

Highlights:

- A total of 1,948 migrants were disembarked in Libya in March 2021, reaching a total of 5,904 migrants returned in 2021.
- Eviction is a mounting concern for displaced families as conflict intensity reduces.
- Libya launched its national COVID-19 vaccination campaign after receiving the first shipments of vaccines.
- The Libya Humanitarian Response Plan asks for US\$189 million to support 451,000 people – 85.7% of the plan requirement is still unmet.



Mirat holding her 5-month-old baby during a UNHCR/WFP food distribution (OCHA/Jennifer Bose Ratka)

KEY FIGURES

1.3M

People in need

0.5M

People targeted

278k

People displaced in Libya

571k

Migrants and refugees in Libya

195k

People reached

FUNDING (2020)

\$189.1M

Required

\$27M

Received

14.3%

Progress

FTS: <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1027/summary>

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Struggles of migrants continue, increasing numbers and protection concerns

Despite the overall reduction of conflict-related incidents since adoption of the October 2020 ceasefire, 2021 has witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of migrants intercepted/rescued at sea and returned to Libya. While in 2020, close to 11,900 migrants were returned to Libya, in the first quarter of 2021, over 6,000 migrants were returned so far (over 1,900 in March alone), suggesting a doubling of figures year-on-year. Strikingly, in the seven day period between 28 March and 3 April, over 1,660 migrants were rescued/intercepted at sea and returned to Libya.¹

The figures constitute a striking increase in the disembarkation trend compared to 2020 and 2019 figures. The increase in numbers might be attributed to the improvement of the weather conditions, increased activity of smugglers or the constraints migrants in Libya face in accessing income generating activities due to COVID-19. Approaching the months of spring and summer that historically show the highest number of migrants attempting the Mediterranean crossing, it is expected that the number of disembarked migrants will increase drastically.²

The economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is projected to result in a 14 per cent global decline in the amount of remittance migrant workers will send home in 2021, which could also negatively affect migrants in Libya in line with the global average. Therefore, a concerted effort towards improving the situation of migrant workers in Libya is needed via regulation of labour market and strengthening of social protection mechanisms available to migrant workers.³

¹ https://twitter.com/IOM_Libya/status/1379805010616270849

² <https://libya.iom.int/sites/libya/files/news/March%202021%20Monthly%20Update.pdf>

³ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/labour-migration-libya-remittances-amidst-conflict-and-pandemic>

The conditions in detention centers is of utmost concern. More than 4,000 men, women and children are detained in dire conditions with limited access to basic services and overcrowding. The highest number of detainees are in detention centres in the Mabani, Abu-Sleim and Triq Al-Sika areas of Tripoli.⁴ Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, overcrowded conditions are alarming.⁵

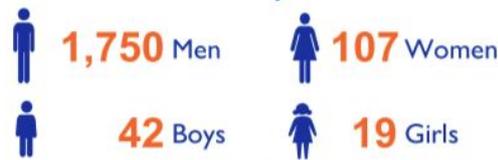
Eviction is an ever-growing concern that families face that strains the coping capacities to seek shelter across Libya. Monitoring the progress of the peace process and the stabilization process, companies and government institutions are reclaiming their properties for redevelopment, which puts the pressure on the host communities to evict due to the reinstated provision of public services in schools and health facilities used as collective shelters. In a recent instance, 535 displaced families from Tawergha residing in the Naval academy in Janzour, a makeshift IDP settlement, have been ordered to vacate the premises by the Ministry of Interior by 20 May 2021.

Displacement causes secondary protection concerns with a particular gender dimension. Exposure to violence and abuse, asset loss, mental health and psychological stress, disrupted community support networks and the resort to negative coping strategies to provide for families are highly likely in displacement settings and aggravated by eviction possibilities. Efforts are needed to ensure dignified relocation in case of eviction, including the provision of information on the process and access to basic services, while ensuring safety measures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.



