

[UPDATE 1-Warring militias in west Libya vow no let-up in fight | Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/04/libya-zuwara-idUSL6E8F4ARH20120404)

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- UPDATE 1-Warring militias in west Libya vow no let-up in fight
- Wed Apr 4, 2012
- * Reuters reporters see heavy fighting in Zuwara
 - * Government forces near town but not intervening
 - * Battle is between neighbouring communities
 - * Violence a test for the fragile Libyan leadership (Rewrites, adds new quotes and details)
- By [Marie-Louise Gumuchian](#)
- ZUWARA, Libya, April 4 (Reuters) - Wissam Kilani, a 22-year-old Libyan fighter, left the front line on Wednesday afternoon just long enough to restock with two rocket-propelled grenades, before heading back into the latest of the ethnic and tribal conflicts convulsing the new Libya.

The government in Tripoli has called for a halt to the fighting and says it will intervene, but it is looking enfeebled against the powerful mix of divided communities, old vendettas and plentiful weapons that is driving this conflict.

"I will keep on fighting," said Kilani, one of the fighters from the town of Zuwara in western Libya who for four days have been battling their neighbours from the nearby settlements of Al-Jumail and Regdalin.

"We don't want to make peace with them," he said, his leg bandaged where he was wounded two days ago. "This is our land and we will defend it."

- Four days of fighting between the rival communities around Zuwara have killed at least 16 people on both sides and hundreds wounded.

The violence has exposed how volatile Libya remains, six months after a revolt last year ended Muammar Gaddafi's rule, and how the National Transitional Council (NTC), the interim leadership, is struggling to impose its authority.

Officials in the capital said they were sending a force to restore order in Zuwara, but the only visible signs of a government security presence was an air force plane flying over the town, and a small contingent of troops parked well back from the front line.

In the meantime, the fighting carried on with no sign of the ceasefire that the NTC had been trying to broker.

A Reuters team that entered Zuwara said they could hear the sound of Russian-made Grad rockets, as well as the crack of rifle fire. Heavier weapons were being used too, including 106 mm anti-tank guns and anti-aircraft guns that have been adapted to fire at targets on the ground.

Between the palm trees and lush green vegetation around Zuwara, a town on the Mediterranean coast about 120 km (75 miles) west of the Libyan capital Tripoli, plumes of smoke rose up from where munitions struck the earth.

- ROOTS OF THE VIOLENCE

The violence has its roots in last year's rebellion against Gaddafi, which here, as in many other parts of the country, set one neighbour against another.

Zuwara's population, made up largely of members of the Berber ethnic group, opposed Gaddafi during the revolt. Their neighbours to the south are mainly Arabs who had been loyal to Gaddafi.

That created mistrust and resentment which ignited at the weekend when, according to one account, a group of men from Zuwara out hunting for game shot dead a man from Al-Jumail by mistake. The hunters were briefly detained and, say people in Zuwara, mistreated, setting off the violence.

At a hospital in Zuwara, a nurse said two people from the town had been killed in the fighting on Wednesday, adding to the death toll on both sides of 14 given earlier by the NTC.

Outside the hospital, ambulances and pickup trucks, some mounted with anti-aircraft guns, were bringing in the wounded from the front line.

One wounded fighter held up his bloodied hand to loud cheers of 'Allahu Akbar!' (God is Great) from a small crowd of people outside. Some young fighters cried, while women scrubbed blood and dirt off stretchers on the ground so they could be re-used.

Rahil Nasser, a 27-year-old woman, came to the hospital because her cousin had been killed in the fighting. She urged the NTC to intervene to protect the town.

- "We have to activate the army to protect people," she said, tears streaming down her face. "Our children, our revolutionaries are dying ... We are going to fight to defend ourselves."

The NTC's ability to intervene though is limited because its own modest security forces are out-gunned by militias who answer only to their own commanders.

The security force sent by the NTC - a mix of men with national army insignia on their uniforms and militia men from the city of Misrata - had arrived but was parked up on the western edge of Zuwara, well away from the fighting.

Reuters reporters were unable to cross the front line to speak to people on the opposing side, in Regdalin and Al-Jumail, and get their version of events.

