



# Libya Timeline Analysis

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This brief analysis aims to compare and contrast the political events and militia activity that occurred in Libya within the time span of three months. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project Dataset (ACLED) was utilised alongside media reports from newspapers such as the Libya Observer and Libya Herald, to create snapshot timelines for both January and April this year. The ACLED dataset identifies all reported political violence in over 60 countries, and is updated on a weekly basis. This real-time dataset was first filtered in Excel to focus on Libya alone, and then more specifically, on militia attacks and politically motivated events occurring in January and April 2016, in order that the notes from these two months could be analysed further. January was chosen as it was the first month in 2016, and April was selected because a countless number of political and military events had occurred within the span of these three months.

From January 1st the political tension between the General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli and the House of Representatives (HoR) in Tobrouk is immediately evident through the corresponding military clash between LNA (Libyan National Army) allied fighters and the pro-GNC Sabratha Military Council militias. The geographical divide in opinion between the two governments is also apparent through the closing of Misrata's Ad Dafniya checkpoint by protesters who rejected the visit of the GNA's Prime Minister, Feyez Sirraj. Moreover, on January 8th at Misrata Airport, protesters gathered to denounce the visit of Sirraj. In fact, his motorcade came under heavy fire from armed protestors and had to be diverted. These events highlight that the GNA is highly reliant on allied militias for security. For instance, Bishr's First Division, which declared support for Sirraj on April 19th.

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On January 19th Ali Al Gutrani, an ally of Haftar, suspended his membership to the GNA. This announcement was a serious blow to the integrity of Sirraj as it set off a cascade effect, as pro-Haftar elements refused the GNA their approval. On January 21st hundreds of demonstrators in Benghazi voiced their support for Haftar. On April 1st Misratan militia leader, Salah Badi, led an anti-Sirraj demonstration in Martyrs' Square in Tripoli; however on the same day, locals in Sabratha demonstrated in support of the GNA, and hundreds of supporters also rallied in Tripoli where the unity cabinet is striving to exert its authority. Political events intensified on April 5th when Libya's unrecognised government based in Tripoli (GNC) announced that it was ceding power to the UN-backed GNA. However, a day later Tripoli's unrecognised Prime Minister Khalifa Ghweil called for his ministers not to cede power, contradicting an earlier announcement. Despite this, on April 25th the GNA took control of more ministries in Tripoli, including foreign affairs. As of April 16th military and political events become further intertwined as two guards were killed and four kidnapped in an attack on the Tripoli home of GNA member, Ahmed Maetig; the Tripoli home of former GNC member, Juma Sayeh, was also attacked. Clearly, the political situation remains just as fragile and fractured in April as it was in January.

Through analysing both timelines, it appears that university campuses are a popular target for militias. Security forces disarmed a vehicle-borne explosive device in front of the College of Sciences at Marqub University in Khom on January 6th and the army ousted IS and Ansar Al-Sharia fighters from the Benghazi University campus on April 17th. As well as university campuses, the police force have also been key targets, for instance, with the killing of 55 people after IS launched a suicide bomb attack on the Al-Jahfal police training academy in Zliten. This military attack was linked to political violence on January 7th as demonstrators in Misrata broke into the local bureau of Naaba TV, accusing it of sympathising with IS and demanding that it close. On the other hand, one positive change has been the decrease in clashes between the Toubou and Tuareg tribes in Ubari in April in comparison to January 2016.

On January 2nd and January 4th IS militants made their mark on the ACLED timeline through undertaking attacks on a mobile telecommunications relay station near Ajdabiya, as well as a suicide car bomb attack in al-Sidra. Moreover, there have been violent clashes throughout January, between IS and the Petroleum Facilities Guards (PFG), a local militia group now loyal to the LNA, who control the majority of Libya's oil fields. On January 7th PFG pursued IS militants and were involved in fighting east of Ben Jawad. The number of IS attacks on oil fields in Libya also appears to be correlated to the economic instability in Libya. This is evident as protesters went to the streets of Al Bayda to denounce the deteriorating living conditions on January 19th and in April, employees at the Zaltan oilfield announced a general strike following the worsening of the security situation inside the field and fears of attacks from IS.

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Moreover, on April 13th there was a riot as Ajdabiya customers stormed the local branch of the National Commercial Bank, when tellers said they had run out banknotes.

As early as January 4th one is able to note the high concentration of IS militants around their stronghold in Sirte. On this day, IS took control of Ben Jawad, 150 kilometres east of Sirte. In countering IS, the LNA has been making substantial military gains, for instance on January 10th the LNA allied 21 Border Guards Battalion seized the al-Qanaan area and on January 12th they had taken control of Gates 18 and 60, as well as Point 100 on the road south of Ajdabiya. Therefore, the LNA's offensive to liberate Sirte from IS appears imminent.

