**LIBYA**

Attacks on education continued in Libya in 2022 and 2023, particularly in and around Tripoli. Attacks on schools declined slightly compared to the previous reporting period, while the military use of schools and attacks on higher education continued sporadically.

**CONTEXT**

Intermittent violence persisted in 2022 and 2023 between armed groups aligned with the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU), established by consensus through a UN-led process, and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), established by the House of Representatives and aligned with the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) armed group.1 Despite the decline in hostilities after the UN-brokered ceasefire in October 2020, low-level violence between armed groups endured.2 Parliamentary and presidential elections, originally set for December 2021, were indefinitely postponed amid disagreements between rival administrations over constitutional amendments and election laws, according to the UN and media reports.3 In May and August 2022, GNS-allied armed groups clashed with armed groups aligned with the GNU near Tripoli but were unable to gain control of the capital.4

Violence continued throughout the reporting period.5 In August 2022, fighting between armed groups in Tripoli killed at least 32 people, including four civilians, wounded 159 people, including civilians, and damaged infrastructure, according to Human Rights Watch.6 One year later, in August 2023, renewed fighting broke out in Tripoli between armed groups based in the west of the country, resulting in 55 deaths and more than 146 civilians injured.7 The UN reported an increase in landmine and unexploded ordnance incidents since the ceasefire in October 2020, low-level violence between armed groups endured.2 Parliamentary and presidential elections, originally set for December 2021, were indefinitely postponed amid disagreements between rival administrations over constitutional amendments and election laws, according to the UN and media reports.3

In September 2023, floods in eastern Libya killed over 4,300 people and left over 8,000 missing.8 They also damaged infrastructure, particularly in northeastern Derna city, including approximately 280 schools, as reported by the UN.9 As a result, over 43,000 people were displaced and schools were used as shelters by internally displaced persons in Derna city, although they were evacuated at the beginning of the academic year. In nearby Benghazi municipality, three schools used as shelters after the flooding had not been vacated as of November 2023.10

More than 111,380 children required support accessing education in January 2023, according to the UN.17 School closures and damaged infrastructure were among the main barriers for children to access learning.18 Following militia clashes in August 2022, the University of Tripoli suspended classes and exams; the university closed again for five days after the renewed fighting in August 2023, according to news reports.19

**ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS**

GCPEA collected at least nine reported attacks on schools in 2022 and 2023, which destroyed at least three schools. In comparison, GCPEA collected at least one reported attack in 2021 and 22 attacks in 2020, many of which occurred before the UN-brokered ceasefire in October of that year.20 Shelling, the use of other explosive weapons, and crossfire affected schools during both reporting periods.

Between mid-2012 and mid-2022, more than 250 schools were damaged due to fighting and other causes, according to the European Commission.21 In August and September 2022, LAAF-affiliated fighters limited the movement of civilians in Qasr Abu Hadi village, near Sirte city, forcing schools to temporarily close, according to the UN.22

In 2022, GCPEA identified at least eight reports of attacks on schools.23 Separately, the UN verified four attacks on schools that year.24 Since it was unclear how many of these attacks overlapped with reports collected by GCPEA, they were not included in the total number of attacks on schools in this report, to avoid double counting. Attacks on schools were concentrated in and around Tripoli. For instance:

- A shooting occurred near the rear entrance of the Shohada Bohdema School in Benghazi city and district, on February 1, 2022, due to a dispute between two unidentified armed groups. Classes were suspended for five days, affecting 670 students enrolled in the school, according to the Libya Education Cluster.25
- Security forces cleared an anti-tank landmine and explosive compounds found in a schoolyard in the Hadaba Agricultural Project, in Tripoli, on February 23, 2022, as reported by local media Alwasat News.26
- Security forces cleared an anti-personnel landmine inside Al-Hussein School in the Hadaba Agricultural Project, in Tripoli, on March 3, 2022, as reported by local media Alwasat News.27
- A war remnant reportedly exploded at Noor Al-Yaqin School near Sirte city and district, on March 21, 2022. The explosion of the shell injured one student, as reported by local media.28
- In late August 2022, armed clashes in Tripoli reportedly damaged three secondary schools, according to local media.29
- On December 13, 2022, an explosive projectile landed on the roof of a school in Benghazi city and district. It did not detonate, and no casualties were recorded, according to the UN.30

In 2023, GCPEA identified one report of an attack on a school. Between January 3 and 7, 2023, nearby armed clashes involving artillery led to the suspension of school classes in the Ujaylat area of western Sabratha city, on the border of Nuqat Al-Khams and Zawiya districts, according to the UN.31
During the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least one incident of the military use of a school.

Attacks on higher education

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least one incident of the military use of a school.

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified attacks on higher education. Attacks also occurred sporadically in the previous reporting period; GCPEA gathered one and seven reports of attacks on higher education in 2021 and 2020, respectively.

GCPEA did not collect any incidents of attacks on higher education in 2022.

In 2023, GCPEA collected eight reports of attacks on higher education:

- Around August 15, 2023, nearby armed clashes caused two universities in Tripoli, the University of Tripoli and the University of Zayda, to suspend studies and exams due to clashes, according to local media.
- On November 16, 2023, the Internal Security Agency detained a professor who chaired a union representing university teaching staff amid a labor dispute at the University of Tripoli, according to Scholars at Risk.
- On November 28, 2023, an academic who participated in a labor dispute relating to university teaching staff was arrested at the University of Tripoli in Tripoli, as reported by local media.
- On December 25, 2023, an academic was arrested on the University of Tripoli campus in Tripoli, as reported by local and international media outlets.

ENDNOTES


A full list of references can be found on GCPEA’s website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/libya_2024_references.pdf
26 “A mine and high explosives were found inside a school yard in the Hadaba project (روثعلا ةبضهلا عورشم يف ةسردم ةحاس ىلع),” Alwasat News, February 23, 2022. Alwasat News (Libya), as cited in ACLED, Event ID LBY10996.
28 Al-Wasat Gate, “A student was injured in a shell explosion inside a school in Sirte (طسولا ةباوب ةسردم لخاد ةفيذق راجفنا يف بلاط ةباصإ),” Alwasat News. Libya Observer; Alwasat News (Libya), as cited in ACLED, Event ID LBY11021.
29 “Minister of Education mourns a student killed in Tripoli recent clashes,” Al-Wasat Gate, “A student was injured in a shell explosion inside a school in Sirte (طسولا ةباوب ةسردم لخاد ةفيذق راجفنا يف بلاط ةباصإ),” Alwasat News. Libya Observer; Alwasat News (Libya), as cited in ACLED, Event ID LBY11021.
32 GCPEA, Education under Attack 2022 (New York, GCPEA: 2022), Libya profile.
34 GCPEA, Education under Attack 2022 (New York, GCPEA: 2022), Libya profile.
36 Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Tripoli, November 16, 2023.
38 Abdulkader Assad, “Faculty staff member kidnapped from inside Tripoli University,” Libya Observer; November 28, 2023.
39 Monia Ghanmi, “After the kidnapping of a university professor, protests erupt in Tripoli,” Al-Arabiya, December 26, 2023. “After criticizing Al-Dabaiba, a university professor was kidnapped from inside the University of Tripoli,” Al-Arabiya, December 26, 2023.