

Politics

## Warlord Haftar loses seven cities in just seven hours

### Libya's GNA retakes major coastline cities in a lightning attack against Haftar's forces



Libyan Army forces under the command of the Government of National Accord (GNA) have retaken full control of Surman, Sabratha, Al-Ajilat, Al-Jamail, Ragdaline, Al-Essa and Zeltin on the coastline of the western region in a lightning attack against Khalifa Haftar's forces.

Surman and Sabratha's recapture is very vital for GNA as they have been a major location for Haftar's operations room to plan an attack on Al-Zawiya and Zuwara cities - an attack that has been under consideration and planning for a year.

GNA forces launched Monday morning an attack to recapture Surman after late Sunday airstrikes by GNA's Air Force, which hit positions for Haftar's forces in Surman and Sabratha, including operations rooms.

Surman took only a few hours to be under the control of GNA forces as Haftar's forces ran away toward Sabratha, to which GNA immediately headed and after a few more hours, the second city fell to the Libyan Army forces, sources reported.

"All Haftar's defenses in Sabratha didn't last more than some two or three hours and then they got defeated. Some 30 fighters of them surrendered as they watched their comrades flee the city." Sources from Libyan Army forces explained.

Many photos and videos posted online showed GNA forces seizing ammunition, weapons, 10 tanks, military vehicles and missiles as well as artillery rounds from different areas, especially Surman and Sabratha.

Politics

### Al-Sarraj to Haftar's supporters: We'll send back your sons in coffins

The Head of the Presidential Council Fayez Al-Sarraj has lashed out at countries conspiring on Libya and supporting Khalifa Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, saying "their sons who are fighting for Haftar will be returned in coffins along with their ID papers."

He added that the Libyan Foreign Ministry will coordinate with relevant authorities to implement this procedure, according to a statement on Monday, hailing the victories of Libyan Army forces as part of Operation Peace Storm against Haftar's forces.

"Your armored vehicles have turned to ashes and the rest are under our control to be put later at the war museum to remind the world of your malicious acts against Libyans. Libyans will hold you accountable for the ammunition and weapons as well as aircraft used to kill our sons." Al-Sarraj said referring to the countries supporting Haftar.

He said their plot to hinder the success of Operation Peace Storm by attacking Abu Grein on Sunday had failed as GNA forces seized Monday the "abducted cities of Surman and Sabratha", saying "GNA forces had taught Haftar's forces a lesson in defending the nation in Abu Grein against the countries that "show loyalty in the morning and plot against us at night".



"We will continue to fight until we control the entire country to allow all the displaced to return home and we will never forget those who helped or forgive those who stabbed us in the back." Al-Sarraj remarked.

Politics

### Human Rights Solidarity: War civilian victims in 2020 over 230, more than 40 are children



The Human Rights Solidarity organization has said that it had documented 236 civilian casualties in the offensive against Tripoli since the beginning of January 2020 till March, including 43 children.

In its recent report on the victims of the aggression on Tripoli, the organization said that 91% of those killed died in bombardments carried out by Haftar's militias in Tripoli and its outskirts.

It noted and expressed concern that the casualty toll in children is rising and worse than last year, in which it verified 65 child casualties during 2019.

The report documented the overall number of victims during the first three months of 2020 around 599 victims, including civilians and military personnel, noting that this number includes fatalities, the wounded, and detainees and prisoners.

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Politics

## Foreign Ministry begins process of returning stranded Libyans home



The Libyan Foreign Ministry will oblige Libyan nationals in Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt to 14 days in quarantine, then they will have to do the needed lab tests before being repatriated home, spokesman Mohamed Al-Giblawi said Sunday.

Al-Giblawi added that the process will start on Monday in these three countries first, adding that the Foreign Ministry had allocated funds for the embassies to provide the needed assistance to the stranded nationals in other countries.

He also said that the idea of placing Libyans in Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt in quarantines for 14 days was recommended by the Interior Ministry as it would be difficult to put the returnees in quarantines inside Libya.

