

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue: The human rights violations and political-military instability related to the Libyan Crisis

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Introduction

After the Arab Spring, several nations in the Middle East and North Africa were in great political and military turmoil. Among them, Libya emerged as one of the most fragile cases. Since the collapse of the First modern civil war in Libya after the death of the Libyan tyrant Muammar Gaddafi and the breakdown of the Great Jamahiriya Libyan Arab People's Socialist Republic in 2011, the country has occupied the forefront of political unrest in its government. The revolution originally escalated quickly and became a prolonged one, marked by competing governments, foreign response, and a persistent breakdown of law and order. The Libyan conflict not only stabilized the nation locally, but its effects were also critical to regional safety and human rights. The United Nations Human Rights Council Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) 2023 report says that there is reason to believe civilians and migrants have been victims of crimes against humanity in Libya since 2016. The crimes inflicted upon them include enforced disappearance, enslavement, rape, torture, and arbitrary arrest. What started as a local issue is now a regional security concern, affecting economic relationships, arms trade, and immigration flows in the Mediterranean and North Africa. This study guide aims to delve deeper into this issue to present the delegations with the necessary information before anything is done.

Definition of Key Terms

Migrant

A person who moves from one region or country to somewhere else. In the present day, this is predominantly due to displacement.



Border Control

Policies implemented by a country in order to regulate and protect its borders, mostly to prevent any unauthorized entries to the nation.

Instability

A lack of monitoring or action in the government, usually causing lax or lacking laws, chaos, and violence.

Intervention

When a foreign force gets involved in a country's conflict. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization intervened the situation in Libya with airstrikes in order to protect civilians.

Militia

Armed non-state groups that control territory or engage in combat. Groups like Misrata Brigades and Zintan militia have significant power, and often act independently from their central government, causing instability and unrest.

Trafficking

Illegal trade of people, particularly vulnerable migrants, for exploitation or forced labor. Libya is a hub for human trafficking, where migrants are sold, extorted, or forced into labor by smuggling networks.

Ceasefire: An agreement between two sides of a conflict, in order to temporarily or permanently halt fighting.

Mercenaries: Fighters from foreign origin, hired by an individual or a group, to engage in conflicts for their own financial gain. Russian Wagner Group fighters and Sudanese mercenaries have participated in the conflicts leading up to the Libyan Crisis.

Persecution: Systematic and regular mistreatment of certain people. This could be caused by race, political view, or religion. Ethnic minorities like the Tawergha community have faced continued persecution and displacement.

Proxy Warfare

A war in which external forces support a faction in order to advance their own gain. Libya's war has seen many involvements from foreign countries, supporting rival factions.



Skhirat Agreement

The UN-brokered peace deal signed in Morocco, to form the Government of National Accord. The agreement faced limited acceptance and later on conflicts occurred between the Libyan National Army and Government of National Accord.

2019 Tripoli Offensive

A military campaign launched by Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army to seize the capital from the Government of National Accord, Tripoli. The conflict caused heavy financial damage and the death of thousands.

Background Information

Muammar Gaddafi's Rule (1969-2011)

In the background of the Libyan crisis, an extended and complicated process lies. In 1969, Muammar Gaddafi came to power with a military coup. With his new position, he established a Jamahiriya — a blend of socialism and Arab nationalism. The regime in play was highly authoritarian, using many systems like widespread suppression of dissent, secret police, and arbitrary detention, which were often seen in other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Gaddafi also had oil wealth on his side, which allowed him to maintain control, build infrastructure, and provide basic services, but basic freedoms were nowhere to be found. The rule of Gaddafi lasted 42 years before being overthrown by the Libyan Uprising.

Libyan Uprising (2011)

In the February of 2011, nationwide protests in Libya erupted, inspired by Tunisia and Egypt. This series of protests demanding reforms would be named “Arab Awakening.” People of Libya started to demand democracy, only to be met with force by the government. Over the next five days, riots expanded throughout northern Libya as rebels and resisters began to shape the unorganized protests into political movements against the Gaddafi regime and for government reform more generally. The Libyan Government kept escalating the situation, causing the death of dozens of rioters. These events fostered rebellion activities in Northern Libya, as people were even more desperate and determined. A short while later, rebellion was laid out throughout Northern Libya, further pressuring the government. In March of 2011, the United Nations



Security Council approved Resolution 1973, which authorized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to intervene in Libya and to “use all means necessary to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas.” Airstrikes were launched by NATO in order to protect the civilians and push back Gaddafi’s forces. Muammar Gaddafi was killed on October 20, 2011, following the Battle of Sirte. He was captured and killed by rebel forces of the National Transitional Council (NTC).