Given the scenario that General Haftar continues his offensive westwards, it is probable that he will gain substantial military strongholds. Haftar will likely make these gains due to the significant economic backing from his major allies in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who despite the arms embargo, continue to send military hardware and armoured vehicles to the LNA. Some of Haftar's operations, such as those in Benghazi, have been against IS, but were also directed at militia groups opposed to him. For example, on April 20th the LNA took control of Fataieh by driving remaining IS fighters from the Derna area. The IS fighters retreated along the desert road, heading for Sirte, and taking 32 vehicles with them. There were reports that IS was forced out of Fataieh purely by the Shura Council of Derna Mujahedeen and not the LNA. As the LNA left, there were further allegations that they had aurally bombed the area. The reports contrast on whether IS militants or fighters from the Shura Council of Derna Mujahedeen were targeted. Nevertheless, the Derna Shura Council has declared a state of emergency, and aims to prevent Haftar's LNA from advancing westwards from Tobrouk. On April 27th there were reports of the movement of LNA troops towards Sirte from the south-west and east. An army source reported that a force of more than 1000 men had left Ghabghab, and was heading for Sirte; it seems likely that this convoy will include some of the armoured personnel carriers and pickups delivered to Tobrouk from the UAE. Moreover, in response to this LNA advance, at least one Misratan brigade also announced it was moving eastwards towards the 200 km long coastal strip controlled by IS militants. If Haftar is successful in liberating Sirte from IS, it is likely that he will gain international approval as well as national political legitimacy, and thus the grounds as well as popular support, to challenge the GNA in Tripoli. Thus, rather than unifying Libyans against IS, it appears more and more likely that these military offensive in Sirte will divide the country.

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Through this comparison of events in January and April 2016, it is evident that political and military events are increasingly intertwined, and will continue to be so.

Snapshot: January 2016

Militia Activity

Political Developments

January 1st

LNA-allied fighters launched a surprise attack on the pro-GNC Sabratha Military Council militias south of Sabratha. However Sabratha Military Council forces appear to have repelled the attacks. Unidentified gunmen assassinated a local militia commander in Tajoura. Consequently, local militia forces increased security.

A potential ceasefire in Ajdabiya was aborted before negotiations as unknown militants shot at the mediators.

January 2nd

A Libyan mobile telecommunications relay station near Ajdabiya was blown up by IS militants.

January 4th

IS militants carried out a suicide car bomb attack on a military checkpoint at the entrance to the town of Al-Sidra. Violent clashes erupted afterwards with the Petroleum Facilities Guards, a local militia group loyal to the Libyan army that control the majority of Libya's oil fields. 6 of their fighters were killed, along with 5 IS fighters in the coastal port town of Sidra. Operation Dawn conducted air strikes on IS militant positions between Al-Sidra and Ben Jawad. IS took control of Ben Jawad, 150 kilometres east of Sirte. IS militants launched an attack on the town of Ras Lanouf but did not manage to enter. An Operation Dignity warplane conducted a raid against Ansar positions near Bouatni. IS militants attacked oil facilities in an area 20 kilometres

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Militia Activity

January 5th

Political Developments

The oil installations guard force had to fight intermittent battles with IS. The clashes in which light arms were used took place in Wadi Kehaila near the oil terminals in the east of Libya.

January 6th

Security forces disarmed a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in front of the College of Sciences at Marqub University in Khoms. Unidentified militants briefly broke into the university and threatened to blow it up, before surrounding a police station in the al-Khamis Market in Khoms.

January 7th

Ibrahim Jadhnan and his Petroleum Facilities Guards units pursued IS militants and were involved in fighting east of Ben Jawad. An IS bomber drove an explosives-packed car into a checkpoint at the entrance of Ras Lanouf, killing 6. Moreover, 55 people were killed after the IS launched a suicide bomb attack on the Al-Jahfal police training academy in Zliten.

Yousif Budeiri, the mayor of Gharyan, was shot at in an assassination attempt. Amid rising anger across Libya at the Zliten suicide attack, demonstrators in Misrata broke into the local bureau of Naaba TV, accusing it of sympathising with IS and demanding that it close. Misrata's Ad Dafniya checkpoint was closed by protesters who rejected the visit of Fayez Sirraj.

January 8th

30 people from Sabratha were kidnapped. Unidentified forces fired at 4 rockets at two camps for IDPs in Benghazi.

