

# **IDPs IN LIBYA AND THE UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

## **ASSESSING AN UNRESOLVED ISSUE**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DTM** Displacement Tracking Matrix
- GNC** General National Congress
- GNU** Government of National Unity
- HCS** High Council of State
- HNEC** High National Election Commission
- HoR** House of Representatives
- IDMC** Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
- MoU** Memorandum of Understanding
- LNA** Libyan National Army
- LPA** Libyan Political Agreement
- LPDF** Libyan Political Dialogue Forum
- OCV** Out of country voters
- UN** United Nations
- UNDP** United Nations Development Program
- UNSMIL** United Nations Support Mission in Libya

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2021, there is a common appreciation of the immense number of tasks and obstacles that need to be resolved before any balloting should take place in Libya. Various concerns relate to the sequencing of elections, the organisational feasibility as well legislative hurdles. Still, given the current transitional status, the country's political institutions are in need to put the Libyan system on more steady grounds, which is longed for internally and supported externally.

Especially the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has been laying the basis for these elections: by paving the way with the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) which has managed to develop the current national institutions, led by the Government of National Unity (GNU).<sup>1</sup> On the international side, the latest meeting took place in Paris on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021 where the international community emphasised further support for the adopted road map and the aim for national elections on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021. While the focus remains on the electoral candidates and the electoral process in general, other aspects of the agreement – including the work of the joint military committee and the unification of state institutions, remain distant reality.

A negative harbinger as well are local actors seemingly invested in withholding the elections. The chairman of the Tripoli-based High State Council (HSC), Khalid Al-Mishri, made a video statement in which he claims to boycott the participation in the upcoming elections due to the illegal basis of these laws.<sup>2</sup> In addition, official statements were issued by the HSC, but also the High National Election Commission (HNEC) supporting steps that would involve postponing the presidential elections due lacking clarity on procedural and practical fronts.<sup>3</sup> By late November, 98 candidates have come forward and declared their intention to run, the HNEC committee has disqualified 25 candidates for not meeting the conditions of Articles no. 10 and 11 of the presidential electoral law. However, prominent figures such as Muammar al-Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam, have appealed to this disqualification and gained a court order in his favour. There were also cases of appeals against candidates, like the ones made against Khalifa Haftar and Abdulhamid Dbaiba.<sup>4</sup> In general, this political bickering exemplifies a grim legacy of a country that has been divided for six years and is still grappling with consensus politics.

Additional, practical challenges are related to the deliberated expansion of the current constituencies, which would have an impact on the voter's behaviour and choices. Despite the fact that the HNEC had just updated the voters

1 <https://www.libyaherald.com/2021/02/07/new-lpdf-elected-gnu-welcomed-locally-by-key-stakeholders-report-and-analysis/>

2 <https://bit.ly/3Ek3Nzs>

3 <https://bit.ly/32hE9yf>

4 <https://bit.ly/3pfjnsC>

registration database, this was done in the absence of an electoral law, nor clarity about the electoral proceedings themselves – even though the electoral law for presidential elections (law no.1 for 2021 – dated 8 September 2021) was passed by the House of Representatives it has been controversial, especially with regard to the amendment of article 12 “which stipulates that for the candidacy to be valid, the candidate whether civilian or military shall stop exercising his functions 3 months before the date of the elections scheduled for Dec 24; and in case he was not elected, he shall return to his previous work and shall benefit from all his salaries and benefits.”<sup>5</sup>

Other issues that would face the electoral process are:

- 1 *Electoral security, access, and control of the HNEC over the voting centers on election day;*
- 2 *Access of external electoral observers and correlating monitoring of the electoral process;*
- 3 *Ongoing incitement and negative use of social media towards the electoral process, including the potential of violence;*
- 4 *Fragile security and political situation that could erupt in the days after the election.*<sup>6</sup>

This brief overview has been quick to highlight the immense challenges and insecurities connected to Libyan elections in December 2021.<sup>7</sup> This report, however, will concentrate on one aspect that adds additional challenges and has stayed unfairly unaddressed over the last years: the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Libya and how their voices could be heard. On the one hand, IDPs can partially participate in the political processes, they can even run as candidates, but on the other hand, the continuous struggles of IDPs in Libya are not being addressed appropriately in the political system.

## Context

When the United Nations (UN) decided to start preparations for the December 2021 elections, it also established a Legal Drafting Committee, a group of eighteen Libyans drawn from the LPDF tasked with forging consensus on a legal electoral framework with the help of UN advisers. These legal considerations are supposed to be pursued independently and without the looming threat of armed actors working to guarantee their current positions and influence.<sup>8</sup>

5 <https://h nec.ly/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/قانون-1--للسنة-2021-م-انتخاب-رئيس-الدولة-وتحديد-اختصاصاته.pdf>

6 SSR and elections: What role for the security sector in 2021? <https://www.dcaf.ch/road-stability-rethinking-ssr-post-conflict-libya>

7 <https://www.libyanjustice.org/news/7-things-to-do-in-7-months-a-human-rights-roadmap-to-elections-august-update>

8 <https://bit.ly/3q9Ne5a>

The agreement managed to pave the way for the GNU, which is meant to facilitate the transitional period and prepare the legal requirements for the previously scheduled 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021 elections. However, the GNU under prime minister Dbaiba largely focussed on spreading Libya's riches under a programme of "Resurrecting Libya" which surprised observers given that the GNU was always supposed to be a temporary government.

Ultimately, many Libyan stakeholders are sceptical of the GNU's governing approach and especially the House of Representatives (HoR) based in Tobruk has worked on limiting the GNU's influence but also particularly to ensure its short-term mandate. In addition, the lack of approved electoral proceedings and bickering about Libya's valuable state budget incentivises political actors to continue lobbying for their own benefits instead of focussing on the common good of the country.