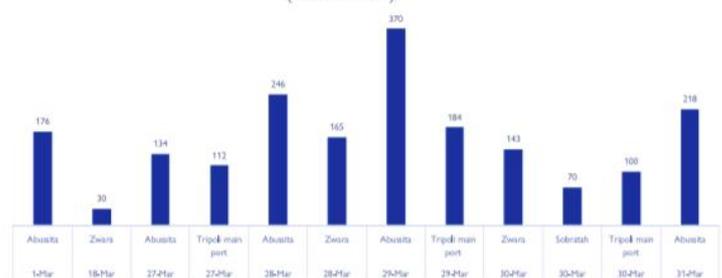
IN March 2021

1,948 Migrants Disembarked in Libya



*No gender data available for 30 individuals

Disembarkation Location and Date (March 2021)



March 2021 disembarkation trends (IOM)

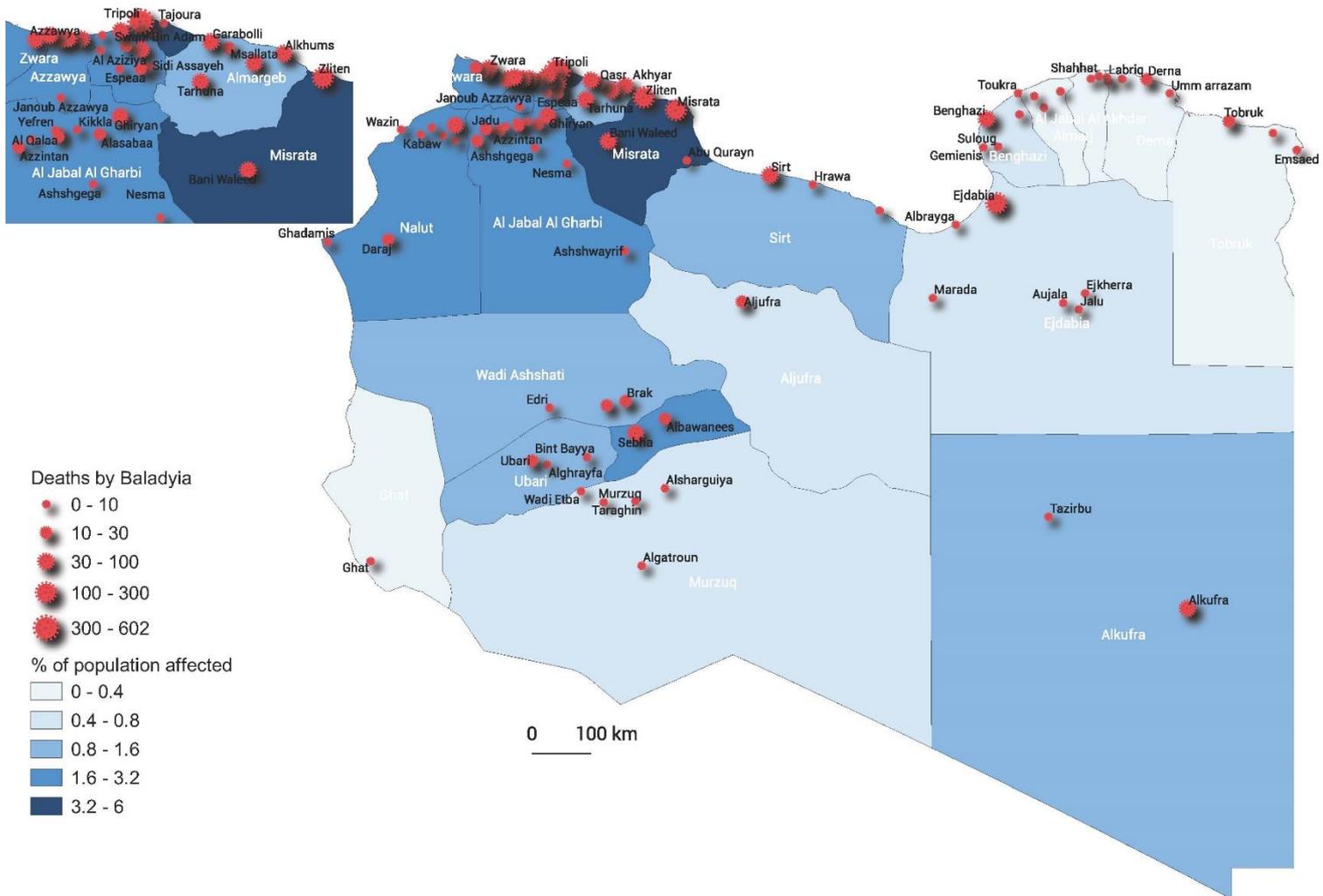
⁴ DCIM Detention Centers Estimated overall population figures (IOM & UNHCR)

