

Libya: Clashes leave 115 dead, 383 injured in Tripoli, says health ministry

24/09/2018 09:16 by admin

The fighting has knocked out most power stations in the city and crippled Tripoli's main airport.

A damaged car is seen during the fight between the armed forces allied to internationally recognised government and armed group in Tripoli, Libya September 22, 2018. (Reuters)

Tripoli: At least 115 people have been killed and 383 injured in month-long clashes between rival factions in Tripoli, Libya's health ministry said on Sunday.

The fighting pitted the Seventh Brigade, or Kaniyat, from Tarhouna, a town 65 km (45 miles) southeast of Tripoli, against the Tripoli Revolutionaries' Brigades (TRB) and the Nawasi, two of the capital's largest armed groups.

Tripoli and western Libya are run by a U.N.-backed government mainly supported by armed groups, while Eastern Libya is controlled by a rival administration. The country has been riven since Muammar Gaddafi was toppled in 2011.

The Kaniyat and other groups from outside Tripoli launched an assault on the capital in late August amid unease over reports of the wealth, power and extravagant lifestyles of some Tripoli militia commanders.

A damaged house is seen during the fight between the armed forces allied to internationally recognised government and armed group in Tripoli, Libya September 22, 2018. (Reuters)

At the Frontline in Tripoli's southern residential areas of Wadi Rabea and Fatma Zahra, shelled houses, torched vehicles, destroyed shops and deserted streets attest to the intensity of the clashes.

“The death toll could surge because of the critical condition of the injured and the continuing fighting,” Wedad Abo Al-Niran, media officer at the health ministry told Reuters.

The armed groups which claim official status through the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli patrol the area in armoured vehicles and pickup trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns.

The fighting has knocked out most power stations in the city and crippled Tripoli's main airport.

Although civilian targets continue to be shelled, Hakeem Al-Sheikh, commander of 42 Brigade loyal to GNA, said “the situation is under control.”

Smoke raise during clashes between armed forces allied to internationally recognised government and armed group in Tripoli, Libya September 22, 2018. (Reuters)

Meanwhile, residents in southern Tripoli continue to bear the brunt of the infighting, with many forced to flee their

homes.

“We are staying with our relatives as we are afraid of looting acts,” said Abdulqader al-Ryani, a father of three who left everything behind when he left his house.

So far, calls by the GNA for all sides to uphold a ceasefire agreed on Sept. 4 have fallen on deaf ears.

Adding to the existing tensions, a coalition of armed groups including Misrata military council promised on Saturday to fight alongside Tarhouna’s Seventh Brigade saying that they “reject the rule of militias inside Tripoli.”

- Reuters