On the diplomatic level, the Berlin II Conference held on 23<sup>th</sup> June 2021 reconfirmed support for the peace process and the need for elections on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to put Libya on more stable grounds. The conference which was attended by both prime minister Dbaiba and foreign minister Najlae Mangoush, ended with an exchange between attendants of the Berlin conference (this included the Libyan and international actors such as Turkey and Egypt) on hotly debated conclusions, amongst them the withdrawal of mercenaries and foreign troops.<sup>9</sup> However, contested definitions of which troops are in the country in a legal versus illegal manner, with especially Turkey objecting to the withdrawal of its troops, claiming that their presence is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Turkey and Libya. The GNU presented four main areas of political focus in the Berlin II Conference, which are:

- 1 *Improve Security: focus on the development of a conclusive security plan to secure elections, as well as calling on the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries.*
- 2 *Support the development of a legal framework for elections. However, this is out largely of the scope of the government's authorities, despite being the fundamental stone on which elections are built.*
- 3 *National Reconciliation. This involves a broad societal process and cannot be a condition for holding the elections; instead, it must precede and surpass the election day.*
- 4 *Decentralisation: the need for fair and just distribution of state revenues across Libya and to provide services to all Libyans equally in a manner of "districts" system to leave behind the centralist system which has neglected some and favoured other parts of Libya.*

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9 <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/berlin-2-conclusions/2467750?openAccordionId=item-2467828-0-panel>

Since its formation the GNU, have issued several populist policies, such as handing out grants to newly married couples and kickstarting reconstruction through the 'Reviving Life' project. However, these policies remain limited and distract the public from noting the major issues in had such as the deteriorating security situation and increase of tensions between the different factions.

While welcoming the plan, several international partners have simultaneously worked to hamper the elections by posing several challenges such as Russia working with Egypt to maintain support to actors from the east such Khalifa Haftar and Aghila Salah, who they use to advance their interests. Simultaneously, Turkey has been present on the ground in the western region as of the summer of 2020 ensuring existing agreements with the previous government (GNA) are upheld.<sup>10</sup>

This interconnectedness of political, security and economic tracks provides spoilers with ample opportunities to delay overall progress and thus successful elections. This is harmful as Libya depends at least partially on the international community and external support to both create an environment in which elections are feasible (after foreign mercenaries have been withdrawn, for example) as well as meaningful (assuring the acceptance of election results, for instance).<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021, the HoR voted to withdraw confidence from the GNU – severely disrupting the national process working towards national unification spearheaded by the GNU and supposedly finalised with the national elections scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

Unsurprisingly, this political move has prompted reactions by the GNU and their supporters, with protests in both Tripoli and Misurata contesting the HoR's decision and reassuring support to the GNU. While being a transitional authority, with a mandate mainly to facilitate the elections, the GNU has increasingly worked on acquiring support of Libyans seemingly with the aim to get support for their government. Examples are the "marriage support initiative", mentioned earlier which turned out to be a successful initiative for acquiring public support, mainly by spending relatively lavishly.

At the time being, the situation, and the position of the GNU as well as the 24<sup>th</sup> December elections remains unclear. HNEC chairman Emad Alsayah, however, has emphasised the readiness of the HNEC to implement both presidential and legislative elections.<sup>12</sup> While these statements sound comforting, the situation is far more complex than that; on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021, during the national assembly to support the elections, Fathi Bashagha (a former minister of the

10 <https://thearabweekly.com/turkey-adamant-about-keeping-military-presence-libya>

11 SSR and elections: What role for the security sector in 2021? <https://www.dcaf.ch/road-stability-rethinking-ssr-post-conflict-libya>

12 <https://bit.ly/331MRRF>



interior and presidential candidate) stated that there can only be elections if national reconciliation is also achieved.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the HSC and Khaled Mishri, continue to dispute the legitimacy of the upcoming elections. Some HoR members have claimed, that they were under pressure by the UN to move forward with the presidential candidacy lists, while the Presidential Council continued to invest efforts in supporting the holding of elections on the 24<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the HNEC postponed the publication of the list of candidates less than ten days before the election.<sup>15</sup> While the Libyan electoral law indicates that candidates should be given at least two weeks to campaign for elections once the list is published, further supporting the claim of a presidential election postponement.

In addition, Libya's HCS has also requested a two-month extension to resolve the existing grievances and legal difficulties. The GNU on the other hand, is adamant that elections will go place as planned. Despite the GNU's perseverance, it is unclear whether Libyan authorities would be able to address lingering concerns in time for the elections to take place.

The HCS subsequently proposed a two-month election delay to allow local stakeholders to resolve outstanding issues, arguing that election results will likely be rejected if held under the current conditions. HCS's proposition was warmly received by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who indicated that a minor delay in the election date could be conducive to the Libyan peace process.<sup>16</sup> Despite current indications and political sentiment pointing towards a likely delay, the GNU remained insistent on holding elections as scheduled on 24<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>17</sup> That being said, any elections that will take place under the current circumstances, will most probably lead failed candidates to reject or contest results, which might hinder a peaceful transition of power when the GNU's mandate expires.

In sum, this is grim news for all of Libya and particularly grim for vulnerable groups such as IDPs due to their associated hopes with a more stable and unified Libyan government working for the common good.

Related to this hope, many IDPs hope to participate in the upcoming elections and this report focusses on two main aspects: 1) the technical elements: examining the readiness of HNEC to conduct these elections with attention to

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13 <https://www.facebook.com/128713322709521/posts/201584235422429>

14 <https://bit.ly/3t9Bm5b>

15 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/11/libya-delays-candidate-list-as-likely-election-postponement-looms>

16 <https://tass.com/world/1375631>

17 <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/libya-to-hold-elections-simultaneously-as-planned-meni>

the circumstances and conditions of IDP communities, including the provision of access to electoral stations; and 2) the challenges that IDPs face in taking part in the elections as some are not even connected to their main constituencies.<sup>18</sup> In other words, this report looks into the current context in relation to the situation of IDPs in Libya, the electoral process and the political and security contexts that can impact the upcoming elections with a focus on the position of IDPs.

