PREFATORY NOTE: These city profiles were prepared by Libya Aqaleem in February 2021, and were accurate as of those dates. We believe the information here offers useful reference points for understanding Libya on a more nuanced level than is possible from breaking news reports. However, readers should be aware that facts on the ground continue to shift quickly at the time of publication and therefore some information may become outdated.
A small tourism city located in the western Sahara south of Libya. It has a population of 22.7 thousand Libyans and hosts three old cultures (corresponding with three different ethnicities) that are distributed between the Alghdamsia, Tripolitanian and Bab Alkher areas. It has three spoken languages: Arabic, Hausa, and Tuareg.

The city is a tourist attraction, on the road to Akakus, and holds the Castle of Ghat, the old city, the Akakus Mountains, Kaf Aljanoun, Taderth, and the Vallies of Azjer arch. It hosts historically significant artifacts that represent not only Libyan heritage but humanity as well. Hosts the largest open museum in the world, the Rock Museum.

Social media has a positive impact on the city, but it’s limited to socializing and communicating.

The city suffers from the neglect of both leading parties in the conflict (LNA and GNA). Citizens are generally poor, goods are pricy, cash liquidity is inaccessible, the security crisis is unstable, due to which the economic situation has worsened.

The city suffers from the political conflict in Libya but has no active role in it, making it one of the few peaceful cities in the region. It launched initiatives to support Libyan reconciliation as well as supporting IDPs and helping to resolve the war in Murzeq.

Social norms: people are conservative, non-hostile, apolitical, and humble.

Tribalism in Ghat has a positive impact as it is sometimes used to resolve individuals’ disputes. Tribes are more of a heritage than a tool of struggle in the city. They all co-exist.

Social media has a positive impact on the city, but it’s limited to socializing and communicating.

Tribalism

Entrepreneurship

A mixed of tribal cultures, comprised mainly of Tuareg and Arab (these tribes include: Magarha, Hasawna, Zentan and others). Tribes are more of a heritage than a tool of struggle in the city. They all co-exist. Tribalism in Ghat has a positive impact as it is sometimes used to resolve individuals’ disputes.

Social norms: people are conservative, non-hostile, apolitical, and humble.

This led to the city being highly influenced by the politics of its neighboring cities. Since 2019, the city has fallen under the LNA’s authority.
**Politics**
The city is under the LNA’s control since the 2019 war (an ongoing conflict). Generally, political representation has been replaced with tribal conflict and territorial control. The city is dominated not by a political party but by tribal militias and religious groups.

**Sabha**
The largest city in the Fezzan region, Sabha is home to approximately 130 thousand Libyans. It shelters a variety of ethnicities including Tabu, Tuareg, and Arab.

**Social Media**
With limited influence, due to the recent pandemic situation, social media is becoming a source of information and a tool for knowledge-sharing. Notably, most governmental institutions post their content on social media.

**Governmental Oversight and Civil Society**
There is little to no monitoring of the authorities by civic activists. Despite the high number of organizations registered by the Ministry of Culture, the number of active organizations does not exceed 15.

**Tourism and Landmarks**
Sebha historical castle was built on the remains of a monument that dates back 2500 years.

**Conflict**
The city has witnessed waves of displacement with varying causes, chief among them armed conflict and economic difficulties. The biggest conflict, along tribal lines, was between Tebu and Awlad Sulieman in 2012. The city is restless and suffers militia-controlled prisons where human rights violations happen regularly.

**Economy**
The people suffer from poverty, cash shortages, and difficulty accessing affordable goods. Many work in the government sector. Trade and agriculture account for the majority of economic activity. Youth are highly involved in the drug trade because it constitutes a reliable source of income amidst broader economic instability. The black market includes human trafficking and smuggling of petrol and goods through uncontrolled borders.

**Entrepreneurship**
The informal market is witnessing growth with the aid of the international community, through incubators and accelerators supporting the growth of start-ups and small businesses.

**Tribalism**
Tribes act chiefly as economic support networks and play an important role in facilitating smuggling on the black market. Tribes also serve as networks to enable traditional employment. Tribal protection is very visible as tribes solve many issues and disputes, for which purpose each tribe has its own social council.

Social norms: the people are generally very conservative. Most are extremely loyal to their tribes, on which they depend for protection.
Political

Ubari's allegiance was initially to the former Ghaddafi regime, and specifically to the Tuareg. While Tabu announced allegiance to the revolt, the city has witnessed outbreaks of violence during the 2011 revolt. With the new unsettled structures of politics that rise and fall in Libya, Ubari remained in a state of insecurity with various rules and armed groups reigning over, that are empowered by the black-market in the area. The scene has very little political representation and domination by whichever party rules the area. Currently under the LNA’s control. Tribes are considered a form of political representation.

Social Media

The absence of media outlets in the city contributes to dependence on social medial platforms to gain information.