Post-Gaddafi Chaos and Fragmentation (2012–2014)

The fall of Gaddafi's regime, precipitated by internal protests and NATO intervention, created a governance void and security vacuum, allowing armed groups to thrive. Transitional authorities struggled to establish control amid militia dominance and internal conflicts. NTC handed its power to the General National Congress (GNC), which was Islamist, after the elections. The disputes over the legitimacy of elections and governance eventually led to two rival governments, those being the GNC and the House of Representatives (HoR). These rival factions in an already unstable region marked the beginning of the 2nd Libyan Civil War, with each government being backed by rebels and foreign forces.

Emergence of Extremist Groups and Foreign Forces

The resulting governance vacuum created the perfect environment for violent non-state actors (VNSAs) to rise, which were sufficient to keep Libya in its politically unstable state. A year later, an UN-brokered peace deal, the Skhirat Agreement, was proposed, creating the Government of National Accord (GNA). Although the GNA was recognized in Libya, it couldn’t gain enough control. Leader of the Libyan National Army, Khalifa Haftar, rejected it. Haftar and the HoR sided together and took control of the east and south of the country, while the GNA controlled Tripoli and northwest Libya, relying on alliances with western militias. Foreign forces were also heavily involved in this process, with the UAE, Egypt, and Russia supporting Haftar, and Turkey supporting the GNA. In April 2019, Haftar launched a large assault to seize Tripoli, the capital of the GNA. The battle caused thousands of deaths and mass displacement. The war was given more international attention when foreign mercenaries were hired, and the UN arms embargo was violated. The war ended with a stalemate, being detrimental to both sides. Shortly after, a permanent ceasefire treaty was signed in Geneva, officially



marking the end of the war and opening potential paths to elections and political stability.

Fragile Peace and Political Roadblocks (2021-Present)

After the Libyan Civil War, an UN-sponsored forum created a contemporary unity government under Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, which reached a compromise on organizing presidential and parliamentary elections. However, the ongoing stalemate appears insurmountable, as the people were concerned about candidate eligibility because of the involvement of Haftar and Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam. This situation, unfortunately, led to new political sides: Dbeibah in Tripoli, and the HoR with their newly appointed prime minister, Fathi Bashagha. In 2022, tensions rose again in Libya with clashes between rival factions, and currently, foreign forces remain deployed in certain parts of the country.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Government of National Accord (GNA)

GNA was an interim government for Libya that was formed under the terms of the Libyan Political Agreement. The United Nations Security Council overwhelmingly approved the deal, recognizing the Government of National Accord as the only valid administrative branch in Libya and applauding the establishment of a Presidency Council for Libya. It was created in an attempt to end the civil conflict and unify the country under a single government after years of instability. The Libyan National Army rejected the GNA as the sole government. In March 2021, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed, replacing the GNA as part of a new transitional process aiming to lead Libya to elections.

Government of National Unity (GNU)

The Government of National Unity (GNU) was established in March 2021 as part of a United Nations-led peace process to replace the Government of National Accord (GNA) and guide Libya through a period of national reconciliation and elections. The international community supported the transition, hoping that the GNU could: serve as a neutral, technocratic government, bridge the divide between the east and west, and lead Libya to its first national elections since 2014.



Egypt

Because it shares a border with Libya, Egypt is one of the major forces in the conflict. They support Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) with military aid, mindful of the Government of National Accord's (GNA) ties to political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood. It has approved troop deployments and conducted direct operations.

Libyan National Army (LNA)

The LNA is a major armed faction in Libya. Despite being nominally part of Libya's official military structure, it operates independently and controls large areas of eastern and southern Libya. The LNA has positioned itself as a force against terrorism and political Islam, with backing from Egypt, the UAE, and Russia. Its campaigns have questioned the legitimacy of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA).

