



Ghat

Humanitarian Assessment Report on the Floods that
Swept the city of Ghat and its Surroundings
2024 Libya - August

This report was conducted and written by

Mansour Ate

Journalist, Human Rights Activist and previous Branch Manager at the Libyan Red Crescent.

He participated as a leader of the intervention and response team during Ghat's flood crisis and currently collaborates with Drooj 2019 in platform as a specialist on crisis and disaster management.

Ahmeed Alzaydani

Writer, Legal advisor and Human Rights Defender.

Edited and translated by

Asma Khalifa

PHD Candidate and Research Fellow
Doctoral Researcher, German Institute
of Global and Area Studies.



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Report Summary

This report examines the disaster in Ghat City and its surrounding areas, focusing on its impact on the local population and various groups, such as stateless individuals and irregular migrants. The report assesses the authorities' responses to predictions and warnings before floods, including monitoring, forecasting, and developing emergency plans. The report also evaluates Li byan authorities' actions to address the crisis, such as proactive measures to prevent harm, rescue, relief, and recovery efforts. Furthermore, the report investigates human rights violations such as discriminatory treatment and denial of healthcare services. The report concludes by examining the state's legal responsibility and providing recommendations for improvement.

Report Methodology

This report was compiled by the Ensaf Organization for Rights and Freedoms in August 2024 after a devastating flood swept through the city of Ghat and its surrounding areas. The purpose of the report was to investigate the human rights situation during a disaster and monitor any violations or breaches. To gather information, the organisation conducted research, investigations, and documentation by conducting interviews and examining various publications, documents, news, warnings, videos, photos, and other source. The report was prepared through interviews with a diverse group of individuals who were affected by the disaster, including local residents, state employees, activists, and other groups, such as holders of administrative numbers (stateless persons), displaced persons, irregular migrants, and others. The organisation adhered to the highest levels of safety and neutrality to ensure the quality of the report's results and outputs while conducting interviews with the affected groups.

Introduction

The city of Ghat is located far southwest of Libya, southwest of Ghadames, Sabha, and Murzuq, and is 1360 km away from Tripoli. Ghat is located at the neck of the Marazt Valley between two high mountain ranges: the eastern one is called the Tadrart or Akakus Mountains, and the western one is called Tassili N'Ajjer. Ghat is located at a latitude of 24.37°N and longitude of 7.27°E

On 15 August the municipality of Tahala, followed by the municipality of Ghat, Al-Barakat, and a number of villages and towns in the far southwest witnessed another flood disaster, adding to a series of the same sad events that the region has witnessed at different times. This disaster resulted from heavy thunderstorms that caused valleys to overflow and torrential floods that swept through the municipality of Tahala and led to its complete isolation, as buildings, homes, and farms were submerged and basic infrastructure was destroyed, with communications and electricity completely cut off. The floods also swept through a number of neighbourhoods in the city of Ghat, such as the neighbourhoods of Bint Al-Libiyah, Al-Uruba, and the homes of the Chinese company.

Floods also reached the municipality of Al-Barakat. In June 2019, the city of Ghat was hit by a torrential flood crisis as a result of unprecedented heavy rains in the region. These floods caused widespread destruction of the infrastructure in the city and surrounding areas, including roads and homes, and led to the displacement of large numbers of residents who found themselves homeless and in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The crisis was exacerbated by the lack of preparations and equipment necessary to confront such disasters, as well as the lack of effective emergency plans, due to the deterioration of the security and economic situation in Libya since 2011, and the response of governments and concerned parties was slow and insufficient to meet the urgent needs of those affected. What happened also tested the ability of the international community and humanitarian organisations to provide support in difficult and complex circumstances of continuous restrictions and the inability to access real information, as the region suffers from relative isolation and difficulty in accessing it due to its geographical distance from the Libyan capital, Tripoli

¹Historic Cities Administration Authority (مدينة غات)

²Part of the relief teams that participated in rescue, relief and psychological support work in the 2019 Ghat flood disaster