Ubari

A small city, located in southwest Libya and south of the Fezzan region in Wadi Alaaajal, Ubari lies between the Algerian and Nigerien borders. It has major oil fields and is known as a point of entry for migrants from Africa. With a population of 72,587, UNFPA reports that around 75% of the Ubari population has been displaced due to internal conflict from 2014 to 2016. Most of the population are Arabized Africans, the “Ahali,” who are descended from sub-Saharan slaves. The Tuareg and Tabu are significant minorities.

Tourism and Landmarks

Ubari hosts the oldest civilization in Libya, the Germant. It’s known for salty lakes like Qabr Oun and Own Almaa, as well as pyramids and the historical city of Germa, where a museum was built in 1968 and reopened in 1989. Ubari also hosts a large oil field, Alsharara, which was discovered in 1980.

Economy

Economic activities based on trade and agriculture are negatively affected by the conflict. The informal sector accounts for most private sector activity, including services, such as home cooking and delivery, and goods. Ubari is a mid-way destination for migrants from Africa and hosts significant black-market commerce and smuggling, including petrol and weapons, horses, and human trafficking. The black market maintains a stranglehold on Ubari’s economy and determines prices in the city.

Entrepreneurship

There are no activities.

Governmental Oversight

There is little to no monitoring of the city. The municipal council restricts some of illegitimate activities but for the most part, armed groups conduct and protect illicit trades.

Conflict

Conflicts are rarely internal, mostly arising as a by-product of the general state of conflict in Libya. Ubari witnessed an armed conflict in 2014 between Tabu and Tuareg tribes.

Tribalism

Tribes have political and security impacts due to the absence of governing or law enforcement institutions to protect individuals. They are a network that supports employment and a safety net that expands family businesses. The High Social Council is recognized as the highest authority in the city with real power over disputes.
The LNA claims authority over Murzuq. The LNA appointed a management council with members from key dominant tribes, while the official municipality council is in actuality dysfunctional. The city knows no political parties, but prominent political figures include: Hamad Ebriko, a member of the high national council Mohammad Adam Lino, a member of the house of representatives (Tabu) Mohammed Alagha, a member of the high National council (Arab).

**Political**

**Murzuq**

Murzuq is in the southwest of Libya, in the center of the Fezzan region, far to the south of Tripoli. It was established as a step on the north-south trade route across the Sahara. The city currently faces severe waves of displacement on the basis of ethnicity and tribal affiliations. It is home to nearly 13 thousand Libyans from mixed cultural backgrounds (Arab, Tabu and Tuareg) who are in constant fights over control on the city.

**Economy**

A large portion of the city's youth survives by working in armed groups and smuggling networks, which in turn empowers their tribes. Murzuq is rich in gold, cars, and essential trade of goods and food, with a new sector emerging to produce and sell buildings and construction materials. In addition, the city has a clothing factory, date farms, and cattle farming.

Black market – Murzuq’s special and remote location with the collapsing security system contributed to a strong and lucrative black market that includes human trafficking, selling Gold ore, automobiles, drugs, and weaponry.

**Entrepreneurship**

Many microbusinesses were shut down completely with the armed conflict in the city, an establishment of security is required.

**Social media**

Social media activity is extremely high, while the street sees little activity due to the armed groups that limit freedom of movement severely.

**Conflict**

The city has faced chronic conflict that first broke out in the 90s between Aahali (Arab) and Tabu tribes. After the 2011 uprising and the collapse of the security system, the city plunged again into chaos and the fighting between these two factions continues until today, forcing a large number of local residents to permanently relocate elsewhere to avoid being assassinated due to their ethnicity. The feud between the Arab and Tabu dates back to Gaddafi’s war with Chad.

**Tribalism**

Tribes play a major role in the conflict and are intensely violent. Some allege that the tribes are supported by authorities, neighbouring counties, and international parties. The conflict weighs down the social structure of the city, tribes and social statures are essential tools of social interaction. However, tribes don’t allow other ethnicities nor do they welcome opposing political parties. The tribe overpowers the law and everyone is damaged with that.

**Governmental Oversight**

Civil society is fairly active in the city, with some advocacy campaigns for peace, projects to support displaced tribes, and other initiatives. However, this has little impact on the city’s politics.

**Tourism and Landmarks**

The city is an oasis at the edge of the Murzuq desert, which is known for its great sand dunes and is part of the Sahara desert. Known historically as the capital of many great empires that ruled the Sahara and North Africa, including the Garmantin Empire, the Kanem Empire, and the Bornu Empire. Hosts the castle of Murzuq, and the Murzuq military garrison.

**Entrepreneurship**

Many microbusinesses were shut down completely with the armed conflict in the city, an establishment of security is required.
**Political**
Interim government (Abdullah Thani), the LNA. The city is home to the house of representatives and the interim government is the only active political side.
Politics is fairly new to the city as it was remote and excluded before 2014 when the House of Representatives moved to the city, attracted more people to be involved in the political scene.

The city is affiliated with the international parties that support Haftar, the GNA, or the House of Representatives (Egypt, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates).

**Albayda**
The fourth largest city in Libya, located in the northeast of Libya. It was the center for many eastern tribes. Was a potential capital during the formation of the Libyan kingdom.
Approximately 250 thousand populate the city. The numbers have likely increased with displacement waves to the city. The main tribes are the Alabara’a tribe, along with Almurabetoon, and Alsaeeet.