⁵ <https://libya.iom.int/sites/libya/files/news/March%202021%20Monthly%20Update.pdf>

First COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Libya

In March 2021, Libya reported 158,957 cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases and 2,667 total deaths. Of over 129,000 tests conducted in Libya in March 2021, 19.2 per cent were confirmed positive. The positivity rate remains the same as for February, but close to 52,000 more lab tests were conducted compared to February (a 67 per cent increase). The increased testing seems promising. However, weekly analyses show significant fluctuations across regions and most of the testing remains Tripoli-centric (93 per cent of the total number of tests conducted nationwide). There are deficiencies in surveillance for all municipalities, especially in the south and west.⁶

On 27 March, the Scientific Advisory Committee for Combatting the Coronavirus Pandemic upgraded the COVID-19 emergency alert level from 3 to 4, meaning that transmission has gone from high incidence to very high incidence or rising exponentially. The Scientific Advisory Committee warned that the epidemiological situation had escalated while the daily COVID-19 death toll is on the rise. Libya has commenced the vaccination campaign, receiving vaccine shipments from various countries and being allocated an initial number of 292,800 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine within the COVAX initiative. Libya is projected to secure 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines according to its National Deployment Plan for COVID-19 vaccination. Four vaccines were approved by the Libyan National Regulatory Authority to be used in the country (AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and J&J/Janssen). The four vaccines are listed for emergency use by WHO.



Geographic COVID-19 case distribution as of March 2021 (OCHA)

⁶ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/libya_covid_update_25_final.pdf

Breaking the fast through food distributions

“We eat what we have. Even some bread is enough for me and my daughters,” Hawaia says as she sits down in a chair in the large warehouse, where food distributions for asylum seekers and refugees are taking place. It is the fourth time the single mother of two teenage daughters visited the site to receive food parcels that contain more than just bread. Tuna, chickpeas, date bars and more will meet her family’s needs for the month.

It’s been a long time coming for Hawaia. “I came to Libya three years ago from Sudan. We escaped fighting and I knew it was unsafe for my daughters to stay there. It took us one and a half months to get to Libya. We went to Chad, we rode through the desert on an animal truck, squeezed in with 20-30 camels and sheep, and at some point, I thought we wouldn’t make it at all,” she says.

But life was not easy once she got to Libya. Similar to many other asylum seekers and refugees, Hawaia struggles to make ends meet. “I have tried to find work again but is not possible now due to the coronavirus. I cannot even afford to send my daughters to schools,” she says.

The pandemic has made the daily struggles of refugees and migrants worse and exacerbated the misery of those stranded in the country. People at previous food distributions told staff that while they had managed to find basic daily labouring work before, this had dried up because of reduced economic activity related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We share an apartment with six other families and currently rely on the help of our neighbors,” Hawaia says. With increasing prices of basic food and commodities, many cannot afford even the most basic costs of day-to-day living. According to a recent migrant report by IOM-DTM, the number of people facing food insecurity in Libya has more than doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2020 as a result of increased prices, restricted freedom of movement and limited income-generating opportunities. This includes people like Hawaia.

To help counter the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, UNHCR together with WFP began a pilot food distribution project in Tripoli during Ramadan last year, aiming to reach some of the most food-insecure refugees with food baskets, later expanding to Zawiya, Misrata, Benghazi and Zwara. By the end of 2020, more than 15,000 individuals were reached. In 2021, UNHCR and WFP aim to reach a similar number.

“Alhamdulillah! [Praise be to God!],” Hawaia exclaims when asked if the food assistance she has received has helped her. “It’s been very helpful to receive the food parcels. Now I am just waiting to hopefully be able to resettle so that my daughters can stay safe and go to school,” she added.



