
Libyan Local Governance Case Studies

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Map of Municipalities



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

A. Summary of Findings

The stabilization of Libya is a pressing objective, both to preserve the rights, needs and dignity of the Libyan people, and to prevent negative spill-over effects that a weak and poorly governed Libya has on its neighbors. Numerous international actors are engaged in Libya to help achieve stability and development. However, state institutions are weak, and there is little prospect of an effective central government for some time to come. Nonetheless, such a government is not the only actor that can improve living conditions and stability in the short term. Even with limited resources, Libyans across the country have shown a remarkable ability to come up with creative solutions to the problems of governance, tailored to local conditions. They have turned to formal, traditional, and ad hoc institutions and mechanisms – Municipal Councils, Councils of Wise Men, Crisis Committees, and civil society organizations, to satisfy their basic needs in terms of services, security, reconciliation, and justice.

Although the process of decentralization in Libya is still at its early stage and legislation is incomplete and often contradictory, Municipal Councils have been elected throughout Libya. At a time when central institutions are weak, executive and legislative authorities are divided, and the economy is stagnant, this report has revealed that local governments are best equipped to provide stability and deliver needed services to their communities. Having their finger on the pulse of their respective communities, they are best positioned and informed to manage crises and address people's needs.

Some of these have been more successful than others, influenced by a number of local factors. The goal of this research project has been to analyze the strategies, constraints, successes and failures of six different Libyan municipalities – Zuwara; Souq Al-Juma'a; Zliten; Misrata; Benghazi; and Bayda – in order to identify which local governance mechanisms may be successful in which circumstances. A team of Libyans and Libya experts conducted in depth grassroots research in order to discover what does and doesn't work from those local actors in the best position to know. They have conducted in-depth interviews with Mayors, Municipal Council members, members of the Council of Wise Men, members of security and defense forces, leaders of civil society organizations, businessmen, journalist, and researchers.

This report has been organized into six structured case studies on local governance that describe the nature and role of the key local actors, the challenges and successes of service provision, the mechanisms that are adopted to provide security and justice, and to settle disputes, and in some instances, the efforts to reconcile with neighboring communities. They also highlight the role and impact of local media, civil society and the international support received. This rich analysis seeks to provide the detailed information needed to design strategies aimed at strengthening governance in Libya from the bottom-up, city-by-city.

The researchers found that the largest and most common problems these municipalities face are as follows:

- Incomplete and contradictory national legislation has created a situation where central government ministries hold legal responsibility for key services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, but are largely unable to provide them, leaving local municipal governments to fill the gap.
- Due to political divisions, economic challenges, and weak central administration, Libyan municipalities are not receiving sufficient funds to administer their city and respond to people's needs.

- These local governments are either unable (again due to national legislation) to collect local taxes to fund these critical services, or are forced to organize such collection on uncertain legal ground. Thus, they are forced to direct resources to only the most urgent needs.
- Local government officials lack expertise and experience in numerous aspects of local governance (such as urban planning) that they are now de facto responsible for. Moreover, they are unable to hire external experts for assistance due to their financial constraints.
- Lacking clear authority over local security providers, whether police or militia, local government officials must rely on negotiation and leverage stemming from traditional social relationships (tribal and otherwise) to keep these providers operating to maintain local peace.

Although all Libyan municipalities face the same challenges, their ability to address them, and the type of solutions they are able to find are shaped by a few key contextual factors, such as:

- **Local balance of power:** The role and relative power of Municipal Councils, Military Councils, Shura Councils, Neighborhood Councils, Council of Wise Men, and other social and tribal groups vary greatly according to local traditions, recent history, and social make-up. The balance of power between them largely determines which bodies control the municipality.

For instance, the Libyan National Army has asserted its control on most of Eastern Libya. Thus, in Benghazi and many other municipalities in the region, the army and its affiliated security services largely control local governance.

- **Community's and municipality's historical roots:** Length of experience with local governance and overall length of history as a community (newly-created municipality vs. long-established one).

For instance, Souq Al-Juma'a has evolved into a cohesive and fairly homogeneous community over centuries, to the point of supplanting tribal identities and traditional mechanisms with its own neighborhood identity, social mechanisms, and powerful armed groups.

Similarly, Zliten was already one of the municipalities (baladiyah) of Libya from 1983 to 1995. Historically, the population of Zliten was composed of seven main tribes, and has remained relatively homogenous and cohesive over the course of centuries. Zliten also hosts the oldest religious educational institution in Libya, which has contributed to shape and homogenize the community's political culture.

In addition, the experience of a municipality during the 2011 revolution has often played an important role for the development and strengthening of local governance mechanisms and institutions. Nowhere is this truer than in Benghazi and Misrata, which were on the forefront of the battle against the Gadhafi regime. During the revolution, local authorities formed Local Councils, Military Councils, Neighborhood Councils, and multiple Committees and networks in charge of managing key functions, such as media, banking, and mobile communication. These initiatives laid the foundations for the development of these cities' current local governance institutions.

- **Human and social resources:** The presence of civil society organizations, community media, social activists and entrepreneurs, local subject matter experts (often from universities), local businessmen and economic entrepreneurs.

As an example, local governance in Zuwara greatly benefited from the remarkably active and vibrant civil society and community media that emerged during the revolution, such as

Zuwara Media Center, Kassass Radio, Freedom Team For Emergency And Medical Care, Tefenagh Art Center, Tweza Cultural Social Forum, and many other CSOs.

Based on the different political sub-culture of its inhabitants, Souq Al-Juma'a developed different mechanisms to tap on the human capital of its community members. Its Municipal Council formed an Experts Council, which is composed of more than 30 experts and academics from the municipality. This body advises the Municipal Council on development strategies and plans.

Zliten instead capitalizes on its dynamic business sector and on the entrepreneurial spirit of its inhabitants. Local businessmen often join Municipal Council initiatives and support local service companies. Furthermore, Zliten's Mayor and his colleagues and staff try to apply transparent, efficient and effective business management practices to local governance, such as publicly discussing fiscal policy, streamlining financial reporting, and publishing the budget.

- **Geopolitical position:** Relative independence (often simply a function of geography) from the larger political conflict being violently contested at the national level. Municipalities can either benefit from being on the periphery of power centres (e.g. Zuwara), or from being close to a power centre (e.g. Souk al Juma'a).

Thus, the solutions that each municipality has crafted to solve problems in its own particular context vary quite broadly. Local governance architecture and performance are very diverse across the country, and solutions are context-specific. However, some common themes and successful local governance mechanisms clearly emerge from our analysis:

- 1) **Solving the security challenge is a necessary precondition:** Successful local governance greatly depends on the ability to solve the security conundrum posed by the multiplication of powerful non-state armed groups, amid the weakness of state security and defense authorities. All relatively successful municipalities studied in this research have centralized control over security actors, although their methods differ from one to the other.

Some municipalities, such as Zuwara and Misrata, have created "super-militias," which have been recognized and legitimized by the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Defense, all-the-while remaining largely independent from them. Another effective mechanism adopted by successful municipalities is the creation of Security and/or Defence Operations Room to coordinate security and defense decision-making and operations (e.g. Zliten, Zuwara).

Other municipalities, such as Benghazi and others in the East that are controlled by the Libyan National Army have centralized security, and have often militarized through the appointment of a security officer as the Mayor.

- 2) **Effective local dispute-settlement mechanisms are keys to stability:** Successful municipalities have established effective and proactive dispute-settlement mechanisms, which vary depending on the community's social make-up. They typically include one or more actors and organizations, such as Tribal Councils, Councils of Wise Men, religious leaders, city notables, and civil society activists. The more successful of these tackle both inter and intra municipality disputes before violence can spread. When communities are cohesive, these bodies cooperate with the Municipal Council to provide stability to their community (e.g. by signing social charters among local authorities), reconcile with neighboring communities (e.g. by signing peace charters with neighboring communities), and solve major issues (e.g. the smuggling of migrants).

For instance, in Zuwara, the Council of Wise Men (Majlis al-Hokama) has centralized local dispute resolution and reconciliation functions, under the direction of the Municipal Council. It helps solve conflicts among the town's inhabitants, its militias, and its government security bodies. It also works in close coordination with the Municipal Council to sign peace agreements with the neighboring towns of Zoltan, Jmail and Rigdalin, with which it has long-standing grievances.

In Zliten, the Municipal Council has created a Conflict and Dispute Resolution Committee, which is comprised of fifteen respected, local Shiekhs who are knowledgeable in Islamic jurisprudence and Libyan civil law. This body is charged with resolving property disputes through arbitration. The Municipal Council has formalized its role by ensuring that its rulings are recognized and endorsed by the local court of law. This extra-judicial mechanism has allowed many local inhabitants to reach a peaceful conclusion for scores of disagreements over property ownership.

- 3) Local community media are keys to legitimacy, effectiveness and responsiveness:** Community media outlets play a very important role to provide common and reliable sources of information, improve the quality of services, and develop accountability from local officials. Municipalities that extensively utilize multiple media channels to publicly communicate their challenges, decisions, and achievements to their constituencies, and open direct channels of communication with them are most able to cement their popular legitimacy. The most successful ones establish public procedures for constituents to raise issues and voice concerns.

In Bayda, the Mayor, Municipal Council members, and local officials regularly appear on local radio stations to discuss issues pertinent to the local community and residents in the city. The Council regularly supports three local radio stations, and a local TV station. These local media help foster dialogue between the Mayor and the citizenry, and improves the level of transparency and accountability. For instance, in May 2017, after months of a local media campaign and investigations into the poor management and performance of Badya's main hospital, its General Manager was sacked and replaced.

Similarly, in Zuwara, municipal authorities regularly participate in live radio programs through the local community radio. Furthermore, the Municipal Council has a very strong media team, and the small town has an active media centre and two local magazines. These media have provided a conduit to express public complaints and demands, and to denounce abuses and corruption.

- 4) Ability to raise revenue locally is key to providing services:** The level of popular support and legitimacy granted to local authorities greatly depends on their capacity to provide services, and guarantee stability and order. In turn, this largely depends on the ability of Municipal Councils to raise revenue locally and allocate it to address local needs.

Some municipalities have collected necessary resources by raising local revenue in spite of central government protests. Others have relied heavily on informal arrangements with businesses, local experts, and civil society organizations.

Zliten Municipal Council capitalized on the presence in the city of one of Libya's largest cement factories by levying a tax on purchase of cement. The Council created a joint commission with the cement factory to study tax mechanisms and shared the proposed strategy with the citizenry, who generally agreed to it. As a result, the Council imposes a 2% tax on any purchase of liquefied

cement and charges 60 LYD per car for packed cement. These funds are entirely allocated to supporting municipal services and development initiatives.

Zuwara on the other hand benefits from its proximity to Libya's main border crossing with Tunisia. The ability of its Municipal Council to raise revenue from the Ras Ejdeer border crossing allows it to support the town Crime Fighting Unit, to address local service needs, such as the maintenance of water and sewage systems, and to fund popular projects, such as the renovation of schools, equipping the hospital, and renovating the local souk (public marketplace).

- 5) Local state-society cooperation enhances service quality and responsiveness:** Local civil society organizations are unique capacity-multipliers for Municipal Councils that decide to cooperate with them and support their work. Furthermore, local state-society cooperation helps diffuse tensions and improves the quality and responsiveness of service provision.

In Misrata, the Municipal Council has partnered with the local Civil Society Commission's office to create the Fund for the Support of Voluntary Works. This fund aims at supporting local CSO projects to protect the environment, and to improve local living conditions. Furthermore, a number of local engineers, lawyers, economists, and university professors formed a CSO, which has carried out an extensive study on infrastructure, communications, water resources and supplies, housing, industry, economic activities, the sea port, the airport, and transportation and sewage. Their extensive report has informed a number of Municipal Council development policies and initiatives. One such initiative has been the creation of a much needed Psychotherapy Center. Since its opening, it has treated more than one thousand patients suffering from post-war traumas and/or psychological illnesses.

Similarly, Bayda's Municipal Council has greatly benefitted from its regular cooperation with Bayda's Omar Al-Mokhtar University - Libya's third largest. In 2014, during the peak of fighting in the East, the university provided one of its students' halls to accommodate internally displaced families. The Council also draws from the expertise of the university professors to carry out studies and to provide technical advice. For instance, a team of professors are currently carrying out a feasibility study to introduce parking spaces and parking fees in the city.

B. Recommendations

Although local authorities did not identify international support as a key factor for their success, they recognized that specific projects have provided a decisive help in certain areas. Moreover, several municipalities have benefited from foreign-supported initiatives and training, and expressed a great desire for more. In particular, our research findings suggest some areas of opportunity for international support. International actors could help build the capacity of local governance in Libya by designing and implementing targeted projects in close partnership with local stakeholders. A few examples of such initiatives are:

- **Thematic research and analysis:** Firstly, the detailed analysis we carried out in six Libyan municipalities has shed light on local governance practices, which should be analysed and distilled into replicable strategies. Thus, building on this report, a follow-up research should craft actionable and replicable policies for each the key cross-cutting themes that have proven to be central to the success of local governance. These are

- Local security arrangements;
- Dispute-settlement and reconciliation mechanisms;
- Community media;
- Local revenue generation and management;
- State-society cooperation.

A thematic research should build on the case studies presented, distil successful local governance practices, and elaborate on when and how they can be reproduced in other localities throughout Libya and in similar contexts around the world.

- **Dialogue and public communication:** Develop a two-way communication between Municipal authorities and their constituency by helping local authorities effectively use multiple media channels. Foster cooperation between community media and local authorities to develop a culture and practices of transparency and participatory governance. Increase the level of political participation of community members.
- **Cooperation between municipal Councils and CSOs:** Facilitate the cooperation between municipal authorities and CSOs for the provision of services and the improvement of the quality of life in their community (also known as “co-production” of services).

Despite its manifest potential, cooperation between local authorities and civil society organizations is still low. This is due to authorities’ general lack of experience with civil society and, often, even to their distrust of some of the most active groups, such as women and youth. However, as the municipalities that have collaborated with civil society have been more successful, it is possible that positive models can spread from area to area and that working relationships can thus be expanded over time.

- **E-government:** Use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the activities of public sector organizations. Develop the capacity of Municipal Councils to deliver services through the use of internet. Establish a “digital agora” to connect the government, civil society, and citizens.
- **Local Public Financial Mechanisms:** Support Libya in developing a sound system for local government budgeting and financial management. This support should be two-pronged:
 - National level: provide technical assistance to the government, and to the Ministries of Local Administration, Planning, and Finance to harmonize existing legislation on municipal budgeting and financial support, and to draft an executive regulation that implements Law 59’s provisions on municipal revenue generation.¹
 - Municipal level: Train municipal staff on budgeting, accounting, and financial auditing. Support Municipal Council to identify potential local sources of income and to design viable tax plans.

Lastly, support should be given to ensure that national and municipal financial mechanisms are harmonized.

- **National Municipal Council forum:** Help create and support a national Municipal Council Forum to foster communication between local administrations. This Forum would create a community

¹ See Art. 52, Law (59) of 2012.

of practice able to share lessons learned on successes and failures, and would provide a reliable, non-political and non-partisan platform to engage in inter-communal dialogue and reconciliation.

Such targeted support at the local level has the potential to produce tangible results in a timely manner. However, success will depend largely on the awareness that each locality is distinct, and must be understood in its own context before effective strategies can be designed and implemented to support Libyan municipalities.

Glossary of Terms

- Council of Wise Men (Created by a GNC law in 2015): Majlis Al-Hokama (aka Hokama wa al-Shura)
- General Authority of Islamic Affairs: Dar al-Awqaf
- Local Council (formed during the Revolution): Majlis Mahalli
- Municipal Council (formed in accordance with local governance Law 59): Majlis Al-Baladi
- Municipal Administration: Diwan Al-Baladiya
- Municipal Administration Director: Wakil Diwan Al-Baladiya
- Municipal Council Committees: Lijan Al-Majlis Al-Baladi
- Municipal Districts: Furuq Al-Baladiya
- Municipal District Director: Raiys Maktab Faraa Baladi
- National Ministries' local offices (a.k.a. Executive Offices): Makatib Al-Kita-at
- Neighborhoods: Mahallat
- Neighborhood Council: Majlis Al-Haiy
- Neighborhood Coordinator (under Law 59): Mukhtar Mahalla
- Shura Council (formed in accordance with Law 59): Majlis Al-Shura
- Social Council: Majlis Ijtimai (includes civil society activists)
- Tribal Council: Majlis al-Kabail

Introduction

A. Research Objectives and Rationale

The Libyan revolution brought down a largely ineffective, unresponsive, corrupt, and highly centralized administrative system. Confronted with this challenging legacy and with the violence and lawlessness resulting from the empowerment of non-state armed groups, Libyan and international efforts to develop and support effective central state institutions have failed. The current low-intensity civil war between two loose coalitions, and the further dilution of power and legitimacy among three governments and two Parliaments, are clear indicators that the emergence of central state institutions able to govern will take years.

Meanwhile, Libyans are turning to their Municipal Councils and to other local governance actors, such as Councils of Wise Men, Crisis Committees, and Civil Society organizations, to satisfy their basic needs. In the midst of political instability, it is evident that local governance mechanisms can potentially fill the gap left by the absence of state institutions. However, the quality of local governance varies greatly across Libya. In some cities Libyans are enjoying a measure of security, better services, and even some forms of justice, whereas in others citizens are confronted with constant insecurity, lack of basic services, and deteriorating infrastructure.

What makes some municipalities perform better than others? In other words, how does local governance function in (relatively) successful municipalities?

Answering this question is the first step to identifying the success factors and mechanisms that could be supported in order to strengthen local participatory governance. In turn, the strengthening of local governance is at the core of national and international efforts supporting the stabilization of Libya from the bottom-up, city-by-city. Instead of importing models from abroad, and designing programs to support local governance through a process of trial and error, we should learn from what is already proving to work across Libya. In other words, we should analyze the functioning of successful municipalities in order to draw some lessons that can inform development programs. Unfortunately, there are almost no data available on these relatively successful municipalities.

This research fills the information gap on successful local governance mechanisms by drawing from the experience and contextual knowledge of Libyan researchers and Libya scholars. Together, they have carried out current, accurate, and grass-roots level research and analysis of Libya's complex, rapidly evolving, and highly localized environment.

This report presents six case studies of municipalities that have enjoyed a relatively higher level of security, stability, and/or quality of services compared to other municipalities in Libya. From West to East, they are Zuwara, Souk al-Juma'a, Zliten, Misrata, Benghazi, and Bayda, as depicted in the map provided above.

B. Defining Governance

In broad terms, governance is the manner and level of effectiveness through which power is exercised in the management of a political community. Local governance is the management of a sub-national community by elected local authorities as well as any other informal authority or group. Drawing from UNDP's definitions: "Local governance comprises a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level."

Governance is not restricted to state officials; rather it is the result of interactions, relationships and networks between the different sectors (government, public sector, private sector and civil society) and involves decisions, negotiation, and different power relations between stakeholders to determine who gets what, when and how."² This is all the more true in a transitional setting such as Libya.

In fact, in post-conflict environments it is local administration rather than central government that plays the pivotal role for peace and stability.³ While democratic State institutions will provide long term mechanisms for peaceful and just social living, local provision of basic goods and services may grant the short term peace and stability necessary to build democratic State institutions.

Governance has two components that go hand in hand: Normative and instrumental. The normative dimension of governance focuses on equity, accountability, rule of law, respect for human rights, and lack of corruption, rather than on the pure effectiveness of governance in terms of service and goods provision. Along this dimension, governance is evaluated in reference to the model of "good governance" developed by the World Bank and widely popular in the development community. This normative component of governance can be summarized as focusing on three principles: Transparency, responsiveness, and accountability. The instrumental dimension of governance, in contrast, looks at how well governance structures responds to the basic needs of the community members. In this sense, we may speak more appropriately about "service provision." These two components complement and influence each other.

C. Team and Methodology

The team is composed of five Libyan activists and researchers and one Libya scholar, all of whom have an extensive knowledge of local governance dynamics and realities in their municipality of study.

Each case study research draws from open sources (articles, reports) and direct, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key actors, such as: Mayor; Municipal Council members; Shura members/Sheikh; Civil society activists; Members of security forces; Local journalist; International organizations that provided support to the municipality.

Each case study is structured around eight key sections, each covering an aspect of local governance:

1. **Brief introduction** describing the municipality
2. **Municipal Authorities:** Local authorities structure and functioning, decision-making mechanisms, and financial management.
3. **Service Provision:** Successes and challenges of service provision. Examples of cooperation between municipal authorities and civil society.
4. **Security:** Existing security mechanisms, successes and challenges.
5. **Justice and Dispute-settlement Mechanisms:** Existing justice and dispute-settlement mechanisms, successes and challenges.
6. **Community Media:** Existing local media, and their contribution to local governance.
7. **International support:** Overview of the main foreign support projects, successes and challenges.
8. **Conclusion**

D. Local Governance in Post-Gadhafi Libya

Local administration in Libya has undergone a number of changes since the country's independence in 1951. The territory was successively divided into Federal Provinces and then Muhafazat (Governorates or Provinces) during the Kingdom; Baladiyat (Municipalities) after 1983; and then into Shabiyat (Districts)

² UNDP, *User's Guide to Measuring Local Governance*, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre

³ For a comparative analysis of the role of local governance for conflict prevention in fragile contexts, see Stephen Commins, *Basic services delivery in conflict affected and fragile areas*, Paper for: UNESCAP regional technical seminar: "Local Governance and Basic Services Delivery in Conflict Affected Areas," 2009

after 1995 up until the 2011 revolution. In reality though, like other institutions in the Libyan *Jamahiriyah* ("state of the masses," the name that Gadhafi assigned to the Libyan state he created), local administration had no substantive governing role.

During the 2011 revolution, which lasted eight months, communities formed Local Councils (Majalis Mahallia) to administer their territory and address the need of its citizens. Since the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime, local governance has been developing all across Libya, reviving old institutions and forming new ones. On December 10, 2011, in order to provide an institutional and legal framework for the dozens of Local Councils that had been forming since the outset of the revolution, the National Transitional Council (NTC) issued Resolution No. 176, entitled: "Adopting local councils' internal regulations."

This legislation provided a stopgap solution until July 18, 2012, when, under increasing public demands for decentralization (particularly in the Eastern region of Cyrenaica),⁴ the NTC promulgated Law 59, which provided a more comprehensive articulation of Libya's new local administration system. The law called for the creation of a two-level local governance system based on Governorates (Muhafazat) and Municipalities (Baladiyat). Due to difficulties in agreeing on the number and geographic scope of Governorates, these administrative entities have not been created yet.

Despite the promulgation of Law 59 in 2012, and the continued pressures from the federalist movement,⁵ the new local governance architecture was not implemented until early 2013. On April 1, 2013, the Zeidan Government issued Cabinet Decree No. 130, which provided the executive regulation of Law 59 of 2012 containing the needed details for its enactment. Later that month, the government finally established 99 municipalities,⁶ and shortly thereafter, in the absence of Governorates, the GNC promulgated a law amending Law 59 of 2012, re-assigning the power and responsibilities of Governorates to the Ministries and to the Municipal Councils.⁷

These laws finally paved the way for the elections of Municipal Councils, which started on November 30, 2013 in Baida, Shahat, Tazarbo, and Bentbeya.⁸ Since then, a total of 94 municipalities have elected their councils, substituting existing Local Councils with Municipal Councils (Majalis al-Baladia). It must be noted that successive governments have continued to create new Municipalities, reaching a total of 126 at the time of writing.⁹

⁴ Larbi Sadiki. 2012. "Libya's new 'feds': The call of Cyrenaica". *Al Jazeera*. 7 March.

Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/20123771523372117.html>

⁵ Jamie Dettmer. 2013. "Libyan Federalists Raise Tensions." *Voice of America*. November 04, 2013.

Available from: <https://www.voanews.com/a/libyan-federalists-raise-tensions/1783421.html>

⁶ Cabinet Decree No. (180) of April 25, 2013

Available from: https://web.archive.org/web/20140326232441/http://www.ccmce.ly/pdf/2/180_2.pdf

⁷ GNC Law No. (9) of March 28, 2013 amending Law No. (59) of 2012 on the local administration system.

Available From: <http://www.log.gov.ly/downloads/add07-2013.pdf>

⁸ "Libya municipal council polls kick off." *AFP*. November 30, 2013.

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2013/11/114207/libya-municipal-council-polls-kick-off/>

⁹ According to Otman Gajiji, Former Chairman of the Central Committee of Municipal Elections, "There were 102 during Zidane's Government, then the governments in the east and the west created another 12 Municipalities each, for a total of 126 now" (Gajiji, 2017)

E. Current Local Governance Actors

Municipal Councils¹⁰

Municipal Councils are composed of either 5 or 7 members depending on whether the population of the municipality is more or less than 250,000 inhabitants. The members must include one female and one member from revolutionaries with special needs, if any are available. Their term lasts four years. The Mayor, who acts as the head of the Council, is elected by the Council members.

The duties and responsibilities of Municipal Councils include managing: Municipal guards (in charge of protecting consumers and the owners of economic activities); local permits; small business incubators; public health; environmental sanitation; public hygiene; quarries; public cemeteries; gardens, parks, and summer resorts; water and sanitation; domestic gas; public administration of squares and streets; public transportation and road traffic; civil registries; public property and urban planning; and construction and demolition affairs.

Municipal Councils operate on the basis of an annual budget provided by the Ministry of Local Government. Theoretically, these budgets are of two types:

- Operating budget (Al-Mizania Al-Tasyrya): Covers salaries, stationery and other operational needs; and
- Development budget (Al-Mizania Al-Tanmawia): Support municipal development projects (e.g. reconstruction, equipment).

However, the distribution of funds to Municipal Councils across Libya has been irregular and unequal due to a series of reasons. Firstly, municipal budget allocations are based on the geographical size of the Municipality, and on its number of inhabitants, based on the last available national census, which was conducted in 2012. However, due to local fighting and unequal hardships across the country, Libyans have moved and population figures have changed. Secondly, central executive and legislative authorities have multiplied, and are internally divided, which prevents the establishment of a single national budget. Furthermore, all financial support sent by the Ministry of Local Government has been disbursed as operating budget funds. Occasionally, some Municipal Councils also received emergency funds (tawari in Arabic).

All major services, such as health care, education, infrastructure, water, electricity, and trash collection, are under the financial and executive control of national ministries in Tripoli, which are supposed to allocate funds to their local offices (a.k.a. executive offices, known as Makatib al-Kita-at in Arabic). However, these offices have received little or no funds in the recent years. Thus, inevitably the burden of meeting people's needs and demands for the provision of services has fallen on Municipal Councils, which struggle to meet popular expectations without proper support. Even when they find resources to improve the key services listed above, Municipal Councils have difficulty coordinating initiatives with the pertinent local offices given that the law does not assign Councils any executive authority over them.

According to Law 59, Municipal Councils are allowed to raise local revenue through fees for municipal services, proceeds from museums and gardens, rents from local properties, and revenues from local fairs, museums and stadiums. In addition to the very limited funds generated by these resources, municipalities should also receive their share of local fees, tariffs, and taxes, which constitute the bulk of local state revenues. Municipalities are supposed to send the entirety of these latter revenues to Tripoli, which then re-allocates them the share as provided by law. Law 59 of 2012 indicated that the executive regulation promulgated to clarify and execute it should determine the rules concerning the types of fees, earnings,

¹⁰ According to Law No. (59) of 2012 and to Executive Regulation of Law No. (59) of 2012 on the Local Administration System attached to Cabinet Decree No. (130) of 2013, May 10, 2013.

and royalties of a municipal character and their allocation,¹¹ but the executive regulation failed to do that. Thus, due to incomplete legislation, which add to the lack of organizational capacity, and institutional divisions, municipalities have still not received any portion of these funds. This situation has pushed many municipalities to keep local taxes and tariffs, and often to create new ones. This has drawn admonishments and attempts to regulate local revenue collection and management from both central government claimants in Tripoli¹² and Bayda.¹³

Shura Council (Majlis al-Shura)

In order to inform its decisions, each Municipal Council counts on a Shura Council, as provided by Art. 28 in Law 59 of 2012. This advisory body is composed of experts, consultants, and scientists chosen by the Municipal Council based on their competence, expertise, and interest in local affairs. Its size is half that of the Municipal Council. Shura Council members work on a part-time basis, and they participate in Municipal Council meetings upon invitation, but they do not have the right to vote.

Neighborhood Coordinator (Mukhtar Mahalla)

Following a tradition that existed in several localities, which was institutionalized by Law 59, a number of municipal councils have appointed Neighborhood Coordinators. Their role is to help settle local disputes and foster reconciliation in civil and personal status disputes. Where they exist, these Mukhtars can play an important role in the maintenance of local peace and stability. In some localities, inhabitants have also formed a Neighborhood Council (called Majlis al-Haiy; or Majlis al-Mantika) to further expand the efforts to maintain local peace and stability.¹⁴

Council of Wise Men (Majlis al-Hokama)

Another type of important mediation and conflict resolution organization that helps maintain peace and stability are the so-called Council of Wise Men. These bodies carry out forms of mediation and conflict-resolution mechanisms that are based on tribal and religious traditions, which are rooted in Libya's history. Such councils emerged spontaneously after the 2011 Revolution, however, their existence was officially formalized by a Decree by the General National Congress in 2015.¹⁵

In theory, existing Councils of Wise Men should have been coordinated through a National Council of Wise Men, but this body was never created, either *de jure* or *de facto*. Moreover, although the GNC formalized the existence of these Councils, and even officially recognized some of them,¹⁶ there are many different types of mediation mechanisms in Libya and those that exist are often informal and fluid. In fact, there are over one hundred such bodies across Libya, whose name and composition varies, including: Majlis al-Hokama wa al-Shura; Majlis Ishtimai (including civil society activists); Majlis Kabail (tribal); and Majlis al-Hokama wa al-Ayan.

¹¹ See Art. 52, Law (59) of 2012.

¹² Libyan Business Channel Reporter. 2017. Minister for Municipal Councils's affairs discusses with the municipalities of the south the creation of the Higher Council for Local Administration. *Libyan Business Channel*. Feb. 8. Available from <http://libyanbusiness.tv/2017/02/08/عمدا-مع-يبحث-ليبادية-المجالس-شؤون-وزير/>

¹³ Al-Habil, Yazied. 2015. Minister of local government meets Mayors of municipalities. *Alwasat*. Feb. 19. Available from <http://www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/62184/>

¹⁴ For example, in Benghazi, residents of al-Fawiyhat created a neighborhood Council, which they call "Majlis al-Mantika"

¹⁵ GNC Decree No. (37) of 2015.

¹⁶ For instance, GNC members from Zliten recommended a list of potential members for the city's Council of Wise Men, based on which the President of the GNC issued Decree No. (93) of 2015 officially approving its creation and listing its 118 members. A similar formal recognition was granted to the Council of Wise Men from Sebrata.

Zuwarah





Map 1: Zuwara and neighboring municipalities' boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Introduction

Zuwara, also known as Tamort in the local Tamazight language, is a small town resting on the westernmost portion of the Libyan coast, bordering Tunisia. The city itself has a population of approximately 45'000 residents, but the municipality of Zuwara also includes several neighboring towns, such as Abu Kammash, Ras Ejdeer, and Tuilet al-Ghazala. Its territory extends from the Tunisian border (about 60 km west of the city) to Al-Manqoub (about 20 km east of the city).

Zuwara is the only Amazigh (aka Berber) town on the Libyan shores of the Mediterranean. It enjoys some of the most beautiful beaches in Libya, with white sand and turquoise water, but it lacks arable land. The city has suffered from age-old tensions with the neighboring Arab towns of Jmail, Rigdalin, and Zoltan (see Map 1 above), which have escalated into major clashes during and after the revolution.

Although Gadhafi chose Zuwara to proclaim his "Cultural Revolution" in 1973, the city was grossly neglected during the dictatorship. The regime made a concerted effort to repress Amazigh culture and keep its citizens out of positions of power and influence, save for a few token exceptions. As further testimony to this deliberate marginalization, out of 1'500 employees, only a few dozen Zuwari worked in the nearby Mellitah oil plant. Located in the eastern outskirts of Zuwara, it is one of the most important facilities in Libya for the export of oil and gas.

Following the toppling of the Gadhafi regime, it has become the crucible of cross-border smuggling and one of the major launching points used by illegal immigrants following the Central Mediterranean route,¹⁷ until the fall of 2015, when local authorities were able to completely stop the smuggling of migrants from their city.

In Zuwara, Tribalism is less evident than in Eastern and Southern Libya and the population appears to be less religiously conservative than in other parts of the country.¹⁸ This may explain why its militias have been less susceptible to tribal factionalism and to the influence of religious extremism.

2. Municipal Actors

A. State Actors

Municipal Council

As in other cities across Libya, Zuwara formed a Local Council (Majlis Mahalli) during the revolution to govern the city. This Council operated until August 2014, when the Zuwara Municipal Council (Majlis al-Baladi) took office,¹⁹ following the April 2014 elections that were held according to local governance Law 59 of 2012, and Executive Order 130 of 2013. The Council consists of 7 members, who selected Hafed ben Sassi as the Head of Council and city Mayor. As provided by the law, one of the Council members is a woman, Mrs Zitouna Moammar, and one was a wounded revolutionary.²⁰ However, the latter resigned

¹⁷The Central Mediterranean route is a mixed migration route from North Africa toward Italy and Malta. Libya is the departure point for 90% of migrants following this route (read more at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/malta-migration-summit_feb2017.pdf). It is currently the main route of entry (and the deadliest) for illegal migrants to Europe, with a peak of 181'000 migrants in 2016. See <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/central-mediterranean-route/>

¹⁸ Based on multiple interviews by the author and a survey of civil society activists in six Libyan cities. For more information, see Romanet Perroux, Jean-Louis. 2015. Libyan CSO Mapping: Comparative Highlights. *UNICEF and UNDP*, May. Available from: <http://docdro.id/iWvRTfu> (AR); and <http://docdro.id/JsAXU6G> (EN)

¹⁹ For more information, Visit <http://zuwarah.gov.ly/عن-البلدية/>

²⁰ Art. 32, Executive Regulation of Law No. (59) of 2012 on the Local Administration System, attached to Cabinet Decree No. (130) of 2013.

after one year, and no other wounded revolutionary candidate was available and willing to join the Municipal Council, thus another candidate was selected.²¹ Unlike in other municipalities in Libya, at the time of writing Zuwara's Municipal Council has not yet appointed Neighborhood Coordinators (Mukhtar Mahallat).