بعض أوجه التصديق على المنظمات الدولية ³:

As the above challenges continue, the local population in Ghat and its environs faces harsh conditions, relying heavily on local and international humanitarian relief efforts. They have not yet had a real opportunity to repair, rebuild, and improve infrastructure, making it possible for such disasters to recur again, especially when heavy rains fall, turning the valleys surrounding Ghat and its environs into a disaster by flooding due to the lack of water barriers, as well as in the complete absence of any plans to prevent such events, which constitutes a violation of the human right to live in a clean, healthy, sustainable, and safe environment, according to the Human Rights Council in 2021 under the number (13/A/HRC/RES/48/1).

Response to the crisis

The floods that swept through the municipality of Tahala on 15 August and then the city of Ghat and its surroundings, reflected the poor response of the Libyan authorities to the disaster, as follows

- 1 Lack of planning: The rescue and relief agencies did not have any emergency plans or sufficient preparations to deal with natural disasters such as floods, despite their recurrence in Ghat in particular, which led to the aggravation of the situation and made it difficult for the concerned parties to act quickly and effectively. The response of governments and concerned parties to the flood disaster became very slow owing to the lack of a response plan in the first place, in addition to the disregard for the warnings issued by the National Centre for Meteorology Meteorology⁴ and the Ru'ya Foundation concerned with weather mwarned of the possibility of thunderstorms, and the flow of valleys in the southwest. This had a devastating impact on the population that suffered from sudden floods that flooded their homes and lacked food, water, and shelter in the first days after the disaster.⁵

⁴Warning issued by the National Center of Meteorology on August 15, 2024

⁵On Sunday, August 11, 2024, Roya Foundation launched the first notification regarding the weather condition moving towards the southwest, followed by a warning 24 hours before the weather condition began, on Wednesday, August 14, mentioning the areas likely to be affected by the risk of valleys flowing, then other publications followed and confirmed the weather condition with an illustrative map of the floods that affected the municipality of Tahala

- 2** Lack of coordination: The emergency response to the Ghat disaster and its surroundings lacked effective coordination between various government agencies and humanitarian organisations, which led to confusion and overlapping of specialties and the failure of aid to reach some groups and places, which increased the severity of the humanitarian crisis.
- 3** Lack of equipment and resources: Rescue and evacuation operations for those trapped and affected were slow, and one survivor attributed this to the lack of sufficient equipment,⁶ since what was available was inadequate to deal with the scale of the disaster, and there were insufficient mechanisms to evacuate those affected or provide them with urgent medical care. The lack of clarity and transparency in the financial plan allocated to respond to the crisis also negatively affected the quality and effectiveness of the relief provided.
- 4** Lack of transparency and accountability: According to a number of testimonies documented by the organisation of 25 displaced persons in three different centres, the distribution of aid and resources was not transparent, which raised suspicions among some of the affected people about (possible corruption) in some of the parties responsible for receiving and providing relief, which led to a loss of trust between the population and the authorities and exacerbated the social crisis.



⁶A survivor's testimony to the organization about the rescue and evacuation operations for those affected and trapped



Human Rights Violations During Disasters



The close and profound connection between humanitarian and human rights in disaster situations is crucial. During times of crisis and disaster, the human rights landscape is impacted on multiple levels, making it an integral part of humanitarian response in emergency scenarios.

In post disaster contexts, several human rights are often violated, including the right to life, water and food, shelter, and health. Therefore, it is essential that the humanitarian response ensures respect for and protection of these rights while also providing support that considers the dignity and basic needs of those affected. In this regard, the Insaaf Organization documented numerous serious violations during the flood disaster in the city of Ghat and its surroundings in August 2024, which are outlined below.

Distribution of humanitarian aid: Due to the lack of planning and poor management of the crisis by governments, the failure to conduct a swift and joint assessment that takes into account the needs and level of access to those affected, and the failure to establish specialised teams comprising relevant stakeholders, including those affected themselves, which contributed to the inability to meet the needs of those affected in a manner that upholds their dignity.

