

Reinforcing Security Sector Governance in Libya

DCAF Country Strategy



DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is committed to making people more secure through accountable and effective security and justice. We help national and international entities to deliver security that respects human rights, upholds the rule of law, and is democratically controlled, by:



Helping to improve the way national security sectors are governed



Guiding the development of sound, sustainable security governance policies



Promoting locally owned reforms that are inclusive, participatory, and gender responsive

DCAF's engagement consists of:



Providing technical expertise to nationally led SSG/R processes



Capacity building for state and non-state actors



Publishing research and knowledge products



Promoting internationally recommended good governance practices



Advising on security sector-related legal and policy questions



Overview

Against the backdrop of the ceasefire agreement signed on 23 October 2020, a new momentum for Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) in Libya was brought about, as these processes became increasingly tangible in the eyes of Libyan and international stakeholders. Indeed, the end of the Tripoli offensive led by Khalifa Haftar's Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) has paved the way for reviving those initiatives. While international spoilers continue playing a role in Libya, bringing with them numerous challenges to stabilisation, this momentum is one that needs to be capitalized upon in order to alleviate the suffering of the Libyan population, and begin laying the foundation for accountable and transparent reform processes to take place.

› HEAVY BURDEN ON CIVILIANS

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of military escalation, as armed groups across the political spectrum appear to have been involved in systematic abuse and regular violations of International Humanitarian Law. War crimes are believed to be committed across the country, which is part of the tragic effects of the absence of accountability. The country's infrastructures become a cause for major concern, particularly against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the country's healthcare system has considerably deteriorated in the past years. Fighting and sabotage periodically damage the country's energy and water systems, leading to week-long water and power cuts. The offensive on Tripoli led to the displacement of large numbers of civilians, who are still struggling for a safe return to their places of residence. This compounds with the said infrastructure and health system problems to rendering many IDPs severely vulnerable to the ongoing pandemic, as they await reconstruction and relocation initiatives. Women and youth remain among the most affected by the ongoing conflict. Moreover, observers noted that the conflict has, since April 2019 in particular, had a major effect on the lives of women and youth, whose physical security has been threatened, their mobility curtailed, and employment opportunities reduced.

› REVAMPED POLITICAL PROCESS

Throughout 2020, progress was made on the Berlin Conference roadmap and its thematic tracks, as the UN-led political process as a whole was revamped, culminating in the election of a new Government of National Unity (GNU) within the scope of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) on 5 February 2021. Simultaneously, progress is being made on both the military track – via the Joint Military Commission (5+5), active since February 2020 and the primary locus for discussions around the establishment of a demilitarized zone between Sirte and Jufra – and the economic track – leading to an agreement on the Terms of Reference for the Libyan Expert Economic Commission and its various mechanisms in February 2021. This process, while contested, brings with itself hope for fair, free and transparent elections to take place on 24 December 2021.

› FRAGMENTED SECURITY LANDSCAPE

Despite the projected cohesion of actors currently at a stalemate in Sirte, the security landscape has experienced a degree of fragmentation across both coalitions (the Government of National Accord (GNA)-aligned forces and the LAAF). Former rifts – which parties had cast aside as they mobilized on either side of the conflict – as well as new divides created by the fallouts from Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, are manifesting themselves as security actors seek to entrench their influence following the dialogue process.



Challenges

› WIDESPREAD ABUSE FROM SECURITY ‘PROVIDERS’

The fragmented institutional and security environment favors lack of accountability and oversight of security forces, especially considering the chaotic institutional setup and absence of clear mandates. Armed groups affiliated to both sides have been repeatedly accused of involvement in serious violations of International Humanitarian Law. Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions are part of these alleged abuses. The criminal justice chain is not immune to abuses of power, while victims' and defendants' rights are too often not guaranteed or simply ignored. Several detention centres, mostly exempt from formal oversight, are regularly denounced as human rights abuse hotspots. The smuggling of migrants, while being regularly denounced by advocacy groups and NGOs, remains a major source of income for certain local armed groups, who detain their victims in horrendous conditions.

› LACK OF CAPACITY

The fallout from the Tripoli offensive has severely depleted the capabilities of the administration, divided between two governments, and increasingly subjected them to the pressure of armed non-state actors and patronage networks. The shift from proxy involvement to direct foreign interventionism has cemented a dynamic whereby the ad hoc concurrent authorities are bypassed – further hampering their ability to govern or to provide security across the Libyan territory. The contemporary blueprint for dialogue appears to ignore these realities, focusing instead on brokering a power-sharing rather than aiming for coherent and inclusive reforms. Far reaching institutional reforms are therefore still pending, and are critical to ensure that roles are clarified, structures are built and capacities are sought to ensure the efficient delivery of security services that respond to people's needs, and that are respectful of the rule of law and human rights.

