

LIBYA

*More than 200 schools were used by armed groups during the 2011 uprising against the Gaddafi regime and more than 1,900 schools were damaged or destroyed.*¹⁰¹⁵

CONTEXT

Libya's conflict began in February 2011 when protests in Benghazi against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime were crushed by security forces firing on the crowd. This led to a rapid escalation between forces loyal to Gaddafi and those seeking political and social change. In March 2011, a NATO coalition intervened with an air campaign following UN Security Council Resolution 1973 and on 16 September 2011, the UN recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legal representative of Libya. The following month, on 20 October 2011, Gaddafi was captured and subsequently killed by rebels.¹⁰¹⁶

In total, more than 1,900 schools were damaged during the 2011 uprising,¹⁰¹⁷ of which 476 sustained heavy damage and 19 were completely destroyed.¹⁰¹⁸ It is not known how many of these were intentionally targeted.

Fighting in 2011 caused extensive damage to universities in Misrata, while in June 2011, the Libyan government said NATO bombing in Tripoli had damaged university buildings.¹⁰¹⁹

A nationwide school-based survey, reporting conflict-related causes of drop-out, indicated that a total of 338 pupils had been killed, 268 injured and 48 disabled during the war in 2011.¹⁰²⁰

The priorities of the new Ministry of Education during the transition period included curriculum

reform, clearing schools of unexploded ordnance and repairing damaged infrastructure.¹⁰²¹

Gross enrolment rates in Libya were 114 per cent (2006) at primary level,¹⁰²² 110 per cent (2006) for secondary¹⁰²³ and 54 per cent (2003) for tertiary.¹⁰²⁴ The adult literacy rate was 90 per cent (2011).¹⁰²⁵

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

A total of 27 intentional attacks on schools were documented in 2011, affecting more than 14,000 children, according to the UN, although it stressed that this number represented only a portion of the incidents that took place due both to difficulties in gaining access to certain areas because of fighting and the absence of systematic monitoring and reporting. Most attacks were reported to have been carried out by the Gaddafi government's forces and opposition forces led by the NTC.¹⁰²⁶

A UN inter-agency assessment found that in Zlitan between five and eight schools reportedly used for military purposes were badly damaged and that several schools that were allegedly being used for military purposes were damaged by aerial bombardment. An independent civil society fact-finding mission visited a number of schools and colleges targeted by NATO, including a number of schools in Zlitan that it had been told were used by pro-Gaddafi forces, but found no evidence of prior military use.¹⁰²⁷

In 2011, 89 schools reported unexploded ordnance on their premises, affecting 17,800 students. This problem continued into 2012.¹⁰²⁸

Schools were used as polling stations during elections to Libya's General National Congress in July 2012,¹⁰²⁹ which may be the reason that some were attacked by armed militias.

The Ministry of Education reported attacks on at least five schools that were being used as polling stations during the elections in July 2012.¹⁰³⁰ For instance, on 6 July 2012, a polling station in a school compound in Benghazi was attacked by small arms fire and improvised explosives.¹⁰³¹

at least one incident involving armed men. Government officials strongly denied a claim that up to 47 girls had been taken in less than a week.¹⁰³⁹ Nonetheless, teachers staged a sit-in to demand increased security outside schools.¹⁰⁴⁰

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

According to a UN respondent, 221 schools were used by armed groups during 2011, with a further 35 used by the government or local administration.¹⁰³²

The UN respondent said both pro-Gaddafi forces and forces aligned with the NTC used schools as military bases, thus making them a target for attack.¹⁰³³ At least one school in Misrata, Al-Wahda High School, was used to detain hundreds of prisoners and remained a detention facility as of 2013.¹⁰³⁴ During the revolution, there was a pattern whereby rebels, when they liberated areas, used schools as detention centres to hold prisoners.¹⁰³⁵ Schools were closed at the time. Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) reported that Gaddafi forces had also used an elementary school in Tomina as a detention site where women and girls were raped.¹⁰³⁶

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

In October 2011, forces of Libya's interim government seized control of two strategic areas in the city of Sirte, at the university and at a huge construction site that was meant to be its new campus.¹⁰³⁷

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

There were isolated reports of explosive devices being placed inside or near schools¹⁰³⁸ and fears that girls were being abducted by armed men. On 28 September 2013, it was reported that four girls had been abducted from outside schools in Tripoli, with

ENDNOTES LIBYA

¹⁰¹⁵ This profile covers attacks on education in 2009-2012, with an additional section on attacks in 2013.

¹⁰¹⁶ “Muammar Gaddafi Dead: Mansour Iddhow, Former Servant, Recounts Colonel’s Final Days,” Huffington Post, 21 February 2012.

¹⁰¹⁷ Information provided by a UN respondent, 1 February 2013.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁹ Megan Detrie, “Libya: New Regime Plans to Reopen Universities Soon,” University World News, 31 August 2011.

¹⁰²⁰ Information provided by a UN respondent, 1 February 2013.

¹⁰²¹ “Libyan Students Return to Gadhafi-free Schools,” USA Today, 7 January 2012.

¹⁰²² The World Bank, “School enrollment – primary (% gross),” The World Bank Data (2006).

¹⁰²³ The World Bank, “School enrollment – secondary (% gross),” The World Bank Data (2006).

¹⁰²⁴ The World Bank, “School enrollment – tertiary (% gross),” The World Bank Data (2003).

¹⁰²⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), “Education (all levels) Profile - Libya,” UIS Statistics in Brief (2011).

¹⁰²⁶ Information provided by a UN respondent, 1 February 2013; and UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782–S/2012/261, 26 April 2012, paras 53 and 58.

¹⁰²⁷ United Nations Inter-Agency Mission to Zlitan, 26 August 2011, 6-7; Report of the Independent Civil Society Fact-Finding Mission to Libya, January 2012 (Arab Organization for Human Rights, International Legal Assistance Consortium and Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 2012), 42-44, paras 184-200.

¹⁰²⁸ Information provided by a UN respondent, 1 February 2013.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁰ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/845–S/2013/245, 15 May 2013, para 83.

¹⁰³¹ Information provided by a UN respondent, 1 February 2013.

¹⁰³² Ibid.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴ Information provided by Human Rights Watch.

¹⁰³⁵ Information provided by a Human Rights Watch researcher, 4 December 2012.

¹⁰³⁶ Women under Siege Project, “Libya,” 2011.

¹⁰³⁷ “Libya: Anti-Qaddafi Forces Seize Strategic Complex, University in Sirte,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 9 October 2011.

¹⁰³⁸ “Bomb blasts rock Libyan city of Benghazi,” Al Jazeera, 11 May 2013; and Sherif Dhaimish, “Bomb targets Benghazi school, no injuries,” 18 May 2013.

¹⁰³⁹ Essam Mohamed, “Tripoli schoolgirl abductions raise questions,” Libya TV, 30 September 2013.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Aimen Eljali and Houda Mzioudet, “Yet another girl abducted; teachers protest in Tripoli,” Libya Herald, 28 September 2013.