Hawaia waiting to receive her parcel during a UNHCR/WFP food distribution (OCHA/Jennifer Bose Ratka)

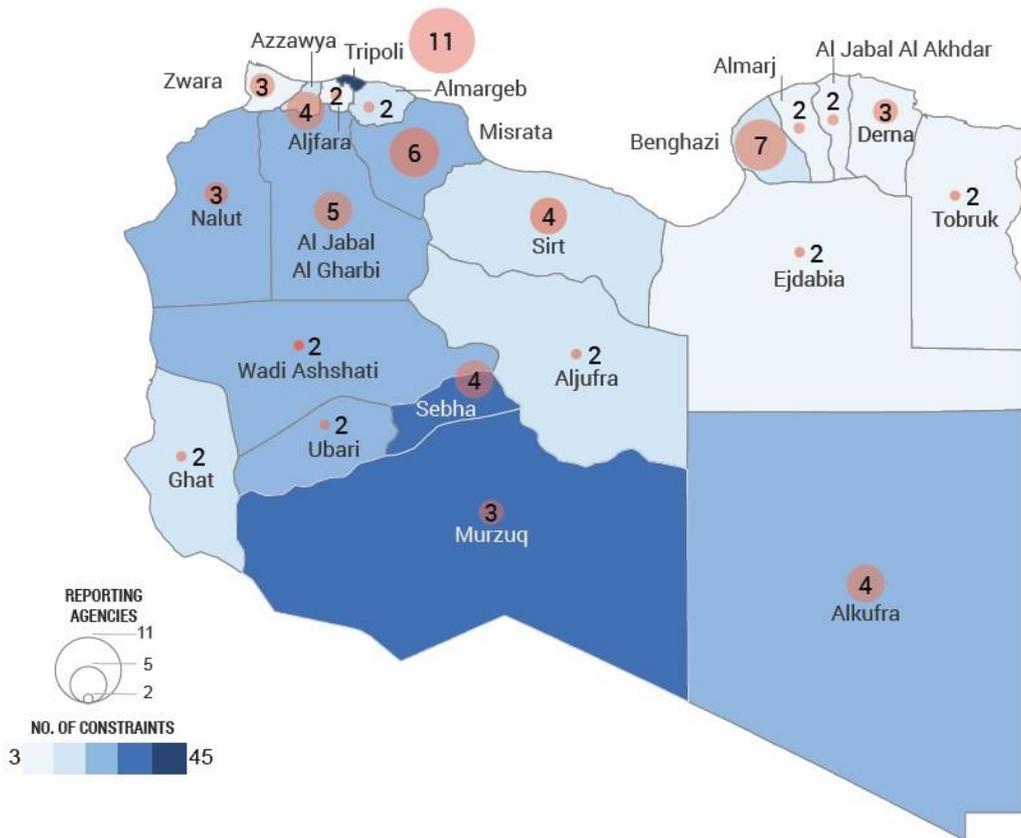


Access constraints continue on a downward trend

Reported humanitarian access constraints continue on a downward trend. March saw a total of 207 access constraints reported through the Access Monitoring and Reporting Framework (AMRF) by humanitarian organizations. This marks a 5 per cent decrease compared to February 2021, a 76 per cent decrease year-on-year compared to March 2020 and an approximate 80 per cent decrease compared to May 2020 (the highest number of constraints reported for a single month since the launch of the AMRF in March 2020).

Bureaucratic restrictions impeding movements of humanitarian staff and relief items into Libya continue to constitute the majority of access constraints, making up 34 per cent of reported constraints similar to the previous two months. Humanitarian organizations also indicated that 15 per cent of reported constraints involved interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities. Some partners reported that their staff were hindered by local authorities while conducting humanitarian activities. The humanitarian community seeks support from the Libyan Government of National Unity to address such incidents of interference to prevent them from recurring. Support is also needed to resolve the mentioned bureaucratic challenges by putting in place consistent processes for visas and customs clearances that are conducive to humanitarian activities.

CONSTRAINTS AND REPORTING AGENCIES BY MANTIKA



Map showing locations of agencies reporting access constraints (OCHA)

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