

UN agencies respond as heavy fighting continues in Tripoli, urge an end to violence before it gets worse

In the midst of reports that scores of civilians have been killed and hundreds injured across residential areas of the Libyan capital, Tripoli, United Nations agencies have stepped up their response, expressing concern that the situation could deteriorate as heavy fighting between rival armed groups continues.

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said on Tuesday that civilians must be allowed to move to safer areas, as aid efforts are being hampered by the ongoing violence.

UNHCR spokesperson, Charlie Yaxley, told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday that the use of heavy weapons and shelling in civilian neighbourhoods had "[caused death, destruction and displacement](#), and is of great concern."

According to the UN human rights office (OHCHR), a humanitarian worker – trying to evacuate civilians trapped in a neighbourhood – was reportedly shot at, while one of the armed groups involved is alleged to have confiscated three ambulances.

OHCHR spokesperson, Liz Throssell, underscored the need on all sides to [ensure that relief workers are not targeted](#).

"We call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate immediate, unimpeded and safe access of humanitarian aid and aid-workers to civilians in need," she said.

"We urge the warring parties to respect and protect personnel engaged in humanitarian relief, and to cease all attacks on medical transport and units, as well as to facilitate the safe and voluntary movement of civilians wishing to leave areas of active hostilities."

► **SEE ALSO:** [UN chief urges calm as violence erupts in Libyan capital](#)

UN agencies, such as the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and UNHCR, have stepped up their response, with WHO delivering trauma medicines for 200 critical cases, keeping another 2,000 more units on standby and deploying 10 mobile emergency trauma teams to areas where fighting is ongoing. Similarly, UNHCR is dispatching emergency items to families seeking shelter at a local school.

Doctors and other health staff be allowed to move freely so that

they can save lives without delay, and without risk to their own personal safety – *Syed Jaffar Hussain, head of WHO in Libya*

However, with the situation remaining volatile, there are fears that the casualties could rise in the coming days.

Syed Jaffar Hussain, the head of WHO operations in Libya, said the agency was “working with national health authorities and partners on the ground to respond to increasing health needs, [but roadblocks remain a major challenge to the delivery of health care](#), especially ambulances that are unable to reach the injured.”

“With greater numbers of injured civilians expected, it is imperative that doctors and other health staff be allowed to move freely so that they can save lives without delay, and without risk to their own personal safety,” he added.

Vulnerable migrants and refugees at heightened risk

With fighting continuing unabated and reports that a migrant detention facility has also been hit, the safety of migrants and refugees is another growing concern.

“We are closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with the Libyan Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration and UN agencies, and advocating for all refugees and migrants to be relocated to a safer place,” said UNHCR’s Mr. Yaxley.

According to UN reports, there are about 8,000 arbitrarily detained migrants trapped in detention centres in areas where fighting has been taking place, without access to food or medical treatment. Furthermore, there are reports that some migrants, released from detention, have subsequently been captured by armed groups and forced to work for them.