## 2. THE SITUATION OF IDPS IN DIFFERENT LOCALITIES

Libya is in its tenth year of instability and conflict following the fall of the Qaddafi regime in 2011. In 2019, escalations in conflict, in both the south (Fezzan) and in the country's capital, Tripoli, saw fighting move into more populated urban areas. The use of explosive weapons in this environment has put civilians at high risk of indiscriminate harm. Civilian casualties, displacement, and damage to civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, have increased. Protracted political and economic instability, which has severely impacted governance structures, has resulted in a significant deterioration in basic services provision. With each passing year, people's well-being and living standards have been eroded, with the most vulnerable increasingly relying on negative coping strategies.<sup>19</sup> The UN has estimated that around 1.8 million people are affected by the conflict. Available information, including humanitarian assessments, point to a humanitarian context that is overall comparable to 2019, with a gradual deterioration in the humanitarian situation, coupled with spikes in conflict, insecurity, and vulnerability. A surge in internal displacement – up by 80 per cent in 2019 – demonstrates the impact of such spikes. The number of people returning to their place of origin in 2019 has been moderated by the scale of displacement, resulting in roughly the same overall number of people displaced at the end of 2019, compared to 2018 - this group remains a priority category of vulnerable people in need.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the protracted nature of the conflict has severely impacted people's wellbeing and livelihoods. Conflict and insecurity remain the main drivers behind population movements, with escalations in fighting leading to several waves of displacement in 2019. As of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019, there are more than 343,000 people displaced in Libya, nearly doubled from 2018. New displacements were primarily due to the conflict in southern Tripoli that has displaced 149,000 people since April 2019, clashes in Murzuq in south of Libya on August 2018 resulted with the displacement of more than 28,000 people, as well as localized and temporary displacement following floods in Ghat in June 2019.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Which they had to leave, due to their disposition with the currently dominating forces in the east – related to the Libyan National Army (LNA)

19 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno\\_2021-final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_2021-final.pdf)

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

Conflict has resulted in severe damage to housing and civilian infrastructure across the country, impacting living conditions. The destruction and damage of housing, coupled with increased demand due to IDP arrivals, has led to shortages in adequate shelter options in many locations, and associated increases in rental costs. Vulnerable families face difficulties in securing affordable housing as a result; many are at risk of eviction. IDPs are most likely to live in substandard shelter and have informal rental contracts. Around 4,000 IDPs in informal settings are assessed as being among the most vulnerable and in need of shelter.

According to UN reports, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2019 there were more than 343,000 IDPs in Libya. 94 per cent of IDPs cite insecurity as the main reason for their displacement, while others are moving due to a deterioration in the economic situation. Of those displaced, more than half are women and girls. Benghazi remains the municipality with the highest number of IDPs, as well as the highest number of returns, reflecting a relative improvement in the security situation in recent years. Sebha, on the other hand, which has the second highest number of IDPs has only seen minimal returns.<sup>22</sup>

IDPs are more likely to face serious protection risks and challenges in accessing basic services and commodities including food and essential household items, than other Libyan groups. These risks are particularly acute for women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with chronic illnesses. Among the IDP households, there are many families who are unable to return to their places of origin due to resistance from authorities and neighbouring communities. This includes the 40,000 Tawerghans, as well as households from Benghazi, Derna, Sirte and lately Tarhouna. These people face many protection challenges during displacement including denial of access to basic services, harassment, detention, loss or lack of civil documentation, evictions, and limited access to cash.

Despite the persistent drivers of displacement, many Libyans are returning to their places of origin. At the same time, displacement remains a huge issue that faces Libya and will continue to do so in many ways. There are also risks and challenges facing returnees, especially those who might face a social excluding stigma, due to political affiliation or social/family origins or background. Some of these risks are safety and security related, while others are related to social exclusion, limited access basic services and deterioration of livelihood.

The absence of functioning governance structures has resulted in the deterioration of public services, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and diminishing people's coping capacities. With the number of IDPs doubling in 2019, with new displacement mostly as a result from armed clashes. Mainly from Tripoli (Ain Zara area), Tarhouna, Sirt and Murzuq, many IDPs struggle to pay rent and/or live-in substandard shelters. In addition, those living in informal

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

settlements are particularly vulnerable and are at high risk of eviction.

Therefor the most severe and compounded needs are found in areas that have experienced direct conflict, such as Tripoli, or have received the highest numbers of IDPs, such as Azzawya, Benghazi, Ejdabia, Misrata and Sebha. IDPs are more likely to face challenges in accessing basic services, like health and education, compared with other affected Libyans. Areas which are considered to have been in frontlines of the conflict in the greater Tripoli area, as well as some areas with the highest returns, like Benghazi and Sirte, remain contaminated by explosive remnants of war (ERW), posing grave risks to people's lives, wellbeing, living standard and livelihoods.

According to UN data, in 2020 the number of displaced persons was around 314,415, who have had to leave their homes in fear of getting caught in the armed clashes. A total number of 1,353,016 citizens have faced a form of displacement due to the armed conflicts, between 2011 and June 2021, this shows the huge impact of the conflict, and the ongoing political polarization has had on civilian populations.<sup>23</sup>

## Summary

### **Latest IDP estimates from the UN's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)<sup>24</sup> 451,000**

#### **In Libya, IDMC GRID Dec 2019**

After 12 months of the LNA launching the offensive on Tripoli, many of the civilians who've been caught in the frontlines have been directly affected, and the majority have been displaced. The number of IDPs have increased in line with the severity of the conflict, which was damaging infrastructure and further deteriorating the existing basic services and access to them. By June of 2020, the number of IDPs was 425, 714 displaced persons.

### **Displaced population tracked by Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Libya 425,714**

#### **As of Jun 2020**

These numbers started to decrease following the withdrawal of LNA forces from their offensive on the Tripoli and settling at the middle region, this came with a seizing of hostilities between both forces. The stalemate has made the city of Sirte a de-facto buffer zone, between western and eastern armed actors.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> <https://displacement.iom.int>

### **Displaced population tracked by DTM in Libya 392,241**

**As of Aug 2020**

By the beginning of 2021, the number of IDPs have been reduced to almost half.