The scientific advisory committee for combating Coronavirus that is appointed by the Presidential Council put last Thursday a protocol for the returning process of the Libyan nationals abroad that included many recommendations upon which the Foreign Ministry acted on Sunday.



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Politics

## Libyan Interior Minister: There's no political agreement with Haftar

The Libyan Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha said there can be no political settlement with Khalifa Haftar and there can be no political solution with him in the scene, saying achieving a complete military victory in Libya is a long shot, dismissing negotiations with Haftar to end the fighting amid fears the coronavirus was taking hold in the country.

There can be no complete military victory in Libya, but there's no political solution with Haftar. We call on all countries supporting this failed dictatorial policy to reconsider." Bashagha told Bloomberg on Tuesday, calling on foreign backers to reconsider their support for Haftar.

Meanwhile, Bashagha took Twitter to say that Haftar's forces were taking advantage of the spread of Coronavirus to intensify attacks on Tripoli and Abu Grein, adding that GNA forces will continue to retake positions on the ground from Haftar's forces.

"There is no political solution with war criminal Haftar and we call on the countries supporting him to reconsider their stances." He added.

Bashagha said shutting down gas pipelines to cut off electricity and attacks on residential areas in Tripoli as well as attacks on Al-Khadra Hospital and Abu Grein town after the arrival of ammunition and weapons and the backup of Chinese drones and mercenary pilots are evidence that Haftar wanted to use Coronavirus concerns and procedures to revive his military operations with more brutality.

Politics

## Malta condemns attacks on hospitals, vows to help Libya fight COVID-19 pandemic



Maltese Ambassador to Libya Charles Saliba has reiterated his country's support to the Libyan people amid the ongoing fighting and the outbreak of coronavirus.

In a telephone conversation with the Minister of Health Dr. Ehmud Ben Omar, Ambassador Saliba strongly condemned the recent military escalations in Tripoli, especially the attacks on health facilities including Al-Khadra Hospital.

"Libya is our neighbor and it is our interest and the stability of Libya is paramount for our country," the Maltese Ambassador stressed.

He confirmed that Malta will be offering assistance to Libya in the coming days to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

For his part, Dr. Ben Omar explained to Ambassador Saliba the difficulties that Libya is going through. He said Libya is facing aggressive attacks by warlord Haftar's armed groups on Tripoli from one side and it's facing the Coronavirus on the other side.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has decided to suspend work at Al-Khadra Hospital due to the repeated rocket attacks.

Politics

## Foreign Ministry mourns Libyan doctor in Belgium died of Covid-19



Spokesman of Libya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Al-Qiblawi confirmed in a statement Saturday the death of Libyan Doctor, Ibrahim Boushima, in Belgium, as a result of infection with Covid-19.

The deceased moved to Belgium since the 1970s, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Al-Qiblawi said the Libyan embassy in Brussels is in contact with his family and assured that they are doing well.

In the same context, the Foreign Ministry's official declared the infection of around 50 Libyan citizens in the UK, among them 20 children, as confirmed by the Libyan Embassy in London.

Two children have achieved full recovery while the other cases are reported to be in stable conditions, according to Al-Qiblawi.



Politics

## Supreme Judiciary Council: Emergency State gives executive authorities exceptional legitimacy



The Head of the Supreme Judiciary Council, Justice Mohammed Al-Hafi, told the Presidential Council's Head Fayez Al-Sarraj and the Governor of the Central Bank of Libya Al-Siddiq Al-Kabir in a letter on Sunday that declaring a state of emergency gives exceptional legitimacy to the executive authorities that allow them to issue extraordinary orders and make exceptional decisions.

Al-Hafi said state institutions should now boost the unity of the state by avoiding plunging it into any dangers, adding that there will be accountability for any unnecessary measures taken by executive authorities after the current state of emergency is over.