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Because of its larger regional campaign against Islamist movements, the UAE is a major supporter of Haftar's LNA. It has provided the LNA with financial support, military hardware, and air support, including airstrikes. It also seeks to counter groups allied with the Muslim Brotherhood that are supported by Turkey and increase its strategic influence in North Africa.

Saudi Arabia

Due to its opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and political Islam, Saudi Arabia has provided Haftar with both financial and political support. Riyadh sees Haftar as a bulwark against Islamist influence in Libya, although he is not as militarily involved as Egypt or the UAE. Saudi support is consistent with its larger regional strategy to counter rival influences like Turkey and Qatar, oppose pro-Islamist regimes, and stand with like-minded Arab regimes like Egypt and the UAE to assert greater regional authority.

Russia

Russia supports Haftar primarily through the Wagner Group, a private military contractor linked to the Kremlin, which has provided fighters, equipment, and operational support. Russia sees



Libya as an opportunity to expand its strategic footprint in the Mediterranean, particularly through potential access to oil fields and military ports. By backing the LNA, Russia challenges Western influence, deepens its role in North Africa, and increases leverage in regional negotiations, including energy and arms deals.

France

France has secretly supported Haftar's LNA, citing concerns about unchecked migration and counterterrorism interests in the Sahel region. While officially supporting the UN-backed GNA, France considers Haftar a potential stabilising force and has provided intelligence and diplomatic support. This dual approach has prompted criticism from EU partners, particularly Italy. France's involvement stems from the country's broader geopolitical interests in North Africa, as well as its desire to maintain security partnerships with regional allies.

Turkey

Turkey is the most visible supporter of the UN-backed GNA, providing weapons, drones, military advisors, and even troops. Its participation is primarily motivated by a maritime agreement signed with the GNA, which grants Turkey access to energy exploration zones in the eastern Mediterranean. Supporting the GNA aligns with Turkey's pro-Islamist foreign policy and helps counter rival powers like the UAE and Egypt. Libya offers Ankara both strategic depth and economic opportunities.

Qatar

Qatar backs the GNA diplomatically and financially, in line with its broader support for Islamist-oriented governments throughout the region. While not as militarily involved as Turkey, Qatar's participation reflects its rivalry with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Its assistance strengthens the GNA and promotes a political vision consistent with its foreign policy objectives. Qatar also uses its media and diplomatic influence to promote international recognition and legitimacy for the GNA.

Italy



Italy backs the GNA due to colonial ties, migration concerns, and significant energy investments in Libya, particularly through ENI, the country's national oil company. Rome has attempted to stabilise Libya through diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, while also supporting UN-led peace processes. Italy is wary of Haftar's growing power and of France's involvement with the LNA. Stability in Libya is critical to Italy's border control efforts and economic interests in the Mediterranean.

Timeline of Events

Date (Arial size 12 bold, centred)	Description of event* (Arial size 12 bold, centred)
17 February 2011	Protests erupted in Libya due to the influence of the Arab Spring, which was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world. What began as demonstrations quickly turned into violent clashes.
19 March 2011	NATO launched military intervention, citing the protection of civilians. The operation, named "Unified Protector," was carried out under UN Security Council authorization.
20 October 2011	Muammar Gaddafi was captured and killed in his hometown of Sirte. His regime was overthrown.



May 2014	General Khalifa Haftar launched "Operation Dignity," which deepened the political split in the country.
August 2014	Two rival governments emerged
17 December 2015	The Libyan Political Agreement was sealed under the patronage of the United Nations. The agreement formed the Government of National Unity (GNA), but the government was resisted by the eastern region.
4 April 2019	General Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) launched a major offensive to capture Tripoli.
April 2019–June 2020	Haftar's side received support from Russia (Wagner Group), the UAE, and Egypt. And the GNA received military support from Turkey. Libya became a battleground for foreign interventions.
23 October 2020	A UN-mediated ceasefire agreement was signed.
March 2021	The Government of National Unity (GNU) was established with UN support to prepare the country for elections.