### **Displaced population tracked by DTM in Libya 245,483**

**As of Feb 2021**

By June 2021 the numbers of IDPs were down to around 212, 593 from 223,949 in April 2021.

### **Displaced population tracked by DTM in Libya 212,593**

**As of Jun 2021**

However, this doesn't change the difficult realities that faces those who remain displaced and those who've managed to return to their households.

## **3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The current overall electoral legal framework is based on the 2011 Constitutional Declaration and several relevant laws including Law No.3/2012, which created the HNEC as an independent body responsible for administering the 2012 General National Congress (GNC) elections and a revised Law (No. 8) that frames the future mandate, form and structure of the HNEC. According to the new law, the Board of the HNEC is composed of seven members, with provision of permanent HNEC offices in Benghazi, Sebha and Tripoli. The HNEC is responsible for administering elections as specified by law; the law does not suggest the body's existence being linked to the conduct of particular electoral event(s). Instead, the General National Congress Electoral Law (No.4/2012, and Law No.14/2012), determined the electoral constituencies for the GNC 2012 elections but did not amend them followingly. National Transitional Council Resolution No.26/2012 established a High Commission for the Implementation of Integrity and Patriotism Standards, and HNEC regulations and procedures specify rules for the implementation of the relevant laws. On 5 May 2013, the GNC passed the Political and Administrative Isolation Law (Law No. 13) which seeks to exclude persons associated with the former regime from public positions in Libya. The Commission applying the law is modelled on the High Commission on Integrity and Patriotism, which was in charge of vetting former regime members and highly controversial. Following the civil war and subsequent diplomatic negotiations resulting in the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), of 2015, which also addressed the possible reconstitution of the head and members of the HNEC.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/yckpd8vn>

Libya's transition to democracy has been marred by violence, indecision, and power struggles between interim leaders. The hopes and aspirations of the Libyan people following the historic 2012 election have been replaced with discontent and frustration. One of the first examples of exclusion was the fact that those who were accounted on the former regime were banned from public office by the Political Isolation Law. In addition, there has been a notable discrimination against certain groups, this included displacement, arbitrary arrests and harassment of those who were known to be affiliated or in support for the former regime.<sup>26</sup>

While most Libyans were disheartened by the outcome of the previous two elections, they seem to have a general sense of trust and confidence in their electoral management body. According to recent opinion polling by IFES, some 62% of the public have positive views towards the HNEC; similar sentiments were also shared with UNDP's Needs Assessment Mission. It is a credit to HNEC for having remained supposedly neutral in a hyper-politicised environment and under very difficult financial constraints.

On Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the HNEC opened the voter registration system, and officially announced in a press conference the start of the voter registration process, to provide an opportunity for citizens who did not register their names previously, or who wish to change their election centres. The HNEC has also worked on increasing its absorption capacity by expanding to 1906 voting centres.

By the end of the registration process inside Libya on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the number of registered persons from inside Libya reached (2,857,661) registered, with a registration rate of 59% of the total target for registration. Among them, (1,623,116) male voters, and (1,234,545) female voters.

Among those registered, there are (514,943) new voters, that is, they registered during this latest update, among them (287,618) male voters and (227,324) female voters. This could be related to the fact that more citizens have become of legal age and eligible to take part of the elections, but also a notable factor would be the increase interest and engagement of former boycotters such as the ex-regime supporters, as surviving leadership from the former regime stated their interest in taking part in the upcoming presidential elections.

As for registration from outside Libya, the HNEC opened the registration system abroad on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021, and it continued for a whole month, noting that those previously registered abroad during the elections of the Constituent Drafting Assembly (CDA) and the election of the HoR in 2014, need to re-register.<sup>27</sup> While those who registered during the update of the registration system abroad during the year 2018 do not have to re-register.

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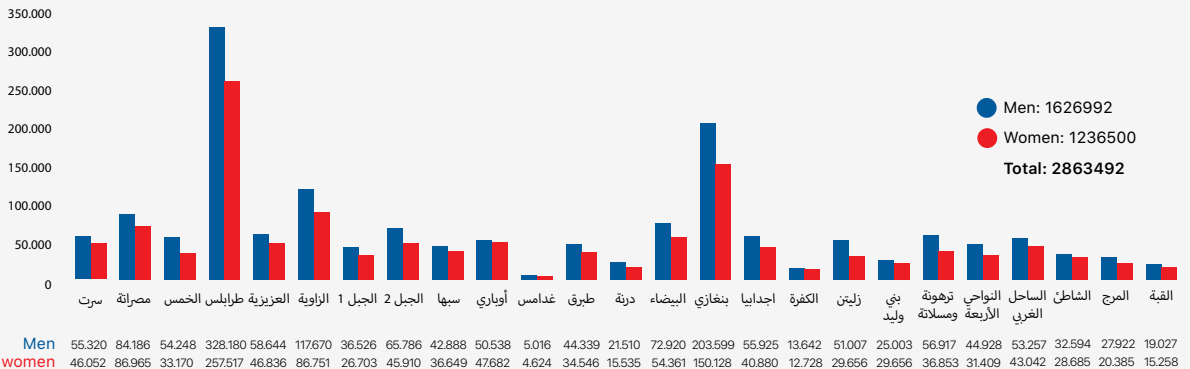
<sup>26</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/msmm37u3>

<sup>27</sup> via the link <https://voteabroad.ly>

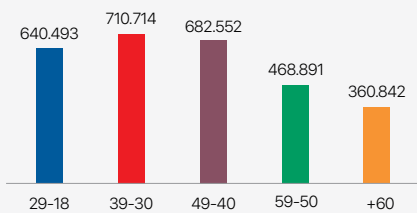
The number of registered voters abroad (OCVs), by Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021, was (9,648) voters. Among them (6,598) male voters, and (3,050) female voters. And the number of registered voters who moved from inside to abroad was (3,401), including (3,662) men and (261) women. The highest levels of OCV registration was from the United Kingdom, where the number of registered voters reached (1,911), followed by Egypt (1,209). However, these numbers remain low in comparison with the size of the diaspora community.

