Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR’s Refworld website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the Knowledge and Information Management Unit.

LBY105017.E

16 December 2014

Libya: Information on the anti-Gaddafi revolutionary (rebel) groups Jaduh and Yufferin, including background and activities; state protection offered to anti-Gaddafi rebel groups by the current regime (2010-December 2014)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview of Revolutionary Brigades in Libya

In a 2012 article, the Jamestown Foundation, an organization that provides research and analysis on conflict and instability in Eurasia from experts that include former government officials, journalists and scholars (Jamestown Foundation n.d.), states that in Libya there are "a variety of autonomous militias of various sizes, geographical origin, ideology and organizational aims" (Jamestown Foundation 19 Jan. 2012). In March 2014, Reuters reports that "[t]hree years after a NATO-supported revolt toppled Muammar Gaddafi, Libya is at the mercy of rival brigades of heavily armed former rebel fighters who openly and regularly defy the new state" (Reuters 30 Mar. 2014). For information on the situation in Libya between 2011 and 2012, please see Response to Information Request LBY104243. According to World Report 2014, published by Human Rights Watch,

[m]yriad armed groups with varying agendas and allegiances, some affiliated with the government, controlled large swathes of the country and its resources- including Libya's oil terminals, its main income source- and operated with impunity. The government failed to demobilize militias or merge fighters who fought against Muammar Gaddafi's forces in the 2011 uprising into government forces with proper vetting procedures. (Human Rights Watch 21 Jan. 2014)

Sources report that there are presently two major "coalitions" of militias engaged in conflict in Libya: the Dawn Coalition [aligned with forces from Misrata] (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 24 Sept. 2014; Al Jazeera 16 Oct. 2014; AI 2014, 5) and rival brigades from the town of Zintan (ibid.; BBC 17 Oct. 2014). According to a 25 August 2014 article by Reuters, "[t]he Zintanis and Misratis joined forces in 2011 to topple Gaddafi, but have now turned their weapons on each other to achieve a power monopoly and exploit Libya's oil resources". Reuters also reports in a March 2014 article that

the two most powerful groups in the country are the militias west of the capital, one in the mountain town of Zintan and the other in the port city of Misrata. ... Each brigade is loosely allied to competing political factions, and neither shows any sign of disarming or falling in behind the government in Tripoli. (30 Mar. 2014)

According to Amnesty International (AI), the Zintan coalition is composed of "Zintan militias such as the Qaaqaa, Sawaiq, al-Madani and Barq al-Nasser brigades,... the Warshafana Brigade formed at the beginning of August 2014 and several small armed groups formed by members of the Warshafana community" (AI 2014, 6). Sources indicate that the Libya Dawn Coalition is composed of armed groups from Misrata and Libyan Shield Forces, and also includes Islamist-leaning factions (ibid.; Human Rights Watch 8 Sept. 2014).
to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, an "international affairs think tank in the United States" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace n.d.), both sides of the conflict receive external funding: Egypt and the United Arab Emirates support the Operation Dignity Movement [1] while Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan support the Libya Dawn Coalition (ibid. 24 Sept. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that the most recent surge of violence in Libya's capital began due to fighting between Misrata and Zintani militias over control of Tripoli's international airport (Human Rights Watch 8 Sept. 2014; Reuters 4 Aug. 2014). According to a 7 August 2014 article published by Reuters, "three weeks of clashes turned Libya's two main cities- Tripoli and Benghazi- into warzones." Reuters reported in August 2014 that the Misrata brigades were "fighting to oust rival Zintani militias from the international airport they have controlled since 2011" (ibid.). According to a 26 August 2014 article published by the United Nations' Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Misrata fighters took over the airport on 23 August 2014.

A July 2014 BBC article states that there is "no effective army to subdue the growing influence and rivalry of militias" (BBC 22 July 2014). According to Al Jazeera in October 2014, the Western Mountain towns of Kikla, Yafran, and Al-Qal'ah are "the scenes of raging battles" (Al Jazeera 16 Oct. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate at this time.

