

**PUBLIC**

**ANNEX 9.21**

## Libya protests: Gaddafi battles to control west

**Libyan ruler Col Muammar Gaddafi is battling to retain control of Tripoli and areas in western Libya as protesters consolidated gains in the east and foreigners continued to flee.**

Much of the capital is deserted as pro-Gaddafi gunmen roam the streets, with reports of uprisings in western towns such as Misurata, Sabratha and Zawiya.

Masses of protesters have been celebrating success in eastern towns.

Thousands of foreigners continue to leave, with chaos at Tripoli airport.

At least 300 people have died in the country's uprising.

Col Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, went on television on Wednesday evening to say that everything was "normal", Reuters reported.

"The ports, schools and airports are all open," he said. "The problem lies in the eastern regions. Life is normal. Brothers, Libyans should come together in this national battle."

US President Barack Obama called the suffering of the people in Libya "outrageous" and said the government there must be held accountable for its failures to meet its responsibilities.

### 'Many deaths'

An eyewitness in Tripoli said that the city was virtually closed, with many people hoping protesters and defecting soldiers would arrive from the east to help them.

A text message had been sent out by government officials telling civil servants and other workers to return to their jobs but many people are too scared to go on to the streets.

One Tripoli resident said: "I hope residents don't go to work - this can be our way of a peaceful protest - we will all stay at home indefinitely."

There were reports of gunmen opening fire on Tuesday morning on a queue of people at a bread shop in the Fashloum district, where there has been a heavy military crackdown, with three people killed.

Two naval gunships are reported to have been deployed facing the city.

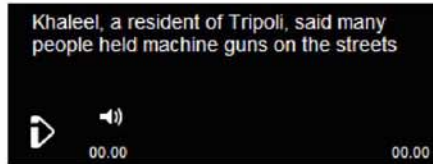
A Tripoli citizen told BBC Arabic that the only people on the streets were police, soldiers and African mercenaries but that the opposition was in touch with cities in the east that had fallen to protesters and a march was planned for the capital on Thursday.

Another Tripoli resident said: "Anti-government protesters have disappeared. The streets are quiet. There are many, many deaths."

The resident also said doctors were reporting gunmen shooting people in hospitals.

Information from Libya is currently difficult to verify and reports cannot often be independently confirmed.

The BBC's Paul Danahar on the Tunisian border says unconfirmed reports suggest several towns between the border and Tripoli have seen anti-government protests but the roads in between are held by people loyal to Col Gaddafi.



Troops are said to have been sent to Sabratha after demonstrators burned government buildings, according to the Quryna news website.

The pre-Gaddafi Libyan flag was also reportedly raised in Zawiya, 50km (30 miles) west of Tripoli while other unconfirmed reports said protesters had seized control of Misurata, 200km east of Tripoli, after days of fighting.

One Tunisian man who crossed from Libya told our correspondent there was no law in the country and added: "God help them".



Navigate the map to see the latest reports from correspondents across the region as the crisis unfolds.

Col Gaddafi has vowed to crush the revolt and die as a martyr. His televised speech on Tuesday referred to the protesters as rats and cockroaches and has been greeted with a mixture of anger and mockery.

In the east, thousands of people celebrated on the streets of Benghazi, waving the pre-Gaddafi flags and handing out food and drink.

Protesters are said to be in control of cities from the Egyptian border to Ajdabiya, 800km east of Tripoli.

Quryna reported that a Libyan fighter plane had crashed near Ajdabiya after the two pilots refused to bomb Benghazi and

ejected.

At the Egyptian border, sprayed graffiti read: "Welcome to the new Libya".

Many defence committees of residents and defecting military have been set up, including one to guard the anti-aircraft missile bases outside Tobruk.

"Down with the Tyrant" was scrawled on a building in the town of al-Marja.

#### **Airport chaos**

Meanwhile, foreigners are struggling to evacuate the violence-torn country.

One American who reached Vienna on a flight from Libya, Kathleen Burnett, told Associated Press the scene at Tripoli airport was "total chaos", adding: "The airport was mobbed, you wouldn't believe the number of people."

And a Briton airlifted out by the Portuguese told the BBC he knew of dozens who were trying to get to Tripoli airport but were too afraid because of "the soldiers who are out on the streets looting and plundering".

One Air Malta pilot who was evacuating Maltese from Tripoli airport said he had to go into the terminal to round up passengers.

He said he saw people fighting to get on to a plane.

Briton Chris Murphy and his wife said they had also "fought their way" through crowds to get on their flight but the plane had about 100 empty seats.

Many countries have been trying to evacuate their citizens.

France and Russia are among the nations that have sent planes and frigates to pick up thousands of their stranded nationals.

Two Turkish ships evacuated 3,000 citizens, while hundreds of Americans are taking a US-chartered ferry from Tripoli to Malta.

Col Gaddafi is also facing increased internal and international diplomatic pressure.

The man considered the colonel's number two, Interior Minister Abdel Fattah Younes al-Abidi, is among senior figures who have joined the opposition.

The UN Security Council demanded an end to the violence on Tuesday, while the Arab League suspended Libya.

On Wednesday, the African Union condemned "the disproportionate use of force against civilians" in Libya.

The US and EU both said they were discussing possible measures against Libya, including sanctions.

President Obama said the world was watching Libya and he would coordinate his response with the international community.

He said: "Change is taking place across the region, being driven by the people of the region - it is not the work of the United States or any other power but the aspirations of people seeking a better life."

The UK Foreign Office [is advising against all but essential travel to Libya](#).

**Are you in Libya? Are you taking part in demonstrations? Are you an expat trying to leave? Send us your comments using the form below:**

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