

# **Technical Inquiry**

## **Socio-Cultural Relationships: Tuareg, Toubus, Misratans, and the Zintanis Tribes**



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**Technical Inquiry Summary.** HDIAC received a technical inquiry regarding an analysis of the socio-cultural relationships between the Tuareg, the Toubous, the Misratans, and the Zintanis in Libya, Niger, and Chad. The analysis was to include the political-tribal relationships between the Libyan House of Representatives and the General National Congress.

## 1. Libya: A Kaleidoscope

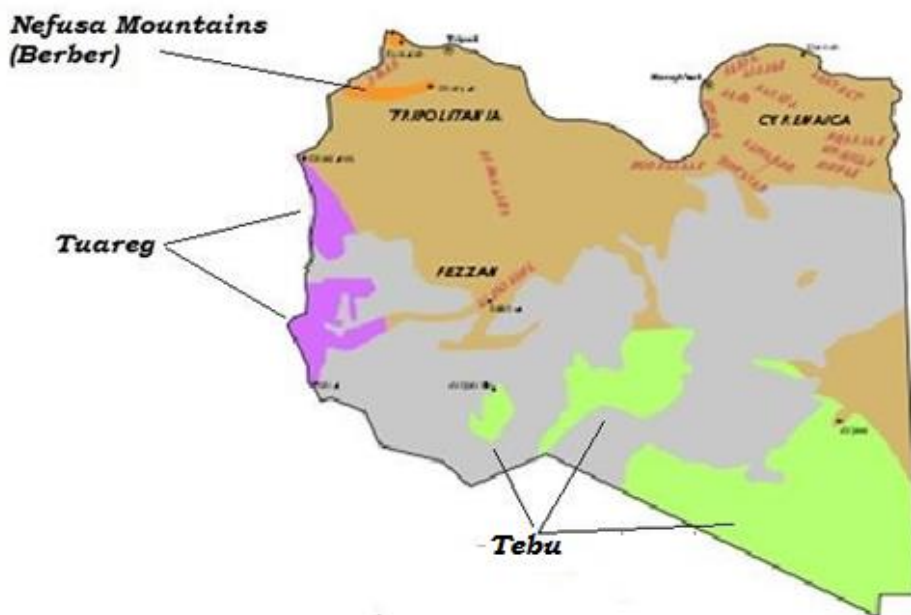
### 1.1. National Level Actors

Libya's military-political landscape during and after the revolution is a kaleidoscope of changing allegiances and organizational structures with one constant — decision making by consensus. The current landscape has evolved into two national governments, each one claiming legitimacy, with external links, political supporters, allied military forces, and territory.

The General National Council<sup>i</sup> (GNC), based in the coastal city of Tripoli in western Libya, has international support from Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan. While the GNC receives political support from Islamists and anti-Qadhafi groups, it also includes tribes and city dwellers. GNC's military coalition, Libya Dawn, draws on fighters from the Tripoli and Misrata regions.

The House of Representatives<sup>ii</sup> (HoR), based in the coastal city of Tobruk in eastern Libya, has international support from Egypt, Chad, Niger, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. HoR supporters include a heterogeneous mix of ex-Qadhafi officials, southern non-Arab tribes, and coastal groups. HoR's military coalition, Operation Dignity, includes former Qaddafi military as part of the mix.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. Ethnic composition of the Libyan population in 1974.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>i</sup> General National Council is also known as the General National Congress or General National Conference (GNC)

<sup>ii</sup> The House of Representatives (HoR) is referenced in English in a variety of ways: Council of Deputies (CoD), Council of Representatives (CoR), Libyan Parliament (LD).

## 2. Non-Arab Tribes

Libya's non-Arab tribes under Qadhafi faced political and societal discrimination. The principle tribes are the Amazigh (Libyan Berber), Tuareg, and Tebu<sup>iii</sup>. See Figure 1 for the map of the main tribes. The 1969 Libyan Constitutional Declaration defined Libya as an Arab state and designated Arabic the sole official language. In 1993, the government recognized tribal leaders as their tribe's "natural leaders."<sup>3</sup> In 2007, the government announced that no Berbers lived in Libya.<sup>4</sup> Non-Arab groups were banned from using their languages in public institutions as part of Qadhafi's attempt at "forced Arabization."<sup>5</sup> The authorities used dark skin color as the basis for evicting Tebu from their homes in Kufra and Tripoli.<sup>6</sup> Despite national policies disadvantaging non-Arab tribes, some members of both tribes won citizenship and joined the military to fight proxy wars for Qadhafi in neighboring countries.<sup>7</sup> It is against this backdrop of discrimination, that the Tuareg and Tebu fought in the civil war and sought recognition of their rights in post Qadhafi Libya.