**Social Media**
Social media plays a major role in mobilizing the streets as it is used to promote political parties and is considered a trusted source of information and gossip.

**Historical landmarks**
Founded in 1930, the city became a tourist attraction for: Wadii Alkouf bridge, Bilal Ben Rabah mosque, Omar Almokhtar University, Selice building, Alakhdar mountain, forests, and the Valley of Murqous. The Vatican has said that parts of the Bible were written in the Valley of Murqous.

**Conflict**
Relatively peaceful, Albayda has seen little armed conflict.

**Economy**
Commerce, catering, and construction are the main economic activities as internally displaced persons flock to the city. However, agriculture and cattle farming were historically and for the locals remain the key economic activities. Informal trade make up 75% of the market”. The black market mainly consists of currency exchange, along with cooking gas.

**Entrepreneurship**
There has been some entrepreneurial activity. However, capacity building and awareness-raising in this area is urgently needed.

**Government Oversight**
Almost unnoticeable as the city grows bigger and the economic activities increase and expand informally with no government oversight.

**Tribalism**
The backbone of the city is its tribes. Tribes are referred to when solving all issues, small or significant, and are a parallel system to the law. They are considered the unwritten constitution of the city. Tribalism is the law that mainstains the city free from chaos and upholds its delicate position as a jewel in the east.
Tribal conflicts are often settled in meetings with the “Tribal leader” (known as “Sheikh Alqaabeela”). Nevertheless, many youths believe that the tribes’ role should be strictly related to social issues. As the involvement in the economy and politics usually is based on tribal leader selection rather than the efficiency of the individual.
**Political**
The interim government and the LNA, led by the tribe of Abiudat, currently control most of the local government, along with the Alhadoor and Murabteen tribes.

Citizens are marginalized from the political process. Instead, tribal leaders speak on behalf of their tribes. Thus the only avenue of political participation is through tribal processes.

**Derna**
A coastal city northeast of the country with a vibrant nature, with a population between 100 and 150 thousand. The city has received many waves of displaced migrants due to unrest and ongoing conflict. Derna is rich in culture, with somewhere between 100 abnd 130 tribes that call Derna home.

**Social Media**
The most popular forum for free speech is social media platforms.

**Governmental Oversight**
The government is attempting to regulate the market and formalize businesses in the city. However, The poverty rate is high and people struggle to access liquidity or decently priced goods. A large number of the employed work in the government sector. Youth are highly involved in drug trades as it makes for better income compared to any other job available due to ongoing economic instability.

**Conflict**
Derna witnessed heavy fighting in 2011, followed by many assassinations. Politicians, writers and religious leaders were targeted. Later, in 2014, ISIS took over the city. Fighting continued for over a year in each of these wars.

**Historical landmarks**
Derna has a Mediterranean coastal feel, with green mountains and a desert, making for a unique climate. There are waterfalls in Shawaa’er valley, as well as Alshahaba Mosque and other religious monuments. Derna has a rich history of religious figures and used to be one of Libya’s wealthiest cities. It was the site of a famous battle in 1805. The people of Derna comprises diverse cultural components that co-existed peacefully until the uprising of 2011, which brought many differences to the surface.

**Economy**
Commercial activities dominate the city. The was a siege between 2014 – 2019 that increased the cost of essentials and grew the sector of wholesale for food, goods, clothes, and medicine. A cement factory was established in the 80’s, bu has had limited operations in recent years. With recent stability, the authorities are very cooperative and working on bringing businesses into the formal economy.

**Entrepreneurship**
The city is economically depressed and can barely provide basic services. People lack the needed knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship.

**Tribalism**
The impact of tribes is economically and politically negative, as most of the available jobs are with the government, and only one tribe controls the government institutions. Thus, access to employment is highly biased and ineffective. The tribal structure of Derna is complex and has a positive impact socially, as it stabilized the city during consecutive conflicts. Most find comfort and safety with their tribal leaders. Tribal protection is very prominent as tribes are called upon to solve many issues and disputes. Each tribe has its own social council.
Governmental Oversight

The GNA controls the city through its notorious connection with many militias, who are currently recruited by the national army and other government bodies.

Political

Political parties were prominent for a short phase in the capital, but with the continued war and conflicts their power faded, especially following the 2014 war as the parties self-sorted according to varying allegiances, and the remaining parties merged, or broke out. Currently, the GNA controls the city.

Tripoli

The capital of Libya is situated in the northwest along the Mediterranean coast known anciently as Oea. It is Libya's largest city, with a population of over one million.

Social Media

Social media is the biggest source of media influence in the region. People mainly get their information from social media from groups and pages, through which they are able to amplify their voices and be heard. Social media has had a negative impact on the political situation. It led to an increase in conflicts between cities, which resulted in a tense political situation.