### Total number of voters registered in electoral centres

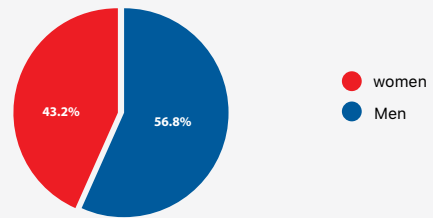
#### مجموع الناخبين المسجلين حسب المكاتب الإدارية الانتخابية



### The age group of the electorate



### Percentage of registration process



### West: 1,803,847 voters

Tripoli = 585,697  
Misurata = 117,356  
Tarhouna & Msilata = 93,770  
Zawia = 98,511  
Tawergha = 32,000 (aprox)  
Sirt = 101,373

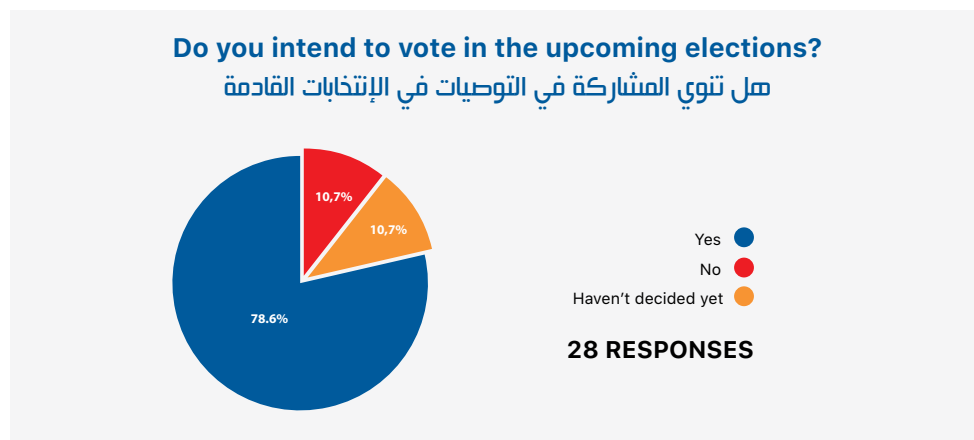
### East: 803,108 voters

Tobruk = 79,485  
Al-Bayda = 127,281  
Dernah = 37,045  
Benghazi = 353,727

### South: 248, 631 voters

Sebha = 79,582  
Murzoq = 15,318 (aprox)  
Voters abroad "OCV":  
9,172 voters

In case a voter is registered as IDP, they would have access to the closest centre out of the 14 dedicated centres (mainly) for IDPs from Tawergha following the 2011 conflict.<sup>28</sup> The HNEC has not issued any updates of their measures being adapted to the new realities and the current displacement situation in the country. In order to shed more light on this issue, the researchers for this report have conducted an interview with Mr. Sadiq Al-Zakar (Operations Departments Manager), where we've raised several questions to clarify the HNEC capacity and strategies to dealing with IDP voters.



## Interview with HNEC representative

**Question: There are 14 polling stations designated for IDPs. Has the increasing number of IDPs due to the armed conflict since August 2018 been taken into consideration?**

Mr. Sadiq Al-Zakar: HNEC have dedicated 14 centres for IDPs, the HNEC mechanism allows any number of IDPs to register in any of these centres. There is no limit to the number of IDPs who can register in the polling centres dedicated to them.

The HNEC will aim to internally sort these centres so these centres will have polling stations within them to absorb the voters registered in them. This was done in coordination with the Ministry of IDPs. By the 17th August, HNEC will have closed the voter registration system, HNEC states that the registered voters also included IDP voters.

<sup>28</sup> [https://h nec.ly/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_.pdf](https://h nec.ly/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/_____.pdf)



**Question: Were the IDPs included in the awareness strategy adopted by the HNEC? If yes, what are the measures taken by the HNEC?**

SZ: HNEC works through 25 electoral management office, these oversee the polling centres including ones dedicated to IDPs. HNEC has adopted the strategy of direct engagement with IDPs, for example Tripoli office has 4 centres for IDPs under its jurisdiction, there has been a targeted effort towards IDPs mainly from Tawergha, Benghazi and Murzoq.

The HNEC has also informed the electoral management offices, to consider the specific conditions of IDPs and IDPs centres listed under them, making sure that these polling centres take the special conditions for the IDPs and the conditions for their voting.

The HNEC sees a huge importance in focusing on IDPs, to assure that they have the same conditions as other voters.

**Question: Do the current electoral districts have sufficient capacity to contain the number of registered voters?**

SZ: Despite the continues discussions on the electoral districts and constituencies, this process is for the legislative body to decide on. The HNEC is waiting for the HoR to issue the law related to the electoral district and the seats for each constituency.

Once HNEC receives the legislation from the HoR, it will be able to know the number of seats dedicated for each district and construct the constituencies (this process relays on the distribution of the population).

**What is the HNEC's strategy in securing the elections in cooperation with the relevant security authorities (Has the joint security committee for securing the elections been formed)?**

SZ: There is a high coordination between HNEC and Ministry of Interior (Mol), working on a strategic approach to securing the elections. The HNEC has a security coordinator (who is seconded from the Mol) and coordinates with 25 security coordinators posted in the electoral management offices.

The Mol also has a dedicated department under the Security Operations Department, the Elections Protection and Security Administration holds several officers and its works in close cooperation with HNEC.

There will also be a security operation room that will work on coordination efforts of different and relevant actors to facilitating and securing the electoral process, this includes the Mol securing the electoral materials and its transport. HNEC and Mol are working on developing a plan for securing the elections during the electoral day.