### 2.1. Tuareg

The Libyan Tuareg are a non-Arab ethnic group numbering about 17,000 or 0.3 percent of the country's total population<sup>8</sup>. They live primarily in southern Libya near the borders of Algeria. Some are semi-nomadic and while others live in settlements in Ghadames, Ubari, and Ghat in Libya.<sup>9</sup>

The Libyan Tuareg are part of the larger Tuareg Azger Confederacy that includes part of neighboring Algeria. The entire Tuareg Confederated region incorporates an estimated one million Tuareg divided into seven confederacies spanning the middle and western Sahara, as well as the north-central Sahel (Libya, Algeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso).<sup>10</sup>

Tuareg in both Mali and Niger have rebelled against their respective governments. In 2012, the largest rebellion to date, the Tuareg demanded independence of historic Tuareg territory in northern Mali. Two to three thousand heavily armed Tuareg fighters, some of whom had served with Qadhafi's forces, joined with the Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali (MTNM) and other groups to form the Azawad National Liberation Movement (National de Liberation de l'Azawad) (MNLA)<sup>11</sup>.

During the revolution, the Tuareg supported the government.<sup>12</sup> After the Qadhafi government fell, the National Transitional Council (NTC) initiated reconciliation talks with Libyan Tuareg in Ubari and Ghadames. The NTC delegation included both civil and military representatives, including fighters from the Zintani Militia who remained behind to "disarm the Tuareg, mediate disputes and reconcile the region with the interim government in the north."<sup>13</sup>

### 2.2. Tebu

The Libyan Tebu population estimates vary wildly. The most common estimates are between 5,000 and 15,000, although one Tebu source stated the tribe numbered up to 200,000.<sup>14,15</sup> Nevertheless, it is likely the Tebu represent less than 0.3 percent of Libya's population. Like the Tuareg, the Tebu are semi-nomadic and some live in the southern Libyan towns of Kufra, Tazerbu, Bezzima,

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<sup>iii</sup> Tebu (also Tubu, Tibu, Tibo, Tibbo, Tibboo, Tubu, Tebbos, Toubou and Libyan Teda)

Qatrun, Ubari, Tajerhi, Sebha, and Murzuq. The Tebu are darker skinned than the Tuaregs. Though they are Muslim, they still retain some of their earlier religious beliefs and practices.<sup>16</sup>

The Libyan Tebu is part of the Teda tribe who also live in northern Chad, Niger, and Nigeria.<sup>17</sup> In 2007, Libyan authorities determined that the Tebu were Chadians and not Libyans and denied them access to government services. In response, the Tebu formed an armed movement, the Tebu Front for the Salvation of Libya (aka Front for the Salvation of the Toubou Libyans) (FSTL), which fought for five days against government forces.<sup>18</sup>

During the 2011 revolution, the Tebu, including the resurrected FSTL, fought against pro-Qadhafi forces. After the government fell, two Tebu became members of the National Transitional Council (NTC) and supported NTC reconciliation talks between Arabs and non-Arab minorities. The reconciliation delegation also included members from the Zintan Militia. Despite efforts to stop ethnic-based conflict, the Arabs and Tebu continue to tussle over smuggling routes and oil facilities in southern Libya.<sup>19</sup> In an effort to stabilize the cities of Kufra and Murzuk, the HoR created a Tebu Brigade in 2014.<sup>20</sup>

### **3. Regional Urban Militias**

The Mistrata and Zintani Militias emerged from urban environments and expanded beyond their hometowns after gaining control of their respective areas. Both militias initially consisted of fighting groups reliant on local civilian support for logistics and personnel and were organized networks operated by consensus.<sup>21</sup> At the end of the revolution, some militia members returned to civilian life while others stayed with their respective militias.<sup>22</sup> Although both militia groups fought to oust government forces during the revolution, since 2012 they have joined military coalitions supporting different successor governments and on occasion, engaged each other.<sup>23</sup>

#### **3.1. Misrata**

Misrata, located on Libya's Mediterranean coast, is 116 miles east of Tripoli, where the GNC is currently based. Misrata is the country's third largest city and is a commercial center with a major sea port and free trade zone. Since 2011, the population size has fluctuated from less than 500,000 to up to one million depending on security conditions.<sup>24</sup>

More than 236 fighting groups, each with its own command structure and ranging in size from less than 10 to more than 1,000 fighters, emerged during the 2011 fight to oust Qadhafi forces from Mistrata. After the city was liberated, the 40,000 member Misratan Union of Revolutionaries registered fighters, but lacked authority over them. The Misratan Military Council, also a body without authority over the fighters, serves more as a logistics hub and intelligence repository. The fighting groups coordinate decisions by consensus among themselves.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the post-Qadhafi Mistratan Local Council, consisting of 28 elected members, make decisions by consensus.<sup>26</sup>

Since the 2012 elections to form a representative government, Mistrata's Local Council has supported the GNC and the Mistrata Militia has contributed the largest number of troops to the pro-GNC Libya Dawn coalition.<sup>27</sup> The Misrata Militia is considered the strongest armed force in

Libya.<sup>28</sup> In July 2014 three Misrata brigades under the GNC Ministry of Interior plus other Misrata-based brigades engaged Zintan brigades under the Ministry of Defense over control of the Tripoli airport.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2. Zintan**