Historical landmarks

Libya has been the capital for decades, since Ottoman times. Trade mainly flows through Tripoli, and it is the seat of all government sectors. It is the most populated, and plays a major role in “incubating the Libyans and outsiders”

Conflict

Conflicts in the capital remain extremely complex, and the situation is very opaque. Authorities lack clear responsibilities in relation to the conflict, and as a result management is extremely poor.

Conflicts have strained the political environment, creating internal divisions among governments and politicians. The capital is broken down into districts of de facto control and violent clashes aim to maintain these areas of control. The conflicts in the city are territorial and militia-based, not tribal. Other forms of conflict, such as control over facilities and ministries, often culminates in the domination of a family or a tribe.

Economy

Main economic activities include delivery services, catering, retail, pharmacies, foods and cafes. Tripoli has the biggest cash economy in Libya. Many hold skilled jobs or work as freelancers.

Most people have two jobs (often, one in government and one private) due to extremely low pay. This phenomenon has increased with chaotic governance, opaque policies, and lack of oversight. The black market dominates the economic situation, in particular in relation to currency and exchange.

Entrepreneurship

While entrepreneurial pursuits are very popular, the sector lacks sustainability and adequate investment.

Tribalism

Tribal feuds are not evident. Militias are the main power brokers, or at times outside (non-Tripoli-based) tribes who come to the capital to join the war. Tribal social constraints are slowly giving way to familial constraints in most of the city, with a few communities as the exception. As the capital has many different districts where certain social norms may be more or less prevalent, it’s noticeable that some tribes have power and/or leverage socially due to their name, history, and money. However, this influence is slowly dimming.
**Political**
The local council is the most prominent level of governance. The city supports the GNA but is not active in politics. The dominant vehicles for political actors are tribes and parties. The focus of the local council is to regulate the situation between various militias. The city’s security situation is starting to improve, with kidnapping, murders and robberies still common but on the decline.

**Social Media**
Social media is the only forum for free speech in the city. However, no protests take place, and political dissonance is restricted to online activity.

**Governmental Oversight**
There is very limited public oversight of the government in Alzawya, due to the city’s high level of armament and numerous active militias. The city supports the GNA through tribal-militia structures, which maintain a fragile peace.

**Conflict**
Armed tribal clashes, mostly between Awlad Sager and the Awlad hanish, are ongoing. Each of the tribes consider it is their right to exclude the other tribe from institutions that they control.

**Alzawya**
Alzawya is the fifth largest city in Libya, located in the northwest of the country on the coastline, near the capital Tripoli. The estimated population is around 200 thousand.

**Landmarks**
Host to Al Zawiya University, AlHariya power station, Alzawia oil refinery (one of the two most important oil refineries in Libya), and Bir Al Ghanam airstrip. Alzawia’s name is the noun for a religious school and with the associated university, which was founded in 1988.

**Social Media**
Social media is the only forum for free speech in the city. However, no protests take place, and political dissonance is restricted to online activity.

**Economy**
Alzawya relies heavily on public sector employment as the security forces and ministry of interior have the highest hiring rates. The city is distinct due to its oil refinery and an electrical power plant, which demand high levels of security which serve as a source of jobs. Other economic activities include electricity, engineering, restaurants, and media. Many products are sold on the black market when middlemen buy government-subsidized essentials (food, medicine, fuel) and smuggle or resell them at a higher price. Currency and weaponry also largely fuel the black market.

**Entrepreneurship**
Entrepreneurial activity is moderate, with some barriers to formalization including complex paperwork, lack of financial aid, and consumer perception, since social norms value public employment or trade as the most reliable sources of income. There is little support for innovators and service providers.

**Tribalism**
The city is largely tribal, reinforced by fragile security that requires tribes to affiliate themselves with militias for security. Tribal influence is very distinct in the city; the main tribes dominate the main economic activities and form the biggest and strongest militias. The tribe provides protection for illicit and illegal economic activities, which dominate the economy. In addition, most economic activity revolves around physical security, which implicates territorial structures and militias. It is therefore a necessity to belong to a tribe or other security structure. The social impact of tribes is fairly negative, as tribal feuds separate families of opposing tribes, and socially inferior tribes are marginalized.
Politics

The city is neutral and currently supports the GNA.

The political scene is dominated by political figures, tribes, parties, the municipality, tribal leaders, and social councils.

The local municipal council is very cooperative, pushing for the progress of the city. This means that authorities and regulations are applied, however, it’s notable that due to the tribal nature of the city and the strong familial network, behavior is governed more by social restrictions than by the law.

Governmental Oversight

The city is run by the elected municipal council. People are content with the efforts of the local council, nonetheless infrastructure is lacking, and the city receives little support for its key economic activities such as tourism, handmade goods, and agriculture. Interviewees believe this is due to conflict within the city, the dangerous roads to the city, and unreliable cash availability from the government.

Yefren

Yefren is in the northwest of Libya, in the western Nafusa mountain and south-west of Tripoli. It’s a beautiful mountain city, rich with sites to visit. Roughly populated by 60 thousand, many residents relocated to the capital or live in between Tripoli and Yefren, mostly for economic reasons or, less frequently, for political purposes. It is a culturally rich tourist destination and the home of many historical Tamazight tribes, although few records are available. A wealth of communal stories and tribal victories need to be preserved.