As elsewhere in Libya, the municipality does not receive regular nor sufficient funds from central authorities. However, owing to its privileged position by the Tunisian border, the Municipal Council is able to raise unspecified revenue from border tariffs imposed by the police force that controls the Ras Ejdeer border crossing, under the supervision of Zuwara's Joint Military Operations Room.²² Officially, no such taxes exist, and the Municipal Council does not possess any official receipts and documentation of these funds. Unlike other entrepreneurial Municipal Councils in Libya, Zuwara Municipal Council has not promulgated any resolution about local taxation. The fear is that if they make locally-raised revenues official and quantifiable, Tripoli will then reduce the already insufficient annual budget they allocate to Zuwara.

This fear is not unfounded. Although Law 59 and its Executive Order call for the definition of mechanisms to allow local taxation and revenue-generation mechanisms, no decrees have been issued yet. Thus, based on the current legislation, both governments in Tripoli and Bayda have reprimanded Municipal Councils that have raised revenues locally, and are pursuing legal actions in some instances.²³

In terms of decision-making, the contradictory and incomplete legal framework for local governance that currently exists in Libya has fuelled tensions in Zuwara's Municipal Council. In particular, the Council has disputed local executive powers with the Director of the Municipal Administration (Wakil Diwan Al-Baladiya), which has led to the resignation of two Directors in one year (Zuwara Municipal Council member, 2017). At the time of writing, the position is still officially vacant, while being covered by an interim Director. In addition, the Mayor laments that the current voting system based on individual candidates produces Municipal Councils that are disunited. Since each candidate runs for municipal elections independently, she/he does not need to agree on a common political platform with other candidates. And once elected, each candidate has no party or group to respond to, which complicates the process of decision-making in the Council. Instead of this system, the Mayor of Zuwara would prefer one based on lists, which would grant the majority to one group (Ben Sasi, Zuwara Mayor, 2017).

Security and Defense

Nowadays, *de facto* Zuwara has two main security and defense coordination bodies, known as Joint Operations Rooms. Although these forces are formally under the Ministry of Defense and Interior in Tripoli, they are quasi-independent. Furthermore, although they receive inputs from the Municipal Council, both Operations Rooms stress that they are not under its control. They possess their own independent decision-making committees that receive requests from the Municipal Council, the Majlis al-Hokama, and the ministries, but they highlight that they are not under their authority (Joint Military Operations Room PR officer, 2017).

Unlike most Libyan cities, Zuwara was able to expel militias from the city and form a new armed group in charge of maintaining security, in coordination and under the auspices of the Municipal Council. This group, which will be described in greater detail under the security section, is called Crime Fighting Unit, however, it is better known under the name "Mukhannain" (i.e. "masked men" in Arabic), in reference to the face hoods they wear in public in order to protect their identity. Their security and policing activities,

²¹ The list of Council members is available on the Municipal Council's website, available from <http://zuwarah.gov.ly/%d8%b9%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%a9/>

²² See post on the Joint Military Operations Room Facebook page dated January 8, 2017, reporting a field visit by the Room's media office to the Libyan/Tunisian border forces, available from https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1857410644542676&id=1827680674182340

²³ For instance, see the case of Zliten.

as well as those of the police, and the judicial police, are somewhat coordinated by the Joint Security Operations Room (al-Ghurfaḥ al-Amniyah al-Mushtarakah). These bodies formally operate under the Ministry of Interior, to oversee all security and policing issues within the confines of the city. For instance, on May 30, 2016, the Joint Security Operations Room convened a large meeting with the Municipal Council, the Joint Military Operations Room, and the Council of Wise Men, in order to discuss local security affairs.²⁴ The Crime Fighting Unit, which is the largest and most powerful security force in the city, is managed independently, although it is entirely funded by the Municipal Council, with an approximate yearly budget of three million LYD (Ben Sasi, Zuwara Mayor, 2017).

Conversely, the defense of city borders, external security issues, and the control of the borders with Tunisia are the responsibility of the Joint Military Operations Room (al-Ghurfaḥ al-Askaria al-Mushtarakah). It was created in January 2015 as a mechanism to coordinate and oversee the activities of all 12 revolutionary and Army Brigades and battalions present in Zuwara, totaling several hundred members (Researcher from Zuwara, 2017). This Operations Room emerged spontaneously, from the bottom-up, due to the frustration of revolutionary fighters (known as *thowar* in Arabic) resulting from the lack of military leaders. These fighters no longer wanted to be called upon by local authorities in times of crisis. They did not want to fight battles in which they had not had a say, only to be forgotten in times of peace (Almansory, Joint Military Operations Room PR officer, 2017). Needless to say, this Operations Room grounds its popular legitimacy on the fact that its members fought during the 2011 revolution.

The Joint Military Operations Room was recognized by both the GNC and the GNA, but the allegiance of the Brigades under its control is local. Most of the time, these units respond to requests from the Municipal Council. Sometimes they initiate their own security operations, in coordination with local governance bodies (Almansory, Joint Military Operations Room PR officer, 2017). A specific unit, formally under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, but *de facto* controlled by the Joint Military Operations Room is the Central Security Agency (Al-Amn al-Markazy), which has the important task of controlling fifty kilometers of the border with Tunisia starting from the coastline (Researcher from Zuwara, 2017).²⁵

Although the defense units under the control of the Joint Military Operations Room usually operate outside of the city, they can provide support to security units under the Joint Security Operations Room upon request. For instance, when Zuwara authorities launched the raid against people smugglers in September 2015 these Rooms cooperated in coordination with Municipal Council, and the Council of Wise Men. More recently, in February 2017, when Zuwara suffered from fuel shortages due to roadblocks and hijackings along the road leading to the city, the Joint Security Operations Room provided an important contribution to managing the crisis. They escorted fuel trucks in coordination with the Fuel Crisis Management Committee (Lajnat Azmat Alwaqaod) created by the Municipal Council.²⁶ This collaborative effort helped diffuse the fervent public protests sparked by the fuel shortage.

In addition to their role with defense and security, brigades under the control of the Joint Military Operations Room carry out multiple tasks, which often extend beyond defense, such as providing security for civil society initiatives, distributing food and other necessities in times of need, helping solve local disputes, and supporting reconciliation efforts with neighboring towns, which are led by the Council of Wise Men (Almansory, Joint Military Operations Room PR officer, 2017).

²⁴ For more information, read the post on the Joint Security Operations Room's Facebook page, available from https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1690693051183007&id=1462744627311185

²⁵ The fluid cooperation between authorities in Tripoli and in Zuwara for the control of Ras Ejdeer is visible in the press release posted by the Municipal Council on its Facebook page, available at <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/1359011587511342>

²⁶ Libya Voice. 2017. The arrival of the first fuel trucks to Zawara after three months of blockage. Libya Voice Facebook Page. March 2. Available from <https://www.facebook.com/nabid.alwatan/posts/1894998490777168>

B. Crisis Management and Conflict-Resolution Actors

Crisis Management Committee (Lajnat Edarat al-Asma)

In June 2014 the Zuwara Local Council established a Crisis Management Committee and formalized its existence by issuing an official resolution. Once the Municipal Council was elected in August 2014, the Crisis Management Committee was put under its authority. This Committee is responsible for managing all crises facing the municipality (e.g. IDPs, fuel shortage, floods), and for coordinating the crisis response of all municipal actors. For instance, the Crisis Management Committee managed the collection of the dead bodies of migrants who washed ashore in 2015, by coordinating the actions of the local office of the Red Crescent, police, security forces, and judicial authorities.

Similarly, the Committee provides a coordinated response to water, food and fuel shortages when these arise. At the time of flash floods, it called upon the water and sanitation office, and the electricity office to ensure secure the power supply and prevent water contamination. The Committee was initially composed of 12 men belonging to the Local Council, the Red Crescent, the local hospital, the Crime Fighting Unit, the Boy Scouts, the Military Council, and local CSOs. For one year, the Director of the Crisis Management Committee was also the Director of the Municipal Administration (Wakil Diwan al-Baladiya) elected in 2014. The Committee receives ad-hoc funds from the Municipal Council upon request. It establishes the budget needed to address the crisis, and then submits it to the Municipal Council for approval (Dahan, 2017).

Council of Wise Men (Majlis al-Hokama)

The Council of Wise Men is a traditional body with legal status, whose main focus is conflict-prevention and reconciliation. In Zuwara, where the tribal social structure is no longer relevant, it serves as an alternative to a Tribal Council (Majlis al-Kabail) and it is the only existing body in Zuwara entirely dedicated to local dispute resolution and reconciliation (Ben Sasi. Zuwara Mayor. 2017). This body was created in 2013, through the concerted efforts of local elders, Zuwara's Local Council, the local branch of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs (Dar al-Awqaf), and civil society activists. Each large family was asked to designate one respectable man, in order to have a broad social representation.

Although the Council of Wise Men plays an important role in maintaining peace and stability, young Zuwari complain that its members are old and out of touch. The roots of their grievances extend beyond the mere generational divide. As a young revolutionary fighter laments, the city elders lost the respect of young Zuwari during the 2011 revolution because they did not rise against Gadhafi (Zuwara revolutionary fighter 2, 2017). However, the elders in Zuwara had good reasons to be cautious, having witnessed many failed coups over the course of four decades, which were followed by brutal repression, torture and assassinations. In 2011, they feared that if the city revolted, the regime would quickly take it over, and would punish its inhabitants. In fact, on March 14, 2011, Gadhafi forces took over Zuwara in less than two days. However, while the youth went to the neighboring Nafusa Mountains to receive weapons and training, the elders remained skeptical and did not follow them to the mountains. Thus, the young men from Zuwara who joined the rebels were left without leadership from their city elders. Unfortunately, this undermined their respect for older figures with lasting effects until this day (Zuwara revolutionary fighter 2, 2017).

C. Civil Society

A mapping of civil society organizations in key Libyan cities carried out in November 2013 reported 40 active civil society organizations in Zuwara. It was the highest concentration of CSOs in proportion to the

population among the six cities surveyed.²⁷ This suggests an exceptionally vibrant civic life relative to other Libyan cities. It must be noted that the greater development of voluntary associations in Zuwara is at least in part attributable to the high degree of social homogeneity and cohesion, since the vast majority of its citizens are Amazigh, and surrounding towns are Arab.

Soon after the beginning of the revolution, active youth seized the opportunity offered by the unprecedented opening of the public space to launch several key voluntary associations. A few friends “who knew how to write well and think *right* founded the Zuwara Media Center” (Zuwara civil society activist, 2016).²⁸ This Center quickly became the main hub for providing and receiving information in Zuwara. However, the Center only had a presence on Facebook. Thus, shortly thereafter, the same group created the Kassas Radio in order to better disseminate information.

As elsewhere in Libya, only a fraction of civil society organizations that formed in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution still operate today. In particular, since 2014, when fighting escalated in both Tripoli and Benghazi, international organizations left the country, which led to a substantial decrease of funding and training for civil society. Furthermore, the public space for CSOs has shrunk further due to the increased security threat, and the pressure of negative public opinion, which frowns upon civil society work outside of charity or humanitarian assistance, particularly during times of crisis. As a result, a large number of CSOs have disappeared all across Libya (multiple author’s interviews of activists across Libya, 2014-17).

Currently, despite the creation of a few new voluntary associations since 2014, there are about 20 active civil society organizations in Zuwara, compared to more than 40 in 2013 (Nanis, 2017), and only five of them have officially registered with the Civil Society Commission in 2016.²⁹ In part, this is a natural – and healthy – process of self-selection, whereby poorly managed and ineffective organizations disappear. However, the decrease in the number of CSOs, and in their scope of work is also due to other, less “healthy” factors, as explained above.

This contraction of civil society has an impact on several aspects of local governance in Zuwara. One of the most prominent civil society activists in the city, who is now an elected member of Zuwara’s Municipal Council laments that the work of the Municipal Council has become much harder since associational life has decreased:

“[Voluntary] associations are important to communicate with the people. During these difficult times, a lot of rumors circulate on how we use money for ourselves and how the Council is responsible for problems around the city. My own friends come talk to me angrily about rumors on the Council’s wrongdoing they heard around town. It takes me a lot of time and patience to explain that they are simply false. And these are my friends. Things were easier when there were a lot of associations working in town” (Dahan, 2016).

Nonetheless, civil society organizations are still active in Zuwara, and they continue to play an important and constructive role in local governance, both supporting municipal authorities and demanding better services. A recent example is the initiative launched by the Zuwara Reform Movement in June 2017, to

²⁷ These were Zuwara, Zawia, Tripoli, Sebha, Misrata and Benghazi. For more, read Romanet Perroux. Jean-Louis. 2015. Libyan CSO Mapping: Comparative Highlights. *UNICEF and UNDP*, May. Available from: <http://docdro.id/iWvRTfu> (AR); and <http://docdro.id/JsAXU6G> (EN)

²⁸ The Center continues to be active. Its main channel of communication is its Facebook page, available from <https://www.facebook.com/zuwara.mc/>. Its Youtube channel is available from https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkOKb3aVwzTtdBmJOLcN_tQ

²⁹ According to the Civil Society Commission 2016 Database, available from <https://www.docdroid.net/VfsTMjr/-2016.pdf.html>.

discuss the fuel shortage crisis, and explore avenues for cooperation to solve it. Following the meeting, the Municipal Council agreed to formalize a working relationship with the CSO.³⁰

3. Service Provision

As in other places in Libya, life in Zuwara is complicated by power cuts, food, water, and fuel shortages, and challenges to face local health care needs. However, compared to other municipalities, crises are fairly short-lived, and basic needs are better addressed (based on multiple interviews I carried out across the country since 2011).

The reasons for this success are three-fold. Firstly, the institutionalization of coordination mechanisms between local governance actors, and the creation of a crisis-management body has increased their effectiveness. This success is particularly visible in times of emergency, such as the smuggling of migrants (Zuwara was one of the most popular points of departure of boats towards Europe), regional fighting resulting from the 2014 clash between the so-called “Islamist” *Fajr Libya* coalition against the so-called “anti-Islamist” *Karama* coalition, and electricity, water and fuel shortages. As mentioned earlier, Municipal authorities created a Crisis Management Committee, which has been able to pool together all available resources from the National Ministries’ local offices, and local state and non-state actors to address major problems.

This systematic coordination and cooperation under the helm of the Municipal Council also extends to the National Ministries’ local offices (a.k.a. Executive Offices, Makatib Al-Kita-at in Arabic). Cooperation between the Municipal Council and these offices is crucial since the latter are officially responsible for the provision of all goods and services, such as water, electricity, healthcare, education, sewage, and trash collection, and the Municipal Council has no executive and administrative authority over them.

As an example of their collaboration, on April 16, 2017, Zuwara’s Municipal Council hosted a meeting with the National Ministries’ local offices to discuss all pressing issues regarding local service provision (e.g. the lack of water, power cuts, healthcare, education needs, sewage issues). The meeting produced several important outcomes. The water supply and water sewage companies agreed to submit a detailed report on how to tackle the current water and sewage issues in the city. The cleaning company undertook the responsibility of dealing with the waste collections problems in critical areas (e.g. al-Qaria al-Sakania, Abo Kammash, and al-Kambo). The electricity company agreed to install more street lighting in locations where frequent car accidents occur. Finally, the office for health care accepted the responsibility of addressing the issues of foreign workers in the hospital.³¹

A second reason for Zuwara’s Municipal Council’s success lies in its ability to count on locally-raised revenue. This is crucial to providing viable solutions to problems as they arise, and diffuse tensions before they undermine their authority. One example is the treatment of wounded revolutionary fighters abroad. As seen throughout Libya, this is a sensitive issue that can quickly escalate into strikes and attacks on state authorities. For instance, in February 2013, former fighters occupied the Parliament for one month demanding compensation for injuries in the 2011 revolution.³² Drawing from local taxes, Zuwara’s

³⁰ For more information, read Libya FM. 2017. Zuwara Municipal Council meeting Zuwara Reform Movement. Libya FM Website. June 29. Available from <http://libya.fm/Details.aspx?id=11241>

³¹ For more information, read Akhbar Libya. 2017. Zuwara Municipal Council meeting representatives of local ministry offices to discuss local issues. *Akhbar Libya Website*. April 16. Available from <http://www.akhbarlibya.net/libya-news/513647.html>

³² Read Zaptia, Sami. 2013. Damaged GNC Building Vacated by Squatting Amputees – Finally. *Libya Herald*. 5 March. Available from <https://www.libyaherald.com/2013/03/05/damaged-gnc-building-vacated-by-squatting->

leadership was able to evade a similar problem by allocating more than 2 million LYD over three years to send their wounded fighters abroad for treatment.

Local resources have also been used for general improvements to the quality of life in the city. In November 2016, the Municipal Council published a public bid to upgrade the local souk (public market).³³ Local financial resources also allow the Municipal Council to improve the quality of healthcare and education by paying the salary of National Ministries' local offices' employees, although these depend from the ministries in Tripoli (Ben Sasi, Zuwara Mayor, 2017). Most recently, the Council used its local financial resources to fund projects such as equipping the central hospital and renovating schools,³⁴ repairing the sewage system,³⁵ and restoring the water treatment station.³⁶

Thirdly, the Municipal Council has developed a deep and multi-faceted cooperative relationship with civil society. The Council has created a dedicated civil society Committee including three of its members, which seeks to support civil society activities and develop synergy between CSOs and the Council. It is worth noting that one of the Council members is the most prominent civil society activist in the city, who co-founded several CSOs, including Kassas Radio and the Zuwara Media Center.

This strategy of outreach and engagement has greatly contributed to the improvement of local governance in Zuwara. Community media outlets have improved the dissemination of information, they developed a two-way dialogue between the citizenry and decision-makers. Furthermore, they have improved transparency and accountability, as I will highlight in greater detail in the section on media. Zuwara CSOs have also helped expand the Council's capacity to provide goods and services.

In 2013, the elected Local Council decided to rehabilitate the popular town seafront that stretches along three kilometres (Zuwara has some of the most beautiful beaches in Libya). Despite investing a large portion of its modest budget, the Council's resources were not sufficient to cover the costs associated with this project. However, by partnering with several voluntary associations, the council was able to circumvent this obstacle. Civil society organizations volunteered to clean the sand, build umbrellas and install kilometres of barriers to fence off the beach and prevent cars from driving on it. Their successful efforts boosted the Council's popular approval over the summer, and fostered a widespread feeling of community pride (Dahan, 2016). This is just one example of a successful joint initiative between municipal authorities and local CSOs.

Voluntary associations have also proven to be active agents in the fight against corruption. In the fall of 2012, three small children undergoing treatment at Zuwara hospital died in rapid succession due to the lack of qualified medical personnel at the hospital. There were simply no doctors on duty when the emergencies occurred, creating an uproar among the citizenry. In response, Kassas Radio dedicated an entire program to the deteriorating quality of healthcare services in town. Individual citizens and hospital workers called the radio with complaints of widespread corruption, which had led to the rapid deterioration of the city's health services. The allegations squarely implicated the Hospital Director and to the Head of the Ministry of Health in Zuwara (Kassas Radio co-founder, 2016).

[amputees-finally/](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/03/201336145842575329.html); and Libya interim leader's car comes under fire. *Al Jazeera*, March 6, 213. Available from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/03/201336145842575329.html>

³³ For more, read Akhbar Libya. 2016. Zuwara Municipal Council calling for construction companies to send their proposals for completing the local public souk. *Akhbar Libya Website*. Oct. 31. Available from <http://www.akhbarlibya.net/libya-news/270633.html>

³⁴ More information available from this post on the Municipal Council's Facebook page, dated June 12, 2017: <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/1368430529902781>

³⁵ More information available from this post on the Municipal Council's Facebook page, dated April 4, 2017: <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/1321184784627356>

³⁶ More information available from this post on the Municipal Council's Facebook page, dated December 7, 2016 <https://www.facebook.com/zuwara.mc/posts/1189513564429613>

In the wake of these revelations, a few Zuwara activists, together with their colleagues at Kassas radio and at the Zuwara Media Center created the Zuwara Corruption Fighting Union (Dahan, 2013). They worked together to collect and relay information to municipal authorities, who were then able to remove the individuals against whom abundant evidence of corruption had been gathered. Again, voluntary associations became a channel of communication between authorities and citizens, thus contributing to the improvement of local government performance, and the participation of citizens in the decision-making.

Lastly, part of the merit for the quality of local service delivery in Zuwara must be given to the Municipal Council and the Municipal Administration themselves. Compared to most Libyan municipalities, Zuwara's is particularly active, responsive to popular demands, and effective in seeking solutions. In another example of their spirit of initiative and their desire to improve the quality of life in Zuwara, the Municipal Council has recently opened an office in Tripoli in charge of liaising with ministries, facilitate the procedures required to obtain official documents (e.g. marriage and birth certificates, passport) and transport them to Zuwara (Ben Sasi, Zuwara Mayor, 2017). In fact, most official documents are issued exclusively in Tripoli, which is more than 100 kilometers away, along a road that is often closed or unsafe.

Although citizens of Zuwara enjoy a good level of service provision compared to most Libyans, they are still confronted with serious problems. The Zuwara Marina hospital is the only one in the region, which includes several neighboring cities, such as Sorman, Sebrata, and Agilat. The hospital is insufficient to respond to the medical needs of almost 300'000 inhabitants of the area (Ben Sasi, Zuwara Mayor, 2017). Moreover, the city suffers from cash shortages, and local businessmen prefer to invest in other, more densely-populated areas of Libya (Zuwara Municipal Council member, 2017). Local authorities also struggle to ensure the regular provision of fuel, which is also necessary to operate the pumps that provide water to the city. These fuel shortages are linked to the smuggling of fuel outside of Libya,³⁷ which is orchestrated by militias from both Zuwara and its neighboring cities (Zuwara revolutionary fighter 2, 2017).

4. Security

In Zuwara, the revolution initially produced a single town militia that was joined by all fighters from the city. However, it was a dysfunctional fighting group commanded by several semi-independent figures, many of whom were former criminals that Gadhafi's forces had deliberately freed shortly after the beginning of the uprisings.

In the few months after the end of the fighting (which, for Zuwara, came in August 2011) these commanders started forming their own groups and began to assert their control over strategic locations in the city (the commercial port, the fishing port, the neighboring Mellitah oil & gas plant, the border with Tunisia). By early 2012, there were about 24 militias in Zuwara (Zuwara revolutionary fighter).

One of the main sources of revenue, and thus contention, was the border with Tunisia, and the lucrative smuggling opportunities it provided. Large amounts of money started circulating as the illegal cross-border trade of drugs, fuel, weapons and human trafficking flourished. In the absence of any state control, militias started fighting over money, territory, and control over Tunisian prostitutes that were brought to Libya. These confrontations were exacerbated by the widespread use of alcohol and drugs (notably psychotropic drugs and hashish). By February 2012, the security situation had become very insecure, with clashes frequently erupting in the middle of the city, posing risks to the safety of civilians.

³⁷ Fuel is highly subsidized in Libya; therefore, its price is a fraction of that in any neighboring country.

In less than a year, armed groups and former fighters had formed criminal networks. The newly elected Local Council tried to regulate trans-border traffic and limit the spread of crime in town. However, those who were prospering from the lawlessness and crime were able to divert and manipulate public sentiment against government authorities. Groups of people organized armed, violent protests against the Local Council while others directly threatened Council members, demanding money for the war-wounded. Key administration officials were exposed to extreme intimidation and accused of being Gadhafi supporters. Shop owners increasingly became targets of racketeering (multiple author interviews of Zuwara inhabitants, 2013).

In August 2012, following growing public demands for security, a group of young local men came together to form a voluntary armed group dedicated to policing the city and restoring order. Many of them had fought in the revolution and some were still members of militias. There are two key criteria for recruitment: Having supported the 2011 revolution since the beginning, and possess unquestionable ethics.³⁸

The group calls itself Zuwara Crime Fighting Unit (CFU), but it is better known as Mukhannain, as mentioned earlier. By October 2012, the group had gained the approval of the Local Council and was officially recognized and affiliated with the Ministry of Interior.³⁹

The Mukhannain have been operating ever since, in coordination with both the Council and with the city elders (sheikhs). However, despite their official recognition and status, one of its founders and most active members admits that the popular support they enjoy is largely due to their ability to connect with the people of Zuwara through voluntary associations, such as the Zuwara Media Center, Kassas Radio and others.⁴⁰ His statement is further supported by the founder of Kassas and the Zuwara Media Center, who is intimately familiar with the Mukhannain:

“A large part of the 99% support the Mukhannain have among the people of Zuwara comes from the active support of Kassas Radio and the Zuwara Media Center” (Dahan, 2016).

However, despite the initially positive public perception of the Mukhannain, criticism and resentment of the group began to grow in parallel to the number of individuals that got arrested and detained. Serious allegations including torture, political partisanship and even accusations of having pro-Gadhafi sympathies began emerging. Kassas Radio played an important role in diffusing these tensions by running regular live programs where they invited the Mukhannain’s representatives. This provided them with the opportunity to speak directly to the people about their objectives and problems they were trying to solve in the city. At the same time, it allowed regular citizens to speak to these security actors directly and publicly. Most callers would thank them and express their support. However, one caller who claimed to be the brother of a criminal arrested by the group, accused the Mukhannain of torturing him and demanded accountability.

The event had a large resonance in the city. Voluntary associations called for the Mukhannain to meet publicly with some of their representatives in addition to judicial authorities to address the allegations. The group acquiesced, and met with a group of lawyers. As a result, the group took action to improve its

³⁸ For more, read Galtier, Mathieu. 2014. A Zouara, les Masqués jouent les justiciers. *Liberation*. February 17, 2014. Available from http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2014/02/17/a-zouara-les-masques-jouent-les-justiciers_980900

³⁹ The group’s operations can be followed on their Facebook page, which had more than 20’000 likes and followers at the time of writing. It is available from

<https://www.facebook.com/%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A9-134735753353429/>

⁴⁰ As an example, this is a video posted by the Zuwara Media Center about an operation of the CFU against the smuggling of migrants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtiU1r2ZigE#t=14>

own rule of law standards and internal procedures. Like in other instances, community media provided an outlet for public discontent to surface and peacefully impact corrective change within the security sector.

It is important to stress that the Municipal Council played an important role in the success of this security initiative. Firstly, the Council provided the legitimacy that the new armed group required to be able to count on the support of the people. Secondly, the Council's endorsement granted the group a certain degree of credibility, a status of official security force in the eyes of both criminals and common people. As a consequence, many Zuwara citizens may have assumed that the Mukhannain had a level of force and the potential backing of other official groups that they did not have in reality. Thirdly, the Council covers the group's salaries and the operational costs. The Municipal Council and the Crime Fighting Unit continue to cooperate closely on security issues until now.⁴¹

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

A. Justice

Soon after the 2011 revolution, local judicial authorities resumed their work and courts went back to their regular functioning. Judicial authorities in Zuwara work in close cooperation with the Crime Fighting Unit, the police, and the judicial police (Nanis, 2017). Zuwara lacks judicial police officers, which depend on the Ministry of Justice. The Council has asked the Ministry to send newly trained recruits, promising to cover their salaries and expenses, but no one has been sent yet. Criminals are regularly arrested and prosecuted. Since Zuwara does not have a jail, convicted criminals must be transferred to Surman, Agilat or Tripoli. However, Zuwara officials who prefer to remain anonymous complain that these jails suffer from corruption, which allows some criminals to buy their freedom.

Zuwara has been affected by the smuggling of migrants, which deserves a separate analysis, due to the size of the problem, and to the inadequacy of Libya's penal code to deal with it. Following the fall of the Gadhafi regime, the trafficking of migrants through Libya has increased exponentially, reaching a peak of 181'000 migrants crossing the Mediterranean in 2016,⁴² 4'579 of whom died.⁴³ Historically, Zuwara has been one of the key points of departure for illegal migrants towards Europe, owing to its comparatively closer proximity to the islands of Lampedusa and Malta. Therefore, the city was particularly affected by the booming illicit trade of migrants.

In August 2015, two boats full of migrants sank, killing 170 men, women and children. As it happened before, their dead bodies floated to the shores of Zuwara, where families were enjoying the city's beautiful beaches.⁴⁴ The citizens of Zuwara, who had already protested against the smuggling of migrants in 2014, mobilized again, determined to put an end to this scourge and humanitarian disaster once and for all. Under great popular pressure, 35 state and non-state local organizations, including all local authorities, such as the Municipal Council, the Council of Wise Men, the General Authority of Islamic

⁴¹ See Zuwara Municipal Council's Facebook post dated July 6, 2017: "Zuwara Municipal Council meeting with Crime Fighting Unit," available from <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/1392043874208113>

⁴² For more, read Frontex. Central Mediterranean Route. Available from <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/central-mediterranean-route/>

⁴³ For more, read European Union Commission. 2017. Taking action on the central Mediterranean route. 3 February. Available from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/taking-action-central-mediterranean-route_en

⁴⁴ Galtier, Mathieu. 2016. A Zouara, les Libyens édictent leurs propres lois. *Liberation*. April 7. Available from https://www.google.tn/amp/www.liberation.fr/amphtml/planete/2016/04/07/a-zouara-les-libyens-edictent-leurs-propres-lois_1444685

Affairs (Dar al-Awqaf), the Crime Fighting Unit, and the Military and Security Operation Rooms, met to discuss avenues to fight the smuggling of migrants.

Confronted with the limits of the Libyan penal code and the weakness of central judicial institutions, which regularly led to the release of smugglers after a few days, they discussed whether or not the Libyan law allowed the application of customary laws (Kanoon al-Orfi). They ultimately concluded that it did. Thus, they appointed a Legal Committee composed of 10 legal scholars, whom they tasked with establishing customary legal provisions that addressed the crimes related to the smuggling of people. The Committee defined a series of penalties, including jail time, reaching a maximum of six months, and financial sanctions that could amount up to 200'000 LYD. In addition, local authorities agreed to withdraw social protection from all smugglers from Zuwara. This last sanction, which may sound trivial in a country with functioning police and judicial institutions, is particularly relevant in Libya. In fact, in the absence of state institutions, individuals who commit a crime are often only protected by their social group (i.e. their tribe, neighborhood, or town), which also provides a form of mediation with the victims. All authorities approved these measures, which they ratified as a social treaty (Dahan, 2017).

As soon as the Municipal Council and other local authorities gave them the task, the Crime Fighting Unit arrested all migrant smugglers in town, all of whom were from Zuwara. The city even created a special detention facility to detain them. In a matter of weeks, the smuggling of migrants through Zuwara was completely stopped, and has entirely ceased to this day.

However, this successful initiative ran into serious problems with authorities in Tripoli. The families of convicted smugglers went to the Attorney General's office in Tripoli to denounce the social treaty and the illegal detention of their relatives (Nanis, 2017). On April 12, 2016, four members of the Municipal Council, the head of the Crime Fighting Unit, the Head of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs, and the Head of the Crisis Management Committee were summoned to Tripoli. They all refused to go. The Attorney General asked the District Attorney from Zawia to investigate the decisions made in Zuwara. Following a few months of discussions, in December 2016, authorities in Zuwara revoked the social treaty on the smuggling of migrants and the customary legal provisions they had adopted, and the Crime Fighting Unit transferred all detained smugglers to Tripoli. Currently, these smugglers are kept in the rehabilitation facility (Mu'assaset al-Islah) in Mitiga, which is officially operated by the judicial police, but is *de facto* under the control of a powerful local Islamist militia that enjoys official state recognition.

B. Dispute Settlement and Reconciliation

As mentioned previously, the Council of Wise Men, which is called Majlis Al-Hokama wa al-Shura in Zuwara, is the only existing body in the city whose objectives are local dispute-resolution and reconciliation. On April 29, 2015, the General National Congress (the Libyan Parliament elected in 2012, whose mandate expired in 2014) created a new body called the Council of Dignitaries (Majlis al-Ayan) in several locations in Libya. However, this entity failed in Zuwara, because the existing Council of Wise Men was already well established and there was no reason for duplicating it (Dahan, 2017).

Zuwara's Council of Wise Men is supported by, and cooperates with the Municipal Council and the Joint Military Operations Room (Almansory, Joint Military Operations Room PR officer, 2017). The Council members are all voluntary, which makes it difficult for the Council to retain them over time. When it was created in 2013, the Council had about 35 members, whereas today there are only ten to fifteen active members (Dahan, 2017).

The Council of Wise Men helps solve conflicts between citizens of Zuwara (e.g. land disputes, shootings), between Zuwara militias, and between the Crime Fighting Unit and the Police. The Council also seeks to solve disputes with other cities, and given its voluntary nature, and its popular representativeness, it also acts as a watchdog on Municipal Council activities (Almansory, Vice-President of the Political and Social Committee of the Council of Wise Men, 2017).

