

## **INSECURITY AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES IN SOUTHERN LIBYA**

**FREDERIC WEHREY**

Southern Libya remains a region of endemic instability wracked by communal conflict, a shortage of basic services, rampant smuggling, and fragmented or collapsed institutions. The region has long existed on the periphery of Libya's politics and international concerns—but that must change. Increasingly, the vacuum of governance in the south has drawn in political actors from northern Libya and outside states. Extremists seeking refuge in the south and migrants being smuggled through the region directly impact the security of Libya, neighboring states like Tunisia, and Europe.

### **Sources of Insecurity in the South**

- The main driver of insecurity is the collapse of already fragile institutions and social pacts after the 2011 revolution and, more importantly, the inequitable distribution of economic resources.
- The outbreak of fighting among Arab, Tabu, and Tuareg tribes across the south can be largely attributed to competition for fixed economic streams derived from smuggling routes and access to oil fields.
- Interference by northern political actors is a further irritant: the payment and arming of young men from the south by warring factions aligned with loose coalitions has prolonged and intensified local conflicts.
- Extremism remains a challenge in the south but should not be overblown. Terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the so-called Islamic State have not found strong purchase in southern towns but have exploited the lack of southern governance for logistics and training.

### **Recommendations for Libyan Authorities and the International Community**

**Implement immediate-impact projects to demonstrate the reach and legitimacy of Libya's government.** A key imperative is the provision of basic services such as electricity, medical care, and cash reserves.

**Support civil society initiatives in the south related to the security sector, especially cross-tribal, cross-communal endeavors.** Many of these have already had a beneficial impact on security, whether through cross-communal dialogue, support to victims of war, children's education, or technical training.

**Restart government salaries in the south, resolve the national identification quandary, and empower municipal budgets as part of a broader security-sector payroll reform effort.** Libya's government should prioritize distributing salaries to security actors via municipal authorities.

**Begin a series of national dialogues with security actors from across the country on a road map for reconstituting the security sector.** Give special consideration to a locally constituted force that harnesses the strength of existing municipal and provincial security actors while also tethering them to a national command.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Frederic Wehrey** is a senior fellow in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He focuses on security affairs, civil-military relations, and identity politics in North Africa and the Gulf.

### **CONTACT**

Tara Medeiros  
Deputy Director of Communications  
+1 202 939 2372  
tmedeiros@ceip.org

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