Social Media

Social media serves as a free forum for people to express their thought and opinions. It is a key reflection of the well-being of locals.

Conflict

During the uprising in 2011 the city went through a siege as it opposed the Gaddafi regime. The water supplies were blocked, as well as food supplies to the city. The city witnessed some heavy bombing and was recovered by the rebels early in June 2011.

The city has seen little armed conflict since the uprising, although it has suffered from the political and economic collapse as a result of the two civil wars.

Economy

The private sector is active and serves as the biggest employer in the city. Jobs include café shops, tourism, agricultural projects, handmade traditional items, and catering services. Despite the easy registration of businesses, the majority remain informal. The black market comprises trade in currency and fuel as well as illicit drugs. Most of the time, fuel is only available on the black market.

Historical Landmarks

Yefren has many historical sites such as the old town of Yefren, the Turkish Mosque, the Jewish synagogue, Berber houses, caves and villages, and the tower of Suffet. The Qasbah (Qasbat) is a Roman mausoleum located on a hilltop. There are many remnants of Berber houses, beautiful stones, and amazing mountain scenery.

Entrepreneurship

Initiating their own projects such as farming, and handmade traditional goods, mostly sold in Tripoli, self-employment is a visible part of society and people rely on their businesses to assure income, particularly in the face of rising prices on goods.

Tribalism

The city is highly tribal and the majority are of Tamazight ethnicity. The city relies on tribal representatives. It does take a more modern, refined shape in Yefren despite it being a by-product of the ailing political processes in Libya generally. Tribal protection in reality performs a monitoring role and prevents individuals from breaking laws.
### Politics
The city is run by a management council, after the municipal council was terminated by the interim government (the municipality supported the GNA). The new system operates as a single clan in control of everything which creates much tension between local residents. The city’s political scene is mostly tribes speaking for tribes.

The private sector has grown as the national government employment plan excluded Sirte, thereby forcing many of the youth to find jobs elsewhere, ignoring the entrepreneurship scene, and pushing the labor force to develop their skills. The city suffers similar complaints as the rest of Libya, cash is unavailable, and the fluctuation of the currency exchange rate negatively affects residents.

The city isn’t generally involved in the politics of the country, as it is considered a supporter of the previous regime, and its importance is usually minimized. The city was however highly involved in reconciliation attempts due to its historical role in reconciliation between tribes of Libya.

### Sirte
This city is at the center of Libya, at the Sirte Gulf, between Benghazi and Tripoli. It briefly served as Tripoli’s successor as Libya’s capital.

The population is about 130 thousand. While many were displaced during 2011, about 70% have returned in the ensuing years.

### Social Media
While social media usage rates remain very high, people in Sirte do not express many political opinions due to intimidation from the visible presence of armed groups throughout the city.

### Conflict
Sirte saw heavy conflict during the 2011 uprising that destroyed many of its facilities. Again, when ISIS took over, the damage continued, with the fighting displacing many citizens, some of whom never returned. The city infrastructure was almost completely destroyed.

Sirte witnessed various armed conflicts in 2011, as well as some outbreaks in relation to ISIS in 2015 and 2016, and in 2019 was exposed to fighting during the second Libyan civil war.

### Governmental Oversight
The city’s vulnerable position as a favorite of the previous regime meant it was overlooked by both dominating governments of Libya. It is currently under LNA control.

Corruption defines the governmental facilities in Sirte, many complain about the rule of law deficit in the city and state that sees little oversight.

### Historical landmarks
The city is coastal, it has many secretarial and governmental buildings, agricultural projects, and remnants from the war. Sirte was established by the Italians but only became a true city after World War II. It’s the birthplace of Ghaddafi and is known for being the site of many famous battles.

### Historical landmarks
The city is coastal, it has many secretarial and governmental buildings, agricultural projects, and remnants from the war. Sirte was established by the Italians but only became a true city after World War II. It’s the birthplace of Ghaddafi and is known for being the site of many famous battles.

### Economy
Main economic activities are agriculture, construction, milk factory, trades and commercial businesses, small enterprises, olive oil, some fruits, potatoes and watermelons are seasonal agricultural projects that Sirte has recently re-opened. Fishing is recently growing to be a key activity in the city.

Black market activities have a relatively smaller presence in Sirte, and are mainly related to fuel and flour, which are smuggled through Sirte to the south for sale to neighboring countries.

### Entrepreneurship
Interestingly high in the city. As the city wasn’t included in the public hiring policy, many of the youth needed to look elsewhere to make a living, forcing a unique and vibrant entrepreneurship scene in the city.

Youths dominate agricultural projects, farming, selling and catering services, training centers, honey making and many other small enterprises that are mostly distributed to the neighboring cities and villages.

### Tribalism
Tribal influence is extremely high as the new management council is run by a single tribe and controls all the facilities as well as public services.