Zuwara has long-standing grievances with the cities of Zoltan, Jmail and Rigdalin. The latter two are Arab cities to the South of Zuwara (as close as 8 Km) who fought until the end of the revolution on the side of the Gadhafi regime. Ethnic and historical grievances are largely façade reasons for these tensions. The most important issues dividing these towns are the control of legal and illegal cross-border trade with Tunisia, and disputes over the ownership and access to arable land. As the Vice-President of the Political and Social Committee of the Council of Wise Men notes, “history changes, but geography does not change,” thereby explaining need to establish good relations with neighboring towns. The Council of Wise Men is working closely with the Municipal Council to promote reconciliation and establish a durable peace between Zuwara and neighboring towns. In March 2017, the Municipal Council organized a meeting with all Zuwara local governance actors to discuss the idea of negotiating with Riqdalin, an Arab town that is barely eight kilometers away (see Map 1). As a follow-up, on 17 April 2017, they hosted a meeting with Riqdalin’s Council of Wise Men and Municipal Council to negotiate and discuss reconciliation (Dahan, 2017). Unlike other municipalities in Libya, Zuwara has decided to refuse the support – and the influence – of international actors in carrying out their reconciliation efforts.

In line with their reconciliation efforts, the Zuwara Council of Wise Men has created four Reconciliation Committees, one for each of the three neighboring Arab towns, and one that deals with issues involving all other communities in Libya. Kassas Radio is also contributing to reconciliation efforts. In April, the Radio launched a program in Arabic (usually their programs are in Amazigh) that allows individuals to read poetry. For the first time participants have come from Riqdalin and Jmail to speak on the Radio in Zuwara.

Recently, the Council of Wise Men has also been trying to solve the tensions with the Tunisian border towns of Ben Gardane, Tataouine and Medenine, whose economy is largely based on smuggling cheap goods and petroleum products from Libya. In late 2016, Zuwara’s security forces tightened their control over the border, thereby curbing trans-border smuggling. This caused a major economic blow to the Tunisian border towns, which reacted by creating roadblocks on the road connecting Libya’s border crossing of Ras Ejdeer and Tunis, and harassing Libyan travelers. The Council of Wise Men has visited the Tunisian towns in order to seek a solution. Currently, the Council is trying to overcome this problem by encouraging local businessmen to develop small business projects with the Tunisian border towns, thereby creating alternative sources of livelihood besides smuggling (Almansouri, Vice-President of the Political and Social Committee of the Council of Wise Men, 2017).

The Council of Wise Men also acts to solve sources of tension in the city, such as the dramatic increase of consumer goods’ prices, and illegal construction. Since the fall of the Gadhafi regime, Municipal Guards have not been able to enforce the law, which has led to the rise of inflation, and to the multiplication of illegal constructions throughout the city. The Council has recently formed a Committee dedicated to discuss these issues with Municipal Guards, and support their work (Almansouri, Vice-President of the Political and Social Committee of the Council of Wise Men, 2017).

6. Community Media

As previously highlighted, media plays an important role for the good functioning of local governance in Zuwara. Despite its small population, the city has a vibrant and diverse media sector, which includes multiple types of media outlets owned and operated by civil society activists, private owners, and the Municipal Council. The multiplicity and diversity of media operators helps improve the quality and completeness of information.

A. Civil Society and Private Media

Community media developed very quickly in Zuwara during the 2011 revolution. In August 2011, a group of young activists and citizen journalists from Zuwara created the Zuwara Media Center, with the mission

of “publishing and documenting all news and events in the city of Zuwara, and everything related to public affairs in Libya.”⁴⁵ The Center, which did not have a particular political orientation (Aledresy, 2017), quickly became the most credible and most followed news source in Zuwara (Dahan, 2017). Although the Center struggles to cover its financial costs, it is able to survive thanks to the volunteer work of about ten activists and journalists, private donations, a modest income from advertising, and a minimal support from the Municipal Council (Dahan, 2013; 2017).

In September 2011, the same activists who created the Zuwara Media Center, founded Kassas Radio. Initially, the purpose of the radio was to connect people and revolutionaries that were fighting. After the end of the revolution, the Radio’s objective became to disseminate information among the citizenry, provide entertainment, and discuss local issues.

Through time, new programs emerged through suggestions and popular demand: programs on health, education, security, Municipal Council. These programs are run by inviting city managers of the National ministries’ local offices to explain their activities and challenges. Ordinary citizens can call and ask questions live, or make comments. This greatly expanded the popularity and the legitimacy of the radio in the eyes of the population. It also helped strengthen good administrators, and weaken corrupt ones.

Today, Kassas Radio is probably the most popular radio station in Zuwara.⁴⁶ Thanks to the Radio, the people of Zuwara can call in and voice their complaints “live” on the program, and obtain immediate answers from their city officials. In turn, the Municipal Council and other local officials can explain their challenges and outline the initiatives they carry out, which are often unknown to the citizenry.

Kassas also provides a channel of information and communication between Zuwara citizens and security forces, by regularly inviting the latter to share their activities and challenges live, and to answer the inquiries callers in real time. When the first city Council was elected, in September 2011, they recognized the vital role played by the radio and the Media Center. In fact, this led to an unsuccessful attempt by the Council to take control of these outlets for use as their own communication tools. Despite their severe lack of funding, both Kassas Radio and the Zuwara Media Center have remained independent community driven initiatives. The successive Municipal Councils have agreed to a mutually beneficial arrangement: The Council provides the media outlets with a minimal budget (about 7’000 LYD/month) in exchange for the continuation of their programs covering the Council’s activities and live air time to engage with the citizens (Kassas Radio co-founder. 2016). However, it must be noted that these funds do not cover the budget necessary to pay the personnel and run programs, which is estimated to be 200’000 LYD/year (Kassas Radio co-founder, 2016). In February 2017, the Radio also started live streaming on the internet.⁴⁷

An episode that occurred in September 2012 further underscores the significant role played by Kassas Radio in Zuwara’s success with local governance. Armed men invaded Zuwara’s water desalination plant and began stealing its very expensive heavy machinery (over 100k LD). The facility’s staff called the radio and reported the theft live on the air as it was underway. Militia members from across the city that heard this news, immediately gathered, and headed toward the facility. At the same time, the father of one of the thieves, who had been recognized at the facility, was called by one of Kassas’ Radio personalities, who also happened to be his relative. The father contacted and questioned his son live on the air about what he was doing and why, and the theft was thwarted.

Kassas radio also improves the quality of services provided by local authorities by giving a voice to citizens who demand accountability. For instance, in March 2013, the Radio broadcasted a program during which a staff person from the Brigade of Inspection of Commercial Activities called in. On air, he complained about the police. When conducting an inspection and verification of a store’s license, the store’s owner

⁴⁵ Zuwara Media Center Facebook page, available from <https://www.facebook.com/zuwara.mc/>.

⁴⁶ At the time of writing, the Radio’s Facebook page had more than 2’500 “likes” and over 3’600 followers.

⁴⁷ Available from <http://mixlr.com/kasasfm981/>

threw out the inspector and threatened him. The inspector went to the police to complain, but the police did nothing (Kassas Radio co-founder, 2016). Following the program, the police received criticism and pressure from the public for their lack of action. This is the very mechanism by which public accountability fosters effective and responsive public services.

Another radio station and a monthly magazine by the name of Tagrmas were created in December 2016. The magazine writes about local news and Amazigh culture, and the Radio has a programming that is similar to that of Kassas Radio, promoting Amazigh culture and a more liberal society.⁴⁸ These outlets are funded by a Zuwara businessman who prefers to remain anonymous (Aledresy, 2017). In March 2017, the entire Tagrmas staff received a training in Zuwara by the German public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW). Over the course of five days, they were educated on journalism, reporting, vocal training, and directing (Abouzamazem, 2017).

In 2016, young civil society activists and citizen journalists created the Tafat magazine, with the objective of printing monthly issues with articles on culture, sports, fashion, and short stories (Dahan, 2017).⁴⁹ The magazine is supported in part by the Municipal Council (with about 6'000 LYD per month), and through local advertising.

At the time of writing the Zuwara Media Center and Kassas Radio continue to be non-profit, independent and reliable sources of local information that are broadly followed and supported by the people of Zuwara.⁵⁰

B. Municipal Council Media

The level and quality of activities of Zuwara's Municipal Council through the media is probably unparalleled in Libya. The Council has a dedicated media office with seven municipal employees, including two photographers, one editor, one video editor, and one office manager, most of whom have been with the Council for years. Some were already active during the revolution, and most of them also volunteer with local CSOs, and/or work as reporters for large media channels, such as Tafat, al Naba TV, 218 TV and Libya Ruh al-Watan channels. They are all working under the direction of the former manager of Kassas Radio (Dahan, 2017). In June 2014, the Municipal Council media team created a dedicated Facebook page,⁵¹ on which they post Municipal Council activities, decisions, and information. At the time of writing, the Council's Facebook page has more than 28'000 followers, which is remarkable for a population of 50'000. The Council's media office also liaises with television and radio channels to distribute information and press releases, and to regularly organize programs that host municipal authorities in order to discuss local matters in the city (Aledresy, 2017). As mentioned above, these programs typically include the live participation of audiences who question officials, which is highly appreciated in the city (Dahan, 2017).

Furthermore, in 2015 the Council contracted a Libyan IT company to develop an official logo, a website and web portal.⁵² The website is the first important step of the Municipal Council to develop local E-government, which is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the activities of public sector organizations. E-government helps overcome some limitations in the administrative capacity of municipal and central authorities by providing information and services through the use of internet, such as: Information on "how to" obtain documents and carry out administrative

⁴⁸ See *Tagrmas* FM 97.7 Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/tagrmas.media/?ref=hovercard>, and its website at <http://www.tagrmas.com/>

⁴⁹ See *Tafat* Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/tafat.foundation/>

⁵⁰ At the time of writing, the Zuwara Media Center Facebook page had more 65'000 likes and followers, and its Youtube channel had more than 765,000 views, which is remarkable considering that the population of Zuwara is estimated at only 50'000 people.

⁵¹ Visit <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/>

⁵² The website is accessible at www.zuwarah.gov.ly

procedures; official forms; a repository of Municipal Council decisions; Information about tenders; mechanisms to provide feedback about services. However, although the website “shell” has been created, all these e-services still need to be developed. The Municipal IT team of two is too small, and its members are not sufficiently skilled to build the interface between the website, actual services, and users.

While still in need of improvement, these media outlets provide widespread access to real time information, and public information sharing between the Municipal Council and other local governance actors. They constitute independent channels of communication between local authorities and the inhabitants of Zuwara.

7. International Support

Some local actors in Zuwara complain that international actors either ignore or do not understand the diversity of culture, social structure and functioning of local governance in Libya (Almansouri, Vice-President of the Political and Social Committee of the Council of Wise Men, 2017). In addition, they lament that the international community only focuses on illegal immigration and transnational Islamic terrorism, at a time when Libyans are struggling with serious security, justice and economic hardships.

Nonetheless, considering its small size, Zuwara has received a large amount of international support since 2011, from organizations such as VNG, Creative, ACTED-CIL, MSF, Humanitarian Dialogue, International Republican Institute, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Deutsche Welle, UNSMIL, BBC, and Ara Pacis. The bulk of training and support has focused on civil society, local governance, and media. For instance, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has trained journalists on journalism and migration

Between 2013 and 2015, the Dutch NGO VNG focused on integrating civil society in local governance, and fostering cooperation between CSOs from border towns. In November 2015, Creative International also held a 3-Day workshop with Zuwara Municipal Council employees about the cooperation with the executive local offices.⁵³ More recently, in April 2017, International Media Support (from Denmark), trained activists from Kassas Radio on how to produce and broadcast news and media.⁵⁴ In May 2017, the International Republican Institute launched a similar project entitled “Partnership between Municipal Councils and civil society organizations.”⁵⁵

8. Conclusion

In the midst of unstable politics, absent state institutions, economic hardships, and recurring conflicts, Zuwara’s local authorities and inhabitants have been able to develop a more comprehensive, effective, and responsive local governance compared to other municipalities in Libya.

There are several reasons behind this success. Firstly, local authorities and inhabitants have succeeded in centralizing power in the hands of a few organizations, each of which has centralized the responsibility for one key function. Today, Zuwara is *de facto* controlled by the following four entities, each responsible for one key aspect of local governance:

- Municipal Council: political decisions, provision of services;

⁵³ For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/913728322039673>

⁵⁴ For more information, watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-TjDwsm66I&feature=youtu.be>

⁵⁵ For more visit <https://www.facebook.com/Zuwarah.MC/posts/1332535083492326>

- Joint Military Operations Room: Defense, control of checkpoints and of the Tunisian border crossing of Ras Ejdeer;
- Crime Fighting Unit: Policing and security;
- Majlis al-Hokama: Dispute-resolution within the community and with neighboring communities.

Secondly, local authorities have managed to institutionalize these organizations, and create coordination mechanisms between them through the Crisis Management Committee. Thirdly, local authorities have been able to count on locally-raised revenues, which have allowed local authorities to respond to pressing local needs and diffuse tensions before they could undermine their authority, and to guarantee a minimum level of services. Fourthly, Zuwara has been able to solve the security dilemma early on, and guarantee a good level of security and justice. There is very little petty crime, no kidnappings, no fighting in the street, and no intimidations occurring in Zuwara nowadays. As the former manager of Kassas radio highlighted: “Personally I have never faced any threats so there is no fear whatsoever of anything.” This owes in part to the Municipal Council’s ability to pay the salary of a local security force (the Crime Fighting Unit, or Mukhannain), and in part to the ability of Zuwara local authorities and revolutionary fighters to create this group and ensure its functioning. And last, but not least, Zuwara has a remarkable civil society, and the Municipal Council has been open and willing to develop cooperation with CSOs, and to supporting them. This report has illustrated extensively the impact of Zuwara’s CSOs on the quality of service provision, and the crucial role of Zuwara’s community media in providing information, and fostering transparency and accountability, which have increased the level of legitimacy and popular support in local governance actors.

However, these success factors are at least in part linked to very unique circumstances. Thanks to its location, Zuwara is able to benefit from the cross-border trade with Tunisia. Zuwara enjoys a strong social cohesion due to the high level of homogeneity of its population (all Amazigh, moderately religious, moderately conservative). Unlike Tripoli or Benghazi, there are no serious cleavages dividing the population of Zuwara. Social cohesion is further strengthened by the external threats (e.g. skirmishes with neighboring Arab towns) and challenges (e.g. smuggling of migrants, fuel shortages, lack of access to arable land) that affect the Zuwara community as a whole. This unity and the spirit of belonging to a community has certainly influenced the behavior of key local actors. As the former manager of Kassas radio admitted, “I will not take part in anything that could harm our city, and I avoided covering any political or controversial issue. [...] I always try to showcase the positive sides in the city” (Aledresy, 2017). In addition, the Municipality of Zuwara is small and fairly isolated, and therefore more manageable, in comparison to Misrata, Benghazi and most of Tripoli’s Municipalities.

Lastly, while local governance arrangements that have been developed in Zuwara prove to be effective in solving immediate challenges, they pose some problems for the emergence of long-term democratic governance, particularly in terms of civilian oversight and the rule of law. In fact, the oversight and control exercised by elected authorities over the mission of security and defense groups and over their command and control structure is weak and informal. Given their quasi-independence, the city must rely on the personal ethics of security and defense groups’ members and on their sensitivity to public opinion to ensure that they operate in the interest of the city. Moreover, notwithstanding their good cooperation with local judicial authorities, security and defense groups set their own standards and procedures. These procedures can change at any time based upon the need, and civilian oversight is not strong enough to oversee their internal functioning. Thus, there is the possibility that a worsening of the security situation in the city may lead to human rights violations, such as the use of detention without charges or trial, and torture. This said, prevalence of civil society organizations and the active role played by local community media constitute monitoring and warning mechanisms of last resort against potential abuses and human rights violations.

Interviews

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Researcher from Zuwara. 2017. June.

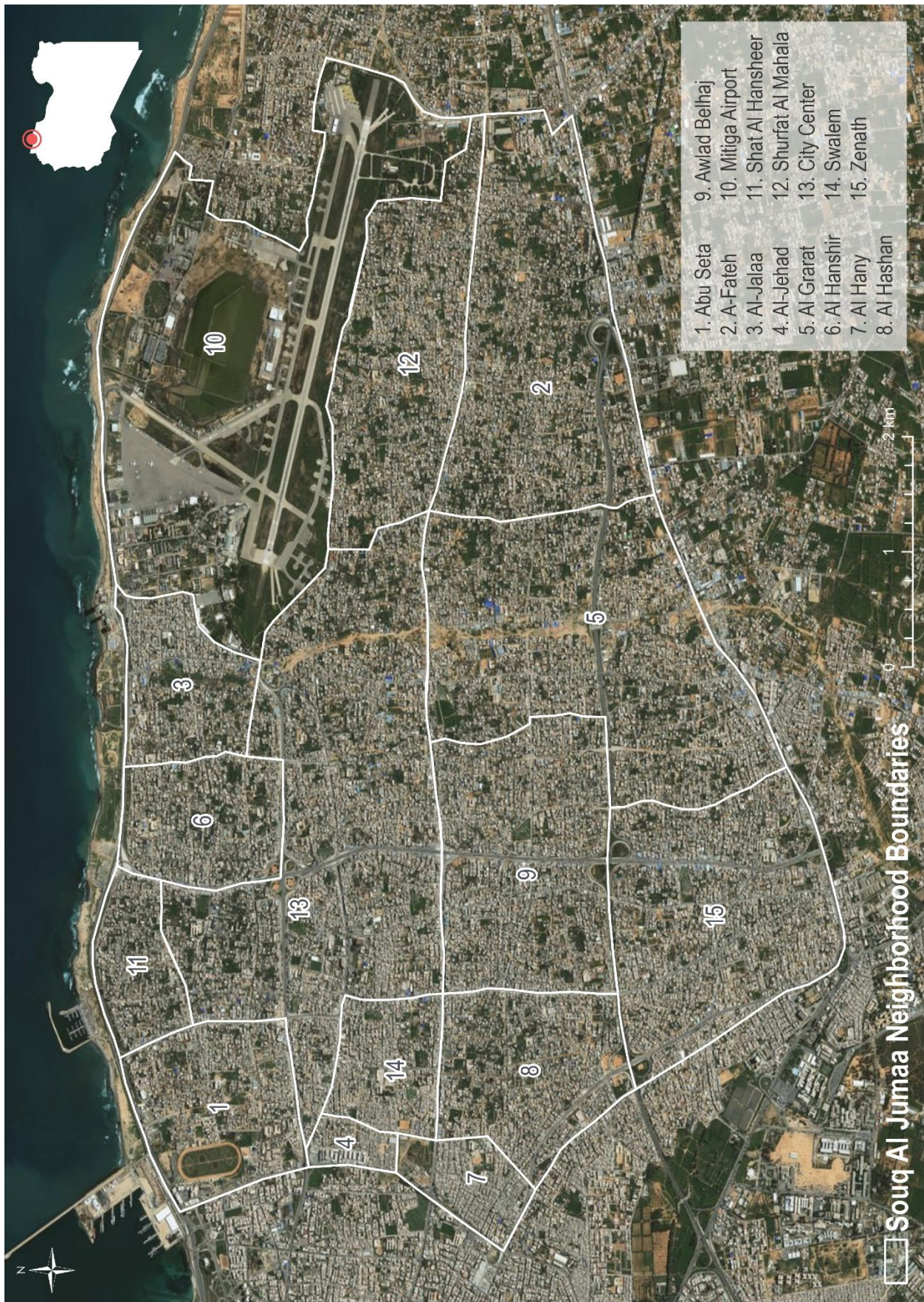
Zuwara Municipal Council member. 2017. June.

Zuwara revolutionary fighter. 2013. November.

Zuwara revolutionary fighter 2. 2017. June.

Souq Al-Juma'a





Map 2: Souq Al-Juma'a neighborhood boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Background

Souq Al-Juma'a was founded more than 500 years ago and consists of 17 neighborhoods (mahallahs) with an area of 4800 hectares and a population of about 320,000 residents. Historically, it was a rural area just outside Tripoli's city walls. The neighborhood grew as a series of farms and countryside homes. Unlike other parts of Tripoli, most families have resided in the area for many generations. Thus, family and neighborhood relations are very strong and inhabitants have a sense that they all know each other. Souq Al-Juma'a is also probably one of the least socially mixed areas in the capital (Abumais, Aug 2017).

The Municipal Council of Souq Al-Juma'a was elected on August 25th, 2014 and it is composed of nine members, including one woman. The Council members selected Hesham Al-Hashemi to be the Mayor of the municipality, one of the thirteen municipalities of Tripoli.

According to a Ministry of Local Government decision issued on 27th of May, 2015, the municipality of Souq Al-Juma'a is classified as type "A" This classification means that Souq Al-Juma'a is considered the equivalent of a major city in its own right, one of the 6 largest municipalities in the country.

2. Municipal Authorities

A. State Actors and Functions

Souq Al-Juma'a Municipal Council (Majlis Baladiya) is organized around five committees:

- Infrastructure
- Health
- Development
- Economy and Investment
- Emergency

The members of the Council preside over these committees, with each member chairing one of them. Other subcommittees fall under these committees. The Council takes its decisions on ordinary cases through a meeting of its members, by an absolute majority (5 votes among the 9 members), while on extraordinary cases such as removing the Mayor, or the dismissal of a member, the decision is taken by the votes of two thirds (6 members).

B. Partnerships with Civil Society and Other Bodies

Souq Al-Juma'a is considered to be one of the most conservative and traditional neighborhoods in Tripoli. Coupled with its strong and well-established social structure, this may explain why formal civil society organizations did not flourish in this neighborhood as much as they did elsewhere. However, this is not to say that civil society does not exist in a more traditional and informal manner. For instance, Souq Al-Juma'a's inhabitants carry out numerous charity initiatives, typically through local mosques. Strong family and neighborhood ties may explain why these initiatives are often carried out outside the framework of formal civil society organizations.

Ms. Awatif Al-Jadayamihas, Municipal Council Member and Chairman of the Human Development Committee, asked International Republican Institute (IRI) to meet with a number of representatives of civil society organizations in order to open bridges of communication with them. The resulting workshop was held on January 22, 2017 at the Haroon hotel.⁵⁶ The municipality has also partnered with Marathon

⁵⁶ 2017 "CSO'S meeting with Souq Al-Juma'a Municipal Council" 22, January.

February 25 organization, which is a civil society organization based in Souq Al-Juma'a, to organize a number of social events such as national holiday celebrations, as well as to undertake a number of workshops on human development. These especially targeted Social Consultants working in Souq Al-Juma'a's schools in order to raise awareness of the role of social workers, how to deal with students, and how these Consultants can play a bigger role in addressing the issues students are facing at home.

The Community Partnership Group of Souq Al-Juma'a, which is a civil society organization founded in October 2016, plays an active role within the municipality. The Council supports this organization to enhance volunteer work in Souq Al-Juma'a, and it cooperates with the municipal council to do a number of activities, such as closing holes in roads in different areas within the municipality as part of a campaign entitled "Be a believer."⁵⁷ The campaign started in March 20th, 2017. The group collects donations from the residents of the municipality to carry out its activities and the Council supports them logistically, through assistance, such as providing trucks and also by providing space at the municipality building for them to hold their meetings.

The Council also cooperates with students of the Architecture Department at the University of Tripoli to carry out construction on development and design projects within Souq Al-Juma'a municipality. The municipal council supports students with the information and assistance needed to design their projects, such as statistics, expertise, and permissions to access sites in order to analyze the targeted locations of their studies.

One of the projects on which the Council cooperated with the Architecture Department is the urban development of Souq Al-Juma'a center. This project was initiated by engineer Ayman Al-A'alim with the Department of Architecture at the University of Tripoli in order to urge students who are about to graduate to design their graduation projects within Souq Al-Juma'a. Mohammad Hamouda, interviewed for this research, is one of the students who executed a graduation project within Souq Al-Juma'a. The Council provided him with aerial maps of the area as well as some information about the infrastructure and statistics. In October 2015, the Council introduced Hamouda's project during a meeting for the residents at which projects and plans were discussed. During this meeting, the residents were dissatisfied and criticized the work of the Council, saying that it was all about plans and visions and lacked implementation on the ground. After that, the Council published Hamouda's project⁵⁸ on its Facebook page, calling on potential donors to adopt this project and support its execution, but no support was provided.

C. Local Revenue and Funding

Law No. 59 provides for the establishment of a Shura Council (Majlis Shura) composed of a number of members whom are considered advisory members of the Municipal Council. However, the Council has not yet formed this Shura Council due to legal problems. The current legislation does not specify how the Shura Council would be paid their salaries. In contrast, the Council does cooperate with Souq Al-Juma'a Experts Council, which is considered a civil society organization made up of a number of subject matter experts and academics from Souq Al-Juma'a. The Experts Council consists of about 30 members of different scientific backgrounds. The Council cooperates with them to examine topics such as the local development strategy. Additionally, the Council cooperates with other experts based on topics they seek to address.

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/suq.aljumah.municipality/posts/1818424105084504>

⁵⁷ 2017 "Be a Believer campaign" Community Partnership Group of Souq Al-Juma'a. 1. April

Available from:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1184153455044384&id=1007739006019164

⁵⁸ 2015 "Honoring the students of the Department of Architecture", 17. August

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/suq.aljumah.municipality/posts/1617836901809893>

As the concept of active local governance in Libya is recent, when Law No. 59 of 2012 regulating the work of local municipalities was issued, there were problems with its implementation due to already existing legislation that conflicted with it. This incompatibility was especially problematic with older laws pertaining to such as planning and taxation. The taxation law, for example should have been amended to provide for a clear division between local taxes and central taxes, so that the municipalities could receive taxes legally and finance themselves.

To date, there is no clear mechanism to provide a budget to the municipalities, despite the recent classification that divided the municipalities into categories (A,B, or C) which was intended to contribute to setting standards for budgets. Souq Al-Juma'a municipality is one of the first municipalities to submit a budget to the Ministry of Local Government when asked to do so. Souq Al-Juma'a Council has received a budget of 610 thousand LYD as part of a "unified budget" for all municipalities in 2014. Under the unified budget, all the municipalities received the same budget regardless of the size or population of the municipality. The municipality also received a budget estimated at 2 million LYD in 2015, and an estimated 4.5 million LYD in 2016. The Council has designated a percentage of these budgets to cover needs within the municipality, especially in the education and health sectors.

All of the aforementioned budgets are facilitative budgets, which means that - in theory - they are intended to be spent on the Council's operational costs, not on services, such as health or education. By law, these are the responsibility of central government ministries, notably the Ministries of Health and Education. Yet, due to the failure of these ministries to meet local needs, the Council attempts to use its own budget to cover a number of sectors such as maintenance of schools, hospitals and other buildings within the municipality. The Council takes on this work in order to provide residents with better services and also because many people in the municipality think that working on education and health is the responsibility of the Council.

It is noteworthy that Greater Tripoli contains 13 municipalities, all of which are new municipalities with no prior management bodies. As such, these municipalities have had to establish and develop new departments in order to complete their work. This is in contrast with cities that contain only one municipality, such as the municipality of Zliten, which has been able to activate the former administrative bodies located in the city. One of the greatest challenges facing all municipalities at the present time is the large volume of legislation being issued and then rapidly cancelled. The instability of decisions over time makes it difficult to create sustainability in the municipal work. For example, two decisions have been issued so far regarding the unified organization of municipalities, which are Resolutions No. 116 and No. 202 for 2015. Both decisions were cancelled in the same year they were issued.

One of the most prominent challenges facing the municipality is staffing, because the municipality cannot appoint or dismiss employees, according to the current law. Most municipal employees are employees of the Local Council (Majlis Mahalli). The municipality can contract with experts in theory, but this is close to impossible in the absence of funds which would allow the municipality to pay the salaries of these experts.

3. Service Provision

It is important to highlight the fact that the current status of the laws organizing the work of the municipalities do not give much space and freedom to the municipalities to fulfill their responsibilities. The municipality's role is limited to supervision and follow-up tasks only, as other tasks vital to service provision at the local level have been assigned (under Law 59) to governorates – governorates which do not yet exist in a form capable of assuming these tasks.

A. Municipal Council Priorities

The Souq Al-Juma'a Council's key priorities include health, education, and infrastructure, similar to most other Libyan municipalities, due to these sectors' direct impact on citizen's lives. The Council has taken steps such as re-distribution of doctors and nurses among clinics and hospitals in order to create a balance between health authorities, as well as to ensure service is provided equitably in all seventeen neighborhoods in the municipality. However, the Council has clear limits, such as being unable to transport a significant number of doctors and nurses together to work in other places where needed without approval from the Ministry of Health. Similarly filling a gap, the Council supports hospitals and health clinics located within the municipality in terms of maintenance and provides medical and pharmaceutical equipment despite the fact that the provision of medicines, medical equipment, and medical supplies are supposed to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

To fill gaps, the municipality searches for donors willing to help meet identified needs. Donor support is directed to the hospitals and clinics and in the form of aid, where the municipality plays a supervisory role. For example, according to Dr. Hussam Belhaj, Director of the Municipal Health Office, the Council has played a direct role in mediating with some public companies such as Al-Madar, a large phone company, in order to obtain in-kind subsidies from these companies, such as the maintenance of generators, the provision of some medicines, and the maintenance of some facilities.

Regarding infrastructure, the Council has also played a role in the maintenance and paving of some main and side roads. The number of roads that were maintained is about 12 roads across the 17 neighborhoods. The municipality paved 8 roads in 2015 and 7 slightly longer roads in 2016, such as Zanega Road in Mahalat Alhaney.⁵⁹ The Council has also improved the water networks in some areas that suffer from depletion, in cooperation with the Housing and Utilities Authority (subordinate to the central government). It is noteworthy that this is also not considered one of the municipality legal obligations at the present time. Finally, the Council also works in cooperation with the General Electric Company (GECOL) to resolve the problems that the municipality suffers in terms of electricity and power cuts. Recently, the Council started working on the maintenance and installation of a number of electric poles along a number of public roads.

The Council also maintains 24 schools within the municipality, providing desks and other things that support the educational process. Those activates were funded using the budget that the municipality received from the Ministry of Local Government. Overall, the Council plays a supervisory role over the educational institutions within its area, assuming tasks such as supervision of the educational process and examinations.

Furthermore, the municipality installed 17 smart boards (an educational tool) divided across 17 schools in 17 neighborhoods (Mahallat) as a part of the work carried out by the municipality to promote schools, in February 2017.

B. Taxation

Taxes have not been officially levied by the Council for several reasons. The Council attempted to collect taxes in the health sector in 2015 by reactivating a resolution of the General People's Committee (No. 104 of 2004) which allows to the Council to charge people for different medical services in hospitals and public clinics. However, the resolution which grants this authority was suspended by the Ministry of Health in 2015.

Presently, there is no clear law that clarifies how local taxes are supposed to be collected, as well as what those taxes should be. As mentioned earlier, Law No. 59 was issued in isolation from the rest of the laws governing a number of subjects, including taxation. As a result, Souq Al-Juma'a collects no taxes directly. If a new law were to be issued that would classify tax revenue as intended for local or central use, the

⁵⁹ 2017 "Pave Zanega road in Mahalat Alhaney" 12. February.

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/suq.aljumah.municipality/posts/1828974654029449>

municipality could collect taxes directly and become self-financing, improving their ability to provide services greatly. There may be movement in this direction – recently, the Ministry of Local Government has asked municipalities to send their proposals for lists of local earnings from which local taxes could be directly collected and implement the collection of taxes within the municipalities. Such steps would allow municipal councils to play a larger role and provide better services to citizens, especially in light of the economic challenges experienced by central state in Libya.

4. Security

The municipality enjoys a high degree of security and low crime rates (in terms of shooting and theft) compared to other municipalities in Tripoli. It is also one of the areas with the fewest number of checkpoints within its boundaries in Tripoli. This is attributable in part to the fact that 90% of the municipality's residents are originally from Souq Al-Juma'a. Thus, the social cohesion of the municipal population is very strong. (Professor Yahya Hattamani of Tripoli University, May 15, 2017) This cohesion plays a vital role in Libyan society, where such bonds are highly valued. Stability also stems from the presence of powerful (now official, once informal) security forces such as Al-Nawasi and Al-Rada'a.

There are ten such security forces in Souq Al-Juma'a, and most of their members are residents of Souq Al-Juma'a. These groups are respected by residents due to their anti-crime activities, reputation for hard work, and attempts to maintain security, not only within the municipality, but across Tripoli⁶⁰. Other municipalities, such as Hay Al-Andalus, have cooperated with these forces to demolish illegal buildings and shops. Al-Madar Mobile Company transferred their HQ to Souq Al-Juma'a due to the area's stability (Director of the Mayor's Office Mohammed Aljaley, 2017).

These forces help maintain security in cooperation with Souq Al-Juma'a police station and the Security and Reconciliation Committee, which is one of the committees that was established by the Council early in its tenure.

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

A key element of the municipal dispute settlement process is the Council of Wise Men (Majlis Al-Hokama'a) of Souq Al-Juma'a. This council consists of non-elected social figures who play an important role in partnership with the municipality. It was created based on a decision of the President of the General National Congress (No. 120,⁶¹ issued in 25th of October 2015). The Majlis Al-Hokama'a consists of 129 members, 50 of whom actively and regularly participate in the Majlis' work. The members of the Majlis were chosen by recommendation from the people of Souq Al-Juma'a, with each mahallah (neighborhood) recommending a number of people. The members are from different backgrounds. They are also well known in the municipality.