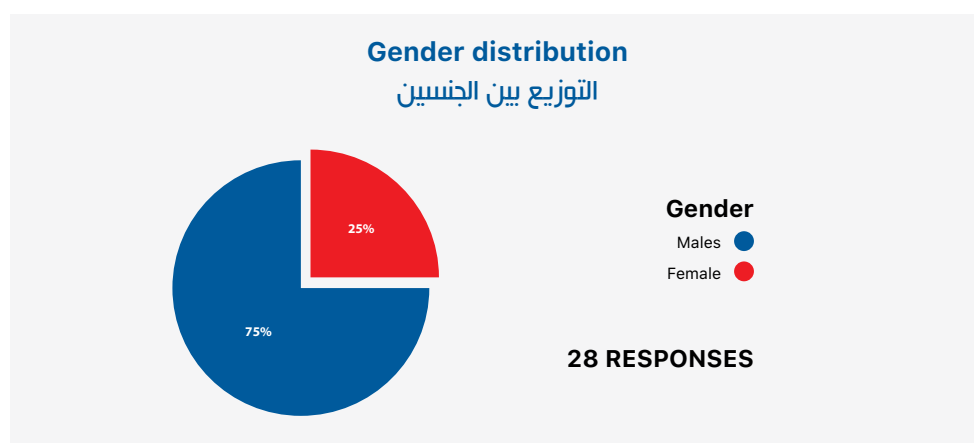
HNEC will be cooperating with the Mol in facilitating the distribution of the voter's cards, this will be done by opening all the voting centres. The Mol will be securing the facilities during the distribution process, which could last for as long as 20 to 30 days.

**What is the readiness of the electoral centres located in the former places of conflict or in areas of congestion such as Sirte, Tarhuna, Kufra, Murzuq, Sabha?**

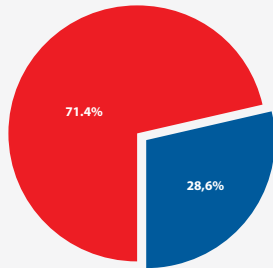
SZ: HNEC has 1906 voting centres (in addition to 19 centres dedicated for oil fields), HNEC's Field Coordination Department is responsible on assessing the conditions of the voting centres, which allows HNEC to take the needed actions to overcome any issues that might be identified. This includes any issues related to access to polling centres, the HNEC maintains strong coordination with relevant actors, such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and all other relevant authorities.

#### 4. ASSESSING PUBLIC OPINION AMONGST IDPs

The researchers have also conducted a random sample survey, which was aimed to understand the public view and position towards the proclaimed elections in December 2021. The questionnaire sought to build a time frame that marks the participation of the public in the elections from 2014, the results have indicated that the number of participants in elections have dropped significantly since the 2012 GNC Elections.



Are you an IDP?  
هل أنت نازح؟

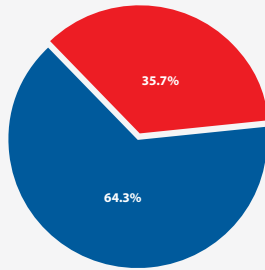


Gender

Yes ●  
No ●

28 RESPONSES

Have you voted in the House of Parliament elections in 2014?  
هل قمت بالتصويت في الإنتخابات البرلمانية لمجلس النواب في 2014

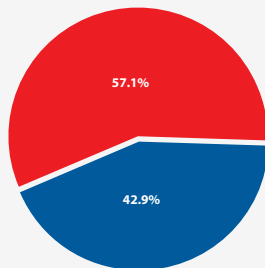


Gender

Yes ●  
No ●

28 RESPONSES

Have you voted for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly in 2014?  
هل قمت بالتصويت في إنتخابات لجنة الستين لإعداد الدستور في 2014



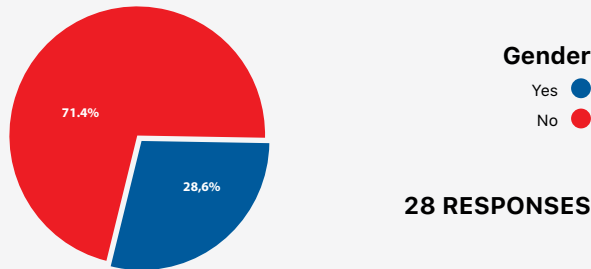
Gender

Yes ●  
No ●

28 RESPONSES

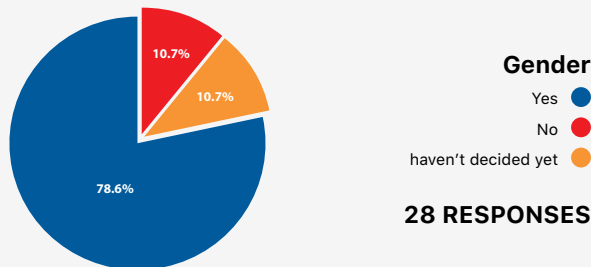
### Have you participated in the municipal elections?

هل قمت بالمشاركة فالإنتخابات البلدية ؟



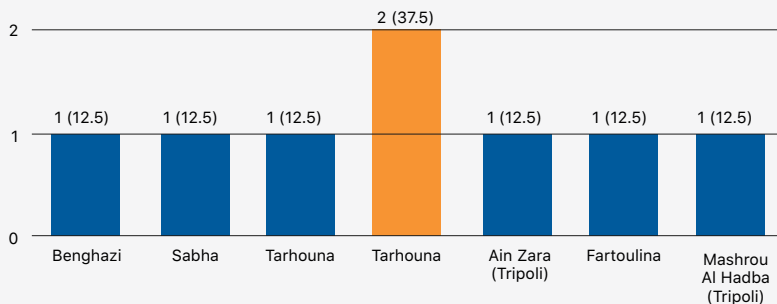
### Do you intend to participate in the intended elections for the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021?

هل قمت بالمشاركة فالإنتخابات البلدية ؟



### Out of the 28,6% who were displaced, where were they displaced from?

في حالة كنت نازحاً، أذكر المنطقة التي نزلت منها



## 5. ASSESSING MEDIA COVERAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

There has been an increased attention towards the elections as we get closer to the 24<sup>th</sup> December, the date of the scheduled elections. Amongst others, the below media platforms have been echoing conflicting messages and opinions regarding the upcoming elections and their feasibility.