Furthermore, aid is overseen by committees that have faced accusations of bias and discrimination based on race and tribal affiliation. As a result, some families were removed from the Tahala municipality and forced to endure harsh living conditions, including those in the Old Tahala neighbourhood, where buildings are not equipped to house a large number of people and do not meet safety standards. The inability of the crisis committees responsible for distributing humanitarian aid became apparent, as it did not reach all displaced individuals and was given randomly and unevenly, as it did not reach all displaced individuals and was given randomly and unevenly, with some people receiving aid, while others did not. ⁷

One of the displaced people from the municipality of Tahala told the Insaf organisation

The aid reaches Ghat, but it does not reach us. We hear about the "Tassili warehouse, but we have not seen anything from it, even though we are in the sand without shelter, but the distribution there is "Hamad and Ahmida

The families who were housed in the displaced people's shelter centre at the Asmaa Bin Abi Bakr Al Siddiq school in the municipality of Ghat experienced difficulties due to the delay in the arrival of aid, the deteriorating health situation, and a severe shortage of potable water. Overcrowding in the centre, with 300 individuals sharing only four bathrooms, led to a lack of support for personal hygiene materials, which contradicted international standards for emergency situations and threatened human dignity. As a result, 39 families were forced to move to the Djan neighbourhood where they remained in tents under direct sunlight, which exacerbated their health conditions and increased their risk of contracting diseases. The tents also made it more likely for them to be bitten by scorpions or snakes, which hindered their ability to seek the necessary medical care. ⁸

⁷Verbatim statement received by the organization

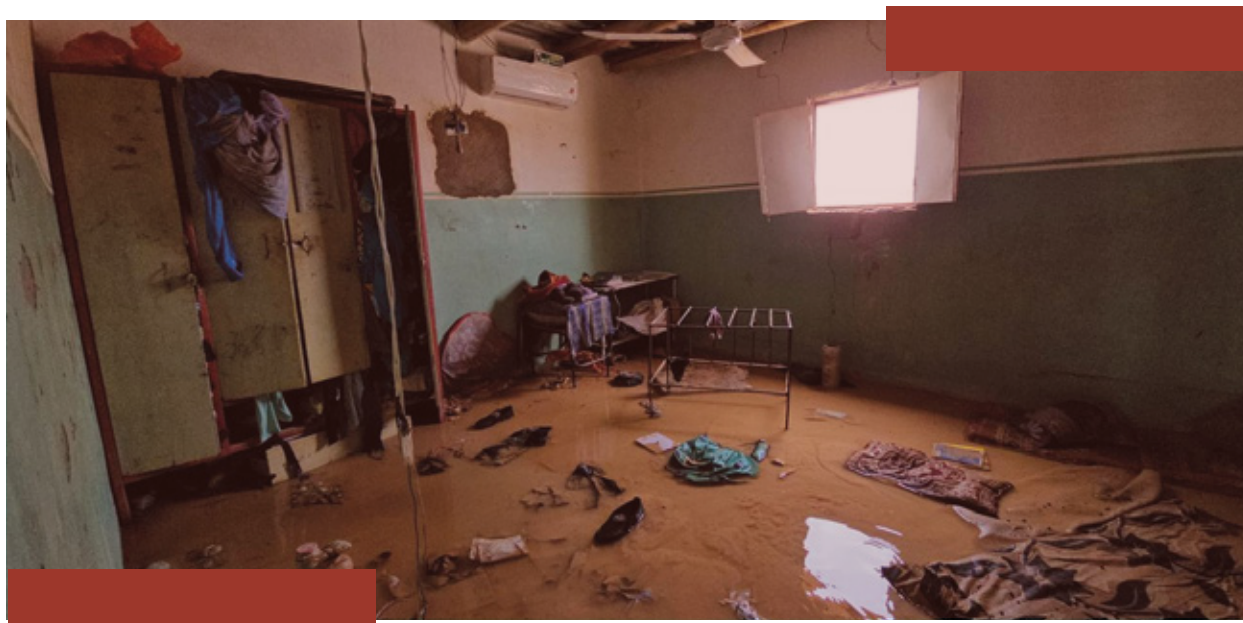
⁸The organization monitored calls from some displaced people in the Ramla area regarding exposure to scorpions and snakes at night