› DESTRUCTIVE NARRATIVES AND PROPAGANDA

The omnipresence of misinformation and widespread propaganda in Libyan media outlets has had destructive long-term effects on the country's social fabric. It contributes to the persistence of the conflict by enforcing divisive narratives. A de-escalation of such discourses is a prerequisite for creating a conducive political environment to favor restoration of dialogue.



Photos taken in Tripoli, Libya
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DCAF's Response

The current situation in Libya requires a concerted and focused action among all international organizations involved. Under the leadership of the UN, the EU and other key multilateral agencies, international community (IC) actors need to support the establishment of more favourable conditions for the de-escalation of hostilities and the effective implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. At the same time, existing and partly functional security sector institutions (MoJ, MoI, MoD) need to be assisted in strengthening their internal capacities, transparency and effectiveness. Access to reliable and unbiased information, as well as the provision of technical and regulatory assistance, should be part of the IC's programming, contributing to more favourable conditions for the resumption of inclusive political dialogue, while paving the way for reform.

In 2021, DCAF will focus on providing advice and technical assistance to the leading multilateral organizations operating in Libya on SSG/R strategies, policies and needs, as well as innovative approaches to implement SSR/G in conflict-afflicted environments. In this framework, DCAF will also develop initiatives to support Libyan functioning authorities and security institutions, most notably the Ministries of Interior, Defence and possibly Justice, in leveraging their strategic planning, while strengthening their capacities, transparency and effectiveness. Simultaneously, DCAF will also work with key Libyan municipalities to strengthen community-level oversight efforts in the broader context of ceasefire and interim security arrangements. In support of these engagements, DCAF will enlarge its existing focus on access to information, through Marsad Libya and additional media capacity building. In the area of regulatory assistance, DCAF will continue to sustain and expand its online resources providing access to Libya's security sector legislation.



› CONTRIBUTING TO SSR AND DDR DOCTRINE-DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY DESIGN

Following the publication of innovative knowledge products such as [Exploring Armed Groups in Libya: Perspectives on Security Sector Reform in a Hybrid Environment](#) (Geneva: DCAF, 2020) and [Conflicts, Peacebuilding and Pandemics: New Perspectives on SSR in the MENA region](#) (DCAF-ISPI Report, 2020), DCAF will continue to contribute to the creation of doctrine on security sector reform and governance in Libya. The project aims to support the country's stabilization, by virtue of exploring and applying SSR/G solutions to enable progress towards agreements to plan for SSR in Libya. Based on its expertise, DCAF will focus on the provision of technical knowledge drawn from operational engagements around the theme of hybridity in conflict environments in the continuum between SSR and DDR.

› SUPPORT TO MULTILATERAL ACTORS AND UN-LED PROCESSES

Considering that peace and stability is key for the launching of any reform processes, DCAF will design and implement projects developed in cooperation with multilateral actors, most notably: 1) Supporting the UN-led processes in Libya, by facilitating and enabling well-informed dialogues on security arrangements, concerns, needs and future security governance visions, as part of ongoing peace building efforts; 2) In partnership with EUBAM, DCAF will continue to support the Libyan Judicial Police (LJP)'s Training strategy for new recruits and internal structural review, as an element of stability; 3) Continue to support the MED Dialogues initiative, in cooperation with the Italian MFA and Italian think tank ISPI, which connects high-level government officials, think tanks and academics to promote security and dialogue across the MENA region.

› SUPPORT TO LIBYAN MINISTRIES

DCAF will put a programmatic emphasis on processes of pre-SSR and conflict SSR by engaging with the Ministries of Interior and Defence to support the restructuring of their institutional setup, building related capacities and laying the foundations for longer-term SSR engagements.

› SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT AT LOCAL LEVEL

In partnership with other international organizations (i.e. the Danish Demining Group - DDG), DCAF will support key Libyan municipalities' governance capabilities through consultations, trainings, and the development of locally owned initiatives, in particular in the areas of civilian oversight and community policing.

› REGULATORY ASSISTANCE

Through its online Libyan Security Sector Legislation Database, Libyan Criminal Justice System platform, and the Migration Legislation infographic, DCAF will continue to provide up-to-date English and Arabic versions of the country's key legislations and decrees, in order to support lawyers, researchers and international community practitioners in their daily work in Libya. DCAF will aim at expanding its dedicated thematic folders, as well as at launching legal analysis that help identify gaps and incoherencies in the legal framework. This shall pave the way for engaging with future legislative authorities in processes of legal reform and legislative oversight.

› ACCESS TO RELIABLE INFORMATION

In a context characterized by intense propaganda and misinformation, with potentially very destructive effects on the Libyan social fabric, DCAF will continue to provide capacity building support, as well as reliable information and analyses to Libyan stakeholders and the public through Marsad Libya - a platform that provides impartial and reliable information about the current conflict, which will be further developed to interact with other factchecking initiatives - as well as by providing tailored SSR related training modules to Libyan journalists, in coordination with existing media governance programs, to contribute to debunk propaganda and contribute to de-escalation of narratives.

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