

Briefing Paper to Libya's Donors and Allies

Explosive Situation: Qaddafi's Abandoned Weapons and the Threat to Libya's Civilians

Summary

Muammar Qaddafi's abandoned arsenal, containing tens of thousands of tons of weapons, presents an ongoing threat to the civilians of Libya. Many of these munitions, which range from bullets and mortars to torpedoes and surface-to-air missiles, are unstable and inadequately guarded. The weak and transitional nature of the central government has exacerbated this already dangerous situation. Protecting civilians by securing or eliminating the ordnance requires an urgent response at the national and international level.

A new report, based on in-country investigations, documents the risks posed to Libyan civilians from the extensive stockpiling and spread of Qaddafi's munitions following the 2011 armed conflict. Published by Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, CIVIC (now the Center for Civilians in Conflict), and the Center for American Progress, the report also calls on Libya, with international support, to improve its stockpile management, clear munitions, educate the population about risks, and assist victims.

The Libyan government, which bears primary responsibility for addressing the issue, should develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy that encompasses all of these activities. It should designate a government focal point for administration and implementation of the plan. That focal point should consult with all relevant parties—including national ministries, local authorities, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and affected individuals and communities. The Libyan government should also be open to receiving financial, material, and technical assistance from donors and partners.

The United States and the rest of the international community should provide ongoing and increased assistance to help ameliorate the situation. NATO nations should accept special responsibility to support these endeavors given its civilian protection mandate during last year's military intervention and the fact that some of its airstrikes dispersed ordnance from Qaddafi's ammunition bunkers. While the report offers many recommendations to the Libyan government, the recommendations that follow are directed at the international community.

Recommendations to the international community

As of July 2012, the international community had contributed more than US \$20 million to dealing with Libya's abandoned weapons problem, but more support is needed. The assistance can take many forms, including funding, material aid, training, and technical advice. The assistance can be given to the Libyan government, UN agencies, and/or NGOs working in the area. The international community, and the US government in particular, can take the following steps to help minimize future harm from abandoned ordnance:

- Provide ongoing and increased financial, technical, and material support for stockpile management, clearance, risk education, and victim assistance in Libya, to the government, the United Nations, and/or NGOs.
- Provide specific financial, technical, and/or material support for clearance of ammunition storage facilities bombed by NATO during the armed conflict in Libya.
- Provide assistance, including in the form of funding, for civilians harmed by abandoned ordnance kicked out of bunkers that were bombed by NATO during the armed conflict in Libya.

For more information

Explosive Situation: Qaddafi's Abandoned Weapons and the Threat to Libya's Civilians is available at: <http://harvardhumanrights.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/clinic-report-finds-qaddafis-weapons-pose-threat-to-civilians/>

Its summary and recommendations are available at:
http://civicworldwide.org/storage/documents/Libya_Arms_Summary.pdf

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