He called for ending escalation and accusations' exchange between Al-Sarraj and Al-Kabir, urging them to work as a team to end the crisis. He added that the rhetoric and statements of sovereign state institutions should be heedful and diligent as well as consider official ranks and the seriousness of the situation.

Meanwhile, over the last few weeks, Al-Sarraj and Al-Kabir have been tit-for-tatting in accusations of mishandling government funds and miscalculations, especially after state employees' salaries have gotten delayed for three months and foreign currency transactions have been put on hold, thus creating a hike in black market rates and prices of commodities as imports have also been stopped.

Politics

## Haftar's militias rain rockets on Tripoli after losing strongholds in coastal cities



Haftar militia stationed on the southern outskirts of Tripoli fired on Monday night a barrage of Grad missiles towards populated areas and Mitiga Airport.

Eyewitnesses did not report any casualties but confirmed that great damage was caused to the people's property.

The attack comes as an act of revenge by Haftar in response to his defeat in the battles that took place on Monday at the hands of the Libyan army forces, who forced his militias out of several cities in the western region.

Economy

## No wheat flour shortage in the country says Ministry of Economy



The director of the commercial department at the Ministry of Economy, Mustafa Qadara, said on Tuesday that the current stock of wheat flour in factories is sufficient for another three months.

Qadara said in a TV statement that if credits open, wheat supplies will flow naturally and this would guarantee vast quantities of stock.

The imposed curfew affected the factories that were functioning around the clock before the coronavirus epidemic, said Qadara, indicating that the matter will be considered by the Ministry of Economy.

Economy

## OPEC to exempt Libya from production cuts



OPEC is to exempt Libya from a plan to slow down oil production for a period of two months, starting next May, due to the production lost through the closure of ports and fields by pro-Haftar militias east of Libya.

The oil-exporting countries, with the exception of Mexico, have agreed to reduce 10 million barrels per day in world production in May and June, to try and stop oil prices from tumbling further, OPEC said in a statement.

The agreement provides for cutting 8 million barrels per day starting from July until next December.

Economy

## Libya, Germany discuss economic cooperation amid Covid-19



German ambassador to Libya, Oliver Owczar discussed on Tuesday economic cooperation with Libya's Minister of Economy, Ali Al-Sarraj, and the impact of the Coronavirus epidemic on commercial traffic.

Owczar said the conversation was constructive and touched upon the effect of the partial closure of borders during the Covid-19 pandemic on trade and services.

Economy

## Tunisia to organize weekly freight trips to Libya



The Tunisian Ministry of Transport said on Monday, that it has agreed with a marine carrier to organize weekly trips for transporting Tunisian exports to Tripoli via Sfax Port.

"This step comes to support the Tunisian exporters and facilitate transportation operations for those interested to access the Libyan market, by providing maritime transport services to secure the flow of cargo traffic between Tunisia and Libya," the Tunisian ministry explained.

The first trip between the two ports will take place next week according to the Tunisian ministry, pointing out to the possibility of regulating maritime trade between the two countries



## UNDP continues supporting all Libyans and strengthening the UN Libya Coronavirus Response

By Gerardo Noto, Resident Representative, UNDP Libya

The rapid spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has shocked the world, with so far 33,257 dead and 697,244 confirmed cases in 204 countries, areas and territories. The International Labor Organization estimates the loss of more than 25 million jobs and US\$ 3.4 trillion losses in labor income.

It is expected that the COVID-19 crisis will hit developing countries harder with income losses exceeding \$220 billion and nearly half of all jobs in Africa lost. An effective response must be driven by solidarity, science and human rights, whilst focusing on the most vulnerable people.

For the United Nations, and for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular, the facts about poverty, climate change, inequality, and conflicts around the world are relevant to the whole of humanity. For this reason, we have been listening to people and experts and working to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Impact on education, human rights and, in the most severe cases, basic food security and nutrition, is expected due to the coronavirus crisis, especially for the estimated 55 per cent of the global population with no access to social protection.