There is no conflict between the tribes of Sirte, and the cultural groups live in harmony with one another. Most of the conflict comes from political reasons, or as a result of national politics. However, with the recent takeover of the LNA/interim government, tension is increasing in relation to tribal power.

Tribal protections are strong in dominant tribes, but in other tribes are almost nonexistent.
Politics

The city follows the LNA authority. Locals are not particularly active in political affairs, although many political figures in Libya are originally from Bani Walid. Residents generally do not vote in local elections as municipal politics is perceived very negatively. However, residents are highly involved in the national Libyan dialogue and reconciliation efforts. The only local governance in the city happens through tribal politics.

Ben Walid

Ben Walid is home to one of the largest tribes in Libya, Werfalla. The city is in the southeast of Tripoli, just south of Misurata, and is the gateway from Misurata’s port to the Libyan south. The population is 85,400 – relatively large considering the city’s small structure. The city has witnessed two main waves of displacement: at the beginning of the 2011 uprising and again in 2012.

Social Media

People trust social media as a source of information, but generally demonstrate a low level of interest.

Conflict

Numerous tribal feuds have overtaken the city, leaving a high number of casualties. Many conflicts broke out lasting for months, with street wars, shootings, revenge, and assassinations continuing even after these conflicts were "resolved" in tribal councils.

Tribalism

The tribes' impact is generally seen as negative, and many feel that it would be better if the tribes' role was strictly limited to social affiliation.

Historical landmarks

Ben Walid has many tribal settings and is nationally known for excellent wool production. Mardoom and Garjooma feature heritage sites and various landmarks that date back to before BC. There is also Castle Abuarkan as well as the City of Kerza, which hosts the oldest church in Libya.

Economy

Wool production has long been the most prominent output of the city. Ben Walid wool is nationally renowned as the highest quality available. Agriculture and cattle farming are also key economic activities in the city. There is also commerce and small service providers. The black market includes over 60 shops that deal with currency exchange and fuel.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is very weak. New and innovative businesses are much needed in the city, but residents lack the skill and knowledge to start their own businesses. Although there has been an attempt to establish an incubator and to provide trainings, it has had little impact.

Governmental Oversight / Civil Society and Activism

Governmental oversight is very poor, cash is generally inaccessible, and people struggle to keep up with black market prices for goods and necessities. Civil activities are quite moderate. There have been a few activities that have engaged in public advocacy campaigns, but civic culture isn’t strong, nor is it independent from tribal affiliations.

Historical landmarks

The tribes are the main source of conflict in the city. They are extremely violent sometimes and cause a lot of bloodshed.

Economy

Social structures are based on tribal affiliations.
Politics
Political power is highly contentious and polarized, leaving it unclear who holds the most influence in Misurata. Businessmen have a strong, undeniable impact on the political discourse in Misurata, but they are under GNA rule. Misurata is a very powerful city due to both its economic impact and its armed militias: Misurata boasts the biggest portion of the western army and arguably the strongest armed force in the country. The city was involved in every armed conflict in Libya and played a vital role in ending the Ghaddafi regime and in fighting ISIS in Libya. The political scene is also dictated by these variables where the local political scene is highly polarized with people’s participation almost completely affiliated to personal/familial/tribal agenda. Misurata city has been involved in all armed conflicts in Libya.

Misurata
With a population of about 550 thousand, Misurata is the third-largest city in Libya. The 2014–2015 conflict in Benghazi led to heavy migration into Misurata from other parts of Libya, as did the 2016 conflict in Sirte.

Only very recently, in 2019-2020, did the conflict in Tripoli prompted many to return to Misurata.

Historical background
The city of Misurata has long been known for its merchants, businesses, and harbour. It’s thought of as the economic engine of Libya’s center.

Civil society and activism
Misurata’s civil society is amongst the most active in Libya.

TV, radio, some national TV channels, and Misurata Radio channel have been anchors during the city siege in 2011 and these continue to provide consistent and prominent coverage even during the pandemic.

Conflict
The Minister of Interior of the Government of National Accord, Fathi Bashagha, Vice President of the Presidency Council Ahmed Maitiq, former President of the Supreme Council of State Abdulrahman Al-Swehli and also head of the Justice and Construction Party Mohammed sowan

Economy
Imports and manufacturing are the two main motors of the economy in Misurata. With the airport and shipping port, Misurata is the main gate for imports, especially in west and south Libya. Manufacturing is also a leading industry in Misurata, as the city’s relative stability enables many manufactories to stay open.

Service industries include public relations, event planning, and other services. Manufacturing is thriving in Misurata due to a concentration of expertise, including many trained workers who initially worked for Libyan Iron and Steel Co. (a government owned factory).

Entrepreneurship scene
The entrepreneurial scene in Misurata is fairly active, with many startups and entreprises as well as relatively easy access to capital. The many businessmen in the city support entrepreneurial growth and provide job opportunities to many skilled workers.

The city’s economy is lively. Prices are slightly higher than in surrounding cities. It’s a destination for many migrants for economic purposes as well as for security, access to the cash economy, and job opportunities.