1.1 Politicization of Armed Groups

Sources report that two government assemblies currently operate in Libya: the elected House of Representatives and the General National Congress in Tripoli which is backed by militias from Misrata, who reject the authority of the elected Parliament (Foreign Policy 1 Dec. 2014; Reuters 11 Nov. 2014; The Wall Street Journal 6 Nov. 2014). Sources further state that the elected House of Representatives is operating out of the city of Tobruk (ibid.; Reuters 11 Nov. 2014). According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Libyan army, parliament, and ministries are "effectively split between two warring factions" (24 Sept. 2014). The same source further explains that

[...]there are effectively two rival governments. One is in Tripoli, where a coalition of armed groups from Misrata and other western towns, together with Islamists, has seized the airport and ministries. The other is in Tobruk, where a newly elected Council of Representatives and a cabinet have convened. ... Libya's armed forces- both official and unofficial- are essentially at war with one another. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 24 Sept. 2014)

According to a December 2014 article by Foreign Policy, the Misratan-Islamist led coalition of Libya Dawn rejected the results of the 25 June House of Representatives elections and launched the attack in Tripoli (1 Dec. 2014). According to the same source, Libya Dawn "decided to resurrect the unpopular former legislature, the General National Congress (GNC)" (ibid.).

According to sources, following the removal of Gaddafi, there was an absence of a strong military and police force (Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 24 Sept. 2014). Sources state that to fill this void, revolutionary brigades and militias were incorporated into the government security apparatus (ibid.; Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014). The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reports that "the idea was to harness the manpower and firepower of the revolutionaries to fill the security void left by the nearly nonexistent police and army, the remnants of which were viewed as tainted in the postrevolutionary era by their association with Qaddafi’s rule" and "to use them to quell the increasingly frequent outbreaks of communal and ethnic fighting that were flaring up in the country" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 24 Sept. 2014). The same source states that, "nearly all the armed groups claim legitimacy from their affiliation with competing organs of the weak and fractured government. Government subsidization of these groups arose from the enfeebled state of the formal army and police" (ibid.). According to sources, militias are provided salaries by various factions of the Libyan government (ibid.; Al 2014; Reuters 4 Aug. 2014). However, reports also state that militias remained loyal to their previous regions and leaders as opposed to the Libyan State (ibid.; Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014).

2. The Jaduh [Jadu] and Yufferin [Yefran] Revolutionary Forces

Sources indicate that Jadu and Yefran are villages located within Libya's Nafusa Mountains (Reuters 11 July 2011; Al Jazeera 28 July 2011; Al May 2011, 12). According to AI, "the Nafusa Mountain hosts a cluster of towns and villages, where most residents belong to the Amazigh minority who speak Tamazight" (Al May 2011). In a 25 November 2011 article Reuters reported that Jadu had a population of 20,000 and a predominantly Amazigh [Berber] population (Reuters 25 Nov. 2011).

Reuters also reported in a 11 July 2011 article that the Nafusa region emerged as "one of the main fronts" during the 2011 uprising against Colonel Gaddafi. Reporting during the revolution against Gaddafi in July 2011, Al Jazeera reported that Libyan opposition fighters "from around the towns of Nalut and Jadu,"
launched attacks against government forces in the Nafusa Mountains (Al Jazeera 28 July 2011). According to the 11 July 2014 Reuters article, "[i]nside rebel-held territory, Arabs and Berbers say they are united. Rebel units from Berber towns like Yefren and Jadu have been fighting side by side with units from Arab towns in the mountains, such as Zintan". The Christian Science Monitor, an "independent international news organization" (Christian Science Monitor n.d.), reports in November 2011 that the Zintan were involved in the rebel liberation of Tripoli (ibid. 4 Nov. 2011). According to the same source, "Jadu and Zintan are close neighbors in the western mountains and also in Tripoli, where they each control half the beachfront compound," and the Jadu brigade "gained a good reputation for the way they liberated the south of the country almost without firing a shot" (ibid.).