It is important to keep in mind that total number of confirmed cases do not provide a total accurate picture as like in the case of Libya there are gaps for testing capacity to identify COVID-19.

Furthermore, the need to respond to the current global health crisis only adds to the protracted security, political and economic crises. People in Libya live in permanent uncertainty and fear, as open conflict continues.

This new challenge comes to under-resourced hospitals and a fragile health systems, plus poor urban planning, the weak waste disposal services, and even traffic congestion impeding quick access to healthcare facilities.

For years, UNDP, as well as other UN agencies, have been supporting public institutions, local governments, civil society and communities in Libya to achieve stabilization, resilience and recovery, and contributing to shaping the conditions for peace and social cohesion in the west, east and south of the country.

Nowadays, UNDP, in coordination with public institutions and the United Nations, is responding to the Covid-19 crisis helping Libya in three ways:

The first is supporting national and local institutions to strengthen their health systems. With support from 13 international partners, our Stabilization Facility for Libya, and with funds from the European Union, our Resilience programme, continue supporting all three regions of Libya with provision of health infrastructure, health waste management, and water and sanitation equipment.

We are providing key strategic health infrastructure and medical equipment; upgrade capacities for local production of protection gear; help the Ministry of Health to build isolation rooms in hospitals and clinics, as well as provide technical assistance to design medical oxygen plants and procure urgent inputs like hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and corona virus test kits.

We are supporting Ministry of Justice to prevent and control COVID-19 in prisons.

We are also working with the Libya Accelerator Lab, part of a UNDP global network, to apply innovative ways and tools to support the COVID-19 response engaging key national and local actors for facilitating access to assistance to all and more effective actions.

The second is setting up a whole-of-society response bringing all local and national authorities, civil society and private sector around the table. In Libya, this will include strengthening institutions for governance and crisis management at national and local level; and raising awareness on the exposure and precautions against the virus through a network of communication officers of municipalities in the South, West, and East of the country.

UNDP keeps supporting UNSMIL, so Libya can move forward with the Berlin peace process and pave the way for a comprehensive political solution, despite the constraints determined by the threat of the virus.

From Libya, we are hosting online reconciliation forums, and advocating in support of the call for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world issued by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, to fight the common enemy, COVID-19. We are supporting a group of 100 peace mediators from all corners of Libya spreading their word online.

The third is addressing the socio-economic and human rights impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding progress towards achieving the SDGs, including addressing stigma and discrimination arising from its spread and supporting marginalized people and vulnerable populations. In Libya, we will assess capacities and planning for long term inclusive development with especial focus on most vulnerable groups; implement special measures for those whose livelihoods are most affected; and conduct communication and advocacy campaigns engaging with civil society and community-based organizations at the local level to prevent discrimination.

Within the UN system coordinated response in Libya, we are working to ensure that no one is left behind, that we support preparation, management and recovery of this crisis and develop capacities for prevention in the longer term, and that we continue making progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

As UNDP in Libya, we continue working with and for the people of Libya, strengthening their capacities to respond to crises, now with a focus on the new corona virus pandemic, to overcome governance, social and economic impacts of conflict and crises from a long term inclusive and sustainable development perspective.