At Misrata Airport, protesters gathered to denounce the visit of the Prime Minister of Fayez Sirraj. Sirraj's motorcade came under heavy fire from armed protestors and was diverted. This highlighted that the GNA completely lacks adequate security and is entirely reliant on temporarily allied militias for its security.

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## Militia Activity

## Political Developments

January 9th

Misratan forces shoot at an ambulance full of explosives. The ambulance detonated. It was believed to have been heading towards the visiting party of Sarraj. A standoff has been ongoing all with exchange of gunfire at a house where kidnapped children are being held. The operation is a joint action by Sabratha and Surman authorities. A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded on Omar al-Mukhtar Street in Tripoli, causing damage to surrounding shops but no casualties. The attack was likely carried out by IS. Warplanes of the Air Force bombed the Ajdabiya Shura Council rebels south of Ajdabiya.

January 10th

The LNA allied 21 Border Guards Battalion seized the al-Qanaan area from IS and Ajdabiya Shura Council. Unidentified warplanes attacked an IS militant convoy in Sirte. More than 14 people were killed in clashes between Tabu and Tuareg groups since confrontations erupted in Ubari. Libyan Oil Installation Guards repelled a maritime assault by IS on Zueitina oil terminal.

January 11th

IS executed 5 Libyan youths, allegedly former members of the security forces, in a public square in Ben Jawad. 3 civilians were wounded when a shell exploded in Hadaiq. IS kidnapped 6 Egyptians from a bus near Abu Qarin. The driver was executed. The 21st Border Guard Battalion seized the 60 Gate area, south of Ajdabiya on the Jalu Road, from the Ajdabiya Revolutionaries Shura Council.

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## Militia Activity

## Political Developments

January 12th

Air raids were reported in Leithi. Members of 204 Brigade were involved in clashes with militants in the city's Belawn district. Counter Crime Agency's headquarters in Benghazi came under attack from Sahawat groups affiliated with Haftar. A shooting occurred outside the Mellitah oil terminal. The facility's guards repelled the assault with the assistance of Sabratha's Um al-Gharib Brigade. Renewed clashes in Obari have left a total of 14 people dead. The LNA announced that it had taken control of the 18 and 60 Gates and 100 Point on the road south of Ajdabiya city.

Commander of the Ajdabiya Border Guards, announced the formation of a joint operations room with the Petroleum Facilities Guard forces and Libya Dawn to liberate Sirte from IS.

January 14th

LNA allied fighters clashed with Ajdabiya Revolutionaries Shura Council forces. LNA fighters also stormed the farm of ASC member, seizing aircraft bombs and weaponry. IS are holding more than 150 men in a compound in Nufaliya. IS also kidnapped 5 PFG members from the Marada Oil Field. IS has claimed that it was responsible the destruction of a section of the oil pipeline near Maradah. 2 mystery warplanes launched a night raid against IS positions in Sirte. The Libyan Air Force targeted Ansar al-Sharia positions.

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Militia Activity

January 15th

Political Developments

In Benghazi, a young girl was killed in a random rocket attack in on going clashes between the Libya National Army and the BRSC. The Libyan Air Force targeted Ansar positions in Gwarsha and at Mreisa port. The Libyan National Army shot down an Ansar Al- Sharia drone. A number of missiles landed in Sidi Yunis district. 4 people were killed in fresh clashes between Tabu and Tuareg tribes in Ubari. Missile fire was reported in Benghazi.

January 16th

A senior commander of the Benghazi Shura Council was killed in clashes against Haftar's forces. Intermittent explosions were reported in Benghazi. There was also missile fire in Leithi. IS fighters executed 3 individuals and displayed their bodies outside of Ben Jawad. The Libyan navy says it has detained 14 suspected militants. IS executed 2 men in Sirte whom it accused of being Libya Dawn spies. Unidentified attackers threw an improvised explosive device at an IS patrol in Sirte.

A demonstration in support of the Libyan- Libyan dialogue took place in Misrata. The Director of the passport authority Gharyan branch was kidnapped.

January 17th

Local fighters in Surman clashed with IS. Al-Saiqa Special Forces repelled an attack on the Chocolate Factory in Benghazi by IS forces.

January 18th

2 IS militants were killed by Derna Shura Council. LNA forces took control of the Flour Factory in Benghazi. The factory is located near the border of Sidi Faraj, a highly contested region.

An armed group stormed the Libyan Constitution Drafting Assembly headquarters in the eastern city of Al-Bayda.



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Militia Activity

January 19th

Political Developments

Five missiles were fired near Benina. A young Tripoli imam was abducted by unknown gunmen from his mosque in Tripoli. Fighting in Benghazi intensified as the army repelled one assault by IS and then appeared to make ground in Sabri and Suq Al-Hud.