In a September 2011 article, the International Herald Tribune noted that "Berbers from the mountain town Yafran took charge of the central square here [Tripoli] where they spray-painted "Yafran Revolutionaries"" (1 Sept. 2011). Corroborating information on the activities of militia forces from Yefran during the 2011 uprising could not be found among sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

Sources report that the Zintan Revolutionaries Military Council (ZRMC) brings together 23 rebel brigades from Zintan and the Nafusa mountains (International Business Times 16 Jul. 2014; Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014;). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an independent scholar who has published several books on contemporary Libyan politics stated,

The Zintan Revolutionaries Military Council (ZRMC), based in the western Nafusa Mountains near the town of Zintan, is an umbrella group of 23 Zintan and Nafusa mountain militias, including the revolutionary brigades from Jadu and Yefran. The ZRMC controlled Tripoli airport until mid-year [2014] when Islamist militias took control of the facility. The Zintani brigades in the west have joined forces with General Khalifa Haftar's Operation Dignity in the east in part because of their mutual animosity toward Qatar and the support it has given to Islamist brigades in Libya. (ibid.)

For information on the background and activities of the Zintan Brigade, please see Response to Information Request LBY104472.

In contrast, some sources report that militia forces from the town of Jadu have joined the Libya Dawn Coalition (Human Rights Watch 8 Sept. 2014; Al 2014, 5). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Availability of State Protection for Members of Revolutionary Brigades

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the independent scholar stated that currently, there are two governments in Libya, each of them has only a limited capacity to protect the members of the revolutionary brigades supporting it and no interest in protecting the members of the revolutionary brigades opposed to it. In the final analysis, the revolutionary brigades are the only ones capable of protecting their own members. (Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014)

A March 2014 Reuters article states, "the army, built around a core of 8,000, is training with the help of U.S., British, Italian and Turkish aid. But most programs have just started" (Reuters 30 March 2014). The same article quotes former Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan as stating, "[r]eally there is no army, I thought there was one, but then I realized there really isn't any" (ibid).

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reports states,

[t]oday, Libya's formal armed forces are extremely ill-equipped, poorly trained, and bloated at the senior ranks. In many parts of the country, it is the armed groups, not the army, that control defense ministries, barracks, bases, and ammunition depots. The police force fares slightly better, but it is still unequipped to handle more difficult and hazardous policing tasks. (24 Sept. 2014)

Similarly, the Inter Press Service, a news agency that is an "international news provider of organized civil society worldwide" (n.d.), quotes a police office in Jadu as saying, "[t]here are 15 of us policemen in Jadu....We work in shifts of five men but we only deal with small issues as we do not have the training or equipment to tackle bigger threats. For the latter...we should get support from the local militia" (IPS 2 Jan. 2014).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note
Libya Dignity is a "military campaign that former General Khalifa Hiftar began in May in eastern Libya to eradicate terrorism. Libya Dignity back the government under Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni, currently based out of eastern Libya" (Human Rights Watch 8 Sept. 2014). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an independent scholar, who has published several books on contemporary Libyan politics, stated that the "Zintani brigades in the west have joined forces with General Khalifa Haftar's Operation Dignity in the east" (Independent Scholar 5 Dec. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate at this time.

References

Al Jazeera. 16 October 2014. "Families Flee Fighting in Libya's Western Mountains, Seek Refuge in Gharyan - TV." (Factiva)


Independent Scholar. 5 December 2014. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

International Herald Tribune. 1 September 2011. David D. Kirkpatrick and Rod Nordland. "Brigades Scramble for Power in Tripoli; Region in Revolt." (Factiva)


Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Lawyers for Justice in Libya. The following sources could not provide information within the time constraints of this response: professor of government at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire; Sadeq Institute, Libya.

Internet sites, including: Brookings Institution; Canada – Embassy to Tunisia; Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); Freedom House; Jane's Intelligence Review; International Federation for Human Rights; Rand Corporation; UN – High Commissioner for Refugees, Security Council; United States Institute of Peace; US – Department of State; Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

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