Tribal affiliations
Tribes have a strong social impact and are the main providers of economic support, but that power does not extend far in the political realm. Economically, tribal support is important for allocating jobs, networking, and frequently accessing funding.
Tribal political impact, by contrast, is very limited. Politics tend to be more interest-based and along familial lines.

Black market
The black market is largely run by the militias that control import shipping at the harbour. It mostly revolves around drugs and spirits; fuel is rarely traded in the city. Most essentials vary in price according to the currency exchange rate, which is another key element in the black market.
Political domination
Under the interim government, the city is run by a Management council that took charge over two years ago, but has yet to receive any budget. The municipality says that it receives taxes for its budget by running various projects in the city, such as infrastructure projects. The municipality is quite active in running different developmental projects. Residents are not generally very active in politics and feel safe in the tribal system. The city is currently suffering a severe Covid-19 outbreak, with a heavy second wave, on which the authorities are fully focusing their efforts.

Tubruk
Tubruk is a border city near Egypt, located to the far northeast of Libya. With 3 coastlines, the city is a bay, surrounded by the Mediterranean with three natural harbours that function even in troubled seas, two oil harbours (Alkhalij and Breega) and a commercial harbor that imports all goods for the city as well as some of the west. Tubruk also has an international airport.

Conflict
Conflict in Tubruk stems almost exclusively from tribal power struggles. The city recently experienced a short, armed conflict between two tribes over a title in one of the city's prestigious facilities. The dispute was eventually solved in the city council.

Civil society and activism
Tubruk has a very active civil society with politically neutral initiatives that tend toward education and advocacy. Civil society is active in mediating dialogue between different parties in the city. The municipality also benefits from journalists who publish a general interest newsletter. The city also has a local radio station, which is highly popular, and Tubruk’s free radio station. Mainstream media is used by everyone with immense impact on the economic situation.

Tribal political impact
The city is generally militarized, which is a recurrent theme highlighted in interviews and focus groups, as well as in online groups. The military is the only leader in the city, and is somewhat ruled by tribes, according to interviewees, since specific tribes control it and manage its employments, projects, and finances.

Main economic activities
The biggest employer in the city is the public sector. Tubruk is historically known for cattle farming and agricultural projects, but recently the city’s economic scene is simultaneously booming and suffering accompanying inflation. Sectors like real estate, clothing and restaurants are growing. The city shares a commercial chamber with Egypt as it imports many products from Egypt. The city has big agricultural potential and cattle farming projects are quite profitable. The city has big commercial and importation projects. Many Egyptians are involved in the farming industry.

Informal market
Little of the market is formalized or legitimized. Although many attempts have been launched to correct the situation, tribal affiliation and protection remain the biggest obstacles. Butchers, beauty salons, restaurants, and shops all reflect the many waves of migration to the inner-city from the city outskirts. Often people migrate to the city center to start small side businesses to supplement low pay rates in the public sector.

Black market
Steel, junk cars and any metal objects are often sold (or stolen, then sold) in the black market and smuggled through the harbours. Currency exchange is huge in Tubruk, as liquidity crises exhaust the economy. Kidnapping and human trafficking are also problems.

The Economy and Entrepreneurship
The economy is viewed as average by interviewees. Money laundering was mentioned frequently. Many new buildings are crowding the city, there is a serious cash crisis, and many live under the poverty line, according to a member of the City Council. However, many tech solutions are planned to ease the pressure. Entrepreneurial activity is moderate. Many tech enterprises are being launched in Tubruk, and many young people (mostly IDPs) power the labour market and enable the private sector to grow. However, money laundering is visible in the city, as stated repeatedly by interviewees.
Political domination

The city comprises three municipalities: Alkufra, Robiana, and Tazerbo. These are home to different cultural groups that support different political parties in the Libyan conflict. Kufra and Tazerbo, with Alwazy tribes and Arabs, are loyal to the interim government in the east, while Robiana, populated by Tabu and their armed groups, supports the GNA in the west. The political alliances are unclear and vary according to agenda and specific cases. Kufra’s political situation is quite complex and is plagued by ethnic discrimination, tribal alliances, and international involvement. All interviewees mentioned the security situation and described local governance as tribal in character. The Alwazy tribe and Arabs make up the majority of Kufra, where they control most of government facilities and institutions and employ the largest number of armed individuals.

Kufra

Kufra, known as Aljawf, is an oasis center southeast of the Libyan desert. It’s located in an isolated area in the Sahara Desert in a valley. Little is known about the city’s population, with an estimated 55 thousand residents, a large number of whom are migrants from Sudan, Egypt and Palestine, who were originally brought over by the Ghaddafi regime to work in public institutions (education, health, and even security). While some of these were returned under Ghaddafi, a larger portion of unregistered migrants live in the city below the radar.

Historical background

The city’s history is rich in both African and Islamic cultures. It’s the Tabu capital, the remnant of Tazer Alkubra, and the capital of the Alsuusna Movement.