Zintan is located near the largely Berber-inhabited Nafusa Mountains, 85 miles southwest of Tripoli.<sup>30</sup> The population is between 35,000 and 50,000.<sup>31</sup> Zintan is a medium sized commercial center with a civilian airport.<sup>32</sup> Zintan supports the Tobruk-based HoR and the Zintan Qaaqaa Brigade, is part of the pro-HoR Operation Dignity military coalition.<sup>33</sup>

The Al-Zintan Revolutionaries' Military Council (ZMC), founded in 2011, is a collective of 23 militias organized into five brigades. The ZMC includes the first joint Arab-Berber force formed during the civil war and has evolved into the second strongest armed force in Libya.<sup>34</sup> The largest Zintan militia group is the 4,000 fighter Martyr Muhammad al-Madani Brigade. The Al-Zintan fighters come from Zintan and the Nafusa Mountains region.<sup>35</sup>

## **4. National Governments**

The institutional underpinning of the currently competing Libyan national governments originated during the civil war with the formation of the National Transitional Council (NTC) in February 2011. The NTC membership included three representatives from the city of Misrata, two Tebu, one from the city of Zintan, and no Tuareg. The TNC named Misratans as Minister of Interior and commander of the Libyan National Army. The TNC issued in August 2011 a constitutional declaration that the TNC would transition to a constitutional democracy with an elected government. In September 2011, the United Nations transferred Libya's seat in the organization to the NTC. Although the draft constitution was incomplete, the TNC did pass legislation prohibiting political parties based on religious, tribal, or regional lines. The TNC moved forward with nationwide voting involving 374 political parties in July 2012 for council members for the General National Congress.<sup>36,37</sup>

### **4.1. General National Congress**

On August 8, 2012, the NTC handed over the reins of government to the GNC. The 200 member GNC consisted of 80 representatives elected from political party slates and 120 representatives without party affiliation. With 62 percent of registered voters turning out, the National Forces Alliance (NFA) was the leading political vote getter and the Union for Homeland (aka Justice and Construction Party<sup>38</sup>) placed second. Significantly, the NFA lost in Ubari, a city with both Tuareg and Tebu and in Misrata where the Union for Homeland prevailed.<sup>39</sup> The Union for Homeland reportedly prevented party voting in the Berber-dominated district in the Nafusa Mountains and Ghadames.<sup>40</sup>

In February 2012, before the GNC's mandate expired, its members amended the constitutional declaration to create another body, the House of Representatives (HoR) and in June 2014 held elections in which all 1,714 candidates ran without party affiliation.<sup>41</sup>

## 4.2. House of Representatives

In August 2014 the GNC handed over national governance to the HoR. The GNC designed the HoR as an interim measure with a mandate to govern Libya for a limited period of time. Voter turnout for the June election was estimated at 42 percent<sup>42</sup>. Representatives linked to secular factions formed the majority, while those linked to religious parties won only 30 seats. The voting resulted in seven HoR seats occupied by Misratans. Both Tebu and the Tuareg voters participated in the elections. In March 2015 one Tebu was sworn in as a member of the HoR.<sup>43</sup> However, violence prevented Tebu access to three designated voting stations in Kufra. As in the 2012 GNC election, some Berber areas were under-represented at the polls.<sup>44,45</sup>

In August 2014 the HoR enacted legislation to demobilize all militias, including those from Misrata and Zintan as well as those given quasi-governmental status by the Ministries of Interior and Defense. In addition the HoR requested United Nations civilian protection.<sup>46</sup> By March 2015 the HoR named General Khalifa Haftar, a Qadhafi-era officer and leader of Operation Dignity forces, as commander of the Libyan National Army.<sup>47</sup>

## 4.3. New General National Congress

The *New* GNC is the Libyan legislative body resident in Tripoli. . The first *New GNC* president was Nouri Adusahmain, a Berber who had served in a leadership role in the GNC.<sup>48</sup> Its creation in August 2014, followed six weeks of intensive fighting between Misratan forces under control of the Ministry of Interior and Zintan forces under the Ministry of Defense, as well as forces from Libyan Dawn and Operation Dignity in Tripoli. The GNC rejected the HoR's demobilization legislation and asserted that the HoR violated the constitution by becoming a second legislative body.

Membership of the *New* GNC consists largely of former GNC members. For example Union for Homeland party members, who ran without party affiliation and lost in the 2014 HoR election, are now members of the *New* GNC. Some elected HoR members resigned to join the *New* GNC, including those representing Misrata. The *New* GNC is more religiously conservative than the HoR.<sup>49</sup>

In November 2014, the Libyan Court in Tripoli ruled unconstitutional the basis on which the HoR election was conducted, suspended the HoR, and ruled that the GNC remained the official Government of Libya. The HoR asserted that the court lacked jurisdiction and rejected the ruling as being made under duress.<sup>50</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: Focus on the Kaleidoscope

In October 2011, the NTC proclaimed the liberation of Libya from Qadhafi. More than three years later Libya remains in chaos without an inclusive constitutional democracy. Yet subnational forms of decision making by consensus remain functional in Libya. The tribes and the urbanized areas have taken on local self-governance in the absence of a strong national government. Settlement of national conflicts would benefit from taking into account subnational actors, their networks and consensus building to focus on the way forward.

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