The Majlis Al-Hokama'a is concerned with issues of social nature that require the intervention of officials. One of the most important instances in which the Majlis played a significant role on was the release of 5 youths from Souq Al-Juma'a, who were arrested in the city of Jadu⁶² in retaliation for the arrest by the Al-

⁶⁰ 2017. "Arrest of drug traffickers," *Al-Rada'a*. January 14. Available from:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1509486392478855&id=1021745154586317

⁶¹ 2015, "GNC approve Majlis Al-Hokama'a of Souq Al-Juma'a 31 October" *Ajwa.net*. Available from:

<http://www.ajwa.net/news/view/202270/>

⁶² 2016 "The release of youth from Souq Al-Juma'a » *Majlis Al-Hokama'a*. November 7. Available from:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1626501897643631&id=1516315778662244

Rada'a force of a group of criminals from Nafusa Mountain (near Jadu). The 5 young men from Souq Al-Juma'a were arrested to pressure the Al-Rada'a force to release those criminals. The Majlis Al-Hokama'a of Souq Al-Juma'a communicated with the Council of Elders and security authorities of Jadu to put pressure on the kidnapers to release the 5 young men.

When citizens face security problems in Souq Al-Juma'a, they go to the local police station to report the situation and open a file. The police then refers the case to one of the security forces that fall within their jurisdiction. The security authorities in the municipality are considered executive bodies. For this reason, they are responsible for receiving cases from the police station within the municipality. The police stations are one of the first bodies that the municipality reactivated in 2015. The municipal response differs according to the case. In some civil cases, citizens also go to the police station to submit their cases. The police station then refers the case to the Public Prosecution, which then refers the case to the competent court.

There is also a trial court within the territory of Souq Al-Juma'a municipality, but this court, like all courts in Libya, falls only under the authority of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, which is an independent administrative body. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary supervises courts and prosecutors in Libya. The municipality only deals with the trial court in very limited matters such as submitting statements or any other needed official documents. Other than that, courts are not subjected to municipal authority.

6. Community Media

A. Social Media

The Council relies on its Facebook page to communicate with the public,⁶³ using their page to share activities and works carried out by the Council as well as data and letters received from the Ministry of Local Government. The municipality's page has about 40,000 followers. The Council recently sponsored some posts on its page that addressed the municipality's vision for 2030.⁶⁴

B. Radio and TV

In addition, the Council relies on official TV channels to cover the activities carried out by the municipality. For example, the Libya Panorama channel covered a presentation on ideas for the development of the municipality⁶⁵ in February of 2017. Libya Panorama also covered a workshop held in Souq Al-Juma'a by the Qodraty Organization, in cooperation with the Council, on communication skills.⁶⁶ The Libya Channel and Channel 218 have also covered events carried out by the municipality.

Since Tripoli is a large city with a very large number of private radio channels, there is no radio channel that directly follows a specific municipality as of yet. Some other cities have radio channels that allow constant contact with their municipal council, channels these councils support due to the lack of other radio stations within their borders.

⁶³ Municipal Council page. Available from : <https://www.facebook.com/suq.aljumah.municipality/>

⁶⁴Municipal Council, 2017 "Municipality's Vision for 2030," May 16. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/suq.aljumah.municipality/videos/1879515242308723/>

⁶⁵Libya Panorama, 2017 "The idea of developing the municipality," 8 April 2017. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_h9cMDUbpU

⁶⁶Libya Panorama, 2017 "Municipal Council training workshop". Qodraty. 27 February. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZA_BccXrPs

7. International Support

The international community has also had a role in supporting some municipalities in Libya. Chemonics has provided assistance to Souq Al-Juma'a through a strategic communication training project in coordination with the International Republican Institute (IRI). IRI provided training and LT12 (the Libyan Transitional Initiative) provided equipment/video production/printing materials to enable Souq Al-Juma'a participants to implement what they learnt during the training. The cost of the equipment was approximately forty thousand USD. The training included a number of skills, including how to promote the municipality, how to deal with social media, and how to organize the municipal Facebook page, as well as how to deal with citizen responses.

IRI also supported municipalities with a number of trainings to build capacity. The training covered areas such as communication, debate, and local administration, as well as the analysis of the legislation governing municipal work and human resources. The number of trainings carried out by IRI was 15, with the participation of 3 members of the Council and about 5 employees from the municipality in each training. The training targeted a number of municipal councils including Souq Al-Juma'a. It also provided a Libyan consultant by the name of Wesam Shanab to these Councils for six months. Shanab helped the municipality develop internal structures and administrative structures as well as local administrative capacity. Also, IRI has a program to support female members of municipal councils.

In addition, the municipality has partnered with Chemonics to launch a voluntary campaign with the Boy Scouts. The campaign aimed at spreading the culture of volunteering in the municipality. The campaign targeted two schools and around 400 students. Further, in 2016, Chemonics helped Souq Al-Juma'a prepare a public park with improved gardens, seating, and lighting.

In 2016 the municipality also supported the first stage of the GIS project (Geographic Information Systems). The project is a partnership between Chemonics and IRI, with an estimated budget of about 200 thousand USD (in kind rather than cash). Chemonics provided the necessary equipment for the project, while IRI trained 10 employees on how to use the equipment allocated to the project. This project provides information about the municipality's Census and also determines the number of administrative facilities such as hospitals, schools and services provided by the municipality. It also shows the number of roads and infrastructure services provided by the municipality. The first phase of this project was launched on the municipality website in April 2016.⁶⁷

8. Conclusion

In general, the role of the Council currently is limited to supervision and follow-up, since many competencies have not yet been officially transferred to the municipalities, such as infrastructure, electricity, water, garbage collection, education, and health among others. These competencies are still under the central government, despite the fact that they are services that affect citizens directly and daily, and are supposed to be within the competencies of the municipalities.

The idea of decentralization gained traction in Libya due to the excessive centralization suffered by the country under the previous regime and also because of its potential to facilitate direct services to citizens. Given their limited current capabilities, initiatives by some municipalities are at present often arranged on an ad hoc basis through personal relationships. The role that municipalities will play in the future is not clear, and a national level vision is lacking. This is due to inexperience as well as an unresolved and

GIS project 13 April.2017. Available from: <http://www.sj.gov.ly/map/>

incomplete legal framework that fails to resolve matters such as the basis on which the budgets of the municipal councils will be adopted and the organization of local taxes.

This legal framework is also required in order to create balance between the municipalities due to their variation in resources, where some municipalities have the advantage of being on the coastline or having airports, harbors, factories, or companies in addition to population density. So far, no national plan exists to achieve balance between the municipalities and determine how the state will support municipalities that lack resources. One possible option is for municipalities with a large percentage of resources to dedicate some of these resources to those municipalities with less. Such a step would help to create a national level of trust and equality, and cannot be achieved without the existence of rules and regulations governing such a redistribution.

Municipal tasks and priorities in Libya differ from one municipality to another and from one city to another due to factors such as the status of each municipal council and the overall social situation. Some municipalities have played a greater role than others. For example, some already collect local earnings. One of the most important drivers of variation between municipalities is the extent and quality of the previous (pre-Revolution) administrations in each area.

Interviews

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Al-Hattamani, Yahya. 2017. Professor at Tripoli University, May

al-Jadayami, Awatif. 2017. Municipal Council Member and Chairman of the Human Development Committee, May

Alaleam, Mohamed. 2017. Former Municipal Council Member, April

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Belhaj, Hussam. 2017. Director of the Health Office in the municipality of Souq Al-Juma'a, May

Ben al-Haj, Ashraf. 2017. Civil society activist, May

Ben Yousef, Hesham Al-Hashim. 2017. Mayor of Souq Al-Juma, May

Hamouda, Mohamed. 2017. Civil society activist, June

IRI Program Officer, June

Zliten





Map 3: Zliten neighborhood boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Background

A. Municipal Character

The city of Zliten lies along the Mediterranean coastline in the western region of Libya. With a population of around 231,000,⁶⁸ it is the sixth largest city in Libya. It is located approximately 150 km east of the capital, Tripoli, and is bordered by the city of Al-Khums from the west, Misrata from the east, and Bani Walid from the south. Zliten's society is relatively homogenous, comprised of seven main tribes and a few smaller families. Most of them are Arab, though some have Turkish roots. The tribes tend to be concentrated in their own neighborhoods, while the city center is mixed. There are no historical tensions between them, although there was some rivalry during the Revolution between those supporting it and those against it, tensions that have since been resolved.

Zliten is most renowned throughout Libya as a center for the study of Maliki Islamic jurisprudence and the Quran. The city is also home to one of the oldest Libyan religious educational institutions, dating back more than five hundred years, the Zawiat Side Abdel Salam. In 1994, a university called Asmarya, which is the only Islamic University in Libya, was established nearby. Economically, the city relies on agriculture and is known for its olive and palm trees. It is also home to several banking institutions, a major shopping center, and the Zliten Hotel, the city's top accommodation for tourists.

B. Recent History

Zliten was one of the Libyan cities that rose up against the Gadhafi regime during the February 2011 Revolution. However, it was quickly retaken by government forces. Because of its strategic location, these forces used the city as a base of operations in their battle against the revolutionary brigades of nearby Misrata. In June of 2011, another attempted revolt inside the city was again put down by Gadhafi's army and the city remained under Regime control until August 2011, when Misratan revolutionaries and locals were able to liberate it, with the help of NATO airstrikes.

2. Municipal Actors

A. State Actors and Functions

In accordance with the local administration legislation known as Law 59, the municipal council representing Zliten was elected on May 10, 2014 and the Mayor was selected by the Council members shortly thereafter, on May 29.⁶⁹ The council consists of seven members, six men (including one disabled former revolutionary fighter) and a woman. However, currently only 6 of the 7 seats are filled. The one reserved for a female representative is unoccupied due to the lack of female candidates. However, there are reports that application process was made especially difficult for women by the male officials running it, and that they disqualified the only female candidate on the grounds that her paperwork was not in order (Zliten Mayor Ehmadi, 2016). The inability of the central government to provide basic services and other forms of support forces many municipalities to function more like crisis committees, addressing the issues and needs of their local communities as they emerge. Zliten is no exception, and its Council works to address issues such as electricity, the water supply, education, and healthcare.

⁶⁸ According to 2012 census.

⁶⁹ 2014. "Inauguration of its Mayor." Central Committee of Municipal Council Election Facebook page. May 29. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/pg/ccmce/photos/?tab=album&album_id=251447021713658

Zliten's Council governs over 39 neighborhoods (Mahallat).⁷⁰ The Council, in accordance with Law 59,⁷¹ appoints a neighborhood coordinator for each one, known as Mukhtar Mahalla. Their role is to issue certain official documents (such as verifications of addresses), to resolve disputes that are within their Mahalla's boundaries, to document all foreigners within the Mahalla, to inform the municipality of any problems affecting the community, and assume various other tasks.⁷²

Although this system is not unique to Zliten, it is particularly active in Zliten in comparison with other Libyan cities. In January 2017, for example, the Council asked the office of "Zakat"⁷³ affairs to communicate with these coordinators to identify potential beneficiaries in their communities and assess their needs. Another example is a March 19th, 2017 meeting held to discuss the issue of rising costs of marriage dowries in the city. The meeting was attended by the Ma'thoneen,⁷⁴ neighborhood coordinators, the Mayor, and other representatives from the municipality.⁷⁵ According to informants, this type of delegation of power and collaboration is a positive development. However, these coordinators have not been able fully meet the responsibilities of their roles due to their limited technical capacity, including a lack of computer and other required skills and knowledge (Civil Society Activist Ali Al-Ratub, 2017).

In accordance with a provision of Law 59, Zliten also established the Shura Council on October 22, 2014, known as Majlis Al-Shura.⁷⁶ It consisted of four members appointed by the Council on the basis of their reputation in the community and their expertise in healthcare, education and finance. Their main role was to provide advice and policy recommendations on local matters to the Council. However, this body was dissolved a year and a half later due to inactivity. The particular members selected were reportedly not able to fully perform the duties required, as they still held other jobs (Municipal Council Planning and Development Committee Member Khaled Dow, 2017). To replace the Shura Council, the Municipal Council has created its own consultative council consisting of five experts that it calls upon regularly for advice (Ehmadi, 2017).

The national government ministries' local offices (a.k.a. Executive Offices) in cities are known as Makatib Al-Kita-at, and the Zliten Council has a constructive, cooperative relationship with them. This is in part due to the fact that Zliten is not solely dependent on the central government for funding, but also raises its own revenue. There are blurred lines between Ministry duties and those of the local council, as Law 59 has not been full activated, but the institutions are working together to address the city's needs (Ehmadi, 2017). The leadership of the Zliten Council seems to enjoy wide acceptance and support across key institutions in the city.

One effective strategy the Zliten Council has adopted to foster cooperation with the ministries' local offices is the creation of sector-specific committees that include representatives from national ministries' local offices (Dow, 2017). This is a helpful ad-hoc mechanism that helps counter the ambiguous and incomplete legal framework municipalities all over Libya currently operate within. Since Law 59 has not

⁷⁰ 2015. "Approval of 39 Neighborhoods in Zliten" Decree No. 149. Ministry of Local Government.

⁷¹ 2012. "Local Administration Law, Law 59, article 39." National Transitional Council.

Available from: <http://kenanaonline.com/files/0068/68744/59.pdf>

⁷² 2016. "Mukhtar Mahalla's Functions and Selection Criteria." Decree No. 29. Zliten Municipal Council.

Available from: <http://zliten.gov.ly/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/مختاري-الأولي.jpg>

⁷³ Islam required alms to the poor paid annually, known as Zakat.

⁷⁴ Sheikhs who are in charge of making the marriage contracts.

⁷⁵ 2017. "Meeting held to discuss the issue of rising costs of marriage dowries." Municipal Council Facebook Page. March 19.

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/zlitenMC/posts/1300913056661569>

⁷⁶ 2014. "Naming the members of the Shura Council." Decree No. 36. Zliten Municipality Website.

Available from: <http://zliten.gov.ly/decision/اقرار-تسمية-مجلس-شورى-البلدية/>

been fully enacted, some government ministries' offices elsewhere do not even recognize the role of municipal councils.⁷⁷

To address the more urgent and pressing issues within Zliten, the Council created the Crisis Management Committee under its direct supervision. Its role is to manage emergencies in the city and provide effective and preventative solutions. Zliten's local leadership credits this Committee with the smooth handling of the aftermath of a deadly terrorist attack on a police training camp that took place on Jan 7, 2016. At least 60 people were killed and more than two hundred wounded.⁷⁸ The Crisis Management Committee oversaw the quick transfer of victims for medical treatment abroad and the dispersal of fiscal compensation to the families of the dead (Civil Society Activist Rageb Al-Zamzam, 2017).

B. Local Revenue Generation

Zliten, like all municipalities, suffers from the central government's inability to provide substantial and consistent financial support. In theory, according to Mayor Ehmadi, it should receive 200,000 LYD per month from the central government to be spent on salaries, administration and development, and infrastructure. However, this small sum is not dispersed regularly and barely covers employee salaries, with nothing left for improvements to the city. Moreover, Libyan laws organizing the budget and fiscal policy have not been updated since 1957, thus making it very difficult for local governments to manage their budgets effectively (Ehmadi, 2016).

In April 2017, Zliten's Council received a lump sum payment of approximately three million LYD from the Government of National Accord (GNA), the internationally recognized and United Nations-backed government of Libya. Prior to this payment, a half million LYD was sent by the self-proclaimed Salvation Government, also based in Tripoli, which challenges the authority of the GNA. Combined, this is the bulk of the funding Zliten Municipal Council has received in the past three years (Dow, 2017). To effectively run the municipality and execute all of its plans and initiatives, Mayor Ehmadi estimates that Zliten needs a budget of at least fifty million LYD per year.

Unable to rely on consistent support from central authorities, the Zliten Council has devised ways to raise revenue within the municipality. In October 2014, it established the Municipal Financial Policies Committee, comprised of six members including the Mayor, the head of the Shura Council, the head of Financial and Urban Planning, the financial controller, and the head of the local Resources and Investment Affairs Office. This committee was tasked with preparing the annual budget.

Zliten is home to two of the largest cement factories in Libya, which belong to the state-owned Arab Cement Company. Individuals and businesses from all over Libya come to Zliten to buy cement for building purposes. Because the price of cement is subsidized by the state, the Council saw a lucrative opportunity to levy a tax on the purchase of cement while still keeping the cost affordable to buyers. They created a joint commission between the cement factories and the Council to study the initiative and shared the details with the public.

Taxation is a rather foreign concept in Libya, and the public is not accustomed to paying taxes that go directly to local administration. However, the inability of the city to rely on financial assistance from the central government and the resulting need for alternative sources of funding, coupled with a listing of

⁷⁷ UNDP. 2015. *Rapid Diagnostic on the Situation of Local Governance and Local Development in Libya*.

Available from:

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/undp_libya_rapid_diagnostic_of_local_governance_-_synthesis_report_final_version.pdf

⁷⁸ 2016. "Zliten Attack: Truck Bomb Kills at Least 60 at Libya Police Training Center." *NBC News*. Jan. 7.

Available from: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/zliten-attack-truck-bomb-kills-least-40-libya-police-training-n491876>

specific projects the money would be used for, built a strong case for move forward. In fact, there was little resistance from Zliten's citizens, given the dire financial plight of the city. Since May 2016, the Council has imposed a 2% tax on any purchase of liquefied cement in Zliten. In addition, a charge of 60 LYD per car is collected as a service fee for packed cement (Ehmadi, 2016).

Within days of its initial implementation, the municipality collected several million dinars from the cement tax. The money was immediately put to use for the public good. Security cameras were installed at the city entrances, stoplights and crosswalks were erected at busy intersections to reduce traffic accidents, hospitals have been reopened, and schools are being outfitted with needed supplies for the students. Any previous opposition to the taxation has been quieted by these improvements and the general advantages of Zliten's new-found financial self-sufficiency (Ehmadi, 2016).

Not surprisingly, the central government has attempted to stop this initiative, calling it illegal, in violation of Law 59, and claiming the funds belong to the central government.⁷⁹ However, the Mayor of Zliten remains steadfastly defiant, despite a lawsuit that has been filed against him personally (Ehmadi, 2016). He argues that, as Zliten endures the negative environmental impact of the cement factories' presence and operation within its borders, it is entitled to enjoy its benefits. These monies continue to be collected regularly and deposited in the municipality's bank account to be used for public expenditures. However, the Zliten Council does not make the budget details available to the public (Civil Society Activist Abdulmallek Al-Sofrani, 2017). In the wake of the success of the cement tax, the Municipal Council has attempted to introduce taxes on the sand shipments departing from Zliten and impose a fee on advertisement panels inside the city (Al-Ratub, 2017). However, they have not been able to follow through due to conflicts and disagreement with the Ministry of Housing (Ehmadi, 2017).

The democratically-elected municipal leadership of Zliten has made great strides in trying to address its citizens' needs during this period of crisis through innovative solutions of its own. However, it does fall short on a couple of fronts. There is a clear need for more education and training for the employees of the Council and its various entities, in order to enable them to better perform their jobs, in addition to a need for formalization of protocol and procedures between various actors. Furthermore, as is the case throughout Libya, more transparency to the public is warranted with regard to budgetary and fiscal issues, especially where taxes are concerned. It is also likely that once a regular mechanism for their local tax collection is established, the Council will face decisions regarding sending some portion to the central government's coffers.

C. Non-State Actors/Traditional Bodies

The Zliten Council of Wise Men (Majlis Al-Hokama in Arabic, but named Majlis Al-Hokama Wa Al-Aian in Zliten) is an independent 118-member council originally created by Libya's first elected General National Congress (GNC), representing the different tribes of the city.⁸⁰ Its main responsibility is to resolve disagreements or conflicts of a social nature, usually between families or tribes, in order to maintain peace within the city. "We see our role as very supportive of key institutions in the city who are doing their work now" the head of Zliten Majlis Al-Hokama said when interviewed. (Abdulghani Al-Bazi, Head of the Zliten Majlis Al-Hokama, 2017) In such conflicts, Majlis Al-Hokama plays the role of a mediator, trying to talk to each party and produce an agreement. They convene regularly at the Municipal Council's offices and receive some Council funding.

⁷⁹ According to the Executive Order 130/2013, Article 103, the Minister of Local Government in coordination with Finance Minister should first issue a decree defining the applicable taxes for municipal councils, which has not yet occurred by the time of this writing.

⁸⁰ General National Congress. 2015. Approval of Zliten Majlis Al-Hokama. Decree No. 93.

D. Civil Society

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are active in the city. According to Civil Society Commission (CSC) 2016 Database, there are only two CSOs officially registered in Zliten.⁸¹ However, unofficially, there are many more operating on the ground. This is attributable to the fact that there is no CSO Commission office in Zliten to provide necessary logistical support. Most CSOs' activities in Zliten are of a charitable nature. In particular, CSOs are very active in collecting donations and distributing them to the poor or IDPs inside the city (often from Benghazi and Sirte). One famous, successful example is the Al-Mashrua Al-Khairiy (Charity Project) for recycling.⁸² The Al-Shaheed Association for Development and Voluntary Work is in charge of the project.⁸³ The project team distributed a few large baskets around the city for people to put their plastic garbage in. They collect this garbage regularly, chop it up, and compress it to be sold as plastic bulks. The money is then used for charity purposes (Abdullah, Civil Society Activist, 2017).

While there is some interaction, the relationship between the Municipal Council and civil society seems rather limited. Cooperation exists and functions more on an individual-to-individual basis, rather than systematically at the organizational level. The Council finds this more effective than dealing with civil society organizations as a whole because it can vet individuals more easily (Al-Ratub, 2017). The collaboration is mainly consultative, with the Council seeking feedback or enlisting volunteers for specific initiatives (Abdullah, 2017).

Local activists have been part of many of the initiatives mentioned above. For example, for the repair of the schools, participants were recruited from civil society for cleaning tasks. The same was done with the hospitals. Basmat Al-Shabab (Fingerprint of the Youth)⁸⁴ is one organization the local council has worked with on a few projects, such as a public award for best employee, the planning of bazaars, and some training and capacity building. On another occasion, the Municipal Council Environment Committee launched an awareness raising campaign targeting small food businesses like restaurants, bakeries, and groceries, aiming to raise their awareness of hygiene standards. The Committee partnered with the Boy Scouts, Basmat Al-Shabab, and the Red Crescent to execute this campaign, which took place in August of 2016.⁸⁵ There is still much room for increased cooperation between Zliten's civil society and the local government.

3. Service Provision

Overall, Zliten Municipality tries to provide basic services to sustain its community in areas where the Libyan central government has failed to offer adequate support. The Council has extended its jurisdiction and authority to issues surrounding infrastructure, healthcare, and education, among many other areas. The Council learns about problems and outstanding issues by word of mouth or through the national ministries' local offices, then prioritizes them by importance and urgency before they study and implement potential solutions (Dow, 2017). The Council's successful move to collect certain local taxes has allowed it to generate revenue to fund these projects. When a need is identified, it issues a tender, announced on the Council's Facebook page. Then Municipal Council Projects Contracting Committee then takes bids through paper submissions from companies seeking to carry out the project and evaluates their proposals in a transparent and open process, in which all applicants are invited to observe deliberations.

⁸¹ Civil Society Commission 2016 Database available at <https://www.docdroid.net/VfsTMjr/-2016.pdf.html>

⁸² Charity Project Facebook page. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/المشروع-الخيرى-لإعادة-تدوير-المخلفات-741497052548133/>

⁸³ CSO's Facebook page. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/Jamyatashahid/>

⁸⁴ CSO's Facebook Page. Available From: https://www.facebook.com/basmat.shabab.ly/?hc_ref=SEARCH

⁸⁵ Zliten Municipality. 2016. Awareness Raising Campaign. Zliten Municipality Website. Available From <http://zliten.gov.ly/blog/مساهمة-فريق-بصمة-شباب-ومفوضية-الكشافة/>

There is no direct contracting in Zliten as in some other cities in Libya. All interested parties must go through the public bidding process.

Municipal Council priorities

Maintaining a sufficient water supply, along with electricity shortages, have been major problems interrupting daily life throughout Libya, and the Zliten Municipal Council has taken measures to address them at the local level. It invested 123,000 LYD for the development of the water system in the city, much of which was allocated for repairs and the purchase of water pumps for eight water wells in Zliten. With regard to electricity, the council supported the installation of new power stations while placing extreme pressure on militia leaders to return all stolen cables and other equipment and property looted during the Revolution. Although only some of it has been recovered, the Council has brought criminal charges against those parties who engaged in theft or participated in the sabotage of the electricity stations (Dow, 2017).

Garbage collection service in Zliten, which are conducted by the central General Service Company's (GSC) local office, have been hampered by the demands of foreign workers for cash payments (as checks are often impossible to cash in Libya's current banking environment). To solve the problem, the Council took direct check payments from the GSC and secured 100,000 LYD in cash from businessmen to pay the workers. On another occasion, the Council paid the workers directly to prevent the interruption of services (Al-Zamzam, 2017).

Zliten's Mayor believes that education is the most important and effective way to improve the mindset of future generations, so he has given it special attention in his administration (Ehmadi, 2016). The Council representative in charge of the Education Committee met with forty school deans in Zliten in October of 2016 to discuss the current progress of the schools and their outstanding concerns. The Council has spent over one million LYD to repair schools and to provide basic supplies for students and staff. It equipped the education administrative offices throughout the city to oversee the smooth running of the school system.⁸⁶ In particular, the opening of twenty-four kindergartens gave the primary education sector a noteworthy boost.

According to representatives of the municipality, healthcare is another top priority for Zliten's Council and is consequentially among the best in this region of Libya. More than 40,000 people received medical treatment in the city in 2016, along with many people from surrounding cities and southern Libya.⁸⁷ However, hospitals in Zliten have received virtually no funding from the central government. Thus, the municipality has taken to providing direct support, using local funds to reopen one hospital and complete the construction of another (Dow, 2017). In July 2015, the Council created the Healthcare Support Committee, which was tasked specifically with raising money for local healthcare facilities. This Committee utilizes mosques, online campaigns, and personal contacts for its fundraising initiatives. It recently received 30 medical beds donated by a private local company for the Zliten Educational Hospital.⁸⁸ In May of 2016, the Council granted 500,000 LYD to Zliten Hospital to maintain its operations.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Zliten Municipal Council, Head of Diwan. 2017. "Brief on Municipality's Expenses on Education Sector in Zliten". Zliten Municipal Council Facebook Page. May 15. Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/zlitenMC/photos/a.649396768479871.1073741829.649362615149953/1364465273639680/?type=3&theater>

⁸⁷ Zliten Hospital. 2017 "Statistics on the number of patients medically treated during 2016." Facebook Post. Feb. 8. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/zletinth/posts/1441745129223405>

⁸⁸ Healthcare Support Committee. 2017 "Donations received." Zliten Hospital Facebook Page. April 14th. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295146530562841/permalink/1294371360640348/>

⁸⁹ Zliten Hospital. 2016. "Approval of the municipal council to allocate 500,000 LYD for the hospital." Zliten Hospital Facebook Page. May 11. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/zletinth/photos/a.691480887583170.1073741827.691475747583684/1185719668159287/?type=3&theater>

Support from the Municipal Council to these sectors has not been without its challenges. The Libyan Audit Bureau (LAB, known as Diwan Al-Muhasaba), an independent central state institution, initially rejected the financial support that the Council provides to the hospitals and schools, claiming such support was illegal because these two sectors have separate budgets. Consequently, the LAB ordered the bank to block the Council's account. But the Council leadership was able to circumvent this legal obstacle by providing the financial support in the form of loans (Dow, 2017).

To address some problems related to fuel, the Fuel and Cooking Gas Monitoring and Distribution Committee met with gas stations owners in the city on May 16, 2017. Atop the agenda was the shortage of car oil and the distribution of fuel. The station owners agreed to assign representatives to be in regular contact with the Committee. Also, in an added effort to combat smuggling outside the country, the participants decided to issue new forms to be used by local businesses for the purchase of fuel. Finally, the Committee stressed the importance of safety measures and the public appearance of fuel stations.⁹⁰

The Municipal Council has also opened offices for a new Civil Registry and published a census of the city based on data provided by the local Civil Registry offices. Through its Social Affairs Office, the Zliten Municipal Council tackles social issues in the city, with particular focus on the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other impoverished people in the city (UNCHR Officer Omer Farhat, 2017). By employing local funds and with the support of private donations and charitable organizations, this Office helps provide food, shelter, healthcare, help with the enrolment of displaced students in local schools, and assistance with other social affairs, such as facilitating marriages. In May of 2016 the Social Affairs Office announced the relocation of 400 families fleeing from Sirte amid the US airstrikes and fighting against the terrorist group Daesh that were controlling that city. The International Red Cross and the Tripoli-based Taher Al Zawi charity organization have been assisting the municipality to assess humanitarian needs and develop a long-term plan for the dispersal of aid.⁹¹

Collaboration with other local actors

One should not underestimate the amount of support that has come from the local citizens of Zliten. There is a genuine feeling of love and pride in the city among the citizenry that motivates people to pitch in. The local leadership enjoys a particularly strong connection with the business community. Business leaders have at times helped the council with liquidity problems. But mostly their contributions come in the form of in-kind donation of supplies and materials for specific projects, for example the expansion of a hospital which included the addition of two three-storey buildings. One of them was an old structure that was remodelled, while the other one was built from scratch almost completely from materials provided by wealthy business owners. Other forms of donations include medicine and school furniture (Ehmadi, 2017).

The municipality also occasionally collaborates with the local University to organize workshops and seminars. One such example is a workshop held on the May 17, 2017 to discuss matters related to the building of a new port. The workshop was attended by the Mayor, Council members, the Dean of the Water Resources Faculty, the Municipal Council Port Committee, the Ports and Marine Shipping Department, and the Head of Municipal Administration (Diwan Al-Baladiya). The meeting resulted in recommendations on how to best manage and run the port (Al-Zamzam, 2017).

The Zliten Municipal Council seems to be following two tracks in its administration of the affairs of the city. For the immediate term, it supplements the deficiencies left by the dysfunctional central government and provides the services that its citizens require to go about daily life. However, the municipality is also looking beyond this period of crisis to the future of the city. It is planning and preparing for a time when

⁹⁰ More details on the meeting are available from <https://www.facebook.com/zlitenMC/posts/1365509426868598>

⁹¹ Michael Cousins. 2013. "Deepwater port to be built in Zliten." *Libya Herald*. Aug. 15.

Available from: <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/08/15/deepwater-port-to-be-built-in-zliten/#axzz4iasgYZ8Q>

Libya has a stable, properly functioning central government that will be able to fulfill its role effectively and provide proper support and empowerment to local communities and their leadership. It continues to explore plans for Zliten's long-term development, including better urban planning and the building of an airport and a seaport toward making Zliten a shipping hub in Libya.⁹² There is also a great emphasis on the need for extensive human resources development.

4. Security

Dealing with Zliten's militias and weapons

Zliten has not been immune to the militia plague, but has managed to reduce their influence in the city significantly. In the period just following the end of the Revolution, a plan to collect the weapons from Zliten's fighters failed amid allegations that it was being run by Gadhafi sympathizers (Ehmadi, 2016). However, public shows of weapons or displays of military prowess are not acceptable culturally in Zliten. Non-state armed vehicles aimlessly roaming the streets or people walking around with guns is not something seen in Zliten. However, in the absence of security from the central government, private citizens do keep weapons in their homes for protection and there is currently no initiative to collect them (Ehamdi, 2017).

Social influence has proven to be stronger than militia power (Al-Bazi, 2017). Tribal leaders, religious scholars, notable businessmen, and other respected individuals are regarded highly within Zliten's close-knit society. Mayor Muftah Ehmadi enjoys their strong public backing, having fought in the Revolution and belonging to a powerful tribe. He is free of the militias' demands in the running of Zliten's political affairs. One such example is the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) brokered by United Nations in Skhirat.⁹³ As the Zliten militias are Islamist leaning, they were adamantly opposed to Zliten municipality's endorsement of the agreement, congruent with the stance of the Grand Mufti of Libya. But despite their attempts to derail Zliten's participation through very vocal protest, Zliten's Municipal Council endorsed the LPA without trepidation (Ehmadi, 2016). Occasionally the Council calls upon the militias if there is a need, as they have proven to be particularly helpful in intelligence gathering, but the leadership tries to keep this at a minimum (Ehmadi, 2017).

Thus far, Zliten's elected Mayor has managed to assert control over the militias in the city through the carrot-and-stick approach. Municipal leadership has broken up militia alliances by identifying individuals deemed suitable for rehabilitation and integration into security roles and offering them well-paying jobs. For example, twenty-five eligible militia members were recruited to provide security for the hospitals. Another group was selected to create a covert intelligence gathering force. A few were given the job of conducting traffic and others joined customs and anti-smuggling forces. Although it has been a slow process of confidence building, this non-confrontational, incentive laden approach to disbanding Zliten's militia seems to be effective. The local leadership is continuing to deal with them one person at a time, vetting them and peeling away those individuals that are eligible and qualified for jobs that need to be filled. They are recruited strictly as individuals rather than brigades, and their applications go through the Ministry of Interior. Overall, at present militia groups have little impact in Zliten relative to other major cities in Libya (Ehmadi, 2016).

⁹³ AFP. 2015. 24 "Libyan Municipalities Sign Up to Unity Deal." *Al Arabiya English*. Dec. 2015. Available from: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2015/12/22/24-Libyan-municipalities-sign-up-to-unity-govt-deAl-.html>

Establishing security in Zliten

According to Law 59, security matters do not fall under the jurisdiction of Municipal Council. However, the Libyan central government has failed to establish security in Libya, forcing local communities to deal with this vital issue on their own. Zliten has risen to the challenge of addressing its own security concerns.

As in other cities, there is a Military Council in Zliten under the Ministry of Defense, but, in contrast the situation in many other Libyan cities, it is essentially obsolete and has no active role in the city's security. On the other hand, the Security Directorate of Zliten plays a very active role. It can be considered the local office or an extension of the Ministry of Interior. It includes all non-military security agencies, such as traffic conductors, police, internal intelligence, and the criminal investigation department (Former Director of Public Relations for the Mayor's office Maher Al-Kadoshi, 2016). In Zliten, there are twenty-four units that oversee security within the municipality under the Security Directorate.

