

Summary

- On 22 May, armed conflict escalated further in Derna, especially to the west of the city.
- Between 300 – 800 households have reportedly been displaced from Saida Khadija neighbourhood in the west as a result of the renewed conflict. A further 60 families have also been displaced from other neighbourhoods.
- There are periodic closures of checkpoints and therefore people are not always able to enter and exit Derna, restricting their movement.
- Humanitarian access to Derna is severely limited and no humanitarian supplies are reported as entered since mid-March. The most urgent needs are in the health sector, however protection concerns for civilians remain serious and the first food shortages are also being reported. Chronic shortages of fuel remain.
- The humanitarian community call on all parties to immediately allow safe and unrestricted access to Derna for humanitarian actors and urgently needed humanitarian goods.

Libya: Derna City (24 May 2018)



Background

The tightened encirclement and closure of Derna, imposed by the Libyan National Army (LNA), has been ongoing since July 2017. Periodic escalations of armed conflict occur, as witnessed since mid-April when the LNA announced it would start a large-scale offensive against armed groups in Derna. During this time, the LNA managed to advance towards Ain Mara in western Derna, and since then airstrikes, shelling,

artillery fire and fighting between armed forces has been ongoing at various intensities. Until 15 May, the fighting was contained to areas with limited civilians.

The primary areas where clashes are taking place remain in Al Hila (south of Derna city), Al Fatayih (east of Derna city), Ain Mara in the west and Dhar Al Hamr to the south-west, encircling Derna city from all sides. There are also reports of clashes in Martuba (south-east of the city) and reportedly shelling of Al Fatayih Al Jadeeda and Sahel al-Sharki areas is taking place.

However, the most recent intense fighting took place in Saida Khadija (west of Derna city) which has resulted in the displacement of most of its residents to other neighbourhoods, Al Bayda, Tobruk and Benghazi. Sources report that between 300 – 800 households have displaced, the majority to Tobruk. Also on 22 May, 21 families were displaced from Hay Al Salam neighbourhood to Al Bayda and remain with their relatives who live there. Furthermore, on 21 May reportedly approximately 40 families were displaced to Martuba, where most are sheltering in a school.

There are periodic closures of checkpoints and thus people are not always able to enter and exit Derna. For example, following several days of closures, the Martuba checkpoint east of Derna was reopened on 20 May allowing for civilian movement in and out of the city, at least for several hours a day. The Corsah (Kirsah) checkpoint, west of Derna, has been reportedly closed since 18 May. As of 21 May, the LNA continued to impose a ban on the entry of essential goods including food items and humanitarian assistance including medical supplies, as well as fuel. No humanitarian goods have entered since mid-March according to humanitarian actors. As a result of these closures, local residents report shortages and price rises in basic foodstuffs including bread and vegetables and a lack of entry of fuel required for the functioning of several installations.

On 20 May, the hospital in Derna city announced that it would only be able to admit urgent life-threatening cases due to the ongoing shortages of basic medical supplies including syringes and oxygen tanks as well as medical staff, many being unable to travel to the hospital due to insecurity. Prior to this, the hospital was forced to close the pediatric ward and women's health unit on 17 May.

Humanitarian Overview

The main ongoing humanitarian needs continue to be: medicine and medical supplies; access to cash; fuel to ensure the continued functioning of critical installations, such as hospitals and water installations and spare parts for the desalination plant.

Further humanitarian needs since the eruption of the recent escalation of violence include shortages in food and other basic supplies due to prohibition of entry into the city; breakdown of medical services due to shortage of medical supplies and oxygen and closure of several departments in the hospital; absence of fuel leading to cessation of public cleaning services/waste disposal services and lack of functionality of firefighting services; ambulances unable to transfer the sick out of the city due to the encirclement and the indiscriminate shelling and a lack of cement to build graves for burying the dead. There are also ongoing electricity and water shortages. The priority needs of those displaced in a school in Martuba are also medical supplies and non-food items. At least 100,000¹-125,000² people are deemed to be affected by the current situation.

No humanitarian assistance has entered Derna since the escalation of conflict and a certain period before that, the last entries that can be confirmed are from March 2018. It is also expected that no humanitarian

¹ Population estimates for Derna based on data provided by Bureau of Census and Statistics, Libya.

² Population estimate for Derna according to the latest government statistics/Derna municipality based on actual number of residents of Derna who hold national numbers

assistance will be allowed in in the near future. All planned humanitarian deliveries are currently awaiting approval to enter Derna, including medicine and medical supplies to deal with trauma and war injuries.

Those humanitarian actors with access have put in place preparedness measures. Pre-positioned supplies include medicine and medical items, food and non-food items and further emergency education supplies. But their rapid and unimpeded entry will be fundamental.

Humanitarian actors reiterate their call on all parties to:

- Meet their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and ensure civilians' freedom of movement and facilitate the safe exit of those civilians wishing to leave Derna
- Respect international humanitarian law (IHL), and accordingly to take all feasible precautions during the conduct of hostilities to protect civilians from the effects of attacks and, to the extent feasible, to avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas.
- Armed actors must at all times distinguish between military objectives and civilians and civilian objects. Direct attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks are prohibited under IHL.
- Allow access of humanitarian assistance intended for civilians in need, lift restrictions on the movement of humanitarian relief personnel and civilians in need of urgent assistance, and grant humanitarian organizations unimpeded access to Derna.
- Ensure the safety and sanctity of health infrastructure and health human resources as enshrined in successive World Health Assembly Resolutions.

Further updates will be issued should the situation require.

For further information, please contact: OCHA Libya: ochalibya2@un.org