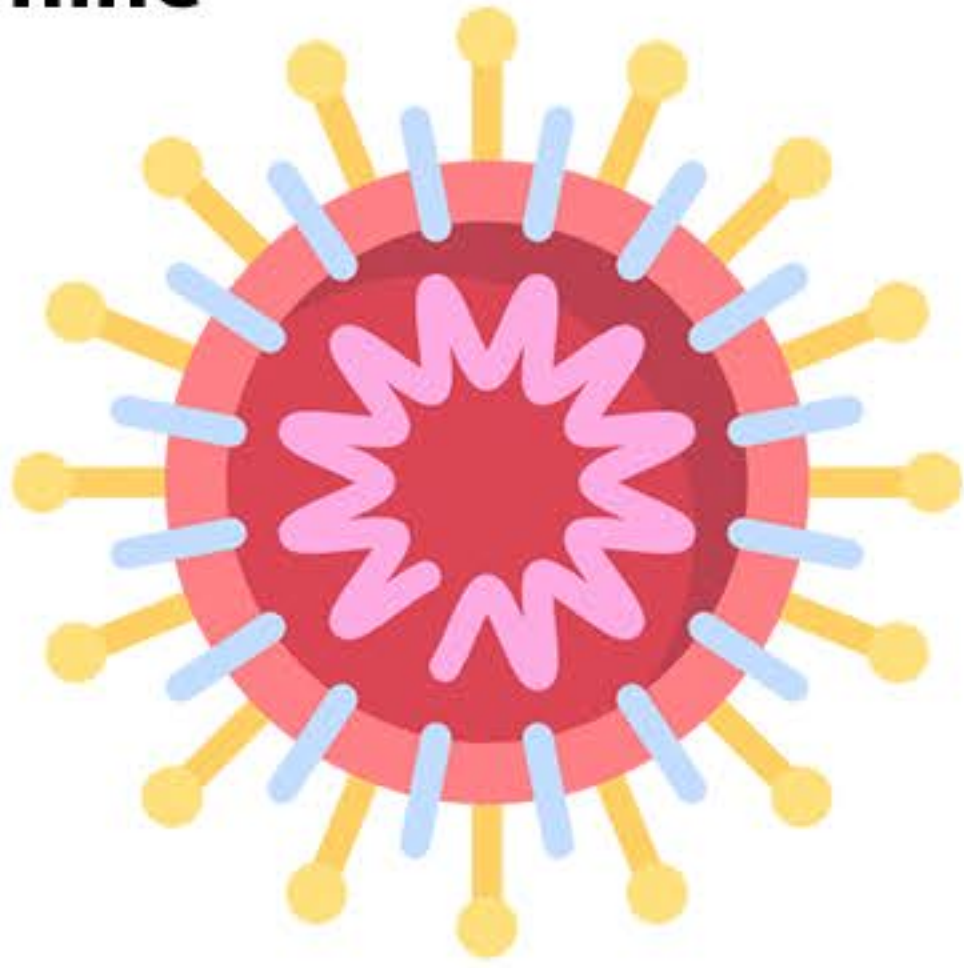
**Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Libya Observer**





Health

## Libya announces new recovery of Covid-19 bringing the total to nine



The National Center for Disease Control has said that another Covid-19 patient has recovered, after testing negative, bringing the number of recovered Covid-19 patients in Libya to nine.

The center issued a statement on Sunday night noting that its laboratory received on Sunday eleven samples, including a sample from the patient, referred to, and all results tested negative, according to the statement.

It is noteworthy that the center announced last Saturday a new case of Covid-19 case in Libya, bringing the total to 25 cases.

Health

## Health Ministry to provide financial reward for staff treating Covid-19 patients



The Minister of Health, Ahmed bin Omar, has announced financial rewards for the staff providing treatment and care for Covid-19 patients.

The reward includes medical and medical ancillary personnel, as well as professionals who provide other services in quarantine and medical check-up facilities approved by the authorities, said a statement issued by the health minister.

Health

## Libya receives medical aid from Turkey



The Ministry of Health has received a shipment of health aid from Turkey, including medical equipment, PPE, and sterilizers to counter the emerging Coronavirus epidemic.

The handover process took place on Saturday with the presence of Turkish ambassador to Libya, Serhat Aksen and the Undersecretary of Libya's Ministry of Health, Muhammad Haitham.

At another level, Chairman of the Presidential Council, Fayez Al-Sarraj, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the Turkish government for its support, saying "it expresses the depth of bilateral relations, brotherhood, and friendship between the two nations".

Health

## Ministry of Health says it delivered coronavirus supplies to Ghadames



The Ministry of Health has said it had delivered service vehicles to the Municipal Council of Ghadames as part of the steps adopted to stem the Covid-19.