Fighters from Zuwara say their opponents are sympathisers of Gaddafi, who was killed in October soon after he was captured in a storm drain near his home town of Sirte.

Near the front line on Wednesday, two fighters produced a green flag and a banner with the words "Long live Al Fatah," which they said they had found in Regdalin.

Al Fatah was the name Gaddafi gave to the 1969 coup which brought him to power, while the green flag was Libya's national symbol under his rule.

- However, there was no hard evidence that the fight was over support for Gaddafi. Often when local conflicts have flared up in Libya since the revolt, one side describes their opponents as Gaddafi loyalists to discredit them.

In another confrontation that has underlined Libya's fragility, about 150 people were killed in clashes over the past week between rival tribes in the southern city of Sabha. (Additional reporting by Taha Zargoun; Writing by Christian Lowe; Editing by [Maria Golovnina](#))

[Rising Tensions in Libya Lead to Congestion at Tunisian Border Crossings : Tunisia Live](#)

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/04/03/rising-tensions-in-libya-lead-to-congestion-at-tunisian-border-crossings>

- **[Rising Tensions in Libya Lead to Congestion at Tunisian Border Crossings](#)**

[Houda Mzioudet](#) | 03 April 2012

- The Tunisian-Libyan border crossings of Ras Jedir and Dhehiba-Wazen have seen a significant increase in the number of Libyan nationals entering Tunisia in the last few

days. In the past 24 hours alone, between 10,000 and 12,000 Libyans have entered Tunisia, the highest level in months.

The Dhehiba-Wazen and Ras Jedir border crossings are located in the governorates of Tataouine and Medenine respectively in southeastern Tunisia.

- 5,000 Libyans passed through Ras Jedir between this past Sunday and yesterday. Dhehiba-Wazen likewise experienced constant traffic of Libyan travelers. The number of Libyans crossing the border there reached 3,850 this past weekend, according to the head of the Tunisian border police at the Dhehiba-Wazen border crossing. In addition, 4,000 Libyan passengers passed through Dhehiba-Wazen yesterday, Tunisian border police in Dhehiba-Wazen noted.
- Lines of vehicles could be seen continuing for several kilometers. Khaled Askar, Libyan Lieutenant at the Dhehiba-Wazen border crossing, said that the influx of Libyan nationals crossing into Tunisia had created a backlog and that consequent delays for Libyan entries have occurred due to painstaking procedures of customs control and vehicle searches.
- The influx of Libyan nationals to Tunisia in the last four days coincides with the Libyan mid-semester school break. However, Abdurrahman Baghni, head of the Nalut National Guard, pointed to recent tensions in Libya as another explanation for the record number of Libya arrivals. Skirmishes between rival militias in the Zuwara-Jemil-Regdaleen area along the Tunisian border as well as bursts of Gaddafi-loyalist reprisals in the outskirts of Tripoli and Bani Walid are driving many Libyan families to leave their troubled hometowns.
- "The children are mostly affected psychologically and the school holidays represent an escape for those families to Tunisia. This is, of course, in addition to the usual Libyan medical tourists to Tunisia," he added.

The Libyan border towns of Zuwara, Jemil and Regdaleen are witnessing an intermittent turf war by local militias over key transit points along the border. However, such tensions have not affected the flow of Libyan travelers through Ras Jedir, according to security forces in the Ras Jedir border crossing.

[Libyan PM visits scene of tribal clashes in desert | Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/01/us-libya-clashes-idUSBRE8300G220120401)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/01/us-libya-clashes-idUSBRE8300G220120401>

- Libyan PM visits scene of tribal clashes in desert
- By [Marie-Louise Gumuchian](#)

SABHA, Libya | Sun Apr 1, 2012

- (Reuters) - Libya's prime minister flew to a desert oasis city on Sunday to try to patch up a tribal dispute that has killed about 150 people over the past week and underscored the ethnic faultlines threatening Libya's stability.
- A Reuters team that flew with the prime minister to Sabha, about 750 km south (450 miles) of the Libyan capital, said a ceasefire appeared to be holding between the Tibu ethnic group and the Sabha militias with which they had been clashing.