Angry protesters went to the streets of Al-Bayda to denounce the deteriorating living conditions. The protesters accused the Al-Thani government of being behind a lack of cash. Ali Al-Gutrani, a Haftar ally has decided to temporarily suspend his membership in the council. The announcement is a serious blow to the integrity of the GNA. It may set off a cascade effect as pro-Haftar elements refuse the GNA their approval. Deputy PM Omar Alaswad for Zintan also suspended his membership.

January 20th

IS militants fired a series of shells which hit a block of flats in Benghazi. An IS senior commander was found dead near Hawara, an IS controlled town 70km from Sirte. LNA aircraft conducted air strikes on the Industrial Neighbourhood of Ajdabiya.

Representatives from Zintan and Kikla signed a peace agreement to end conflict. Both sides also agreed to exchange prisoners.

January 21st

Fighting between LNA allied 21st Border Guards Battalion against Ajdabiya Revolutionaries Shura Council forces continues. IS tried to enter Derna but were repulsed by the Derna Council of Mujahideen. Oil facilities in Ras Lanuf were set ablaze by IS. Fighting broke out in Tarhouna, between the pro-Islamist Al-Kanni brigade and the Naja'a tribe.

In Benghazi, hundreds of demonstrators voiced their support for Haftar in Kish Square, and denounced Al-Hejazi, the spokesman of the leader of the Libyan Army.

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## Militia Activity

January 23rd

## Political Developments

The Libyan Air Force said that it carried out air strikes against IS vehicles in Ben Jawad. An IS commander was killed in Sirte. The Ajdabiya Shura Council claimed to have retaken the 18 Gate from the LNA 21 Border Guards.

Military forces from Britain, US and Russia arrived near Tobruk to support the new UN- backed government.

January 25th

A senior member of the Misratan 3rd Force, was abducted in al-Shati. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the Ben Nayal tribe militias (seen as pro-Gaddafi) were involved in the kidnapping.

January 31st

Fierce clashes in the south Tripoli between Misratan forces and fighters belonging to Salah Marghani's brigade.

Protesters in El Feel prevented Tobruk Parliament rapporteur Saleh Qilmah from boarding his plane to Tobruk. The protesters, including military personnel and civilians demanded ammunition and maintenance to Murzuq's hospital and supply it with medicines and medical equipment in order to set the plane free.

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Snapshot: April 2016

Militia Activity

In Sirte, IS militants executed two prisoners after Friday prayers.

April 1st

Political Developments

In Sabratha, locals demonstrated in support of the GNA. Misratan militia leader Salah Badi led an anti-Serraj demonstration in Martyrs' Square in Tripoli. However hundreds of supporters of Libya's UN-backed government also rallied in Tripoli where the unity cabinet is striving to exert its authority, calling on a rival administration to depart.

April 2nd

Two PFG men died when an IS convoy descended on the Beda oilfield. Additionally, two members of the Merada brigade were killed after IS launched an attack on the Bayda and Tibisti oilfields.

April 5th

Libya's unrecognised government based in Tripoli announced that it is ceding power to the UN-backed unity government. However, on 6 April, Tripoli's unrecognised Prime Minister Khalifa Ghweil called for his ministers not to cede power, contradicting an earlier announcement.

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## Militia Activity

April 8th

## Political Developments

Hundreds of demonstrators took to Tripoli's Martyrs' Square to protest the institution of the State Council without a vote by the House of Representatives.

April 9th

Heavy fighting in Benghazi was reported as the army launched a push into the tourist village at Ganfouda in the south of the city.

April 11th

A boat believed to have come from Misrata to deliver ammunition to militants, was targeted by the Libyan air force and sunk off Ganfouda in Benghazi. Clashes were also reported between the Petroleum Facilities Guard and IS on the outskirts of Ben Jawad.

Employees at the Zaltan oilfield announced a general strike following the worsening of the security situation inside the field and fears of attacks from IS.

April 12th

The General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) reported that 8 of its trucks loaded with 500 wooden telegraph poles were stolen by armed militias, as the convoy left Tripoli, heading south.

April 13th

Militants attacked a military camp near As Saddadah and seized weapons and ammunition. Two members of the security forces were killed and three camp workers were beheaded. There was also a car bomb attack on a security post in Misrata, and a vessel delivering arms and ammunition to militants was attacked north-west of Benghazi. Mortar fire claimed by Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi hit an army ammunitions store in the city's central district of Juliana.