The three cars included an ambulance, a vehicle for spraying pesticides, and a third for the "Family Doctor" program, according to the Health Ministry.

As said by the ministry, Ghadames Municipal Council has also received PPE equipment and sanitizing supplies, adding that other supplies are on their way to the city.

Work is underway to complete the isolation site in the city of Ghadames, while another site will be converted to a quarantine facility as well, the ministry added.

quote



Salah Elbakkoush  
Libyan political commentator

“People are dying, social fabric is fraying, resources are plundered, and the future of our young is being robbed. Yet, many in the Libyan intellectuals are mum. Hiding behind fighting terrorism and political Islam in the face of incipient dictatorship is disingenuous.”

Health

## Health Ministry receives new batch of PPE

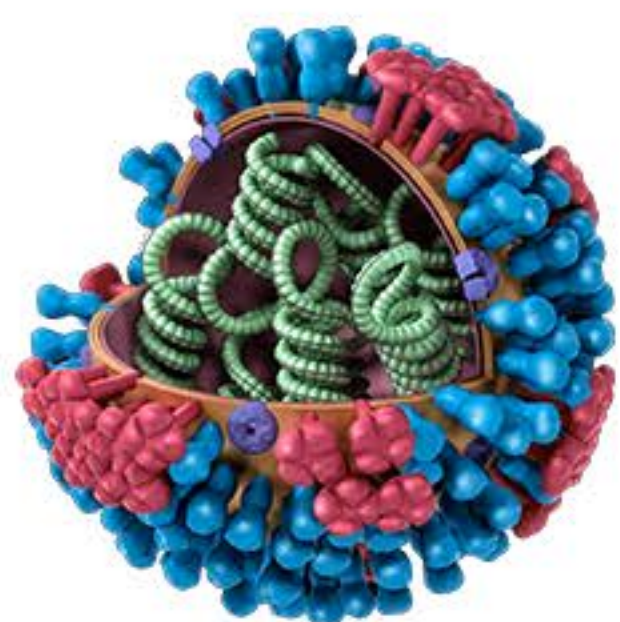


The Health Ministry has received a new batch of PPE for medical staff working in isolation sites. The shipment was flown into Libya from Belgium, as stated by the Health Ministry.

The ministry's media office explained that the shipment imported by the ministry is part of its plan for confronting Covid-19.

The plane landed at Misurata International Airport and included 5000 protective shacks and around 25000 test strips, according to the ministry.





## Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19)

### What is SARS-CoV-2? What is COVID-19?

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the name given to the 2019 novel coronavirus. COVID-19 is the name given to the disease associated with the virus. SARS-CoV-2 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

### Where do coronaviruses come from?

Coronaviruses are viruses that circulate among animals with some of them also known to infect humans.

Bats are considered natural hosts of these viruses yet several other species of animals are also known to act as sources. For instance, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is transmitted to humans from camels, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-1 (SARS-CoV-1) is transmitted to humans from civet cats. More information on coronaviruses can be found in the ECDC factsheet.

### Is this virus comparable to SARS or to the seasonal flu?

The novel coronavirus detected in China in 2019 is closely related genetically to the SARS-CoV-1 virus. SARS emerged at the end of 2002 in China, and it caused more than 8 000 cases in 33 countries over a period of eight months. Around one in ten of the people who developed SARS died. As of 30 March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak had caused over 700 000 cases worldwide since the first case was reported in China in January 2020. Of these, more than 30 000 are known to have died.

### What is the mode of transmission? How (easily) does it spread?

While animals are believed to be the original source, the virus spread is now from person to person (human-to-human transmission). There is not enough epidemiological information at this time to determine how easily this virus spreads between people, but it is currently estimated that, on average, one infected person will infect between two and three other people.