Conflict

The city witnessed little armed conflict but was heavily affected by the surrounding conflict in the country, tribal conflict, and ethnic discrimination. This, alongside low oversight and little protection for minorities, pushed the city into a downward spiral. The city has a very particular and extremely racist tribal system, with Tabu and Arab tribes constantly fighting over territorial control.

Main economic activities

The city has high potential. Agriculture was a key economic activity in the city, as mangoes from Kufra are of high quality, but agricultural projects are dying out due to greed and corruption. Current economic activities include transportation, commercial and water trade, and some farming and agricultural projects. Most of the businesses in the city are governmental (services such as health and education) with the exception of trade and selling subsidized goods for black market prices. There is a robust black market in Kufra, particularly due to the unregulated borders with three countries, a no-tax agreement between Libya and Sudan (which drives the transport of cars through the borders to Sudan as a staple of the black market), and alongside the smuggling of fuel, flour and cattle. It’s notable that some coveted breeds of horses are smuggled through Kufra.

Tribal economic impact

The impact of tribalism on the economy is extreme. It doesn’t just affect profit, security or functionality. It is a recurrent theme in interviews and focus groups, and is also mentioned frequently on Facebook groups and pages, as a factor that can determine whether someone can access government services such as education and healthcare. Many Tabu tribes cannot access education and must leave the city to get a proper education. Some cases of severe injuries were reported as a result of the difficulties facing Tabu citizens in attempting to access emergency medical care, due to their ethnicity.

Landmarks

Kufra was a strategic trade center to Africa in the past, along with rich remnants from the Tabu Culture (Slatana Altabaua and other Tabu castles) and the Zawya Sonosisia in Taj, the Sanousi Library, and Sanousi college. Along with its rich agricultural potential, natural water resources that supply Libya, and its oil fields, it is accessible to three borders—Egypt, Sudan and Chad. The city has outstanding tourism potential along with tourism mentality among the locals. Many speak of re-igniting tourism as a main source of income.

Entrepreneurship

With the exception of some crafts and handmade goods, no small businesses launch in the city. The city is in need of capacity-building and talent incubators to support small and micro businesses and provide employment opportunities for youth.

General economic state

The city is very poor, little liquidity is available, and although the city provides water supplies, mangoes and oil fields there are little employment opportunities outside the public sector (which is completely controlled by certain tribes). The infrastructure is deteriorated and the health sector is especially decrepit. Government accountability is limited. Government facilities are poorly managed as they only support specific ethnicities. All interviewees agreed that laws are not equally, but rather target marginalized minorities. Tribal protections are very extreme for powerful and controlling tribes. Alliances and loyalties are also frequently ethnic or familial in nature.
Political affiliations

Tazerbu is too small and the city is run largely by the Alzawaiat tribe, which is Arab and supportive of the interim government and the LNA. However, there is a municipal council that’s adherent to the GNA. The city has representation from both the GNA and the LNA, and although no armed conflict happens between them, and the two authorities enjoy a fragile détente, some paperwork is very difficult in the city due to the unclear facilities and alliances. Tribal influence is moderate. The system is as tribal as it is slow. The two governments that have authorities in the city are embodied in the tribes that defend them and create administrative mayhem.

Tazerbu

Tazerbu is on oasis in the Libyan desert, located in the quadrant, southwest of Kufra city. It’s 25–30 km long, made up of villages built around the oasis. The population is very limited, most likely around 8 to 10 thousand, according to interviewees. Tracking waves of migration in the city shows successive waves from the city to the coastal cities, as well as inbound migration from surrounding conflict areas or neighboring countries.

History and landmarks

The city was the seat of Tobou sultanate. Landmarks include the Taj Palace and the great man-made river.

Tribal economic impact

Tribal impact is evident in employment processes, as dominant tribes only employ their own members. Favoritism plays a major role. In general, cash is hardly available. People suffer from the administrative chaos in the city as well as the difficulty of accessing public services (healthcare and education). The city is home to the great manmade river, but it seems that this has little impact over the labour market as few locals are employed in the facility.

Conflict

There is little conflict in the city. The pace of life is generally slow. Resident suffer from heavy administrative barriers, unwieldy bureaucracy, and lack of cashflow and liquidity.

Economy

Tazerbu’s economy is based on agricultural crops, including mangoes, citrus fruits, and palm trees, as well as the water trade. There are limited oil fields and some small projects and import business. Most of the farming market is in the informal market. Although little information is available on the informal sector, almost all interviewees agreed that the government exercises little oversight, making it “useless” to register and legitimize your business.

Tribal affiliations

The majority of the locals are from one large tribe and that defines the city’s political-tribal scene.

Black and informal markets

Interviewees disagreed with one another on the black market, with some claiming that in Tazerbu it is focused on currency and fuel smuggling across borders. Same pointed out that a liter of gas costs 20 LYD, which the official price is 15 cents. Others insisted that smuggling fuel is very rare in the city, as it is distributed in an organized fashion. Entrepreneurship is limited, with no innovative projects or startups in city. However, microbusinesses and homemade goods are starting to flourish as government payments may be delayed by months at a time, and people must find stop-gap solutions, according to one interviewee.