Smashed windows at a conference centre and burned-out vehicles in a Tibu-controlled neighborhood bore testimony to the fighting over the past days, some of the worst since a revolt last year ousted Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Asked about the situation in Sabha, Prime Minister Abdurrahim El-Keib told Reuters: "It's much better than I thought."

- He said he wanted to show the opposing sides in Sabha that the new Libya had a place for all tribes and ethnic groups.

The Tibu have black skin and some have ties to neighboring Chad, while their opponents are lighter-skinned ethnic Arabs who see the Tibu as outsiders.

"Every Libyan is important to us. We're going to take care of them like we do take care of any other Libyan, like our brothers and sisters," Keib told Reuters after addressing about 500 local people from the non-Tibu camp.

"This problem has a historical background ... The past regime has used and abused this problem," he said, in reference to Gaddafi's tactic of playing up tribal differences to weaken any opposition against him.

- Keib was then heckled by a man who was shouting that the government was late in acting to stop the clashes and called on the military to deal with the Tibu.

Keib tried to talk to the heckler but his security detail ushered him into a car to head onto his next meeting, with Tibu elders.

As his convoy drove through Tibu-controlled neighborhoods, fighters from the tribe lined the roads, with rifles in their hands. They shouted "Allahu Akbar!" (God is greatest), and smiled and waved at the prime minister's motorcade.

"We need to find a solution for this, I am here for that," the prime minister told the Tibu elders, at a two-hour meeting conducted on mats laid on the ground, after they set out their grievances.

"We do not want the Tibu to be in need, we want things to go well ... It's not Tibu and the rest of Libya. It's all our country," Keib said.

- REGIONAL SECURITY

Restoring order in Sabha is not only important internally for Libya but also for stability in the wider region.

In the chaos that followed Gaddafi's fall, the south has been used as a smuggling route for weapons which are reaching al Qaeda in the Sahara and fanning a separatist rebellion by Tuaregs in northern Mali.

Earlier on Sunday, on the journey to Sabha from the airport where he landed, the prime minister's motorcade was accompanied by a heavy security escort, which included vehicles mounted with anti-aircraft guns.

At the entrance to Sabha, militia men from the coastal city of Misrata stood guard. They had been dispatched by the government to help restore order. The prime minister was joined in Sabha by Youssef al-Mangoush, chief of the new national army.

- There was a separate incident on Sunday that also illustrated Libya's ethnic divisions, in the Mediterranean coast town of Zuwara near the border with [Tunisia](#).

Fighters from the nearby town of Al-Jumail had detained 25 members of the Zuwara local militia, leading to a tense stand-off between the two groups, a representative of the Zuwara council and an Interior Ministry official told Reuters.

"The origin of the problem was that there was a group from Zuwara hunting in the area near Al-Jumail and they shot and killed someone from Al-Jumail by mistake," the Interior Ministry official said.

Zuwara is inhabited mainly by members of the Berber ethnic minority, who fought to overthrow Gaddafi. The town is though surrounded by ethnic Arab settlements, some of which backed Gaddafi in last year's revolt.

[Libya clashes kill four | The Australian](#)

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/libya-clashes-kill-four/story-fn3dxity-1226318098064>

- **Libya clashes kill four**

- by: [From correspondents in Tripoli](#)
- From: [AFP](#)
- April 04, 2012

- **HEAVY fighting between gunmen in western Libya has killed four people and left several more wounded, a local official said.**

"At least four people were killed today but that number could rise," said Othman Ben Sassi, a member of the ruling National Transitional Council, and a native of Zwarah, 100 kilometres west of Tripoli, near Tunisia.

He said that the exact number of casualties remained unknown.

"The situation is critical in Zwarah. It is being hit by rockets fired from the (nearby) towns of Regdalin and Jamil," he said.

Tensions have simmered in and around Zwarah since the collapse of slain leader Muammar Gaddafi's regime last October. Residents there were accused of supporting the dictator during the 2011 conflict.

Libyan Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali said overnight that efforts were underway to put an end to the fighting.

- "The interior ministry has sent a force of 200 men towards the region," he said, urging both sides to act with restraint.