The virus seems to be transmitted mainly via small respiratory droplets through sneezing, coughing, or when people interact with each other for some time in close proximity (usually less than one metre). These droplets can then be inhaled, or they can land on surfaces that others may come into contact with, who can then get infected when they touch their nose, mouth or eyes. The virus can survive on different surfaces from several hours (copper, cardboard) up to a few days (plastic and stainless steel). However, the amount of viable virus declines over time and may not always be present in sufficient numbers to cause infection.

### When is a person infectious?

The infectious period may begin one to two days before symptoms appear, but people are likely most infectious during the symptomatic period, even if symptoms are mild and very non-specific. The infectious period is now estimated to last for 7-12 days in moderate cases and up to two weeks on average in severe cases.

### How severe is COVID-19 infection?

Preliminary data from the EU/EEA (from the countries with available data) show that around 20-30% of diagnosed COVID-19 cases are hospitalised and 4% have severe illness. Hospitalisation rates are higher for those aged 60 years and above, and for those with other underlying health conditions.





weather

## TRIPOLI WEATHER FORECAST



DAY		DESCRIPTION	HIGH / LOW	PRECIP	WIND	HUMIDITY
FRI APR 17		Mostly Sunny	25°/16°	20%	E 23 km/h	61%
SAT APR 18		Mostly Sunny	26°/17°	0%	E 24 km/h	50%
SUN APR 19		Mostly Sunny	30°/20°	0%	ESE 26 km/h	36%
MON APR 20		Partly Cloudy	30°/19°	10%	ESE 26 km/h	40%
TUE APR 21		Sunny	23°/16°	0%	WNW 26 km/h	60%
WED APR 22		Mostly Sunny	22°/16°	10%	NNW 17 km/h	66%
THU APR 23		Sunny	23°/16°	20%	ENE 20 km/h	61%

## Photo of the Week





Features



The Jard or “Holy” is a traditional Libyan costume for men, the simplest item of clothing possible. It’s a single length of fabric, about 4-6 × 1.5 m in length, it spans all of Libyan society, from ordinary citizens, to exceedingly rich persons, including the rulers.

In the old days, the Jard was used for clothing, bedding and as a tent when travelling and was even very handy in getting water from the well, whereas these days it is mostly present in festivals and special occasions. When the bride leaves her parents' home, it is customary to hold up the Holy for her as a passage to pass under it, along with other customs that some still maintain to this day. It’s even a participant in melancholy events, where the man's coffin is to be covered with the Jard during his funeral.

The Jard is often white in colour, the brown one is rare and it's usually worn in winter times.

To wear it you need to make a ring with a knot no bigger than a small apricot called a Tukumia, and wear it around your left arm while the right hand remains free, leaving part of it to be a cover for the head. It was shameful not to know how to wrap yourself in the Jard in the dominant culture of the old days.

The origin of this custom dates back to ancient times, it is similar to that worn by the nobles of Rome. Many travellers and scholars have mentioned that the Roman dress is derived from ancient Greek dress and that the Greeks have passed the Jard from the ancient Libyans, including the Italian historian Giulia Narduchi in the book "Barqa since the Greek Settlement." This was also confirmed by the Danish philologist Birket-Smith, K in his book “The Paths of Culture” (1965, p. 183).

The Jard used to be made at home by women through a manual machine called the Masda. The woman sits down to weave the yarns of wool, clean them, trim them and spin them between her fingers in an unparalleled way, accompanied by her neighbour's support, whether by taking part in the weaving process, preparing tea in the Libyan way, or singing along together folk songs and poetry, so time will pass quickly as it might take a year to complete the task.

There were rituals to be followed during the weaving process, for instance, you weren't allowed to weave on the Masda at night, or if death occurs in the neighbourhood, you have to stop for a period of time before resuming the work, and there are certain days you couldn't start a new work on, simple people believed that violation of these rituals could bring harm and bad luck to their lives.

Though it is the simplest costume in design among other traditional dresses across Libya, it's also associated with the Libyan Jihad period and coupled with the icon of Libyan Jihad, Omar al-Mukhtar, who was captured and executed in this uniform.

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