There was a riot as Ajdabiya customers stormed the local branch of the National Commercial Bank when tellers said they had run out banknotes.

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## Militia Activity

April 14th

## Political Developments

At least five soldiers died whilst fighting around the Hawari cement factory in Benghazi. It was reported that at least 20 IS fighters were also killed in a fuel tank explosion during the fighting. Further fighting was reported in Gwarsha, Garyounis, and Suq Al-Hout and Sabri districts of Benghazi. The police arrested the commander of the militants' 17 February Brigade in Benghazi.

April 15th

3 IS suicide bombers staged attacks near a cement factory in the Hawari district of Benghazi. IS claimed 50 soldiers were killed by the bombers. The army spokesman said 6 soldiers were killed. Air strikes continued in Sabri and Gwarsha.

April 16th

Air strikes continue in Sabri and Gwarsha. A former TV presenter for Libya Awlan survived an attempted assassination in Beida, and the finance manager of Afriqiyah Airways was kidnapped in Tripoli.

Two guards are killed and four kidnapped in an attack on the Tripoli home of the Presidency Council member Ahmed Maetig. The Tripoli home of former General National Congress (GNC) member Juma Sayeh was also attacked and destroyed.

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## Militia Activity

April 17th

## Political Developments

The army said that it had ousted all IS and Ansar Al-Sharia fighters from the Benghazi University campus. Fighting continued around the cement factory at Huwari. The Libyan army reportedly retook the cement factory on 18 April.

April 19th

Heavy fighting resumed as the Libyan army pushed into Gwarsha from Huwari. By late afternoon, a local commander was claiming that nearly all of the district had been taken. Some Libyan militants surrendered. Tripoli Castle overlooking Martyrs' Square was taken over by militia commander Hashim Bishr. The air force launched several airstrikes in Ganfouda against IS, Ansar Al-Sharia and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council. IS fighters in Gwarsha captured two workers from the Benghazi Medical Centre.

Bishr's First Division militia declared support for the Presidency Council headed by Fayeze Serraj.

April 20th

The Libya National Army took control of Fataieh by driving remaining IS fighters from the Derna area. IS fighters retreated towards the desert road to Ajdabiya, heading for Sirte, taking 32 vehicles with them. There were claims that IS was forced out of Fataieh purely by the Shura Council of Derna Mujahedeen and not the LNA. As the LNA left, there were reports that they aerielly-bombed the area. Reports contrast on whether IS militants or fighters from the Shura Council of Derna Mujahedeen were targeted. There were further reports of continued fighting near Al-Mekhili, south west of Derna, as LNA land and air forces targeted the retreating IS militants.

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## Militia Activity

## Political Developments

April 23rd

IS attacked a checkpoint near an oil plant in eastern Libya. A 60-vehicles strong force mounted the attack 50km south of Brega, east of Tripoli. The head of the central region Petroleum Facilities' Guards (PFG), Ibrahim Jadhan, was injured in the fighting. A number of IS militants were killed. Libya Herald reported that IS fighters were pulling out of the village of Ben Jawad, and returning to Sirte. 3 people were killed in an air raid by a helicopter belonging to Haftar in Derna. A Serbian worker was kidnapped whilst visiting Messla Oil Field near the border with Egypt. He was released on April 27th.

April 25th

An air raid by the warplanes of the Misratah militias on Al-Sittin checkpoint, west of Sirte, left casualties amongst the ranks of IS.

Libya's new unity government took control of more ministries in Tripoli including foreign affairs as it seeks to assert its authority.

April 27th

Six people, said to be civilians or members of the Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Derna are reported to have been killed in air strikes in Derna. The police academy is under the control of the Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Derna. There are reports of the movement of Libyan National Army troops towards Sirte from the south-west and east. At least one Misratan brigade also announced it was moving eastwards towards the 200 km long coastal strip controlled by IS militants. An army source reported that a force of more than 1000 men had left Ghabghab, and was heading for Sirte.

It seems likely that the army convoy leaving Ghabghab will include some of the armoured personnel carriers and pickups delivered to Tobrouk from the UAE.

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Militia Activity

Political Developments

April 29th

Residents in Derna took to the streets to protest against continuing airstrikes in the town by the Libyan National Army. Burning an Italian flag, they condemned what they said was Italian and UN interference in Libya.

April 30th

IS executed two brothers from the city of Suluq in Sirte. They were apprehended because they had photos of army personnel on their phones.

Military forces from Britain, US and Russia arrived near Tobrouk to support the new UN-backed government.

Sources: ACLED, 2016. Africa Data: real-time 2016 All Africa File.csv [online] Available at: <http://www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2016/> [Accessed 20/05/2106].