24 December 2021	Scheduled elections were postponed indefinitely due to electoral disputes and security concerns.
13 May 2025	In Tripoli, violence erupted following the death of militia leader Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, which killed at least six other people.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- **UN Security Council Resolution 2441 (2018)**

Date: 5 November 2018

Extended the mandate of sanctions and arms embargo enforcement, and condemned the illicit export of oil and petroleum products from Libya by armed groups.

- **UN Security Council Resolution 2570 (2021)**

Date: 16 April 2021

Supported the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) and called for timely national elections. It also reiterated the demand for foreign forces and mercenaries to leave Libya.

International Treaties, Agreements, and Declarations

- **Libyan Political Agreement (Skhirat Agreement)**

Date: 17 December 2015

Brokered by the UN and signed in Morocco, this agreement established the Government of National Accord (GNA) and aimed to unify Libya's institutions. However, it faced resistance from rival factions like Haftar's LNA.

- **Geneva Ceasefire Agreement**

Date: 23 October 2020



A landmark ceasefire was signed by military representatives of both the GNA and LNA. It demanded the withdrawal of all foreign fighters within three months and set the stage for further political negotiations.

- **Roadmap for the Preparatory Phase of a Comprehensive Solution**

Date: November 2020

Created by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), this roadmap established the timeline and mechanisms for the formation of an interim government and the holding of national elections.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Previous attempts to solve the Libyan Crisis could be listed as;

1. United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) – 2011 to Present

Established in 2011, UNSMIL is the primary UN political mission in Libya, tasked with promoting political dialogue and peacebuilding. It has promoted many ceasefires and political talks between opposing factions. Despite ongoing challenges, UNSMIL continues to act as a neutral mediator, advocating for a unified government and nationwide elections.

2. Skhirat Agreement (Libyan Political Agreement) – December 2015

The UN brokered the agreement to bring Libya's rival governments together by establishing the Government of National Accord (GNA). It established the Presidential Council and was intended to pave the way for elections. However, the LNA and other factions rejected the GNA's authority, leading to further fragmentation of power.

3. Berlin Conference on Libya – January 2020

Hosted by Germany under UN auspices, this high-level diplomatic meeting gathered key international stakeholders, including the U.S., Russia, Turkey, Egypt, UAE, and the EU. It called for a ceasefire, respect for the arms embargo, and support for the UN-led peace process. While symbolically important, enforcement of its conclusions was weak, and fighting resumed shortly afterwards.



4. Ceasefire Agreement – October 2020

A breakthrough brokered by UNSMIL, this agreement was signed in Geneva by representatives of both the GNA and LNA. It called for an end to hostilities, withdrawal of foreign fighters, and the opening of land and air routes between regions. Although fragile, the ceasefire helped reduce violence and laid the groundwork for future political talks.

5. Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) – Late 2020 to Early 2021

Organised by UNSMIL, this dialogue brought together 75 Libyan delegates from across the country to chart a path toward elections. The LPDF resulted in creating a new interim Government of National Unity (GNU) tasked with unifying institutions and preparing for national elections.

6. Paris Conference on Libya – November 2021

France, Germany, Italy, and the United Nations co-hosted this conference, which reaffirmed support for elections and the withdrawal of foreign forces. While it demonstrated international unity, Libya's failure to hold scheduled elections in December 2021 highlighted a long-standing institutional and political barrier.

7. Ongoing African Union (AU) and Arab League Initiatives

Both the African Union and the Arab League have attempted to mediate or support Libyan reconciliation through diplomatic channels and peace proposals. However, their influence has been limited due to internal problems.

Possible Solutions

There are several possible paths for international diplomacy organizations to take in order to solve the Libyan crisis. First of all, all participants of the civil war, including the Libyans and the foreign belligerents, should compromise with each other to find the most appetizing solution that would return the Libyans sovereignty and national will. All the delegates must consider all the ways for protecting the Libyan people; humanitarian corridors, economic assistance and many other aspects that will assist Libya to rebuild itself into a sustainable democratic nation. The challenge here stems from the fact that the last 15 years opened the Libyan soil for many other nations to send their troops and companies to somehow get as much benefit as possible, and anything that alters the current state of Libya interests those countries as well. The encouraged pathway is for



stopping any neo-imperialistic action, but that's up to the voting of the security council which might lead to scenarios that could end war, but still do not lead to a democracy in Libya.

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