These clashes come soon after tribal fighting in the southern city of Sabha, which left more than 147 dead and 395 wounded in a week, before the government imposed a ceasefire.

The interim government has struggled to impose its authority on dozens of brigades comprising of former rebels who fought against Gaddafi's forces and who now have become a law unto themselves.

Tribesmen, militias and residents of several regions have shown little hesitation in using force to settle disputes.

[Rival militias battle in Libya - World - CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2012/04/03/libya-militias-battle.html)

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2012/04/03/libya-militias-battle.html>

• Rival militias battle in Libya

Tanks, artillery claim 22 lives in neighbouring towns

The Associated Press

Posted: Apr 3, 2012

- Militias from rival towns in western Libya battled each other with tanks and artillery on Tuesday in fierce fighting that killed at least 22 people, local officials said.

The clashes erupted over the weekend between the Arab-majority town of Ragdalein and the Berber-dominated town of Zwara, about 110 kilometres west of the capital Tripoli. The violence is fuelled by deep-rooted animosity between the neighbours, who took different sides in Libya's civil war that toppled Moammar Gadhafi last year.

- The fighting is the latest in a series of local rivalries that threaten to divide Libya along tribal and regional lines. Libya's new leaders, who took power after Gadhafi's capture and killing in October, have struggled to stamp their authority on the country and rein in the myriad armed groups that helped defeat the dictator's forces but have refused to disarm.

In Tuesday's clashes, local Ragdalein official Rami Kaanan said 17 fighters and town residents were killed, including two women and an infant. The infant was killed when a rocket fell on his home, bringing down the ceiling, Kaanan said.

Zwara spokesman Adel Kashbour said five people from his side were killed and 49 wounded.

"The fighting continues. Two rockets landed in the city, killing two young men," Kashbour said of the most recent deaths.

- **Looting claimed**

The clashes began Sunday after fighters from Ragdalein said they took 34 men from the Zwara brigade hostage to avenge what Ragdalein forces said were months of abuses, including the looting. The hostages were released Monday after mediation, but the cease-fire quickly collapsed.

Prime Minister Abdurrahim el-Keib said he, along with his defence minister and chief of staff, met with elders from Zwara on Tuesday and will soon meet with tribal leaders from Ragdalein to discuss a cease-fire and reconciliation.

"We will send forces from the defence and interior ministries to resolve the issue, stop both sides, and be in the middle to quell the violence," el-Keib said. "I am very optimistic."

- Libya's Interior Ministry dispatched police forces to the towns on Monday to quell the violence, but were overpowered by the heavily armed local militias. "We have no ability to stop them except through negotiations. We think the Defence Ministry is better equipped for this job because we are equipped with light weapons," Interior Minister Fawzi Abdul-Al said in Tripoli.

Last week, Libyan leader Mustafa Abdul-Jalil acknowledged to The Associated Press that his government has failed to act quickly enough to restore stability. His spokesman, Mohammed al-Hareizi, said Tuesday that security officials in top posts must do more.

"The government must improve its performance and speed up their efforts, or we will have to take extreme measures, especially with the defence and interior ministries, which have failed to deliver any of their plans," al-Hareizi said, warning that ministers could be replaced soon.

- **Divide-and-rule policies**

The conflict between the towns is one of many local rivalries stemming from Gadhafi's 40 years of divide-and-rule policies and Libya's eight-month civil war. Fighting in the remote desert oasis of Sabha between Arab tribes and an anti-Gadhafi African tribe killed around 150 people and left hundreds displaced last week.

Zwara, a town of 45,000 people, is less than 10 kilometres from Ragdalein, which is twice as large. Zwara residents were quick to join the uprising last year that led to Gadhafi's capture and killing in October. The Berber tribe there complained of discrimination under Gadhafi, including neglect and being barred from high-level posts.

Ragdalein, which is inhabited primarily by Arab tribes, was a stronghold for Gadhafi loyalists and heavily armed by his regime during the civil war.

Zwara residents, themselves well armed by rebels during the uprising, accuse Ragdalein's fighters of raping women, looting property and attacking the town last year for opposing Gadhafi's regime. They say they are now being blocked by Ragdalein's tribes from reaching their farms south of the city.