In early January 2016, a terrorist car bombing of Zliten's police training camp, mentioned previously, brought the issue of security front and centre. The terrorist group Daesh claimed responsibility, though Zliten does not historically have an extremist tradition. In the wake of the tragedy, there was a strong sense of public unity, urgency, and resolve to protect Zliten from such nefarious elements. Even militia members realised the imminent danger to Zliten if measures were not taken to shore up security and thwart the infiltration of terrorism. In fact, they played a pivotal role in helping the authorities gather the intelligence that led to the capture of the perpetrators, because of their network of contacts. It took approximately two months to solve the crime with the help of the RADA Special Deterrence Forces, the crime-fighting unit under the Ministry of Interior in Tripoli (Ehmadi, 2017).

Following the Daesh attack, at the behest of the Zliten Municipal Council, the Libyan Ministry of Defence issued a decree for the establishment of the Zliten Joint Security Operations Room.⁹⁴ This newly created elite body was formed a year later in response to the growing terrorist threat and to address increased crime in Zliten. The members were recruited from police forces and other security agencies from Zliten and wear masks to conceal their identities due to the sensitive nature of their role (Civil Society Activist Ali Al-Ratub, 2017). This body is specifically tasked with patrolling the perimeter of the city. It cooperates with and provides support to the Security Directorate of Zliten, executing more difficult operations and arrests of suspected criminals. According to Zliten's Mayor, criminal acts have been reduced considerably since its creation. Most recently, it arrested a man accused of running one of the largest human trafficking operations in Libya, along with 168 illegal migrants in Zliten.⁹⁵

The Municipal Council leadership indirectly heads Zliten's Joint Security Operations Room, issuing its orders and sharing public statements on its progress through the council's Facebook page. The municipality allocates around 300,000 LYD per month from its budget to provide salaries and support its operations (Dow, 2017). Thus, the municipal council is able to maintain oversight and control of the entity. According to Zliten's Mayor, "Right now there are no crimes in Zliten that have not been solved," which is dramatically different from the reality in most of Libya (Ehmadi, 2016).

The establishment of security and the eradication of non-state armed groups remain the number one priority and challenge facing all of Libya today. Zliten has made significant progress on this issue by dealing with it at its roots. It has established effective security agencies that are tasked with specific duties and maintains a close, collaborative relationship with them. It has also rallied the public behind the issue of security and provided incentives for young Libyan men to take up roles in the security sector rather than a militia. This progress has been the result of more than two and a half years of dialogue and collaboration

⁹⁴ Defense Minister. 2016. Creation of Zliten Joint Security Operation Room, Decree No. 23. January 31.

⁹⁵ 2017 "Alleged human trafficker and 168 migrants caught in Zliten." *Libya Herald*. June 9. Available from: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/06/09/alleged-human-trafficker-and-168-migrants-arrested-in-zliten/>

with local actors (Ehmadi, 2016). It is a grassroots level approach that requires time and tenacity but thus far it seems to be the only viable solution.

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

Zliten and its neighbors

Zliten's leadership has taken the decisive step of instituting a "zero-problem" policy with respect to its relationships and interaction with the rest of the country. This means that Zliten officially maintains a strictly neutral stance when it comes to any dispute or conflict that it is not a party to or that takes place outside of the municipality, whether it is between rival cities, tribes, or political parties. This position has allowed Zliten the flexibility to conduct its business as needed throughout Libya without any major obstacles. Zliten trucks can travel from west to east without being harassed because of their origin and there are no markets for commerce in Libya that Zliten's citizens are barred from because of any rivalries or grudges against the city (Ehmadi, 2016).

In February of this year, the usefulness of this approach was demonstrated when a Misrata militia attacked the Joint Security Operations Room forces in Zliten, killing two of its men.⁹⁶ The coastal road was closed and Zliten forces were preparing a counterattack, but tribal elders urged restraint until the source of the clashes could be determined. To contain the situation and ease tensions, the Municipal Councils of Zliten and Misrata created a crisis committee that included representatives from the Municipal Councils, Military Councils, Zliten's Majlis Al-Hokama, and other key local actors. On February 22nd, 2017, they all met and settled the dispute peacefully, and reached a final agreement. The terms included the handover of all criminals for prosecution, the release of all Zliten citizens being held in Misrata due to their origin, the removal of newly created check-points between the two cities, the reopening of the coastal road, and the withdrawal of all brigades back to their city limits (Al-Bazi, 2017).

While minimizing unnecessary conflict, Zliten's relative independence and the political neutrality of its leadership have also bolstered its standing as a credible mediator in negotiating disputes between other groups (Al-Bazi, 2016). For example, in May 2016, the Zliten Municipal Council and Majlis Al-Hokama of Zliten sponsored the reconciliation between the Tebu and Tawareg tribes in Zliten.⁹⁷ Zliten also extends its assistance outside its city to build constructive relationships with its neighbours. Following the settlement between the two tribes, the Zliten Municipal Council spent approximately 200,000 LYD to repair schools in Obari as a gesture of good will. It is worth noting that the southern region of Libya is of great strategic importance to Zliten for the purpose of securing trade routes, especially with pending plans for an airport and seaport (Dow, 2017).

The Initiative for the Improvement of Neighbour Relations is an inter-city pact between Zliten, Misrata, Tarhouna, Bani-Walid, and Khoms to further inter-city cooperation on security. The main aim of the plan is to strip those wanted by the law of their social cover or protection from their city of origin. Representatives from the cities have held a few meetings but for now the initiative is stalled due to rising tensions between Misrata, Ben-Wlaid, and Tarhouna.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ 2017. "Two killed in clashes between armed forces in Zliten, northwestern Libya." *Libyan Express*. Feb. 20. Available from: <http://www.libyanexpress.com/two-killed-in-clashes-between-armed-forces-in-zliten-northwestern-libya/>

⁹⁷ 2016. "Video showing the arrival of Tebu and Tawareg representatives." Zliten Municipal Council Facebook Page. May 13. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/zlitenMC/videos/1032889440130600/>

⁹⁸ 2016. "Meeting between representative of the five Municipal Councils to discuss the initiative." Zliten Municipality Website. December 1. Available from <http://zliten.gov.ly/blog/%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%af->

Establishing justice and conflict resolution in Zliten

Internally, the Zliten Municipal Council has made great efforts with respect to justice and dispute settlement through a number of initiatives and the involvement and cooperation of tribal leadership. Prior to taking office, the newly elected Council and the Mayor made sure that all prisoners still held captive since the Revolution received due process for the existing cases against them. The Council created a committee to oversee the process; the committee managed to release most prisoners that were not guilty of violent crimes.⁹⁹ Furthermore, after taking office, the Council reached out to citizens that had fled the city to Tunisia or Egypt during the Revolution (out of fear they would be persecuted for having ties to the Gadhafi regime). The leadership of Zliten seeks to create a culture where all citizens feel a sense of belonging and are treated equally.

The Council and Majlas Al-Hokama issued the “Social Charter of Honor” on January 16th, 2016. As with the aforementioned initiative with neighboring cities, this Charter stripped all criminals of the social protection from their tribe inside Zliten in order to deter crime, isolate criminals, and bring perpetrators to justice (Al-Bazi, 2017). The Municipal Council also created a committee known as the Conflict and Dispute Resolution Committee. This body is comprised of fifteen respected, local Shiekhhs who are knowledgeable in Islamic jurisprudence, also known as Sharia Law, and Libyan civil law. It is charged with resolving property disputes through arbitration. The Council has assigned the courts a formal role in the process as well, to give it some sort of legal framework. If a case has also been filed legally in the court system, once a decision is reached, the court then legally endorses it. On the other hand, if there is not a pre-existing legal file, and the parties are in agreement, then there is no role for the court. However, if either party objects to the decision, they can file an appeal in court. Many disagreements over property ownership have reached a successful conclusion through this committee, which funds itself by charging a small fee for each case it takes on (Dow, 2017).

6. Community Media

Relative to other cities in Libya, the Municipal Council of Zliten makes an effort to communicate with the public through accessible channels. According to the Zliten’s Mayor, people have lost confidence in politicians at the national level because of their lack of public communication – arguably one of the biggest mistakes that the political leadership made after the Revolution. In Zliten, elected officials are trying to remedy this loss of trust and build a relationship with the citizens by making important information readily available and creating avenues for feedback and responses.

A. Digital and Social Media

There are no newspapers published in Zliten currently (Sawan, 2017). However, the Zliten Municipal Council maintains a website and an official Facebook page on which it shares information on the Council’s activities and plans, in addition to current events. However, the website¹⁰⁰ does not seem to be used much by the public, as it is not well known, nor is the web page updated as regularly as the Council’s Facebook page with real time data and news. However, there is a wide range of useful general information on needed local government services and procedures that can be found there. For example, the website includes instructions on the issuance of family identification booklets, registration of new births, issuance

<http://zlitentv.gov.ly/>
<http://zlitentv.gov.ly/>
<http://zlitentv.gov.ly/>
<http://zlitentv.gov.ly/>

⁹⁹ Zliten Municipality Website. 2016. “Releasing of prisoners.” March 31. Available from:

<http://zlitentv.gov.ly/blog/الجنة-المكلفة-بمتابعة-ملف-السجناء-تط/>

¹⁰⁰ Zliten Municipality Website, <http://zlitentv.gov.ly/>

of fishing boat licenses, forms related to the Civil Registry, and applications for passports. Additionally, the website publishes information on higher education, such as scholarship application forms and banking procedures.

As more and more Libyans use Facebook for their personal social media, the Council has found its own Facebook page is the best way to communicate interactively with the local population and collect feedback. Right now, it is only available in Arabic, but they will soon be looking to make their pages available in English as well in order to be more accessible and visible to international governments and organizations (Al-Kadoshi, 2016). The municipal council utilizes this platform to disseminate information and also to monitor and respond to citizens' comments. It also uses it to explain policy decisions or the need for projects and what those projects will entail. If there is strong popular resistance to a decision, it may be reconsidered, modified and sometimes revoked altogether (Ehmadi, 2016). Although there is clearly an effort at transparency being made by the Council, some maintain that it does not provide enough detail on fiscal matters. While it often shares the cost of proposed initiatives, it does not make public how much revenue was collected or how much was spent in total (Al-Sofrani, 2017).

B. Radio

Another tool the municipal council uses to reach its citizens is radio. It funds a local radio station called "Free Zliten Radio" or FZ Radio, on which representatives from the Council often appear to discuss local issues. It is the Council's direct channel with its constituents and has as staff that is at its disposal. It is sometimes called upon to broadcast workshops, conferences, or other events the Council is running. FZ Radio also plays an important role in times of crisis such as the clashes between Zliten's Joint Operations Room and Misrata, a situation where the station helped to calm the situation and prevent further escalation of tensions in the city.

"The Radio is the municipal council's platform to communicate with all groups in the city particularly in times of crisis" FZ Employee Sawan maintains. In 2016, the radio launched a weekly program called "With the Council" for Council representatives to come and speak about the progress of the local government and other local issues in general. Questions that are posed occasionally to the public on Facebook are addressed on this show. People can also call in live and ask their questions on the air. However, political topics have been prohibited from the discussion for the last year or so to avoid the station getting involved in the political conflicts taking place at the national level. In addition to the FZ Radio, there is an educational station run by the Ministry of Education to raise public awareness on different issues, ranging from health and the environment to information technology. There are also two other private stations that are dedicated to religious programming (Sawan, 2017).

C. Face to Face Consultation

Further, the Council is open to face to face communication with local representatives. In fact, the Mayor himself sets aside one day each week to meet with the general public. Anyone who has a grievance can make an appointment and see him. However, because there are no females on the Council, currently if a woman has an issue she would like to address or wishes to contact the Mayor, there is no official or direct channel. She usually goes through his wife or another family member. While again, there is room for improvement, it is evident the local leadership recognizes that the support of public is key to its success and that this can only be won through transparency and open channels of communication (Ehmadi, 2016).

7. International Support

Being one of Libya's less well-known cities internationally, Zliten doesn't enjoy a significant amount of direct attention or support from global actors that focus on Libya. It seems these entities prefer to interface directly with a main central authority (Ehmadi, 2016). However, this is problematic because of

the Libyan national government's lack of political stability. Every time there is an agreement or some type of relationship established on an international level, a change in the government or within the ministries presents a setback, which often means having to rebuild new relationships and start the process again from scratch (Ehmadi, 2016). Zliten has been the beneficiary of a few initiatives in partnership with international NGOs in Zliten, but most of these originated with the central government.

Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI), a British development firm which receives most of its funding from the UK government, is one such example. It launched a project aimed at strengthening social peace and harmony in Zliten (Kariem, PCI Trainer, 2017). They conducted a meeting of local actors including the Council, businessmen, security personnel, representatives from the healthcare and education sectors, and from civil society organizations. The main goal was to create a collaborative partnership among these actors towards the goal of harmony.

PCI funds all activities that this partnership produces, and the participants are educated and trained regarding social peace, strategic planning, and local development. All meetings and trainings are held in the Municipal Council building. One of this project's activities was the creation of a summer camp in Zliten for family recreation, but unfortunately the project was halted because of budgetary setbacks due to rising inflation in Libya (Al-Sofrani, 2017). Other examples include The World Food Programme, which sent 900 food baskets to Zliten's Committee of IDPs (arranged through the previously mentioned Taher Al Zawi civil society organization). The Zliten Council has also participated in a few capacity building events held in Tunis, such a three-day workshop on Libya Public Financial Management in May 2017 funded by the World Bank. However, the invitation came through the Ministry of Local Governance.¹⁰¹ In terms of direct assistance from a foreign government, Italy sponsored the medical treatment of some of the most severe injuries from the terrorist attack on the police academy in January 2016 (Al-Zamzam, 2017).

Although Zliten may not be foremost on the agenda of the international community with regard to Libya, this has not deterred its leadership from reaching out to the international community. In fact, the leadership has gone well beyond the country's borders to seek ideas and establish partnerships for the city's development, human resources training, and capacity building. There is a team in place in Zliten that is developing a plan called Zliten 2030 (Al-Kadoshi, 2016). It is a vision for the city's growth and expansion over the next several years, including the construction of an airport and seaport as mentioned previously.

To this end, local leaders have visited Turkey, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Morocco and most recently, the United States, to better understand municipal governance and explore possible models for Zliten's urban planning and human resources development. In early 2015, the Mayor of Zliten visited Jordan to learn specifically about municipal administration.¹⁰² At the close of 2016, the Mayor also toured major American metropolitan cities including Washington D.C., New York, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. The objective was to find a sister city in the United States that Zliten can model itself after and partner with for training, feasibility studies, administration, project management and information technology development (Ehmadi, 2016). Shortly after this visit, in February 2017, Zliten's Council reached an initial agreement with the American firm, US Global Innovative Consulting and Services Group, to create a database that includes important information and data on the city to be used by the municipality, other Libyan cities, and service providers across different sectors. A representative from the company came to Zliten and presented the proposal in a meeting that included the mayor, municipal council members, security personnel and bank

¹⁰¹ Zliten Municipal Council. 2017. "Participating in Public Financial Management Workshop organized by the World Bank". Facebook Post. Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/zlitenMC/photos/a.649396768479871.1073741829.649362615149953/1367542123331995/?type=3&theater>

¹⁰² Libya herald Staff. 2015. "Zliten mayor in Jordan to learn about municipal administration." *Libya Herald*. Feb. 23. Available from:

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2015/02/23/zliten-mayor-in-jordan-to-learn-about-municipal-administration/>

representatives. In a public statement, the mayor explained how this would also help officials make informed decisions for the city.¹⁰³

These overseas initiatives and travel are funded independently by the municipality. However, as a formality, the council writes to the central government to seek official permission (Al-Kadoshi, 2016). Human resources and capacity building are areas in which the Council deems Zliten to be currently deficient. However, an organization called The Libyan Academy for Governance in Turkey has provided the council with some human resources training, and guidance on job descriptions, salaries, and transparency, among other issues (Al-Kadoshi, 2016).

Although Zliten does not have a large presence of international NGOs and other entities active within the city, the current municipal leadership's proactive outreach to foreign partners will likely change this and put it on the radar of the international community. It will also make more educational, technical training, capacity building and business opportunities accessible to Zliten's people. This will likely accelerate Zliten's growth and development into one of Libya's more modern, urban cities.

8. Conclusion

Despite Libya's current fractured state, Zliten municipality has managed to adapt, function, and actually make advances in these rather unfavourable conditions. This is attributable to several factors. First of all, being a more homogenous society and smaller in population, there is more of a sense of cohesiveness and communal pride in the city than in other parts of Libya. This is especially evident in times of crisis. The rivalry and conflict that exist between some tribes in other parts of Libya are virtually non-existent in Zliten.

Further, the city benefits from a Municipal Council that enjoys strong popular support that it has gained over time through its effective communication, responsiveness to public demands, and collaboration with non-state actors such as Majlis Al Hokama. The current mayor is also from a well-respected family and tribe, thus making it easier for him and the council to act decisively and free from the pressure and coercion of non-state armed groups, as in the case of the Libyan Political Agreement. However, the Council still recognizes how dependent its work is on the public's support. Therefore, it makes a concerted effort to build and maintain relationships with its constituents through different channels of communication, including radio and social media. The council members also make themselves accessible through face to face interaction.

Zliten's "zero-problem" policy of maintaining neutrality in all conflicts taking place outside of its borders is a significant and successful departure from the norm at a time when Libyan society is highly polarized. This has insulated it from the toll of the regional conflicts that have sprung up all over the country in the post-Revolution period. Again, this has allowed the leadership to focus on improving the daily lives of the people while strategising for the longer-term future of the city.

However, the most defining factor in Zliten's success as a municipality is its ambitious initiative to raise revenue locally through taxation. By taking advantage of the presence of Libya's two largest cement factories within its city's borders, it has equipped itself with the resources to act autonomously and swiftly to produce tangible benefits to the community, further bolstering its popular support.

Notwithstanding its relative success, there are still many areas where Zliten's Council could improve its performance. As is the case throughout Libya, more transparency is needed, especially with regard to the city's budget and expenditures. Zliten would also benefit from a more active role for its civil society organisations in the city's affairs beyond charity and volunteer work. There also seems to be a general

¹⁰³ Abdulkader Assad. 2017. "Zliten city contract US firm to install municipal database." February 14. *The Libya Observer*. Available from: <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/life/zliten-city-contracts-us-firm-install-municipal-database>

lack of female participation in public spheres, depriving the city of their contributions and limiting Zliten's full potential as a society. Limited human resources are an issue that hinders the ability of the Council and the staff of its associated entities to fully execute some of their plans and projects. They would stand to benefit from more capacity building training in general management, finance, and even basic computer skills. The Council leadership appears to strongly welcome and continue to seek assistance in these areas from international entities and foreign governments.

According to Zliten's Mayor, "if you ask how things are going in Libya, anyone will tell you that they are terrible. But if you ask how they are going in Zliten, things are great" (Ehamdi, 2016). This confident statement does not seem baseless, if one compares Zliten to other cities in Libya. This is due to a combination of natural advantages the city enjoys along with its strong, visionary local leadership. The Council has been able to capitalise on these advantages, raise local funds, establish security, and devise and implement policies to meet the immediate needs of the population. At the same time, it has been able to plan for the future prosperity and growth of the municipality. There is room for improvement, but in many aspects Zliten can serve as a model for effective local governance for other Libyan cities to emulate. Ultimately, what Zliten and other local communities throughout Libya need are the support and financial backing of a strong, stable central government and legislation that empowers them. Only then can their potential be truly unlocked.

List of Interviews

Abdullah, Ramadan. 2017. Civil Society Activist, May.

Al-Bazi, Abdulghani. 2017. Head of Majlis Al-Hokama in Zliten, May.

Al-Kadoshi, Maher. 2016. Former Director of Public Relations for the Mayor's office, December.

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Ehmadi, Muftah. 2016. Zliten Mayor. December.

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Ramadan, Kariem. 2017. Trainer with Peaceful Change Initiative, May.

Sawan, Fatihi. 2017. Employee at Free Zliten Radio, May.

Misrata





Map 4: Misrata neighborhood boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Background

A. Municipal Character

Misrata, located on the west coast of Libya east of Tripoli with a population of about half a million inhabitants,¹⁰⁴ is the third most populous municipality in Libya. It is comprised of twelve districts (Furua): Central Misrata, Dath-Remal, Rumaila, Ras Touba, Zarouq, Qasr Ahmed, Alghairan, Mahjoub, Dafniyah, Tamina, Abuqrin and Washka. The modern name Misrata came from Berber tribes that settled in the area.

Although the reaction of the Regime to the peaceful uprising in 2011, caused great damage to buildings and the infrastructure of Misrata, the city was able to recover at a remarkable pace. It is easy to see the huge renovation being done. The facades of the new shopping centers and the trendy café fill the streets side by side with destroyed buildings. The city centre has a Western-style shopping centre called Gardabiya Mall, with 35 shops and a large supermarket and about two thousand shoppers come to the centre each day. The centre gets very crowded on weekends.

Misrata Port is a major feature of the city as it gives strategic importance. The port accommodates about 200 vessels a year. It was the lifeline of the city during its siege in 2011. The port is unique in its administrative structure – it is not affiliated to the Ministry of Transportation like other ports in Libya, rather it is affiliated to and operated by the Free Zone Company in Misrata.

Another industrial plant that has a clear impact on the economy is the Libyan Iron and Steel Company (LISCO). It is a Libyan state-owned company, established in 1989, and employs citizens from more than 66 different cities in Libya. Several small businesses are beginning to rebuild and reopen. The city has a great potential for expansion since it attracts a lot of internal immigration and is surrounded by uninhabited flat land. It is home to Misrata Airport, one of Libya's largest.

B. Recent History

On the 20th of February 2011, during the anti-Gadhafi uprising of that period, unarmed Misrati took to the streets peacefully in order to show solidarity with their fellow citizens in the east. Demonstrators later called for the downfall of the regime. They were opposed by armed security forces, and later, the Libyan Army. The city was besieged for more than six months and thousands from both sides were injured or killed. Homes and infrastructure were destroyed, and many people had to flee the city.

In its early days, the revolution was spontaneous. It had no leadership, and no ideology of any kind. Over time, some well-known judges, lawyers, engineers, religious persons, university professors and defected and retired army officers gathered at what used to be called "Hall of the people" in Misrata's city centre, later moved to the courts building, and started forming local and military councils. These initiatives laid the foundations for the development of Misrata's current local governance institutions.

2. Municipal Actors

A. State Actors

Transitional stage

In order to fill the gap left by the absence of state institutions, a newly formed local Council was granted legitimacy by the National Transitional Council (NTC) by decree on 25 April 2011. This Council asked every

¹⁰⁴ Bureau of Statistics and Census, "Libya, the National Population Survey 2012." Available from: <http://www.bsc.ly/#b19>

relatively secure neighbourhood (Mahalla) and every state owned company in Misrata, to form steering committees. The Committees were tasked with managing the company or neighborhood and safeguarding their premises and properties. These companies include the Libyan Iron and Steel Company (LISCO), the ports company, the shipyards company, the fuel distribution companies, and the telephone companies, among others. Major banks have their main offices located either in Tripoli or Benghazi and only have branches in Misrata. During the six-month siege of the city, these branches were cut off from the banking network of their headquarters. These branches had to develop their local banking networks. The local Council stood by these arrangements by legitimising their solo work and by urging business men to deposit cash money in these branches. The Misrata branch of the mobile telephone company had to develop a separate system using the existing infrastructure and allocating new numbers for customers. This action was also legitimised by the Council.

Since the early days of the revolution, the Council continuously communicated with the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi. Two members of the Council were assigned to represent Misrata in the NTC. The Military Council (a separate body that spontaneously and independently organised after the Revolution) had also been in continuous contact with its counterpart in Benghazi.

On January 2012, the Council issued Decree no. 02 of 2012, forming the Independent Committee for the Election of the Local Council (ICEMLC). These elections, which were welcomed by the international community, were the first in the country in decades.¹⁰⁵ By the end of February 2012, Misrata had a newly elected Council. A ceremonial transition of power and swearing-in of the newly elected local council members, took place in the presence of Mr. Mustapha Abdul Jalil, Chairman of the National Transitional Council (NTC).

This newly-elected Council was faced with similar challenges as those faced by its predecessor. In addition, the Council had to face the disruption stemming from the conflict that arose in summer 2014 in the wake of contested national elections. One side of this on-going conflict, the so-called “Libya Dawn” Coalition (*Fajr Libya* in Arabic), has a considerable presence in Misrata.

Current Municipal Council (Majils Baladi) and Mayor

The current Municipal Council (Majlis Baladi) was elected in June 2014 by the residents of the municipality for a four-year term. It has 9 members including a woman and a disabled war veteran. This structure is based on the Local Governance Law no.59, issued by the General National Congress (GNC) on the 18th of July 2012. The Mayor was elected by an absolute majority of Council members during their first meeting. (Council Member Khadoura, 2017) The current Mayor is Mr. Mohammed Ashtawi. The members of the council are Mustafa Korwad, Ali Abusta, Abubaker Al-Huraish, Mohammad Al-Toumi, Isma'il Al Hashemi, Ali Ashtawi, Hana Khadoura, and disabled war veteran Abdulhamid Fraifer.

The managers of the 12 Municipal District Offices were chosen by the Council from lists of nominees provided by the districts. These managers of district offices are monitored by the Department of Districts and are under the supervision of the Undersecretary of the Council. Demarcation of borders between the municipality and the neighbouring municipalities i.e., Sirte, Ben Walid and Zletin, has been a source of some difficulties. According to Council member Hana Khadoura, this has caused delays in formally approving the appointment of some district office managers and the appointment of heads of neighbourhoods (Mukhtar Mahallat) (Khadoura, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ 2012. “Misrata stages first Libyan election in decades.” *ABC News*. Available from: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-02-21/misrata-stages-first-libyan-election-in-40-years/3841438>

Decision-making within the Council

Decisions relating to public affairs are taken by consensus within the Council and by voting if necessary. Decisions are also taken in the presence of other bodies within the municipality, who may be concerned by the case laid for discussion. These bodies include the Military Council, the Students Union, the Lawyers Association, the Revolutionary Brigades, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Routine meetings are held weekly and the agenda is prepared by the Mayor's Office and/or the Secretarial Office in cooperation with the specialised committees (Lijan al-Majlis al-Baladiya) for every sector. In addition, and in accordance with Law 59, CSOs and any group of citizens can add items to the agenda of a routine or an emergency meeting through a petition (Khadoura, 2017).

Council member Khadoura believes that the Council has made some progress in reconciliation and political issues. However, not much has been accomplished in providing services for Misratans. This can be partially attributed to insufficient funding from the central government and lack of local income, as explained below.

B. Funding

By law, Libya's central government allocates a yearly operating budget to each municipality. These have no say regarding how much they will receive or when they will receive it. The allocation of municipal budgets is based on criteria such as the number of inhabitants, and whether the municipality is harbouring refugees and/or displaced families, has wounded veterans, etc. When the Council receives the money, it decides how and on what to spend it using a priority list of needs. Currently, the priorities are security, health, and education (Mayor Ashtawi, 2017).

Misrata's Municipal Council has a special committee for financial policies. However, there is no vision or plans for a budget for the municipality, either this year or in previous years. The Council largely does not engage in planning but rather deals with crises that periodically erupt. This is due to the fact that the Council has no local income from any portion of state tariff and fees and from rental fees of public property within the municipality. The later are collected by a governmental body called the Department of Public Property.

Local governance Law 59 states that, the governorates (Muhafadat) should get 10% of state fees, tariffs and taxes collected from within each specific governorate. However, this provision has never been activated due to the fact that governorates have not yet been established. According to Misrata Mayor Ashtawi, these state fees, tariffs, and taxes instead currently go to the central state income account. Money cannot be withdrawn from this account except via a budget law (Ashtawi, 2017). The central government will as yet not deduct the governorate share from these (fees, tariffs and taxes) nor has it allowed the municipality to do so before that money gets into the state income account. Funding of state bodies other than the Municipal Council thus goes directly to the ministries, who then fund their sector offices (Makatib al-Kita-at) in the Municipality (Ashtawi, 2017).

Currently, Council member and staff salaries come straight from the central Ministry of Local Governance. The central governments (including the National Salvation Government, the Interim government and later, the Government of National Accord) have in the past allocated some money to address certain long-standing issues such as security, health, and education, and also to issues requiring emergency funding such as harboring displaced families from war torn cities, refugees, or caring for those wounded in conflict. Twenty million Dinars were received in 2015 and ten million Dinars were received in December of last year (Ashtawi, 2017). Only 16% of the later was spent on services entrusted under law to the Municipal Council, while the rest went to cover services that are legally (but not in practice) the financial responsibility of the various central government ministries.

Several interviewees expressed the view that it would have been better if all sectors, particularly education and health, were integrated into the financial system of the municipality, as Law 59 requires, rather than each sector being run by the pertinent central ministry. They noted that the ministries are failing to fund these sectors and the Municipal Council must do so from its limited resources. The central budget for 2017 is unclear on what funds will be allocated to the municipalities, and the ministry of local governance has not asked local councils to draft their estimated budgets for this year. The Municipal Council instead is likely to continue to receive funding solely for crises management rather than a planned budget (Ashtawi, 2017).

C. Relationship between the Municipal Council and Other State Bodies

The relationship between the Council and other state bodies such as the education, health, environment, and social affairs sectors offices (Makatib al-Kita-at) in the municipality is blurry. The Council has no more than a supervisory role on these sectors' offices. These offices are affiliated to ministries of the central government. For example, the General Services Company, which collects and disposes of garbage, is also affiliated to the central government, not the Council, which means that the Council has no direct control over this vital service.

However, the Council does maintain special committees for social affairs, health, education, and human development (Khadoura, 2017). One key example of this dynamic is local security. The Municipality Guard, as the name implies, should, under existing law (Law 59), belong to the Council. Paradoxically, it doesn't. However, Misrata's Municipal Council has a special committee for security affairs. This committee actively liaises with the concerned parties to solve and settle security issues inside the municipality and elsewhere when necessary.

D. Traditional Bodies

Early role

The challenges of managing security issues negatively affects the performance of Misrata local authorities and consumes valuable time. Dealing with these issues detracts attention from the provision of services to the citizenry. Thus, the current Municipal Council and its predecessors have had to rely on elders, wise men, and the traditional figures within the community to resolve issues relating to local or inter-municipality disputes and other related security issues.

Due to the fact that the demographic composition of Misrata is not tribal, but urban,¹⁰⁶ the municipality does not have tribal leaders (Sheikhs) or tribal councils (Majalis Qabail). For this reason, the ousted Gadhafi had to depend on selected community figures to control Misrata. Those appointed figures were his schoolmates in Misrata and in Benghazi. Many names were given to these men, such as Comrades of the Leader (Refaq al-Qaid), Popular Leaders (Qiyadat Shabia) and so forth. Gadhafi appointed these selected community figures (about 10) to be social leaders in their districts. Some of them fought for the Gadhafi regime until the end, while some defected to the side of the revolution in its early days.

Local authorities in Misrata have always relied on the experience and capability of some individuals in the community to help resolve local or inter-municipal disputes and security breaches. The various crises that have faced the municipality have refined these individuals' capabilities for resolving complex issues within or outside the municipality. These individuals may seem inactive when no challenges exist, but they become very active in times of crises. When people feel a potential danger, especially from a common enemy such as ISIS (Daesh), they usually press for action and they scramble to make donations in order to combat that danger before it worsens. At times, this popular support has helped the Municipal Council to

¹⁰⁶ Hatitah, Abdusattar, 2011. "Libyan tribal map." Feb. 24. Available from: <http://www.cetri.be/Libyan-Tribal-Map-Network-of?lang=fr>

make painful decisions and implement them, such as the decision to pull the Misrata forces out of Tripoli after the Gargour incident.¹⁰⁷ These community individuals who later on became members of traditional bodies, usually do the campaigning for this popular support and stand behind it.

Between September and October of 2012, Misrata forces were involved in the Beni Walid War. This war was officially launched by the Controversial decree no. 7/2012 issued by the GNC to combat counter revolutionaries in Beni Walid. The elected Local Council after that war had to form a Shura Council in order to undertake reconciliation within communities affected by that war. This Shura council was comprised of elders, religious leaders, and other prominent social figures. The principle task of such council is to represent the municipality in meetings, dialogues, and any reconciliation efforts with other tribes and municipalities. This was the first Shura Council to be established in the municipality, which was later reinstated by the GNC on the 6th of May 2016 under the official name "Council of Wise Men" (Majlis Hokama).¹⁰⁸

At the time of writing, this council is still active. Although the current Municipal Council dissolved it, the Council of Wise Men believes that it can only be legally dissolved by the central government. This is one of the consequences of the political divide and the dispute over legitimacy between competing governments. The Council of Wise Men believes that it is a legitimate body in accordance to the GNC decree, and thus, it does not recognize the Municipal Council's authority to dissolve it. The Municipal Council disagreed, and attempted to replace the Majlis Hokama by issuing a decree (no. 40/2016)¹⁰⁹ forming a competing council of 150 members representing all the 12 municipal districts (Furua) on the September 6th, 2016. This new Council was named the Council of the Dignitaries of Misrata for Shura and Reconciliation (Majlis Al-Ayan Misrata lil shura wa aleslah, also referred to as Majlis al-Ayan).¹¹⁰ The main tasks of this body are working on reconciliation initiatives between the Municipality of Misrata and other municipalities, representing the Misrata Municipality in social forums, helping to find solutions to local and inter-municipality disputes, and providing the Municipal Council with proposals toward supporting peace and on promoting dialogue and social reconciliation.

