAC's Regional Analyst for the Middle East and North Africa](#).

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