

Turmoil in Libya

March 2011



The situation

In February 2011, pro-democracy demonstrators and political opposition groups in Libya initiated a series of protests against Muammar al-Gaddafi's 42-year rule. Inspired by events in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt, the demonstrations quickly gathered momentum, threatening al-Gaddafi's control of several towns and cities. As the al-Gaddafi regime attempted to reassert its authority, confrontations between Libyan security forces and protesters escalated significantly, military and government officials defected and the politically motivated unrest quickly evolved into a more widespread and threatening armed civil conflict.

red24, however, was already proactively monitoring the situation in Libya and had identified and alerted clients to potential flashpoints before protests erupted in the east of the country.



15 February: Opposition political groupings have called for countrywide anti-al-Gaddafi demonstrations on 17 February. The call follows weeks of protests against authoritarian regimes in the wider region and housing-related rioting and unrest that affected numerous cities across Libya in mid-January 2011...the planned protests are likely to occur in the country's main urban centres, such as Tripoli and Benghazi. Personnel in or planning to travel to Libya in the coming days are advised to monitor political developments closely and should

avoid all large public gatherings...

As the protests proliferated and reports of violent confrontations emerged, red24 amended the Libya country page and pushed out a number of alerts via SMS and email to clients with revised advice.



21 February: Violent anti-government protests are ongoing in the capital, Tripoli. Protests are reportedly occurring in Martyrs' Place in the city centre, as well as in the al-Andalous and Dhara districts and near the Tripoli Medical Centre... Further violent protests are expected in various areas of the country...[and as] such, clients are advised to defer all non-essential travel to Libya and are advised against all travel to the cities of Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Al-Bayda, Al-Marj, Derna and Tobruk...Ongoing disturbances have the potential to compromise both overland travel and movement in and out of the country. Clients currently in Libya should consider evacuating as a precautionary measure...

red24 also created an in-depth analysis page on the situation online, allowing our clients to view the latest developments, as well as our accompanying assessment and advice, in a comprehensive but timely manner.

It was against this backdrop that red24's 24/7 Crisis Response Management (CRM) Centre started receiving

inbound calls and email enquiries from individuals requiring assistance. Some enquiries came from corporate headquarters in various parts of the world with stranded employees in-country; other calls came directly from people in Libya itself. Their situations and locations varied; some were living and working in Tripoli and were badly exposed to potential violence while others were stranded at remote desert locations in the centre of the country. All required immediate information, advice and assistance.

red24's response

red24's first point of action was to ascertain their exact situation and offer immediate actionable advice. Simultaneously, red24 logged the relevant contact details of the key stakeholders in each respective case; these included people on the ground, employers, insurers and immediate family where appropriate. Each case was then given a unique identifier codename which was then communicated across the company to the relevant teams, which included:

- The Analyst and Editorial teams, responsible for monitoring the fast-changing situation in Libya around the clock and reporting and predicting developments to colleagues and clients;
- The Customer Services team, red24's front line in dealing with any ongoing client assistance;
- The Operations team, red24's in-house team of security specialists responsible for the strategic management of any ongoing response;
- The Security team, the in-house group of security specialists based in the Crisis Response Management (CRM) Centre;
- The Crisis Management Team (CMT), red24's senior level during a high-level security situation;
- The Sales and Marketing team, red24's UK-based client services team, responsible for liaison with clients and commercial relationships;
- red24's consultants on the ground.

Advice and assistance

red24 then set about determining the response options, both remote and on the ground. A team of suitably qualified security consultants were deployed ready to provide assistance. For clients in Tripoli and the surrounds, this involved the security consultants extracting them from insecure accommodation and facilitating their evacuation, either by road or air, out of the country. For those individuals in remote desert camps in central Libya, heavily dependent on state-supplied air services, the situation warranted a more patient and 'softer' response. Those clients, all of whom had food, water and security contingents, were told to sit tight while we evaluated the available evacuation options. They were regularly informed of security developments and of our progress, and after working in conjunction with various foreign government agencies and their employers, we were able to facilitate their eventual departure by air.

In total, we assisted in twelve cases, involving over 30 individuals, in Libya; we spent over 1,000 man hours supporting our clients, with our on-the-ground security specialists operating in theatre over eight consecutive days.



...Transport in the country remains severely affected. Public transportation has been suspended or delayed in most areas of the country, most airports (except for Tripoli International Airport) are closed to civilian traffic. Overland travel remains high risk with reports of armed assailants attacking and robbing road users on routes toward Tunisia, as well as eastern Libya....

Throughout the unrest red24's in-house team of analysts continued to keep clients updated with the latest situation in-country, including the location of any new reported unrest and, crucially, the situation at the international airports and ports. Because of the challenging communications in Libya, we did this via a range of communication tools, including mobile and satellite phone, text messaging, Skype and even BlackBerry Messenger.