The creation of the Majlis Al-Ayan in opposition to the Majlis Hokama has widened the rift between the key actors in the municipality. The Majlis Hokama had formed relationships and channels of contact with tribal leaders, other councils, and with many influential people throughout the country. The Majlis Al-Ayan had to reach out for contacts and relationships from scratch. This has been difficult because key actors in other parts of the country prefer to communicate with people they already know.

Muftah Shetwan, Vice President of the Majlis Al-Ayan, reports that some of its members believe that there is no more need for the Majlis Hokama. The Majlis Al-Ayan currently represents the municipality in social and reconciliation meetings with other municipalities. In spite of such belief and in order not to widen the rift between the two bodies, the Majlis Al-Ayan usually takes a step back when there is the possibility of

¹⁰⁷ On November 15, 2013, "Militias from Misrata fired assault rifles, machine guns, and heavy weapons at overwhelmingly peaceful protesters [in Tripoli's Gargour neighborhood]." "Libya: Militias Kill Unarmed Protesters". Human Rights Watch, November 17, 2013, available from: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/17/libya-militias-kill-unarmed-protesters>

¹⁰⁸ Abo Alhareth Al-Misrati, 2015, "The GNC decree of endorsing the forming of the Misrata Majlis Hokama." Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%20%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A1%20%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%20%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9%20%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A9%20%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1%20%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AF>

¹⁰⁹ Libya Al-Mostakbal. 2016. "Misrata Municipal Council endorses Majlis Ayan Misrata by decree 40/2016" Available from: <http://www.libya-al-mostakbal.org/95/5870/بلدي-مصراتة-يعتمد-مجلس-أعيان-بلدية-مصراتة-للشورى-والإصلاح>

¹¹⁰ Ean Libya. 2016. "Misrata Municipality endorsing the forming of Majlis Ayan." Available from: <http://www.eanlibya.com/archives/94344>

both bodies getting involved in the same issue. In such incidents, Majlis Al-Ayan, apologises to the host for not being able to attend and pulls out of the meeting (Shetwan, 2017).

Majlis Al-Ayan

Of the 150 members of the Majlis Al-Ayan, only around 60 members typically attend meetings and less than 20 members are active. The 60 members who do come to the meetings are not necessarily the same in every meeting. The active members are reportedly those who almost never miss any meeting and usually are engaged as members of committees and sub-committees and task forces that the Majlis Al-Ayan assigns (Shetwan, 2017).

The Majlis Al-Ayan has a Reconciliation Committee in every Municipal District. These committees undertake the responsibility of solving disputes among individuals or groups in that Municipal District. Community members may ask the Majlis Al-Ayan to get involved in case where the issue has aggravated or when parties from outside the municipality are getting involved. The role of Misrata's Majlis Al-Ayan is similar to the one played by Tribal Councils in other municipalities (Shetwan, 2017).

The members of Majlis Al-Ayan were chosen by the founding committee by forming one committee in every municipal district to select a specified number of nominees from that branch. The founding committee also, suggested some names from every district to be added to the list of nominees upon the approval of the district committee. 150 members were chosen and 7 internal committees were formed by consensus. In addition, the Council has internally elected a Management Board, the President, the Vice President, the Secretary and the Spokesperson (Shetwan, 2017).

The management board lays down the agenda for meetings after having communicated with the Municipal Council and all the concerned parties. However, the decisions made in such meetings are not binding for the Municipal Council or any other body, but are rather suggestions. However, the Majlis Al-Ayan builds general support for its recommendations by carrying out extensive public discussions and campaigning before making a final decision, and then publicly advocates for its implementation (Shetwan, 2017).

Members of the Majlis Al-Ayan who were interviewed did not report any political, partisan, or ideological conflicts within the organization. When Misrata is set to have discussions with other municipalities on security or social issues, or for the sake of reconciliation, the Majlis Al-Ayan coordinates with the Municipal Council and the security committees to discuss the agenda for the talks. This usually leads to consensus on one decision that represents the municipality and is binding on all. In such cases, a number of Majlis Al-Ayan members are usually chosen to attend these meeting and dialogues (Shetwan, 2017).

Funding for the Majlis Al-Ayan mainly comes from the Municipal Council. Some CSOs, private citizens and members of the council do provide the council with donations. One CSO has donated an apartment which the council is currently using as its main office (Shetwan, 2017).

The Shura Council (Majlis Shura)

As article 28 of Act no.59 provides, Misrata's Municipal Council has appointed a Shura Council, which is a technical advisory body that advises it on matters requiring specialist expertise, such as economic development. All five members of this council are paid for their work (Jarrushi, 2017).

However, Mr. Jarrushi, a member of the Shura Council, laments that it was "born dead." He attributes this to the poor selection of its members and of its chairman. The body is chaired by its oldest member, who has no technical qualification or experience. For instance, the chairman, who holds a degree in Educational Psychology, was expected to lead a team of four engineers in order to study avenues to improve the infrastructure and the general service sector in the municipality (Jarrushi, 2017).

In spite of this, the Shura Council organized a scientific symposium entitled “Misrata 2040”. In that symposium, 20 papers were presented on how Misrata should look like within the next 25 years. Few members of the Municipal Council showed interest and attended the symposium (Jarushi, 2017). The Shura Council has also proposed that the Municipal Council carries out some public works that citizens can see that would build confidence that the future can be better. Some proposed starting with simple and relatively inexpensive works such as naming streets, numbering houses, fixing traffic chaos and updating traffic light systems. It was also proposed that the Municipal Council allocates a suitable arena for people to come and share their thoughts and ideas for a better future for the Municipality and Libya in general, but this proposal has never been realized (Jarushi, 2017).

Relationship between the Municipal Council and non-state bodies

As noted, the Misrata Municipal Council has no direct communications with the Majlis Hokama, and instead works regularly with the Majlis Al-Ayan, especially in matters related to internal, intercity, and intertribal disputes. According to Article 30 of Law 59,¹¹¹ CSOs should have a considerable role in Council decisions and activities. It specifies that items can be added to the agenda of a Municipal Council meeting by CSOs or individual citizens in any of the following three cases:

- 1) If a group of civil society organizations submit a petition containing local demands;
- 2) If at least 2% local citizens (approximately 500 for Misrata) submit a signed petition in which they demand an action or local policy change, or;
- 3) If at least 1% local citizens (approximately 250 for Misrata) take to the street and demand an action or local policy change.

However, despite this law CSOs are largely unaware of their rights and have not utilized them (Khadoura, 2017).

E. Civil Society

Civil society groups, represented by non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations, were uncommon in Libya prior to 2011. During the Revolution and in the absence of the governmental institutions, hundreds of civil society organizations (CSOs) were formed in Misrata and in the rest of Libya.¹¹² They succeeded notably in providing charity, in securing neighborhoods, and helping the needy and the displaced. Currently, there are 162 Civil Society Organizations registered in the municipality of Misrata (Sittini, 2017).

According to the head of the Misrata Civil Society Commission, Ebrahim Sittini, about 15 of these CSOs are active. Most of these CSOs do not have the experience nor the capability to partner with international counterparts or the international organizations such as the UN or the EU. The Commission plays a considerable role in the arena of civil society activities in Misrata. It also serves as an example of how the competing central governments of Libya have affected local affairs - Misrata Civil Society Commission is affiliated to Libya’s Civil Society Commission (CSC) in Benghazi, itself part of the Ministry of Culture of Interim National Government in Bayda rather than the Government of National Accord (GNA). The Interim National Government pays for employees' salaries and for training and rents, etc (Sittini, 2017).

¹¹¹ Libyan Security Sector Legislation. 2012. Law 59/2012 for local governance. Available from: [http://security-legislation.ly/sites/default/files/files/lois/62-Law%20No.%20\(59\)%20of%202012_AR.pdf](http://security-legislation.ly/sites/default/files/files/lois/62-Law%20No.%20(59)%20of%202012_AR.pdf)

¹¹² See Romanet Perroux, Jean-Louis. 2015. “Misrata Civil Society Organizations: Survey Report”, UNICEF and UNDP, May. Available from: <http://docdro.id/7Bg3dzY> (AR); and <http://docdro.id/WFvRynG> (EN); and Romanet Perroux, Jean-Louis. 2015. “Libyan CSO Mapping : Comparative Highlights”, UNICEF and UNDP, May 2015. Available from: www.facebook.com/LibyaCSOreports and <http://docdro.id/iWvRTfu> (AR); <http://docdro.id/JsAXU6G> (EN)

There is no recent legislation that organizes civil society activities in the country. Some CSOs formed a Union of Charity Organizations for the purpose of working together on larger projects, but it did not work well and the body is currently inactive (Sittini, 2017). Sittini believes that the Misrata Civil Society Commission should have worked harder on capacity building for CSO members and on raising their awareness on matters of civil activities. This could have been done by organizing training courses and workshops. The main obstacle is the lack of funding for these activities, as international training teams and experts cost more than what Misrata's Civil Society Commission office can afford. There are some training activities that the office has carried out and will continue to carry out if it can rely on local trainers. These trainers are less costly, but there are worries that the quality of the training might be inadequate (Sittini, 2017).

Further, in partnership with the Misrata Municipal Council, Misrata's Civil Society Commission office has initiated a Fund for the Support of Voluntary Works (FSVW). The fund is intended to support projects relating to the protection of the environment and improving the appearance of the city. Three projects were approved for implementation by three civil society organizations. The first one was for the Child Rights Foundation to implement a children's park in the municipal district of Abu Qurain, the second was for the Tree Lovers Association to plant orange trees on the sides of a chosen street in Misrata city, and the third was for Al-Raqeeb for the Protection of Consumer Rights to implement one of its projects. These grants are very modest, not exceeding 4,000 dinars each, but the Municipal Council and the Misrata Civil Society Commission office see them as a good path to bigger projects in the future. Misrata's Civil Society Commission has had contact with some international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to explore the possibilities of their contributing to the fund. Many INGOs welcomed the idea and have promised to engage (Sittini, 2017).

Sittini reports that Misrata's Civil Society Commission office is working in harmony with the Municipal Council in all matters related to civil society activities. For example, they exchange information on local and international NGOs. The Municipal Council usually invites Misrata's Civil Society Commission office to meetings and asks for yearly reports on status of local and international NGOs that are working in the municipality. Misrata's Civil Society Commission office also sometimes receives logistic support from the Municipal Council, despite their affiliations with competing claimants to central government authority (Sittini, 2017). As far as training of local CSOs. Misrata's Civil Society Commission office has a plan for 2017 comprising a number of training courses and workshops, but it lacks funding for implementation (Sittini, 2017).

The Forum of Opinion and Advice (FOA) is one of the most active local CSOs in the municipality. It was founded in 2011 by a number of engineers, lawyers, economists, and university professors. According to its current leader, Adussalam Benramadan, the FOA's mission is to provide local authorities with the advice they need to reach success in managing the city and in providing vital services for citizens. It has carried out many studies relating to all aspects of life in the municipality. A comprehensive study was produced by FOA in 2012, covering infrastructure, communications, water resources and supplies, housing, industry, economic activities in the city, the sea port, the airport, and transportation and sewage. It took eight specialists (members of FOA), eight months to complete and officially, hand in to the Council. A seminar on this study was delivered in the presence of local council members. The study was appreciated by the council and some of its recommendations were implemented, though some were postponed due to lack of funding (Benramdan, 2017).

One notable FOA success is the creation of a Psychotherapy Center in Misrata. The need is great - thousands of municipality inhabitants suffer some sort of post-war trauma and/or psychological illnesses and need long term treatment. This can only, be carried out by a specialized centre, which the municipality

had never previously had (Benramadan, 2017). The centre registered 1264 cases during the second half of the year 2015.¹¹³

3. Service Provision

According to a Municipal Council member, despite the Council's relative success on the national and international stages in acting as a peace partner, it has only achieved about 20% success in the provision of local services. (Khadoura, 2017) As previously noted, this failure is largely due to lack of funding and lack of appropriate legislation that keeps pace with the current developments in local governance (Khadoura, 2017).

Due to unpredictable and inconsistent funding, the Council has trouble both fulfilling its own duties and filling the gap left by central ministries (notably health care, education, social affairs and security) that are not fulfilling their duties. Therefore, according to Council member Khadoura, whenever a lump sum of funding arrives, the Council prioritises as best as it can by reaching an agreement among its members regarding which areas/citizens are the neediest, and then distributes the amount accordingly. The official website of the Municipal Council shows many examples of decrees issued by the Mayor for funding key institutions, such as hospitals, schools, security institutions, radio, and TV (Khadoura, 2017).

The Council has also allocated some funding to urgent infrastructure repairs. Most large projects such as the University complex, football stadiums, public housings and so forth, have been halted since the outbreak of the revolution in February 2011 for lack of funding from the central governments (Khadoura, 2017). The water supply to the municipality, which largely comes through a pre-stressed concrete pipeline from the south of Libya, is occasionally interrupted for days and weeks. Earlier this year, the interruption lasted for a month and a half. Citizens suffer, but the Municipal Council cannot afford to provide an alternative source for water (Benramadan, 2017).

4. Security

The municipality of Misrata is seen by most of its citizens, as one of the most secure in the nation.¹¹⁴ However, the roles of the official police and the Army are unclear. The Police and the Security Directorates are affiliated to the Ministry of Interior of the National Accord Government. The Army and its intelligence units belong to the Ministry of Defence.

A. State Armed Groups

By law, the Municipal Council has no authority whatsoever over state security bodies. As previously noted, the Council doesn't even have authority over the Municipal Guard, despite the law indicating that it should. According to Mayor Ashtawi, these bodies generally see any security breaches in the municipality as some sort of political feud between individuals or groups, and do not interfere. They may become involved only if they receive direct orders from their bosses in the capital. Further, the work force of these bodies are understaffed and aging, and lack training (Ashtawi, 2017). In spite of this, members of these security forces usually contribute as individuals to solving many of the security breaches within the

¹¹³ Misrata Central Hospital. 2016. MCH press conference. Available from: <http://mch.med.ly/-مؤتمر-صحفي-أول-بمستشفى-مصراتة-المركزي>

¹¹⁴ Abou-Khalil, Naji & others. 2015. "Perceptions of security in Libya." United States Institute of Peace. Available from: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW108-Perceptions-of-Security-in-Libya.pdf>

municipality, or when another municipality is involved. Since the Municipal Council has no formal means of enforcing the law in the municipality, it sometimes has to rely on non-state armed groups, such as revolutionary battalions (Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017).

B. Non-state Armed Groups

Most of the revolutionary battalions are part-time. They are led and trained by Army officers. Some of these battalions have joined together and formed brigades, such as the nationally well-known Al-Halbous Brigade. Commanders of these brigades have a reputation for patriotism and discipline. Lately, the National Accord Government appointed General Al-Haddad (commander of Al-Halbous Brigade) as the general commander of the Libyan Army of the Central Region of Libya, encompassing Misrata (Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017).

The Misrata Military Council, as previously noted a locally-organized body, played a very critical role right after the outbreak of the Revolution and during the six-month siege of the city. It is composed of a number of army officers, some of whom were retired. The Council still exists and, according to a battalion member hereafter referred to as MBR, has good unofficial relationships with almost all the revolutionary battalions (Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017). As with its counterparts in many other Libyan cities, it is not part of the structure of the national army. In spite of the fact that it is led by military officers, it has no official authority over the armed battalions in the municipality (Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017).

Funding for these non-state armed groups comes from the central governments and sometimes, from the Municipal Council and from government and private owned companies for work they are asked to do such as securing premises, neighbourhoods or even towns, and safeguarding personnel. Some are paid for their official engagement in wars that the state has undertaken, such as the war on ISIS in Sirte last year (Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017).

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

In general, the judicial system did not change after the outbreak of the Revolution. Judicial procedures are still as they were prior to 2011. A transitional justice law, 29 /2013, was passed by the General National Congress on the 2nd Dec. 2013, which would have criminalised rank-and-file Gadhafi forces for following orders to kill protesters during the Revolution, but this law has never been implemented, for unclear reasons.¹¹⁵ Under previous law, these troops would not be criminally responsible for these killings. According to local lawyer Husain Shegamani, delay in implementing the new law has added to the suffering of current prisoners and their families. It has also caused failures in reconciliation talks with other Libyan tribes and municipalities, due to the fact that the status of prisoners held in Misrata has always been item number one on the agenda of every meeting or reconciliation talk. The judicial establishment is pushed into a corner. If they implement the current law, most prisoners will be found innocent and be released. If they continue to detain these prisoners and postpone the rulings, they will be blamed by human rights groups, by the international community, and most of all by the prisoners' families for holding them without trial (Shegamani, 2017).

Implementing the rulings of courts is the most difficult step in the judicial procedure. No doubt that spread of arms has caused this, and it will continue as long as arms are widespread. Shegamani provides a good example that draws a clear picture of this, a situation in which a group of protesters against the Misrata

¹¹⁵ Libyan Security Sector Legislation. 2013. Law 13/2013 for political isolation. Available from: <http://security-legislation.ly/ar/node/31772>

Municipal Council about two months ago built a brick wall obstructing the main entrance of the Council's office building, demanding the resignation of the Mayor and Council members. The Council members moved to another municipality building and presented their case to the General Attorney in Misrata. The General Attorney ordered the wall removed at once. This order could not be implemented because of local fears that it would spark a cycle of violence (Shegamani, 2017).

The judicial system is lacking in experienced judges due to the political isolation law No.13 of 2013, one of the most controversial laws that ever passed by the General National Congress. Under this law, judges that had worked in the People's Court during the Gadhafi era were barred from doing judicial work. The judicial system therefore, has lost most of its capacity at a time when it is most needed. Finding replacement judges may take a very long time to achieve (Shegamani, 2017).

Due to weakness of both the judicial system and the security system in the municipality, citizens resort to resolving their disputes outside the courts. Disputes over land, for example, are handled by elders and wise men in the neighbourhoods. The chosen elders or wise men are usually familiar with the families' histories and interconnections and the succession of inheritance of the disputed land or property. Traditional bodies such as the previously-described Majlis Hokama and/or Majlis Al-Ayan do interfere when issues escalate to fights and use of arms. When disputes escalate to killing, Police and Security bodies are likely to become involved. However, the killer may be killed in a retaliation, escape from prison, or may even flee the country. Generally, when the dispute over land or property is between the state and an individual or a family, the state loses such cases in the courts. This may be attributed to the fact that the state during the Gadhafi era had confiscated the lands and properties of many citizens in the Municipality. These citizens want it all back so they take their cases to courts. Courts in most cases rule in favour of the citizen (Shegamani, 2017).

6. Community Media

The media in any community plays a very important role. It can shape public opinion, especially in politically inexperienced communities like Libya. During the Gadhafi era, there were no private TV or radio stations. Even local radio stations like the one Misrata use to have, was controlled by his rule. That radio station was called Misrata Local Radio (Journalist, 2017).

A. Radio and TV

Starting from the first week of the Revolution in February 2011, protesters took control of Misrata Local Radio, and local leaders used it to direct the battles, broadcast news from the fronts, and to broadcast instructions to the general public in the city. The station had been targeted by the Gadhafi forces but survived. In less than a month after the Revolution, the FM radio transformed to an AM radio and became a national one. Its voice reached all corners of Libya and even parts of the neighbouring countries. This was possible when the rebels were able to take control of and use the AM band, which had been allocated for use by the national radio during the Gadhafi era. This move allowed besieged Misratans to broadcast war news as it happened. Later during the Revolution, a satellite TV channel was established and set to broadcast worldwide (Journalist, 2017).

Currently, media have lost the momentum they used to have during the Revolution. Both the radio and TV stations in Misrata lack necessary funding, proper training for their staff, and competent management. However, the Misrata Municipal Council does provide some financial support on an irregular basis for both the radio and TV stations. The private sector also donates money for maintenance. The Ministry of Culture provides salaries for the work force (Journalist, 2017).

There are another five private radio stations in the municipality. Al-Madina Radio is one of them. It broadcasts to the whole of Libya and it has live chat programs open to callers from everywhere in Libya. The station is privately owned by local businessman Abdulla Ben Naser. Local papers were many during the Revolution, but have disappeared. People nowadays are finding it easier and more cost effective to turn to the internet for politics, cultural, sports, and economic news (Journalist, 2017).

Misrata FM radio and the other private radio station have scheduled programs for the Municipal Council, the sectoral offices (Makatib al-Kita-at) and for civil society organizations. Some of these programmes are live and some are recorded. In addition, they transmit interviews with key actors in these bodies and broadcast social and political events and activities that take place in the Municipality. These radio stations have also committed themselves to broadcast advertisements for the civil society organisations for free (Journalist, 2017).

B. Social Media

The Misrata Municipal Council also has a Media Office and a Spokesman. The Media Office administers an official website¹¹⁶ and a Facebook page.¹¹⁷ All decrees and statements issued by the council as well as official news relating to the Council, are published on these sites (Khadoura, 2017). The latest news published on the official Facebook page of the Municipal Council as of Sunday June 12, 2017, stated, “On Sunday, June 11, 2017, maintenance of the passport Department of the Municipal District Abuqrin was completed and provided with some necessary equipment and furniture. This work was done under the supervision of the municipal district office and the Misrata Municipal Council. The department will begin serving the local citizens in the near future.”

7. International Support

International civil society organizations have been quite active in the city in spite of security concerns. Their main activities focus on support for hospitals, schools, refugee camps, illegal immigrants, providing health care for prisoners and the war wounded, and demining. Also, they have campaigned to raise awareness about the risk of mines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), as well as Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). In addition, they have worked on providing essential health services for the most vulnerable and conflict-affected people.

Some of these INGOs are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Doctors without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontiers MSF), International Medical Corp (IMC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Handicap International, Danish Church Aid (DCA), and UN organizations such as UNDP, UNISEF and UNESCO. The Council and the Commission of Civil Society-Misrata Regional Office (CCS-MRO) have had contacts with some international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to explore the possibilities of them contributing to the funding and capacity building of local civil society organizations. Many INGOs welcomed the idea and promised to get engaged (Sittini, 2017).

The German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) was licensed to work in Libya by the Commission of Civil Society. Its mission is to support the role of Municipal Councils. It has started to do so with five Municipal Councils, including the Misrata Municipal Council. Four projects were selected by GIZ in cooperation with the Misrata Local Council and the Commission of Civil Society-Misrata Regional Office. These projects were:

¹¹⁶ Official website of Misrata Municipal Council. 2015. Available from: <http://misrata.gov.ly/>

¹¹⁷ Face book page of Misrata Municipal council, 2015. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/Misrata.Municipality/>

- 1) Training paramedics on stroke treatment,
- 2) Construction of sports arena for women,
- 3) Construction of a green area by the sea, and;
- 4) Provision of a water desalination laboratory.

This sort of international cooperation is welcomed by the Municipal Council and the Commission of Civil Society-Misrata Regional Office (CCS-MRO) and they look forward to its sustainability and growth (Sittini, 2017).

There is no doubt that international support through international non-governmental organizations since the Revolution has been helpful. The main obstacle to full cooperation between international organizations and the local authorities, including civil society organizations, is mistrust. The citizens in Misrata, and perhaps, in the whole of Libya, have doubts about the real objectives of these organizations. Being so skeptical of these INGOs, the citizens of Misrata tend to avoid engaging with them. Also, the licensing bodies, such as the Commission of Civil Society, are always hesitant to providing them with licenses to work in the country partly, for the same reason.

Large INGOs such as the MSF and the ICRC are treated as international companies and they have to go through tedious procedures to be licensed to work in Libya. They have to get the approval of the Foreign Ministry and the Commission of Civil Society (CCS) in Tripoli. Small INGOs usually partner with local CSOs and can easily get the approval of Misrata's Civil Society Commission office to work in the Misrata Municipality (Sittini, 2017).

8. Conclusion

Misrata has gone through difficult times during the past six years. This might have been expected in an unstable transitional period. Unlike the other neighbouring countries of the Arab Spring, the peaceful Libyan uprising transformed into an armed revolution. This was caused by the way the Gadhafi regime treated the demonstrators. In Misrata, thousands of citizens were killed and tens of thousands were injured. In addition to that, hundreds were lost and tens of thousands are now suffering post-war psychological illnesses.

In Misrata the Municipal Council, including the Mayor, were elected and thus they have the legitimacy they need to govern for four years ending in June 2018. The question is, do have they had the right tools for governing? As noted, the failure to implement local governance Law 59 has been a major obstacle. This research further shows that Law 59 has some vital defects and needs to be amended urgently.

Unfortunately, these changes are not in the Municipal Council's hands. Financial resources at the disposal of the Misrata Municipal Council are scarce and erratic. Therefore, the Municipal Council has not had sufficient and constant funding to complete projects that are idle, to carry out maintenance of infrastructure, or to provide the services entrusted to it. The Misrata Municipal Council has, however, succeeded in managing crises, some of which were political and social. This success is achieved at the expense of services delivery and the development of the municipality.

For Misratan local governance to work effectively, the national legislature must amend Law 59 and any other relating laws or decrees, such as those dealing with revenue collection at the local level and those dealing with decentralisation of authority. It is imperative that training and capacity building of the local government personnel be taken seriously. It is also very important to engage the local CSOs, and to encourage INGOs to join in and help with the capacity building of state and non-state bodies. But above

all else, stopping the proliferation of small arms is perhaps the most urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

Interviews

Ashtawi, Mohammed. 2017. Mayor, April.

Benramadan, Abdulssalam. 2017. Head of FOA, May.

Khadoura, Hana. 2017. Municipal Council member, April.

Jaarani, Ali. Majlis Hokama member, May.

Jarushi, Jibrae. 2017. Shura Council member, May.

Journalist. 2017. May.

Member of a Revolutionary Battalion, 2017. April.

Shegamani, Husian. 2017. Lawyer, May.

Shetwan, Muftah. 2017. Majlis Al-Ayan Vice President, April.

Sittini, Ebrahim. 2017. Misrata's Civil Society Commission office's Director, April.

Benghazi





Map 5: Benghazi neighborhood boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Background

A. Municipal Character

Situated in the eastern side of the Libyan coast, Benghazi is the second largest city in Libya and the biggest municipality, with a population of approximately 1.2 million inhabitants, divided into some 100 neighborhoods (Hai). Historically, it was always considered the capital of the eastern region known as Cyrenaica (Barga). Until the early 70s, it was home of the Central Bank, the National Oil Corporation, and Libya Airlines. Before the armed conflict of 2014 it was economically vital to the region, possessing the biggest airport and seaport. It served as the major commercial port in the east and also hosted industrial activities, most importantly in the cement and food processing sectors. The city is also home to one of the biggest oil and gas production companies in Libya, the Arab Gulf Oil Company.

B. Recent History

In the quest to better understand local governance and the mechanisms through which public interest is managed in unstable contexts, Benghazi presents a very enriching study case, as it has passed through very different phases in recent years. It was first the epicentre of the February 2011 anti-Gadhafi uprising and, after the fall of the previous regime, hosted local elections in May of 2012.¹¹⁸ However, in November 2013 the city once again witnessed armed clashes, originally between the Special Forces of the National Army and Ansar Alsharia Brigade.¹¹⁹ In the spring of 2014, these episodic clashes evolved into the current civil war.¹²⁰

The local Council (Majlis Mahalli) managed the city until the elections of the Municipal Council (Majlis Baladi) in April 2014.¹²¹ In August of 2016, as a result of clashes between Council members over the Mayor position, the elected Council was frozen and replaced by the Military Governor in the region.¹²² In April 2017 a civilian Mayor was appointed, also by the military.¹²³

Throughout these changes, public services have still been delivered to citizens. But the level of quality has been low, particularly as there have been periodic disruptions of civilian life due to widespread armed confrontations, especially in late 2016 to early 2017.

2. Municipal Actors

The main bodies that interact in the public domain of the city are:

- Neighbourhood Committees (Majales Al-Ahia)
- Council of Wise Men (Majles Al-Houkama)

¹¹⁸ 2012. "Libyans cast ballots in Benghazi elections." *Aljazeera*. May 15. Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/05/2012519202245675248.html>

¹¹⁹ 2013. "Death toll rises with clashes in Libyan city of Benghazi." *Euronews*. November 11.

Available from: <http://euronews.com/2013/11/25/death-toll-rises-with-clashes-in-libyan-city-of-benghazi>

¹²⁰ 2014. "Deadly clashes erupt in Libya between paramilitary force and militias." *Euronews*. May 17. Available from: <http://www.euronews.com/2014/05/17/deadly-clashes-erupt-in-libya-between-paramilitary-force-and-militias>

¹²¹ Fathia Al-Majbri. 2014. "Libya: Benghazi Holds Municipal Elections." *All Africa*. April 21. Available from: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201404220745.html>

¹²² 2016. "Alnadhouri appoints a new Mayor in Benghazi." *Ean Libya*. August 14. Available from: <http://www.eanlibya.com/archives/91527>

¹²³ "Benghazi acting mayor resigns; Elabbar appointed as replacement." *Libya Herald*. April 9. Available from: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/04/09/benghazi-acting-mayor-resigns/>

- Local Executive Authorities (National Ministries' local offices (a.k.a. Executive Offices); Municipal Guards, the General Services Authority and the Security Directorate, the Registry Office, and the Real-estate Registry Office. These are also known as Executive Offices or Makatib al-Kita-at
- Civil Society Organizations (Moasasat Al-Moushtama Al-Madani)

The relationships between these bodies have fluctuated over time. However, they became more stable and hierarchal after the intervention of the military and the freezing of the elected Council. The Municipality has minimal power over the National Ministries' local offices. According to Council Member Zakaria Beltamir, *"Essentially, this is due to an fundamental flaw in Law 59, as it doesn't illustrate clear roles and procedures in regard to decision making and reporting"* (Beltamr, 2017). This characterisation was echoed by other interviewees (Beltamir, 2017; Elzwawi, 2017; and Elseaiti, 2017). Consequently, cooperation between these authorities takes place on an ad hoc basis, usually under public pressure and/or crises. Moreover, since the adoption of Law 59, *"no amendments have been made to the rules and regulations governing the work of the Local Executive Authorities at the Municipal level, in order to accommodate the requirements of the Law 59."* (Beltamr, 2017).

Tensions between central and local government authority

There have been several periods where the municipal government managed to impose some kind of control over the local executive authorities in the city. The first was when the Ministerial Council formed the Benghazi Crises Committee in July 2014 two months after the election of the Municipal Council, with a mandate to oversee service provision, particularly IDPs relief, in the Greater Benghazi region (which composes of the Benghazi Municipality and the 4 surrounding Municipalities, Qamines, Soloug, Alabiar, Benina and Sidi Khalifa). *"This was an attempt from the Ministerial Council to override the inefficiency of the public sector mechanisms"* recounts Council member Beltamir, by creating a multilateral body, consisting of the heads of sectoral offices, Lib Aid, and the Security Directorate.

However, this created another type of conflict. Since the Committee was headed by a member of Benghazi's Municipal Council, the authorities of the neighboring Municipalities felt excluded from the decision-making mechanism, and at the same time a power struggle ignited within Benghazi's Municipal Council between the Mayor and the Council members leading the Crises Committee, *"especially, when the Committee managed to deduct 20M LYD of a 50M LYD budget, through a ministerial decision, originally allocated to Benghazi's Municipal Council"* (Yousef Elzwawi, Mayor's Office Manager, 2017). This tension led to total dysfunction within the Municipal Council, and eventually to its suspension by the regional Military Governor.

The second period came after the Military Governor froze the Municipal Council and appointed an army officer as the Mayor. As part of this decision, the new Mayor was given authority over the executive offices in the city (an authority the elected Mayor had not possessed) who now reported to him as well as to their central ministries.

In both cases, this created a more cooperative attitude among the executive offices. Regular meetings now take place in the municipality between the Mayor and heads of the ministries' local offices (a.k.a. executive offices), and consequently the Municipality is more involved in setting priorities and allocating funds than previously. As the Mayor's office manager observed: *"this setup created a more practical mechanism in the prioritization of needs and resources allocation, but still, the limited resources constrained the quality and sustainability of service delivery"* (Elzwawi, 2017).