As the below table will outline a polarisation in statements, has repercussions that would impact political, security and economic sectors in the upcoming months. These conflicting statements are also a sign of alert of the acceptance of the elections results, if they do take place? Would these actors agree and submit to the new state?

| Name of Platform   | Note  | Link  |
|--|---|---|
| Libya Channel for elections (Facebook)   | Engaged, provides a follow-up on a wide range of news, all in relation to elections.  | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/4hsfs5up">https://tinyurl.com/4hsfs5up</a> |
| شبكة الرائد الإعلامية<br><a href="https://twitter.com/arraedlg-plus?s=21">https://twitter.com/arraedlg-plus?s=21</a> | Video of Mohamed Sawan, head of the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Justice and Construction Party (JCP) in Libya calling in support for holding the elections in 24 <sup>th</sup> December, and calls for enhancing the means to hold the elections, and to know who to vote for | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3sc9se7d">https://tinyurl.com/3sc9se7d</a> |
| صحيفة أوبيا  | FM Najlae Mangoush (minister of foreign affairs) asserting that the GNU is aiming to set a security plan to secure the upcoming elections   | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/4nzf4uyx">https://tinyurl.com/4nzf4uyx</a> |
| Almarsad   | HoR member states that UNSMIL is pressuring the HOR with regard to the presidential candidates.   | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yusjmr55">https://tinyurl.com/yusjmr55</a> |
| Almarsad   | HSC Khaled Mishri, if the elections are to be held as the HoR have sought, we will not accept it and will not accept that Khalifa Haftar (head of the LNA) can run for elections.   | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yckp23cz">https://tinyurl.com/yckp23cz</a> |

|                            |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <p>اخبار ليبيا العاجلة</p> | <p>Ahmed Swehli (son of Abdulrahman Swehli), opposes the idea of Haftar running for elections. He even goes as far as threatening the director of HNEC if he allows Haftar to run for elections.</p>  | <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y7kxpz34">https://tinyurl.com/y7kxpz34</a></p>   |
| <p>Alhadath</p>            | <p>Coverage on elections by Alhadath, highlighting the issues related to article no.10 of the electoral law – regarding conditions for applying for presidency.<br/>And the allegation about PM Dbaiba running for next elections.</p>  | <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p8f3y4c">https://tinyurl.com/2p8f3y4c</a></p>   |
| <p>صحيفة قورينا</p>        | <p>About 44 members of the House of Representatives announced their rejection UNSMIL demands.<br/>The members affirmed that they adhere to the sovereignty of the Libyan state, as they said, and that the HoR has fulfilled all its obligations, starting with the completion of the Seventh Amendment to the Constitutional Declaration and the resolution of the option referred to it, by issuing Resolution No. 5 of 2014, directly electing the head of state from the people.</p>  | <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y94awrzsm">https://tinyurl.com/y94awrzsm</a></p> |
| <p>218 TV</p>              | <p>218 Tv channel, held an open survey about the expectations regarding the next elections:<br/>The majority of votes expected the Libyan elections to be held on time, as 70.66% of the voters voted, expecting the elections to take place on the scheduled date on the twenty-fourth of next December, while 6.85% of the voters expected the elections to be held on a date other than the scheduled date, for various reasons. Some attributed it to the lack of agreement on an electoral law or because of the delay in the Libyan understandings.</p> | <p><a href="https://tinyurl.com/3jnkynu8">https://tinyurl.com/3jnkynu8</a></p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Libya Channel                                     | A member of the LPDF, Amal Bugaighis, affirmed that the people are the owner of sovereignty according to all the laws and charters of the world.  | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/mzjj6xat">https://tinyurl.com/mzjj6xat</a> |
|   | The head of the Libya Revival bloc, Aref Al-Nayed, announced in a press statement today his intention to run for the presidential elections scheduled for the twenty-fourth of next December. | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2syvh5hx">https://tinyurl.com/2syvh5hx</a> |
| <a href="http://alwasat.ly">http://alwasat.ly</a> | Sirte receives a shipment of electoral materials  | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3y2arb9z">https://tinyurl.com/3y2arb9z</a> |
|   | Delivery of 2.8 million voter cards to the offices of electoral administrations in Libya  | <a href="https://tinyurl.com/3v6dss28">https://tinyurl.com/3v6dss28</a> |

## Social media concerns with regard to the elections

It is worth noting that some of the existing social media platforms, have a significant role that they serve in conveying information. However, these platforms credibility and way of portraying the news is at times questionable. Certain incidents have been noted to seem coordinated in the content of the messages; such as the statements of Msillata, Misurata, Gheryan, Jadh, Janzour and Zawyah regarding their opposition for the upcoming elections<sup>29</sup> – all building on and at times using the exact wording, stating that the electoral law no.1 and article no 12 are not legal, as well as the need for having a constitutional basis and the welcoming for a parliamentary elections.<sup>30</sup>

There was also a widely shared video on *Dar Al-Ifta's* Facebook page showing a video message from Sheikh Sadeq al-Gheryani where he expressed his disagreement with the electoral law, portraying the HNEC as a main actor due to their efforts and actions to promote for these elections.<sup>31</sup>

Social media influencers can be a key threat in the Libyan information environment. These actors have large followings and their fame and influence flows directly from their social media accounts. Media events (strategic communication and public relations exercises) that are executed by social media influencers through websites and their associated social media accounts

<sup>29</sup> These were the municipalities, areas to first announce their opposition.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1608255492862477>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IO5\\_GKOT-GK-1C&v=3121257628155853](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-IO5_GKOT-GK-1C&v=3121257628155853)

play a critical role in shaping narratives in the Libyan information environment. These influencers are purporting to be independent political news media or blogs but that are covertly managed or funded by political entities to further a specific set of interests. It is important to note that some of these accounts respond to political events within Libya. For example, a media organisation in Egypt was used to promote and legitimise a hashtag critical of the Prime Minister of the GNA (Sarraj the Traitor of Libya) to initiate and amplify a narrative in an inorganic manner.<sup>32</sup>

Most of these actors and pages share common traits, including phrases, the timing of posts, and branding, that suggest they are part of a single network.<sup>33</sup> These elements are the most likely source of disinformation in the Libyan information environment and will frequently seek to push content in support of their sponsors.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to note the ability of the social media platforms to engage change, and how it could also be used positively, as seen in many growing initiatives that aim to counter disinformation and incitement in the Libyan context.

This includes the emergence of some local platforms that are specialised in following social media activities, where they provide an analysis of the content and timing of the events. Tahra for example has 23,384 followers on Facebook, but only 733 on Twitter further proving that Facebook remains the most useful platform for engaging the public.<sup>35</sup>

Some other platforms are supported by some international actors to work on countering misinformation on social media, for example TSC *معاً نحو الحقيقة* which is supported by DW Libya. While these initiatives remain small in size in comparison to the efforts invested in disinformation and negative utilization of social media, they continue to be vital and essential for maintaining a narrative that focuses on countering negative social media influence when observed.<sup>36</sup>

## 6. OUTLOOK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the volatility of the Libyan situation and the complexity of the conflict, it is difficult to assess with confidence the feasibility of seeing the elections to be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> December. However, in either way there is a lot that needs to be done when it comes to support of the electoral process.

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32 <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/publication/twitter-facebook-egypt-uae-saudi>

33 <https://www.facebook.com/360662307897024/posts/884718372158079>; <https://www.facebook.com/479089242836482/posts/1134342123977854>

34 <https://www.facebook.com/360662307897024/posts/884718372158079>

35 <https://www.facebook.com/Tahra2021>

36 <https://www.facebook.com/tscly.org/>



The HNEC faces various difficulties and challenges, amongst them:

- *The dispute on the electoral legal framework, where some actors continue to stand by the narrative of starting with the referendum to establish a constitutional basis for the upcoming transitional period.*
- *The planning and preparing for the implementation of electoral activities, this includes engaging with the complication of the security of the elections with the existing security division between the west and east.*
- *While UNDP has assigned 800.000 USD in support for HNEC, this would only be able to cover technical needs and preparations, however, it cannot cover the expenses such as the electoral material which needs to be covered by the state of Libya (GNU).*

Overall, the HNEC remains the most essential actor for electoral manner, but the HNEC is constrained between the legislative and executive authorities. Therefore, it is important not to ignore nor forget the importance and role of civil society and public influencers:

- In spreading awareness about elections,
- Providing capacity to assist in the electoral observation,
- Countering circulation of false information that aim to incite and mislead the public opinion.

Consulting the following recommendations would therefore be well-advised:

1. The HNEC should take all necessary measures that ensure the active participation of vulnerable communities such as IDPs and people with special needs, by increasing the number of electoral centres dedicated for them and equipping those centres with the needed capacity to facilitate that.
2. Providing and building on previous trainings on awareness among election observers, expanding the targeted organisations, to include the largest possible number of organizations, with a focus on the quality of training, and to enable observers to be familiar with all aspects of the electoral process including dealing with vulnerable communities and elderly.
3. International organisations that work in the field of electoral assistance should aim to provide more support to civil society organisations working in enhancing democracy and election observations, but also include organisations with wide humanitarian access and through upgrading the level of support, and trying to find the appropriate means for transferring the international experience and best practices, in this area.

4. Raising the levels of coordination with the HNEC concerning the measures needed to secure the elections and the accessibility of the voting centres on the day of elections.
5. The HNEC must consider the observations and information that are submitted to it, concerning violations related to the electoral process, trying to deal with them so as to prevent those violations to happen again in future (this could include targeted violence on IDP communities).
6. Creating the sustainable security conditions needed to facilitate the work of observers and ordinary voters on the day, raising the levels of security coordination with the relevant authorities in order to enable observers to carry out their mission without any pressures or threats that may affect their safety and security.
7. Relying on the right technologies as much as possible for raising the awareness for vulnerable communities on the electoral process in general and voting on polling day.
8. Increase the level of technical support and assistance provided by international organizations active in raising awareness importance of elections, countering disinformation and misinformation campaigns.

## ANNEX.1: LIST OF THE IDP VOTING CENTERS

| Center number | Name of the electoral center                  | City     | Municipality    | Mahala          |
|---------------|---|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 14701         | Sidi Abdul-karem primary school               | Tripoli  | Tajoura         | Alwadi Alsharqi |
| 14702         | Al-Tahrir high school                         | Tripoli  | Central Tripoli | Myrtares square |
| 14703         | Al-hadar Al-Jadidia primary school            | Tripoli  | Janzour         | Sidi Abduljalil |
| 14704         | Shams Almarefa high school                    | Tripoli  | Abu-Salim       | Al-Inaitaq      |
| 12705         | Misurata Central school for primary education | Misurata | Misurata        | City Center     |
| 12706         | Alyarmouk High school                         | Misurata | Misurata        | Agzeer          |
| 12707         | Shohada Al-Mahjoub primary school             | Misurata | Misurata        | Almhajoub       |
| 19708         | Shohada Al Shaat primary school               | Zliten   | Zliten          | Abu Rqeya       |
| 14709         | Almorqab High school                          | Alkhoms  | Alkhoms         | Alkhoms city    |
| 13709         | Alfarouq primary school                       | Sebha    | Sebha           | Hay Abdulkafi   |
| 34711         | Alshoroq primary school                       | Benghazi | Benghazi        | Al-Kiesh        |
| 34712         | Al Amal Almashraq primary school              | Benghazi | Benghazi        | Qaryounes       |
| 35713         | Nour Almarefa primary school                  | Ajdabya  | Ajdabya         | Ajdabya         |
| 37714         | Alhouda primary school                        | Almarj   | Almarj          | Eastern Marj    |

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