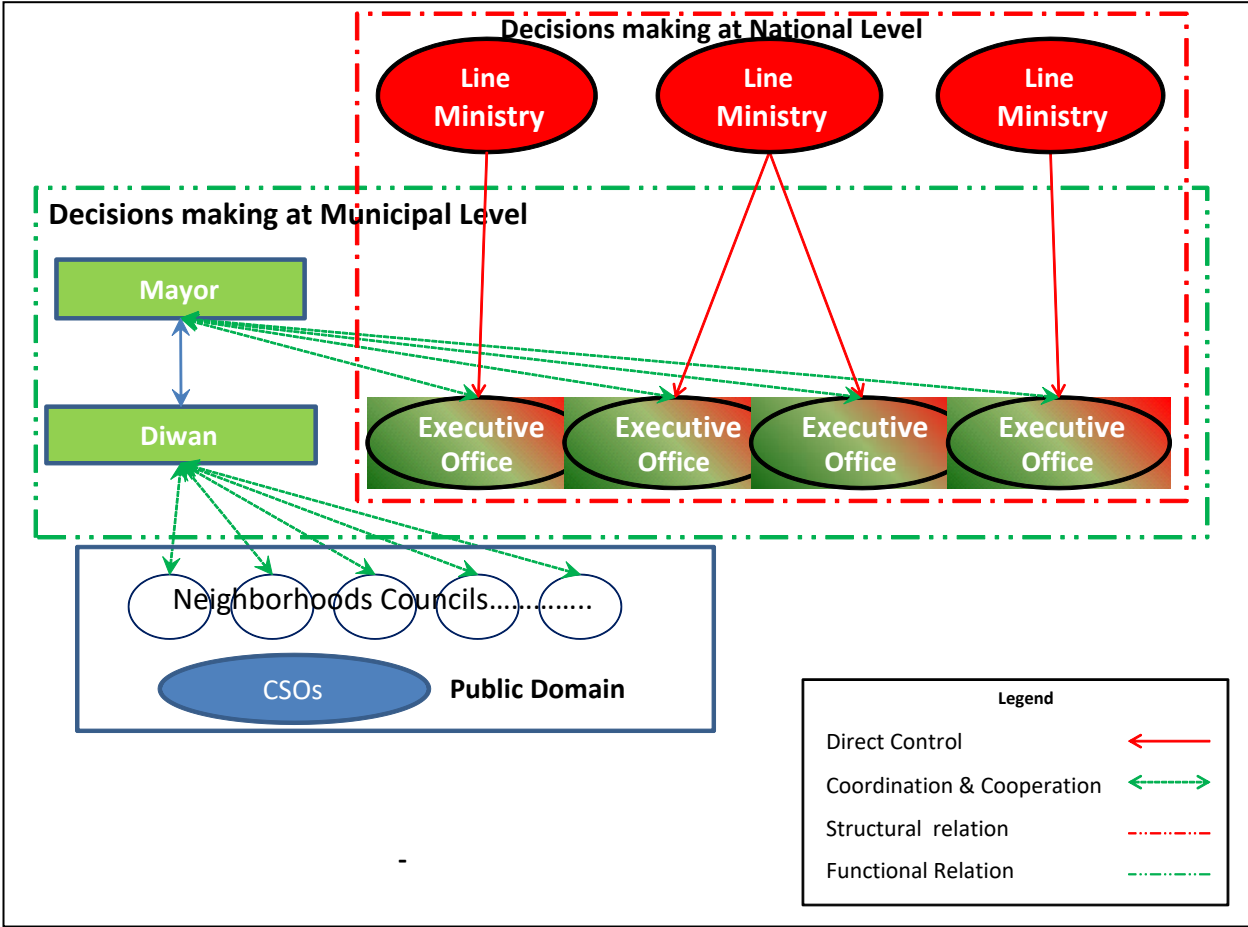


Figure 5.1: Relationship between local and national authorities in the municipality

The current municipal decision-making mechanism lacks a legal basis. However, it has allowed the appointed Mayor to use his political status and strong ties to the ruling central authority to garner more cooperation from the heads of the executive authorities than was achieved under the previous system. Currently, municipal priorities are mainly identified through a consultative process between the Mayor and the relevant executive authority, even though these authorities are still officially reporting and directed by their respective Ministries. Final say on budgeting still belongs to the ministries’ local offices, which, in cooperation with the Municipality develop suggested budgets. These are later amended, approved, and allocated by the central ministries. However, due to the tight governmental budget, these usually only cover salaries, which leaves the ministries’ local offices with a small space to maneuver in order to respond to local needs.

As shown in Figure 5.1 above, this structure is not very coherent. It has parallel paths for decision making and budgeting, which makes the decision-making process difficult at the national level, and sometimes confusing, especially in relation to the approval of budgets, as risk of overlapping and/or conflicting agendas is very probable. Still, it has given the Municipality a bigger ability to set its own priorities and allocate funds to address those priorities. At a certain level, this set-up mitigates the shortfalls of Law 59, but it is far from perfect. Structural and strategic decisions are made mainly at the ministerial level, while those related to urgent needs are taken at the municipal level (which must use its own funds for these projects) in a more cooperative model.

However, the financial resources allocated to the Municipality are insufficient to cover all needs. For example, as the Mayor’s Office Manager points out: *“In mid-2016 the municipality funded the GECOL, (which is the National Electricity Authority) in an effort to repair extensive parts of the grid, repairs which should be included in the general budget and allocated directly to GECOL.”* As another example, the Head

of the Media Office at the General Services Company stated: “The Municipality is spending approximately 1.5M LYD/month on garbage collection, contracting private companies. Instead, these expenses should be covered directly by the Ministry of Local Governance through our company, the Benghazi General Services Company – however, the MoLG hasn’t even paid our salaries since mid-2015” (Alfougghi, 2017). The Benghazi General Services Company is a national company pertaining to the MoLG, its mandate is providing garbage collection service in Benghazi. This shows that the Municipality is spending from its emergency budget, in order to cover the ministries’ failure to undertake their regular duties.

Civil Society

During the first three years following the uprising in 2011, Benghazi possessed a very animated civil society, with around 1,300 registered organizations featuring the participation of women and youth and a vast array of specialisations. However, after the “Save Benghazi” march, in September 21, 2012, coordinated by a number of CSOs and activists to protest against militias in the city, and demand the reinstatement of the police and the national army, these organizations became the target of threats, intimidation, and assassinations.¹²⁴ After September 19, 2014, when youth activists, Tawfik Ben Saud and Sami Elkawafi were assassinated, there was a significant decrease in civil society’s activities.¹²⁵ In Spring 2015, after armed conflict in the city had dwindled to smaller areas, like Al-Lithi, Gwarsha, Ganfouda, Al-Sabri, and Downtown, CSOs restarted their activities, but restricted themselves mainly to charity work related to IDPs, mitigating the effect of conflict on school children, and some neighbourhood cleaning campaigns.

The critical economic situation in the country resulting from the ravages of inflation and conflict, has led to the shutdown of many public and private businesses. Many families formerly considered middle class can no longer meet their basic needs. CSOs step in to provide food, medicine, and to help restore or rebuild damaged property.¹²⁶ CSOs are also pursuing initiatives focused on institutional reform and capacity development, usually in the form of training for CSOs’ members and public servants. Finally, CSOs conduct substantial infrastructure rehabilitation, most of which is related to the major health facilities that were heavily damaged during recent conflict. Some examples include the restoration of the Kidney Hospital, the ICU in Aljala Hospital¹²⁷ and the external clinic of the Hawary Hospital.¹²⁸

Although there are over 1,000 registered CSOs, few are currently active and having an impact. According to Omar Elfakhri, head of the Benghazi Civil Society Commission, “I only consider 15 to 20 to be actually active and providing a sustainable contribution,” an assessment echoed by other interviewees (Jaaouda, 2017; Alzaiani, 2017; Alhouni, 2017). CSO representatives for their part reported little cooperation with authorities or international organizations. Most of their initiatives were either crowd-funded and/or co-funded by business enterprises. On average, Benghazi CSOs consist of about 15 members and are organised with varying degrees of formality.

¹²⁴ Steven Sotloff, 2012. “The Revolt of Benghazi’s Moderates: Will the Rest of Libya Follow?” *Time*. September 22. Available from: <http://world.time.com/2012/09/22/the-revolt-of-benghazis-moderates-will-the-rest-of-libya-follow/>

¹²⁵ 2014. “Teenage peace activists among dead in Libya 'black Friday'” *The Guardian*. September 20. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/20/teenaged-libyan-peace-activists-assassinations-benghazi-libya-tripoli>

¹²⁶ Monadhmit Liajlik Benghazi Oubadir. 2017.

Facebook Page :

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1337930646255889&id=452568721458757

https://www.facebook.com/pg/452568721458757-منظمة-لأجلك-بنغازي-ابادر-/posts/?ref=page_internal

¹²⁷ Monadhmit Liajlik Benghazi Oubadir. 2017. FB Page. https://www.facebook.com/-منظمة-لأجلك-بنغازي-ابادر-/?ref=page_internal

¹²⁸ 2017. “The restoration of Alhawari Hospital. “ 218 TV.

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/salah.njm.3/videos/1258720030902885/>

Starting in 2015, security agencies have become more aggressive towards CSOs, and a number of civil society activists have been arrested and interrogated.¹²⁹ Moreover, since second quarter of 2017, the work of local CSOs and international support to civil society in Eastern Libya has come under increased scrutiny. In particular, the internal security apparatus has been systematically reviewing all registration applications presented to the Civil Society Commission by national and international organizations.¹³⁰ This may explain the reluctance that some CSOs have recently shown to cooperate with international organization.

Lastly, in December 2016, a Committee called “Benghazi Committee for Communication, Coordination of the International Support” (Lajnat Benghazi al-Tawassol, al-Tanseek wa al-Daam al-Dwaly, in Arabic) was created in Benghazi.¹³¹ The Committee was initially composed of six members, two of whom came from the security sector.¹³² The committee, which now has fifteen members, is tasked to coordinate and oversee all international support in Benghazi, thereby *de facto* taking over one of the responsibilities of Libya’s Civil Society Commission. Since its creation, the Committee has demanded all international organizations to register through it. While this newly-formed Committee has complicated the work of international organizations in Benghazi, it has not increased cooperation among local actors, and between them and international actors. This may be due, at least in part, to the lack of experience of its members, given that most of them had never worked in this field before their appointment.

3. Service Provision

As noted, local authorities in Benghazi have recently gone through very turbulent times. During the, relatively stable phase during the term of the Local Council (2012 – 2014) services were provided adequately, schools were operating normally, hospitals and clinics provided their usual mediocre health care, there were no reported power nor water shortages, and garbage was collected regularly. As explained by Local Council member Saad Elseaiti, during this time the Security Directorate, Traffic Control, and the Municipal Guards gradually reasserted order. A police presence was evident in the streets, all major congested areas were controlled by traffic police, and the municipal guards were checking on markets shops, beakers, and butchers regularly. Still, the Council consistently suffered from a shortage of funds, which affected the stability of certain services, such as the maintenance of infrastructure, sometimes the provision of medical supplies, and garbage collection (Elseaiti, 2017).

Shortly after the Municipal elections, in April 2014, the city entered a violent stage as the clash between military forces (under the name of the Libyan National Army) and revolutionary militias evolved into full-fledged civil war, which undermined civilian authority. By the second quarter of 2016, the military forces controlled most of the city, which created enough stability to allow most schools to reopen and other services to resume. However, as previously noted, the lack of a clear legal framework delineating which bodies were responsible for which services led to a lack of reliability on their delivery. The other major issue has been a lack of funds to rebuild destroyed infrastructure. Many schools and health facilities have been heavily damaged, with an obvious negative impact on their efficiency.

¹²⁹ Statement, 2016; Regarding cases of arrest of some activists in Tripoli, Tobruk, Almarj and Albayda, Victims Organization for Human Rights; 3 April 2016. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/victimsohr/photos/a.505705042811072.1073741826.505701026144807/976303439084561/?type=3>

¹³⁰ Author interviews of multiple sources in Benghazi.

¹³¹ Benghazi Municipal decree No. 126. December 5, 2016. For more, read “Benghazi International Humanitarian Communication Committee begins its work,” Alwasat; 27 February 2017. Available from: <http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/134164/>

¹³² Interview with Benghazi activist, July 2017.

To highlight one example, even though the Municipality contracts with some 30 companies to collect garbage from different neighborhoods, with an approximate budget of 1.5M LYD, the service is still far from perfect. In some places garbage can stay for days without being collected, or is collected in an inadequate manner because trash collection companies are not paid regularly. Moreover, there is minimal monitoring and evaluation of their work. There is in theory a national company under the Ministry of Local Government that is in charge of this task called the “General Services Company of Benghazi.” The Company’s Media Office lead by Monthir Alfougghi reports over 2000 staff, and some 90 garbage trucks, four of which were donated by UNDP along with other equipment. However, all staff have a backlog of salary due since mid-2015 and consequently most of them don’t come to work (Alfougghi, 2017). Periodic influxes of equipment from the UN or Municipality “*didn’t address the most critical issues, namely continuous management turnover and the lack of workers, due to delayed payroll for almost two years.*” This demonstrates the adverse effects when the Municipality has no control over human resources or salaries, which are instead subject to the line ministry’s authority.

Another sector touched by this problematic local/line ministry division is health services. Many facilities were damaged during the conflict or are poorly maintained, and there is a constant shortage of medicines for chronic illnesses and chemotherapy due to lack of funding.¹³³ According to a medical practitioner from the Benghazi Kidney Hospital: “the Ministry of Health is the only national authority authorised to import medicines for the public health sector.” Local authorities have addressed the Ministry several times about these problems,¹³⁴ but no sustainable solutions have been adopted.

However, civil society has pitched in to try and lift some of the pressure on people in need. For example in March five CSOs (Mouasasit Benghazi Al-Amal¹³⁵, Mounadhama Shabab Al-Amal Al-Tataoui,¹³⁶ Mounadhamet Liajlic Benghazi Oubader,¹³⁷ Mouasaset Basmat Khear¹³⁸) and others started the refurbishment of the ground floor of Al-Hawari General Hospital, located in the Al-hawari neighborhood, which was heavily hit during the recent conflict.¹³⁹ The work targeted the external clinics and emergency ward, was done on a volunteer basis, and was funded by private donors and businessmen with a total budget around 50,000 LYD, including a minor contribution from authorities (the maintenance of the parking area and the surrounding green areas, as well the application of anti-parasites). The clinic was reopened in early April, 2017, and is now providing services to the public¹⁴⁰ (CSO leader Anas Elagouri, 2017).

Another example is the Kidney Hospital in the Alhawari neighbourhood, which had been a fighting zone between conflicting forces though mid-2016. During this time, it was impossible for kidney patients to make their regular checkups and receive dialysis. In May of 2015, the Mouaset Basmat Khear and Benghazi Al-Amal CSOs took the initiative to prepare an empty ward in Almajouri General Clinic with a dialysis

¹³³ Khalil Gweider. 2017, “Gweider: Benghazi Medical suffers from lack of medicines and medical supplies since 3 years.” *Akhbar Libya* 24. June 6. Available from <https://tinyurl.com/yb5s7gsx>

¹³⁴ A statement by the directors of Benghazi hospitals regarding the conditions of hospitals, lack of capacities, lack of medicines and shortfall of the Ministry of Health. October 22, 2015. Available from: <http://benghazimun.ly/?p=1174>

¹³⁵ FB page. 2017. Mouasasit Benghazi Al-Amal. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/benghazi.alamal.foundation/?ref=mentions>

¹³⁶ FB Page. 2017. Mounadhama Shabab Al-Amal Al-Tataoui. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/vowork/>

¹³⁷ FB page. 2017. Mounadhamet Liajlic Benghazi Oubader. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/منظمة-لأجلك-452568721458757-بنغازي-إبادر/>

¹³⁸ FB Page. 2017. Mouasaset Basmat Khear. Available from https://www.facebook.com/BasmetKhair1/?ref=br_rs

¹³⁹ FB post. 2017. The start of the work on the maintenance of Al-Hawari Hospital. Mounadhama Shabab Al-Amal Al-Tataoui. March 12. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/vowork/posts/1386071978097912>

¹⁴⁰ 2017. “The “clinics” of Hawari Hospital in Benghazi open its doors to the patients.” *218 TV*. April 4. Available from : <https://tinyurl.com/ycna5xb2>

machine. This ward provided its services for over a year, until the kidney Hospital was rehabilitated and reopened in the third quarter 2016. All of this was done with very limited official government involvement.

Benghazi CSOs have also provided medicines to those in need. As previously mentioned, the governmental supply of medicines was very poor, so population relied on supplies imported by private companies. The dramatic increase of inflation in the last years, where CPI¹⁴¹ reached almost 200%, in March 2017;¹⁴² made it impossible for a most people suffering of chronic illnesses to secure their medicines, in particular people suffering from diabetes and other illnesses related to old age. Tragically, the category of patients most critically hit was children with cancers, as most parents weren't able to afford chemotherapy.

A number of activists set up a Facebook page under the name Benghazi Appeals (Benghazi Tounadi)¹⁴³, through which they managed to gather more than 1M LYD worth of medicines and other supplies in the span of one year. Through their efforts, the hospitals were able to provide chemotherapy to over 50 children, along with the treatment of patients with other chronic illnesses (Jaaouda, 2017).

CSOs also made an impact in the area of social welfare and IDP relief. At the beginning of the IDPs crisis, starting in late 2014, organizations such as Al-Mounadhama Al-Libiya Lil-Amal Al-Tataoui took the lead in supporting families in need.¹⁴⁴ At the end of 2015, there were 47,000 IDP families in Benghazi¹⁴⁵ distributed across over 60 schools across the city.¹⁴⁶ CSOs stepping in to "provide them with food and other necessities, such as clothing, medicines and even cash" (CSO leader Riadh Alhouni, 2017). After the IDPs crisis lessened these organizations added other vulnerable groups to their list of beneficiaries (Jaaouda, 2017; Alhouni, 2017 and Elagouri, 2017). In early May 2017, 12 CSOs formed an online database for people in need. Currently, this database includes over 2000 families in need of financial support (Alhouni, 2017 and Elagouri, 2017).

However, not all CSO work is about providing food and medicines; for example, this year Mounadhamet Liajlic Benghazi Oubader started a new initiative¹⁴⁷ focused on economic empowerment by setting up family businesses for families without income, as Elaouri recounts, "*so far we have set more than five small businesses, mainly in the catering and clothing markets*" (Elagouri, 2017).

Surprisingly, all of these inspiring initiatives are largely run independently from municipal and national authorities, according to most CSOs' members interviewed (Jaaouda, 2017; Alzaiani, Ali. 2017; Alhouni, 2017 and Elagouri, 2017). The relationship between civil society and state authorities remains very weak, and thus far, municipal authorities are failing to tap into numerous and valuable civil society resources.

¹⁴¹ The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food and medical care. It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.

¹⁴² 2017. "Libya CPI Transportation 2004-2017." *Tradingeconomics.com*. Available from:

<https://tradingeconomics.com/libya/cpi-transportation>

¹⁴³ FB page. 2017. Benghazi Appeal. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/683438245112935/>

¹⁴⁴ FB page. Al-Mounadhama Al-Libiya Lil-Amal Al-Tataoui. 2017. Available from:

https://www.facebook.com/vowork/?ref=page_internal

¹⁴⁵ 2016. "Benghazi displaced ...Crisis incapacitated". *Akhbar Libya* 24. January 23. Available from:

<https://tinyurl.com/y8yyx2wj>

¹⁴⁶ Article. 2016. Benghazi schools turn into camps to house displaced Libyans. *Alarabia*. January 12. Available

from: <https://tinyurl.com/y73a9adb>

¹⁴⁷ FB page. 2017. Mounadhamet Liajlic Benghazi Oubader. Available from <https://www.facebook.com/منظمة-لأجلك-452568721458757-بنغازي-إبادر/>

4. Security

After the uprising in 2011, the Minister of Interior Issued Decree (388/2011), which formed the Supreme Security Committee (Allajna Alamnia Aloulia). The Decree's aim was to create a security apparatus comprised of Revolutionaries and some existing police forces. However, this irregular force "caused aggravations with the traditional police system, who were still operating through the Security Directorate and the police stations which eventually led to violent confrontations" (Alsaïeti, 2017). These confrontations led some revolutionary groups to systematically target police personnel and facilities, by the first half of 2014, at least five police stations had been hit.¹⁴⁸ This episode ended with the bombing of the Benghazi Security Directorate Headquarters on August 1, 2014. The whole building was totally demolished, reportedly by the Majlis Shoura Thowar Benghazi, which was comprised of the most influential revolutionary militias in the city.¹⁴⁹

Six months later the National Army stepped in to reopen police stations in the area¹⁵⁰ and since the second quarter of 2015, the Ministry of interior has made major changes, firing 450 absentee police, bringing in over 2,600 new recruits, and appointing a new Head of Directorate. The Municipality contributed through the provision of cars. Overall, under the supervision and control of the Ministry of interior all police stations have been reactivated and a police presence reasserted. Similarly, the Licenses and Traffic Authority is fully functional. Nevertheless, during 2015 and 2016 official reports confirm an increase in criminal activities, linked to the spread of arms in the streets.¹⁵¹ The issue of funding and insufficient resources remains at the top of the agenda for the Security Directorate.

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

Following the 2011 Revolution, justice provision system in the city received a substantial setback. Starting in 2012, Courts and judges were targeted with bombings and assassinations.¹⁵² This insecurity eventually forced some judges to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt. According to the leader of Benghazi Reconciliation Committee, "this judicial void created a bigger space and popular demand for traditional justice" (Hamouda Aljmai, 2017).

Housni Zaidan recounts, "In February 2011, a number of tribal sheikhs and notables of the greater Benghazi area started gathering to discuss security and justice issues; following a series of meetings they formed the Benghazi Council of Wise Men (Majlis al-Hokama)." (Housni Zaidan, Council of Wise Men member, 2017) This was an assembly of around 1,000 representatives of 110 tribes that form the Benghazi community. They elected a Presidency Board (Maslis Riasa) of three members, and shortly after that a (Lajnit Fadh Alnizaat), to handle disputes between civilians. For each case the committee formed a delegation to contact conflicting parties, depending on the nature of the case and the concerned

¹⁴⁸ 2014. "Benghazi without police stations." *Alwasat*. July 8. Available from:

<http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/26304/>

¹⁴⁹ 2014. "The bombing of Benghazi Security Directorate building." *Alwasat*. August 2. Available from:

<http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/29437/>

¹⁵⁰ 2014. "Reopening police stations and prisons in Benghazi." *Alarabia*. December 12. Available from:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybxpxbwg>

¹⁵¹ 2016. "Victims of fighting in Benghazi in 2016." *Alwasat*. January 21. Available from:

<https://www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/130628/>

¹⁵² 2014. "One policeman was killed and another injured in a bombing at a court in Benghazi." *Libyens*. January 6.

Available from: <https://tinyurl.com/yav3y4ew>

tribes. A case could be raised by either party, the perpetrator or the victim – the victim could come to demand retribution, or the family of the offender would might seek intervention to avoid retaliation.

According to Head of the Dispute Settlement Committee, *“the Committee handles disputes that result from crimes and violations; ranging from murder cases, armed assaults, traffic accidents, to property and financial disputes”* (Almai 2017). The Committee carries out its work by leading negotiations between the rival parties and proposing settlements, in line with what has traditionally been recognized as appropriate to the case. This usually consists of financial compensations and/or the culpable parties’ family relocation, depending on the nature and the gravity of the damages or losses.

Traditionally, this system tries to look beyond the facts of a crime or conflict, and address the long term implications. As the Deputy Head of Reconciliation Committee summarised the logic behind the system: *“no jail sentence or execution will solve the grievance between opponents, only transparent and fair resolution can do that, as we focus more on reconciliation and indemnification; it is more about supporting the Judiciary system, aiming to preserve social peace and prevent escalation”*; yet once a settlement has been agreed and implemented, the victim is expected to accept it as final rather than pursuing a formal legal case.

However, during the policing gap, 2014 to 2015, Almai offers: *“I assume some cases have been resolved totally out of the judiciary system; which is still a possibility, due to the under resourced policing system.”* During the collapse of the security system, the Council of Wise Men became the only body performing mediation and conflict resolution in the city. The Council’s power over the parties stems from social pressure and the commitment of the parties to tribal norms, which mean that any of the parties can withdrawal from the negotiations at any time, or refuse the final decision, if they are able to face the social/tribal consequences of withdrawal.

It is worth noting that even after the gradual restoration of the courts and the police system, the Committee still handles a significant number of cases. For instance, during the author’s interview with the Head of Reconciliation Committee and his Deputy, we were interrupted three times by citizens and tribal liaisons checking on cases status or updating the Council on progress.

6. Community Media

A. Social Media

The Municipal Council manages a website¹⁵³ and a Facebook page with almost 62,000 followers.¹⁵⁴ Even though the website appears to be updated every 2 to 3 days, it seems to have very limited reach. When scanning the news, there is no visible public interaction, comments, nor social media shares and likes. The Facebook page instead is used primarily to share reports on meetings and decisions, rather than as a tool for communicating with and receiving feedback from population.

B. Radio and TV

As for the TV and Radio, the Municipality has no direct control over the local media outlets. Even the state-owned Benghazi TV and Benghazi Broadcasting Network,¹⁵⁵ which were originally established by the local

¹⁵³ 2017. Benghazi Municipality Website.

Available from: <http://benghazimun.ly/>

¹⁵⁴ 2017. Benghazi Municipality Facebook Page.

Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/MunicipalCouncilBenghazi/>

¹⁵⁵ 2017. Benghazi TV Facebook Page. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/BenghaziTV/?ref=br_rs,

Council are no longer controlled by them. The General Manager of Benghazi TV agrees this: *“at the opposite of the municipality view, we believe that this channel should provide a service to the city, and most importantly the population, reporting problems, motivating people to speak out, addressing their concerns and needs, where the Municipality thinks it is a tool to advocate their policies and showcase their achievements.”*

On the opposite side of the spectrum, CSOs actively use social media as a tool to engage in public communication and carry out advocacy campaigns. For example, all the service-provision initiatives mentioned earlier (implemented by Mouasat Benghazi Al-Amal, Mounadhama Shabab Al-Amal Al-Tataoui, Mounadhamet Liajlic Benghazi Oubader and Mouasat Basmat Khear) were abundantly covered on Facebook, and CSOs also distributed flyers, and carried out crowd-funding through the internet.

Facebook proved to be particularly effective in fundraising, and mobilising volunteers. For instance, the rehabilitation of the external Clinic of Alhawari Hospital was initiated by a few employees, who started to clear the debris. After pictures of their work started circulating on Facebook, CSOs and businessmen started to be motivated to contribute, and what started as cleaning of debris evolved into a full facility restoration.

As for other forms of media, the radio is very strong in terms of reach, but it is rarely used as a tool to promote public services. As one media worker noted: *“around 10 radio channels broadcasts in Benghazi, over 200 air hours per day, but there is less than 10 hours of programmes discussing public services.”* Newspapers are not very popular. As one bookshop owner in Alberka neighborhood laments, *“the biggest local newspaper Benghazi News (Akhbar Benghazi) is issued weekly, and rarely distributes over ten thousand copies.”*

7. International Support

The international community has invested a lot of resources in supporting local governance in Benghazi. Organizations such as UNDP,¹⁵⁶ CREATIVE Associates,¹⁵⁷ ACTED,¹⁵⁸ and GIZ,¹⁵⁹ have carried out large support projects, typically in the form of technical assistance and training of officials and personnel. This kind of support was very helpful in the aftermath of the current conflict, since the level of capacity and skills in the public administration was very low. Even workshops on basic concepts such as budget prioritising were very helpful. However, after time, they were no longer adding much value.

Nowadays, the projects that have the most significant impact are those providing material support, either by funding local initiatives or providing equipment, especially in light of the funds shortage at the national level. For example in 2016, in cooperation with the Municipal council of Tokara (a municipality

2017. Benghazi Broadcasting Network Facebook Page. Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/www.benghazitv.ly/>

¹⁵⁶ “Stabilization Facility for Libya,” UNDP.

Available From: <http://www.ly.undp.org/content/libya/en/home/operations/projects/sustainable-development/stabilization-facility-for-libya.html>

“Strengthening Local Capacities for Resilience and recovery Project Page,” UNDP, Available from:

<http://www.ly.undp.org/content/libya/en/home/operations/projects/sustainable-development/strengthening-local-capacities-for-resilience-and-recovery.html>

¹⁵⁷ 2017. Creative Associate.

Available from: <http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/>

¹⁵⁸ Local Development Planning Approach Libyan Municipalities Project Page. ACTED.

Available from: <http://www.acted.org/en/local-development-planning-approach-libyan-municipalities>

¹⁵⁹ 2017. GIZ.

Available from: <https://www.giz.de/en/html/index.html>

neighbouring Benghazi) and the Libyan Association for Support of Towns and Municipalities (Aljamia Allibya li Daam Almoudoun Wal Baladiat),¹⁶⁰ Chemonics funded the rehabilitation of the water supply network, a project which provides water to an estimated 20,000 citizens.¹⁶¹ Under the same programme, they also funded the installation of a delivery room in the local hospital, which improved the quality of life for pregnant women, who used to travel more than 70 KM to reach the nearest hospital in Benghazi.¹⁶²

These projects were chosen as high priorities through a collaborative process in which local CSOs consulted with the Municipal Council and the local community in order to identify the critical needs of the municipality. Once needs were identified and ranked, Chemonics contracted a local construction company for the implementation, under the supervision of both the Municipal Council and a local CSO. This type of intervention made a significant impact on the quality of life for this community.

8. Conclusion

After three years of fighting in Benghazi, schools, hospitals, and public spaces are once again open and operating. There are no major shortages in fuel or water, except for an area of 3km by 10km in the coastal area of the city center, where there are still military operations.

Even though the conflict is not fully over, it is expected to be end soon. The local governance setup in the city appears to be very stable. There is no move toward reinstating the elected Municipal Council, nor changes to the legal framework governing local governance.

The Benghazi Municipal Council managed to override some key flaws of Law 59, particularly regarding its ambiguity on the division of authority and accountability. Despite the setback in terms of democratic procedures and representation, the author believes that the appointment of a Mayor by the Military Governor has allowed the Municipality to efficiently exercise some needed authority over the government ministries' executive offices.

However, at times the quality of services is inconsistent across the city, especially in periods of crisis. There are still serious shortage of medicines in public hospitals, and repeated gaps in garbage collection. These problems are primarily related to the lack of funds, itself a consequence of ambiguity over whether National Ministries' Local Offices or local authorities should control resources. This situation can only be remedied through the adoption of a comprehensive decision-making and financial managements framework governing the relationship between the Municipality and the executive authorities.

Also, one of the most egregious missed opportunities is the lack of official engagement and cooperation with civil society organizations and media. Benghazi Municipality is not using the multiple media channels available in the city to carry out public consultation, and it is not leveraging the large and diverse set of capacities and skills possessed by the city's CSOs to improve service delivery or collect feedback on the allocation of resources.

¹⁶⁰ 2017. The Libyan Association for Support of Towns and Municipalities Facebook Page. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/1040817336016103-الجمعية-الليبية-لادعم-المدن-و-البلديات/>

¹⁶¹ "The rehabilitation of the water supply network." *Tokara Municipality Facebook Page*. May 26. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1260091374111446&id=936415573145696

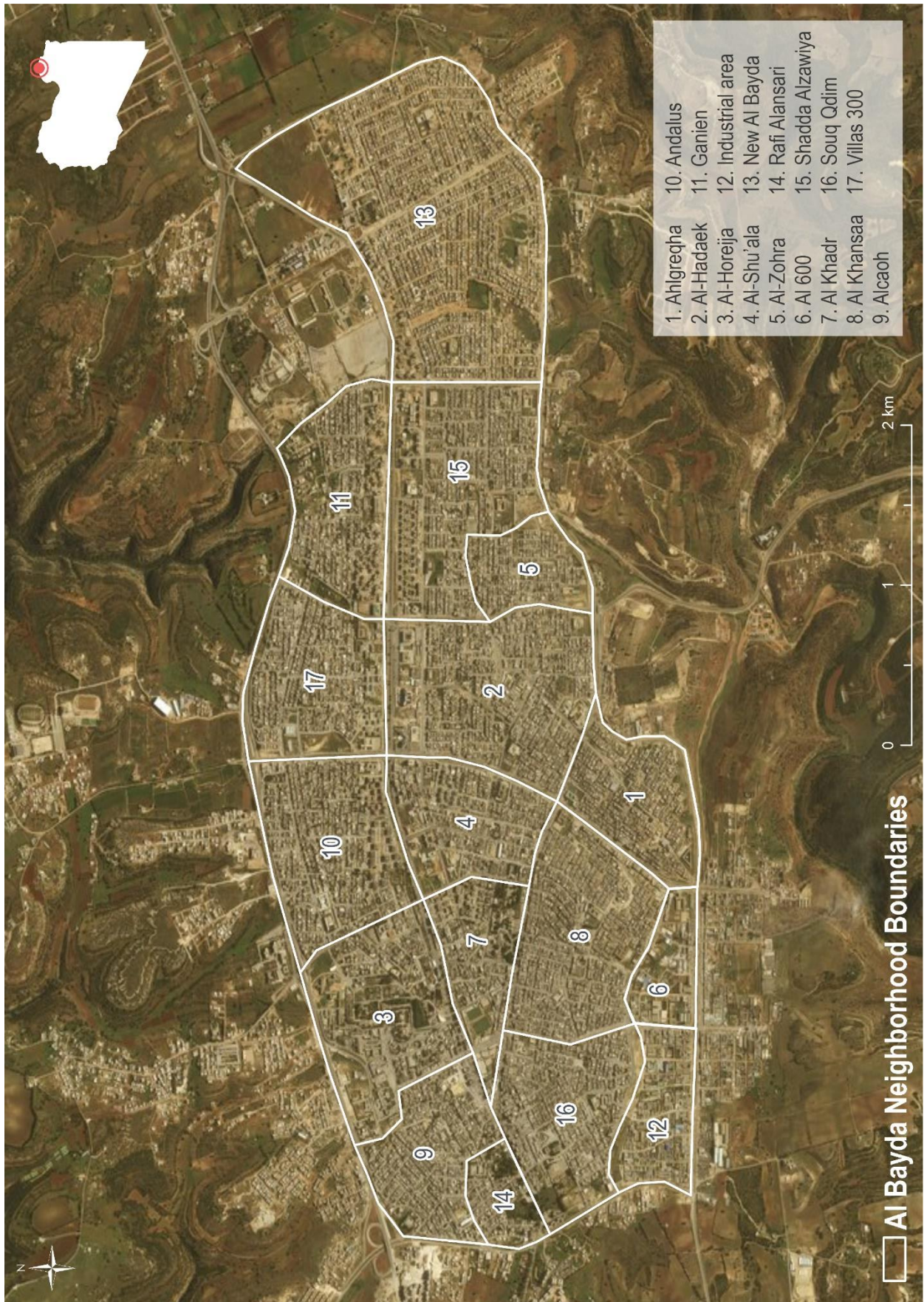
¹⁶² "The handover of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology to the Director of Tokara Hospital." *Tokara Municipality News*. May 26. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/libya.tokarh/posts/134919508501349>

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Bayda





Map 6: Bayda neighborhood boundaries (Source: Impact Initiatives)

1. Background

A. Municipal Character

The city of Bayda is the second largest city in Libya's eastern region, after the city of Benghazi. Bayda has a population of around 218,000,¹⁶³ and is located in the Green Mountain area around 1300km east of Tripoli. It is bordered by the city of Shahaat from the East, Al-Marj from the West, the Mediterranean Sea from the North, and the Green Mountain hills from the South. The city is home to Libya's third largest university, Omar Al-Mokhtar University. The city is known for its historical links to the Senussi movement and once was home to one of Libya's oldest universities, the Mohamed Bin Ali Al-Senussi University, which was closed down by the Gadhafi regime following the 1969 coup and re-established on October 4, 2011 following the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime. Bayda has a distinct tribal structure where tribes play a key role alongside formal state institution in maintaining social peace through traditional dispute resolution and social justice mechanisms.

B. Recent History

In 2011, the city of Bayda was one of the first cities to rise against Gadhafi Regime security forces. Protests and clashes in Bayda occurred as early as February 15, 2011. The city played a key role in the uprising against the Gadhafi Regime and it is the home city of the Chairman of the National Transitional Council (the immediate post-Revolution government of Libya), Mustafa Abduljalil, who led the opposition forces during the 2011 war.

Decades ago, King Idris (ruled 1951-1969) made the city of Bayda the summer seat of the government. This is why the city has an extensive administrative complex built for the government and also a parliament hall. Thus, in 2011, then ruling National Transitional Council designated the city of Bayda the home of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDA) and in 2014, the CDA convened in the old parliament hall.

Also in 2014, Bayda was suddenly turned into a seat for the Interim Government headed by Prime Minister Abdullah Thini. That government fled Tripoli following the takeover by forces loyal to the former General National Congress, which refused to recognize the House of Representatives' election results. One of the first major tasks for the Bayda Municipal Council was to provide a home for Libya's Interim Government effectively taking on the role of the relocation team for the national government. This meant additional demanding responsibilities for the Bayda Municipal Council.

2. Municipal Authorities

A. State Actors and Functions

The Bayda City Municipal Council was elected on 1 January 2014, making the Bayda Municipal Council one of the first to be elected in accordance with Law 59 on local governance. It also means that the four-year mandate of the current Municipal Council will expire in 2018 and preparations for new elections should start no later than September 2017. Seven members were elected in total, six men and one woman.

In a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in the period from April 14 to May 24, 2016, the Bayda Municipal Council performed extremely well compared to 21 administrative districts

¹⁶³ According to the 2012 census.

from which Libyans were interviewed and the 13 municipalities¹⁶⁴ that were sampled in the Survey.¹⁶⁵ In particular, the Council performed extremely well in terms of citizens' satisfaction and the legitimacy categories. For example, 60% of respondents to the survey in Bayda were at least fairly satisfied with the quality of the services provided by the Council. More than 75% believed the Municipal Council in Bayda was legitimate, the highest rate of the all municipalities polled.

Currently, municipal councils in eastern Libya are militarising, with democratically elected Municipal Councils being replaced with army officers, or in some cases civilians who report directly to the Military Governor of the Eastern Region. They are being appointed by General Abdulrazaq Al-Nadori, the Libyan National Army's Chief of Staff who was also named Military Governor for the Eastern Region (between the cities of Bin Jawad in central Libya and Derna) in June 2016 by the head of the Libyan Parliament in Tobruk.

However, the Municipal Council in Bayda remains in place despite an attempt to replace it with a military governor (as took place in around ten municipalities, including Ejdabyia, Shahaat and Benghazi).¹⁶⁶ It is worth noting that the Bayda Council of Wisemen and Notables (Majlis Al-Hukama wa Al-Ayan) was leading these attempts and communicating with the military governor of the Eastern region to push for the replacement of the Municipal Council with a military governor. The Council of Wisemen and Notables is mainly made up of traditional and tribal leaders who gain their legitimacy and recognition from the traditional tribal and social structures and loyalties that existed in Libya for hundreds of years. The Council of Wisemen and Notables in Bayda has been locked in dispute with the Mayor and the Municipal Council due to disagreements on the role and the functionality of the Council of Wisemen and Notables. On November 11, the Bayda Municipal Council decided to dissolve the Council of Wisemen and Notables, holding that the group was violating and overstepping its mandate.¹⁶⁷

The survival of Bayda's democratically elected government raises the question of what factors – the Municipal Council's governing structure, performance, service delivery, security, communication, and/or international support – has allowed it to maintain such high support amongst constituents. According to the Municipal Council members interviewed for the purpose of this research, the key factor that helped the Bayda Municipal Council stay in power was the unity and trust among its members and the fact that there were no internal divisions.

Additionally, the members seemed to be in consensus that delegating some of their powers to the Mayor has helped improve the Council's performance during the turbulent times that Libya is going through (Bayda Municipal Council Members, 2017). Following the replacement of some democratically elected councils with military governors, the Mayor of Bayda, Ali Hussaine, visited the Military Governor for the Eastern Region to make it clear that the Bayda municipality did not need and would not accept a military governor for the city (Yousef Gabaili, Bayda Municipal Council Public Relations Officer, 2017).

¹⁶⁴ Municipalities surveyed: Bayda, Shahat, Weddan, Gharyan, Misratan, Sabratha, Benghazi, Souq al Juma, Ubari, Sabha, Abu Salim, Tripoli Centre, Tajoura

¹⁶⁵ 2016. "Libyan Municipal Council Research, Center for insights in the survey research." *IRI*, November 9.

Available from: http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_libya_municipal_councils_presentation.pdf

¹⁶⁶ 2016. "The wisemen and notables (Hokama and Ayan) of Al-Jabal Al-Akthar and the Martyrs Association demand the appointment of a military governor for the Bayda Municipality." *Akhabar Libya*. Nov 16.

Available from: <http://www.akhbarlibya24.net/2016/11/16/الشهيد-أسر-ورابطة-البيضاء-وأعيان-حكمااء/>

¹⁶⁷ 2016. "Decision to dissolve the Hokama and Ayan Council." Bayda Municipal Council. Nov 11. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/albida.town.council/posts/575666339306517>

Centralising decision-making mechanisms

In November 2015, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) produced a diagnostic report on local governance and local development in Libya.¹⁶⁸ One of its key findings was that there was no overall clear structure for local governance systems in Libya, as demonstrated through the absence of a national vision and policy framework that would define the nature, mission, mandates, and functions of Libya's system of local governance. Libya's governance system remains centralized and run in an ad-hoc manner, but with a various competing central governments, which are incapable of fulfilling any policy-making, control, or support roles.

The Bayda Municipal Council has a clear cohesion advantage over other councils in the eastern region given that the election result in Bayda was adequately representative of the city's social structures. In other words, all the main tribes in the city are represented in the Council. In addition, the homogenous and trustful relationship between the council members and the Mayor has given the council the strength and unity it needs to deliver to its constituents. The clearly-defined tribal landscape in the city of Bayda seems to help the Mayor and the Council to deliver services to citizens and overcome any obstacles facing them, as each Member has a tribal and social base that can support them when they face opposition.

The 2014 political divide of state institutions and the creation of parallel governments in Libya has resulted in a lack of financial support from the central authorities to fund the budgets of the local governments. Consequently, the Bayda Municipal Council is operating in a crisis and emergency mode (Municipal Council members, 2017).

Very early on in their mandate, members of the Council reached a consensus to delegate most of their powers and competences to the Mayor. Collectively, the members decided that with the on-going crisis in the country and the deteriorating living conditions, the municipality needed decisive and fast-paced decision making mechanisms and leadership to better respond to the local community's needs and the people's aspirations (Municipal Council members, 2017). The decision concentrated more power and authority in the hands of the Mayor, who makes most decisions on any given day. The reported immediate result of this decision was an improved response to the local community's needs and better service delivery.

Although the delegation of powers by the Municipal Council members to the Mayor helped improve the Municipal Council's performance compared to neighbouring municipalities, the move sets a worrying precedence for democratically representative local governance by concentrating local power in the hands of one actor – it also, reinforces arguments that claim democratic and participatory local governance is not applicable in the context of Libya; and that democratic local governance is not capable of delivering on the needs and aspirations of local communities. The sides that rationalise such arguments push for the appointment of Mayors and Governors by the central authority instead of direct election by the people.

The Municipal Council members interviewed understand that the decision to delegate more power to the mayor could be viewed as against the spirit of democratic governance spirit and actual provisions contained in local governance Law 59. However, they argue that had they not taken such a step, the Council could have become embroiled in internal conflicts, which would have resulted in slow and inefficient decision-making. For example, during the interview, the Bayda Municipal members made their case for their decision by citing the internal conflict that has occurred within other municipal councils such as Shahaat and Benghazi. Both councils have been replaced with military governors (Municipal Council

¹⁶⁸ 2015. "Rapid Diagnostic on the Situation of Local Governance and Local Development in Libya." *UNDP Libya*
Available from:

<http://www.ly.undp.org/content/dam/libya/docs/UNDP%20Libya%20Rapid%20Diagnostic%20of%20Local%20Governance%20-%20Synthesis%20Report%20%28Final%20Version%29.pdf>

members, 2017). Indeed, an internal conflict within the Bayda Council would have made it difficult to respond effectively to the various crises and responsibilities Bayda has faced, including the relocation of the central government to the city and the influx of internally displaced people due to the conflict in Benghazi and other parts of the country.

Each of the Council's six members (the seventh is the Mayor) oversees one or two of the city's sectors, taking on the vast majority of responsibility for those sectors, which include civil society, women's affairs, economy and finance, electricity and utilities, and security and police. Each of the members has an office in the Council's building. The Council convenes and holds meetings when required. However, given that much power was vested in the Mayor, he makes most decisions and then consults with Council members in instances where any of them have objections or concerns regarding his decisions. This arrangement is ad-hoc – as the Head of the Central Commission for the Election of Municipal Councils notes, such an arrangement is not prescribed or guided by a universal and harmonized local governance structure across all municipalities in Libya (Gajiji, 2017).

As previously noted, the central Ministry of Local Government has yet to design a single municipal governance structure and implement it across Libya. Two proposals have been presented over the last couple of years (Gajiji, 2017). One proposal would have given mayors more power, but the Council Members in numerous municipalities protested and the second proposal was adjusted to rebalance the distribution of powers and competences between the mayor and Municipal Council members. However, a number of Mayors protested, leading the Local Governance Minister in the Government of National Accord to shelf the proposal in February 2017 (Gajiji, 2017). This leaves the post-2011 local governance reform in limbo.

Other Organizations

In 2014 Bayda formed a Council of Wise Men and Notables (Majlis Hokama wa Al-Ayan in Arabic), which was headed by one of the city's tribal leaders. The Council is not part of the decision-making and governing mechanism in the Bayda Municipality; it consisted of three members that were appointed by the Municipal Council in accordance with Law 59. However, in November 2016 the Mayor dissolved the Wisemen and Notables Council due to a dispute with its head over the ownership of land upon which a local school was built. The Municipal Council is currently looking to name a new Wisemen and Notables Council (Gabaili, 2017). Municipal Council Members reportedly believe that a Wisemen and Notables Council could be productive to their work, despite the previous Council head's abuse of position (Gabaili, 2017).

In contrast, the Municipal Council and the Mayor have a cooperative working relationships with national ministries' local offices (a.k.a. Executive Offices, Makatib Al-Kita-at in Arabic), which represent the central government on local level, including the economy and planning departments, health and education authorities, the judicial authorities and the courts, the ministry of interior (police), the University, and the revenue and the tax authority.

These cooperative relationships are partly due to the fact that some of the Municipal Council employees are either former or current employees of local offices representing national ministries, and that provides useful linkages and access (Gabaili, 2017). Moreover, the presence of the Interim Libyan government in Badya seems to be a contributing factor to this cooperative relationship, given that the Mayor is able to discuss issues in his municipality directly with national Ministers. The Municipal Council has directed some of its funds and local revenues to support some of the local sectors that fall under the jurisdiction of national ministries, such as furnishing and equipping police stations, furnishing and equipping local

schools, and building a new court complex (Ayman Abdrabah, Head of the Diwan and lead Legal Counsel in Bayda, 2017).¹⁶⁹

B. Local revenue generation

Since 2014, the Bayda Municipal Council has worked hard to secure access to local revenues from local taxes, commercial and business licenses fees, penalty fees from the municipal guard and traffic police (Hafed Khazali, Bayda Revenues Department, 2017). A Revenues Office within the municipality was set up in 2014 and headed by an employee of the larger region's (Al-Jabal Al-Akthar's) tax authority. However, the process was neither easy nor straightforward. As the head of Revenues Department in Bayda's Municipal Council lamented: "We have worked hard to navigate through the central nature of Libya's financial system and regulations and Law 59 on local governance." Indeed, there are clear contradictions between the local governance law and existing financial regulations and financial systems in Libya. One of the key issues facing local revenue generation in Bayda is the contrast in laws and regulations between the central nature of Libya's national financial regulations and the devolved powers to municipalities in accordance with law 59. This contrast opened the door for different and usually opposing interpretations of the laws and regulations governing public financial management in municipalities (Abdrabah, 2017).

Through influence on the interim government institutions that have relocated to the city of Bayda in 2014 and personal relationships, the Bayda Municipal Council has been able to generate roughly 80 million LYD since 2014. Revenues from local taxes, commercial licenses fees, and municipal violation tickets were diverted to an emergency and assets account that belongs to the Bayda Municipal Council. The funds are allocated to projects at the discretion of the Mayor and the Municipal Council members.

Moreover, the Minister of Finance in the interim government in Bayda has been cooperative with the Bayda Municipal Council, allowing them to use the universal tax receipt forms to collect taxes generated within the Bayda Municipality and deposit them in a special bank account set up and managed by the Bayda Municipal Council (Khazali, 2017).

This cooperation is happening despite repeated and persistent protests from the Audit Bureau (Diwan Al-Mouhasaba) and the Administrative Oversight Authority (Hay'at Al-Riqaba Al-Eydariya) in Bayda. As Mr. Khazali recalls, he was summoned twice by the Administrative Oversight Authority and the Audit Bureau to discuss the Bayda Municipal Council's revenue generation and management arrangements. However, the Mayor and the Municipal Council members and staff insist that they had no option but find ways through which they can generate funds and invest them back in the municipality. The head of the Municipal Council insists that the Council is operating in a crisis and emergency mode, and that the Municipal Council's financial management practices are sound, maintaining, "we have all the paper trail to prove where each Dinar was spent, but we have to operate even if the central authority is dysfunctional. We owe it to our people" during a face-to-face interview (Abdrabah, Ayman 2017).

3. Service Provision

As stated earlier in the IRI's survey in April and May 2016, 60% of people surveyed in Bayda were either greatly or fairly satisfied with the Council's service delivery; neighbouring Shahat achieved 47% satisfaction rate while Benghazi's satisfaction rate stood at 27%. In another public opinion survey conducted by the Navanti Group in April 2016, almost 73% of Al-Bayda residents who have directly interacted with the Municipal Council reported a positive experience.

¹⁶⁹ More details and news about the Municipal Council's activities can be found on the Council's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/albida.town.council/>

Key to the popularity of the Bayda Municipal is its ability to generate funds and use them efficiently to respond to the local populations' urgent needs in terms of utilities and sanitation works, repair and maintenance of infrastructure and schools, and judicial and security service provision. Furthermore, the Bayda Municipal Council is able to prioritize its services successfully. As is explained below, the Council has prioritized the justice and security sectors; a decision which has greatly contributed to high popular support for the Council.

Priority Services

Besides the security and judicial sectors, the Municipal Council has focused on infrastructure projects, such as the maintenance of roads, sewage systems, and addressing streets in need of repairs. These are the quick wins for any Council. Such services are, reportedly, what citizens recognize and appreciate; people see what is happening on the streets and that is what creates their perceptions of the Municipal Council (Mohamed Mhawach, Civil Society Activist 2017). The Mayor gives special attention to infrastructure and utilities projects and is usually spotted out and about overseeing the work. Some on-going projects include street tarmac and pothole repairs, street lighting, and sewage system improvement (Mhawach, 2017).

During visits to Bayda and various conversations with local officials and activists conducted for the purpose of this case study, there was no indication that citizens have a direct role in deciding which projects to carry out, or in what areas. However, citizens can present their proposals and petitions to the Council on Tuesday of every week. The projects are decided at the discretion of the Mayor and Municipal Council based on urgency and importance (Gabaili, 2017).

Another key area is the monitoring and oversight of inflation – the Municipal Council attempts to control the prices of goods and labour services within the municipality. For example, the Council with the help of the Municipal Guards put together a list of basic goods including vegetables, baby milk, flour, oil, rice and pasta, as well as meat and decided the appropriate prices for such goods. They then distribute the list to concerned businesses and the public through flyers or local and community media (Abedrabah, 2017).

Cooperative relationships and service delivery

Cooperative working relationships with local institutions such as the University, local executive branches that represent central government ministries, civil society organizations, and mosques help the Bayda Council address people's needs and demands for services, as well as handle crises that confront the city. The Mayor and his fellow Council members enjoy smooth working relationships with these key local institutions. For example, the Council's good working relationship with Omar Al-Mokhtar University proved very useful on a number of occasions. The University is Libya's third largest, with a rich pool of qualified individuals. For their part, the Mayor and the Municipal Council have lent a helping hand to help the University overcome some of the obstacles in its dealings with the Ministry of Higher Education in Bayda.

On the other end, when the city of Bayda was rocked with an unexplained spike in the number of suicides,¹⁷⁰ the Municipal Council sought help from University psychologists, who formed a committee to look into establishing a mental health clinic in the city.¹⁷¹ Further, in 2014, when Bayda was faced with an internally displaced people's crisis due to the on-going war in Benghazi and other parts of Libya, the University provided one of its students halls for the internally displaced families, which the Municipal Council refurbished and made useable for temporarily displaced families.

¹⁷⁰ 2017. "Beida suicides prompt panic and incomprehension." *Libya Herald*. April 15. Available from: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/04/15/beida-suicides-prompt-panic-and-incomprehension/>

¹⁷¹ 2017. "Bayda Municipality: the possibility to establish a psychiatric clinic in the city." *Ean Libya*. Available from: <http://www.eanlibya.com/archives/116402>

More generally, according to the head of the Diwan (roughly the General Secretary who oversees Council operations) at the Bayda Municipal Council, the municipality is supposed to have 500 staff and employees in its various departments and administrations for the various sectors and steering committees in sub-administrative units. However, the Municipal Council has less than 50 employees due to current financial constraints (Abdrabah, 2017). This means that the Council needs to seek expertise elsewhere, expertise the University is well-positioned to provide. For example, the Council member in charge of the economy and finance file at the Council is currently seeking help and expertise from the University to conduct a feasibility study on introducing parking spaces and parking fees in the city, in order to help generate more funds for the municipality (Saad Al-Himri, Bayda Municipal Council Member, 2017).

Cooperation with civil society also continues. Mohamed Mhawach, a civil society activist, is working with the Municipal Council member in charge of civil society and women's affairs to create a database and mapping of active civil society organizations in the city. The exercise would help civil society organize more effectively and be more efficient in their activities, and provide the Municipal Council with a useful database of civil society organizations and their areas of activism for future reference. This work is being done in coordination with the Civil Society Commission in Benghazi. The relationship between civil society organisations and the Bayda Municipal Council could improve if more communication and outreach were done.

The author's general observation was that there is historic suspicion of the role of civil society, especially from the Mayor's office, because of the link between civil society activists and organizations from the international community, and also due to the lack of clarity and understanding of the role of civil society and the contribution they make to their local society and local governance. Additionally, civil society organisations and activists with links to international or foreign organizations are automatically viewed as agents for foreign intelligence agencies. For example, local staff working for international NGOs working in Eastern Libya told me that over the last couple of years they have come under increased surveillance by security services with their staff being constantly phoned or summoned for questioning about their on-going activities and funding.

However, it is pivotal for a better working relationship to be developed between the Municipal Council and local civil society community. An improved relationship with the local civil society organizations might well help improve the work of the Municipal Council in areas related to awareness, civic education, and active citizenship, with positive results for the whole municipality.

4. Security

The first priority sector for the Bayda Municipal Council is undoubtedly security. For Bayda security is where everything starts. There seems to be consensus that no development or projects will happen without security and law and order first (Abdrabah, 2017). In 2014 and 2015, the Bayda Municipal Council provided thousands of Libyan Dinars for the maintenance of police stations in the municipality and provided them with computers, stationery, and police gear (Hafed Khazali, Bayda Municipality Revenues Department, 2017). Although such expenses are legally supposed to be covered by the Ministry of Interior, the Municipal Council decided it could not wait for the Ministry to act.

Security in Bayda is provided and guaranteed by the Bayda Security Directorate, which is part of the Ministry of Interior – each municipality has a security directorate. The Directorate is responsible for regular and traffic police and the criminal investigation department. The city does not have any militias, since all armed units in the city have been integrated with the Libyan National Army in Eastern Libya.

The city of Bayda, like some other cities and towns in Eastern Libya such as Tobruk, Al-Marj and Al-Biyar, were quick to recall former security and intelligence personnel and ask them to return to their work. Local officials agreed with tribal leaders and civil society activists that the return of police officers, internal security, and criminal investigation units back to work was critical for the security of these cities and the people. Additionally, the city of Bayda's civil society activists, tribes and local population at large were very quick to resist the formation and presence of militias in the city. This meant that the city of Bayda did not suffer as other parts of Libya have from problems and crimes linked to militias. The rejection came in the form of warnings and the lifting of social immunity from individuals who joined armed militias outside state structures or control. The tribal nature of the city of Bayda played a major role in this regard (Abubaker Al-Jali, Member of the Bayda Wiseman Council, 2017). The lifting of social immunity means that a tribe would disown a member who does not follow consensus of the tribe or to punish a tribe member who engages in dangerous activities that undermine public safety or national security. The lifting of social immunity was used against individuals involved with terrorist groups or those that have links to extremist activities in Libya (Al-Jali, 2017).

The city's security forces are thus currently more or less the same that existed during the Gadhafi era, with some revolutionaries joining their ranks as lone individuals. This arrangement is partly the result of Bayda's domination by traditional tribal structures and the ability of tribes to influence their members. These same factors meant that during Gadhafi's rule, the regime had to rely on locals to police and govern their own city. When the revolution erupted, and some army and security forces fired on some of the protesters in the city of Bayda, tribes and tribal leaders were quick to convene and resolve issues of responsibility, including the return of security, police, and army personnel who are not convicted or directly responsible for any crimes during the 2011 uprising.

The continuation of the pre-revolutionary security forces and figures in their roles after the regime change 2011 was possible due to a local arrangement that took effect in 2014, and which was supported community leaders and by the city's inhabitants (Al-Jali, 2017). The agreement was the result of collective effort by concerned local security officials, the local council, and the local community represented by civil society and tribal leaders. Fears of insecurity and growing threat from Jihadist groups, the increase in the number of bombings and assassinations, along with the rise in crime both in Bayda and in other parts of the country led to this collective action and agreement. Before this agreement, the local security system was a hybrid and highly ineffective force, with formal and revolutionary units competing for power, resulting in a chaotic security situation and space for armed militias, criminal gangs and extremist groups to flourish and operate.

5. Justice and Dispute Settlement

State judicial courts, including trial courts, appellate courts, and the court of cassation, have been regularly operating in Bayda since 2012. The judiciary is one of the key focus areas for the Bayda Municipal Council. The council allocated and maintains a building for the courts complex. Under normal circumstances this would fall within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, but is another responsibility the Council has assumed out of necessity. Access to the court of cassation and the administrative tribunal court in Bayda were key in determining the fate of some high profile cases involving the Government of National Accord, the Constitution Drafting Committee¹⁷² and the interim government led by Prime Minister Abdullah Thini

¹⁷² 2016. "Bayda Cassations Court rejects appeal by Ali Tarhuni (chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee) and cancels his membership of the Committee." *Al-Wasat*. Available from: <http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/125876/>

in Bayda. Additionally, courts in Bayda did not stop functioning and continue to deal with family, criminal and corporate law cases.

In Bayda, in addition to the formal judicial system, traditional social structures and tribes play a key role in maintaining social peace and, in many cases, serving justice as well. The relationship between formal and informal justice and dispute settlement structures is cooperative. In many cases, informal social structures complement formal state justice channels (Al-Jali, 2017). Thus, there are two routes for individuals seeking justice within the Bayda municipalities:

1. Formal justice channels: A crime is reported to the police and case file is created, the police's criminal investigations department investigates and makes arrests if possible and once the case file is complete it gets referred to the prosecutors' office and a court trial begins.

2. The informal or traditional route: When a violent dispute occurs between two families, tribal figures intervene to end the violence and start with traditional conflict resolution steps.

In criminal cases, both formal and informal routes are usually pursued in parallel, and that is how the two routes complement each other. "The formal justice system focuses on holding individuals accountable, while the informal justice focuses on the social fabric and maintaining social peace by preventing escalation especially at times when the state is weak" explains Al-Jali. For example, when a lethal dispute occurs between two families or tribes and the threat of violence is high, local wise men and tribal figures move to ease tensions and start a mediation process. The mediation process starts by appointing a reconciliation committee.

The committee is usually formed from one tribe or more that can play a neutral role in the mediation process and the application of the traditional or tribal penal code (known as Al-Oref) in order to reach a settlement that would prevent escalation and serve justice in accordance with tribal traditions. Key tribal figures convene to calm the situation and following discussions and exchange of point of views, the tribal figures decide which family or tribe is most neutral and has the trust of the conflict parties. This party then mediates and implements the tribal penal code. The arrangement is fast paced and ad-hoc, as it responds to immediate threats to social peace.

One of the early cases where informal or traditional justice mechanisms played a positive role was in March 2013, when local tribes and influential figures started a local reconciliation campaign that involved the families of those killed or injured in the February 2011 uprising and the security and military personnel that were ordered by the Gadhafi regime to crack down on protesters (Al-Jali, 2017).

Local tribes and wise men in the city considered the local reconciliation an essential step for achieving closure and reducing the risks of unresolved grievances. As a result of this reconciliation, security and police personnel that were arrested were released with the consent of the concerned families and their tribes.¹⁷³ Another case where local wise men and tribal figures played a positive role was in mediating between the authorities of the city of Bayda and a local man with a claim to a land upon which the court of cassation building stood. The efforts by the wise men resulted in agreed compensation for the man, and the new building for the court of cassation was officially opened on 17 April 2017 (Gabaili, 2017).

Solutions reached through the traditional and informal route are usually taken into account by judges and the prosecutor's office when handling criminal and civil cases. This means that convicts in criminal cases receive significantly reduced sentences and usually have their sentences suspended if an agreement was reached between the parties concerned through traditional mechanisms (Al-Jali, 2017).

¹⁷³ "Captured Gadhafi regime security and military personnel." February 2011. The individuals in the video were released after the reconciliation in 2013. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tD5jbXIT_U

This effective mechanism in the city of Bayda is the result of longstanding tradition of tribal and social capacity to resolve localized disputes and maintains social peace. Additionally, the tribes have developed social safety mechanisms including an annual fee for male members over the age of 16, the collected funds go to a central tribal account that is usually managed by the head of the tribe. The funds are then used to help tribe members that get involved in disputes or commit crimes such as grievous bodily harm, running someone over, honour related crimes, and murder (Al-Jali, 2017). This gives the tribe power over its members and the ability to influence their behaviour and decisions.¹⁷⁴

6. Community Media

How often citizens hear from their Municipal Councils plays a role in how citizens' perceive the legitimacy of their local council. The Mayor, Municipal Council members, and local officials in the city of Bayda appear regularly on local radio stations to discuss issues pertinent to the local community and residents in the city.

A. Radio & TV

"The mayor used to appear once a week to update citizens on the work of the municipal council," reports Gabaili, the Municipality's Public Relations Officers. At the time of writing, the Mayor or one of the Municipal Council members appeared at least once every two weeks on local radio stations to discuss developments in Bayda, Local officials in different sectors also take to the media to discuss or explain situations that are relevant to their work (Gabaili, 2017).

One council member had his own show on the Al-Jabal Al-Akthar local radio station, but it was suspended given that listeners calling in were at times very critical of him. The radio station management decided that it was best to cancel the show (Fawzi Belhassaine, Presenter and Programmes Producer at Al-Jabal Al-Akthar Station, 2017). The Municipal Council supports and has close links with three local radio stations, Al-Jabal Al-Akthar, Sout Libya Al-Hurra, and Al-Turathiya. The three local radio stations listed above receive support from the Municipal Council, an annual financial package of around 55.000 Libyan Dinars each (Belhassaine, 2017).

There are other privately owned small radio stations, including an entertainment and advertisement radio that doesn't have any live programs dealing with local politics or affairs. There other radio stations that broadcast from outside Al-Bayda include Al-Wasat, which is owned by Libyan media and journalism group Al-Wasat, and a local Salafist radio station that airs mainly religious programs, but also sometimes segments dealing with local politics and affairs.

Although supported by the Council, local TV stations enjoy a degree of autonomy and play an important role in discussing difficult issues, including those that have the potential to cause discomfort to local officials (Belhassaine, 2017). For example, in May 2017, after months of a local media campaign and investigations into the poor management and performance of Badya's main hospital, its General Manager was sacked and replaced after intervention from the Mayor and the Health Minister of the Interim Government. Another key role played by the local media was raising awareness during the hike in suicides among the city's residents. Local media kept citizens informed about investigations and reports produced by relevant local authorities (Belhassaine, 2017).

¹⁷⁴ 2014. "Al-Gabael tribe in the Al-Jabal Al-Akthar region support the army and lift social immunity on individuals involved with extremist groups." Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-g5usQF9_Q

B. Social Media

On social media, the Bayda Council's Facebook page has around twenty thousand followers.¹⁷⁵ The page is updated regularly with briefings on the Council's activities, with a focus news and updates about completed projects, on-going projects, or future planned projects. However, there does not seem to be much interaction from the community to the Council on this page.

C. Face to Face Consultation

Every Tuesday is an open day, when citizens can visit the Municipal Council with their petitions, suggestions or request for help, ranging from cancer patients wanting help to have treatment abroad to the residents of poorly maintained neighbourhood asking for solutions to sewage problems or potholes in the streets. Internally displaced families can also visit the council and seek help through the Crisis Committee that was set up by the Municipal Council in 2014.

7. International Support

The Bayda Municipal Council has been the focus of several efforts by international NGOs working on local governance and building the capacity of municipal councils. INGOs that worked or attempted to work with the Bayda Municipal Council include Chemonics, the International Republican Institute, Creative International, ACTED, and the Peaceful Change Initiative.

However, as already explained in a previous section, the Municipal Council and the Mayor in particular do not have a friendly attitude towards international assistance or initiatives directed at the Bayda Municipal Council. A country director of an INGO in Libya told me that when it comes to international support, the Bayda Municipal Council is only interested in significant political recognition or financial gain (INGO Country Director, 2017). As an example, the INGO country director cited the participation of the Bayda's Mayor in the UN-brokered political dialogue track for Municipal Councils.

Generally, there seems to be suspicion and mistrust towards international efforts (INGO Country Director, 2017). In one incident, an international NGO was accused of acting on behalf of a spy agency. The incident occurred when a local civil society activist cooperating with the Municipal Council had a disagreement with the International NGO Programme Officer in charge and decided to refer the matter to the military intelligence (INGO Country Director, 2017). On another occasion, the Mayor rejected a shipment of first aid kits provided by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Bayda Municipal Council has been targeted by various INGOs for capacity building and mentoring in areas such as human resources, legal affairs, finance, project management, service delivery and media. However, in many cases there has been little commitment from the Municipal Council staff targeted by the training (INGO Project Manager, 2017). For example, in some cases staff did not show up to capacity building training and in other cases the outcomes of the training were never implemented on the ground (INGO Project Manager, 2017).

The Bayda Municipal Council suffers from a severe shortage of capable and qualified staff (INGO Project Manager, 2017). The shortage of qualified and professional staff is mainly due to the lack of financial resources available to the Municipal Council to hire staff on long-term basis. The Mayor's one-man show management style makes up for that shortage as he along with the head of Diwan oversees most aspects of management and administration of the Council. The mayor also holds himself accountable and

¹⁷⁵ Bayda Municipal Council Facebook page. 2017. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/albida.town.council/?hc_ref=SEARCH

responsible in front of the state oversight authorities such as the Audit Bureau and the Administrative Oversight Authority (Abedrabah, 2017).

Table 6.1 summarises the state of the capacity building and mentoring programmes that have been offered to the Bayda Municipal Council by International NGOs and the level of commitment and attendance from staff to the training.

Training Type	Targeted Staff	Actual Attendance	Comment
Human Resources	3	None	No show at the last minute
Legal affairs	3	None	No show at the last minute
Finance	3	1	
Project Management	2	2	
Service Delivery	3	3	
Media	3	3	Outcome of training and capacity building exercise was never implemented including the launch of a website for the municipal council, a complaints application and mobile application

Table 6.1: Capacity building training for Bayda Municipal Council (Data Source: INGO)

8. Conclusion

Bayda's Municipal Council performs well in some aspects of local governances, but it still has a long way to go to ensure efficient, effective, and sustainable local governance. A number of factors contributed to the relative success of Bayda's Municipal Council. These include the ability to generate funds locally, the homogenous and trustful relationship between its members, and their ability to respond to the local community's needs by investing in security, judicial services, infrastructure, and other sectors essential to citizens.

In terms of community communication, the Council can improve its media outreach by activating its official website and finish work on a Municipal Council complaints and news app which the Municipal staff have received training on how to use from international NGOs.

Interviews

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