Another testimony from one of the displaced people of the Asma Bint Abi Bakr Al Siddiq Centre

Seven families or more, close to 300 people in Asma Bint Abi Bakr Al Siddiq School do not have access to proper bathrooms, here there are 6 of them and two are ruined (do not work). Many families went out to Ramla because of the bathroom issue, they sat in the sun and under tents, and here we sometimes get what we need to wash and sometimes we do not get it, and we are afraid of diseases.

Vulnerable groups, including children, women, people with disabilities, migrants, and marginalised communities, such as linguistic minorities and indigenous groups, are more likely to experience human rights violations during disasters, as documented by Insaf. Unfortunately, the organisation did not consider the specific needs of these groups, nor did it receive any information about meeting their needs.⁹

A lack of a rights based approach was observed during the rescue and relief efforts Disaster response failed to incorporate human rights principles at every stage resulting in a lack of fairness, comprehensiveness, and respect for the dignity of individuals from all ethnic backgrounds. The inefficiency of those responsible for implementing the response has prevented the creation of a comprehensive and inclusive approach.



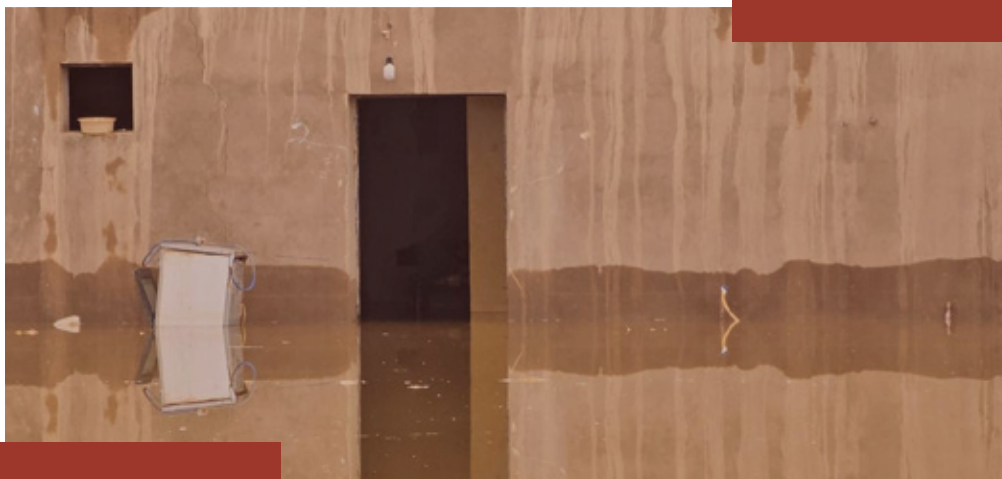
⁹The organization documented the testimony of a survivor in the city of Ghat, about the lack of needs for women and children

Systematic Discrimination in Aid Distribution

During the crisis that occurred in Ghat in June 2019, eyewitnesses reported evidence of discrimination and violations of rights against linguistic minorities and indigenous people, particularly those known as "returnees" and stateless individuals. Among these violations, the distribution of aid and relief operations required individuals to provide a national identity number or family status to receive assistance, further exacerbating the suffering and deprivation experienced by these groups. This is a violation of human rights and principles of social justice. In a recent disaster, the son of a Libyan woman who married a non Libyan woman, who was considered a foreigner under Libyan laws, was classified as a victim.

We heard about the distribution by social affairs, and although my mother is Libyan and I was born in Ghat, they told me that the distribution was based on the national number, and that you have no right to take this aid, because in their view I am a foreigner and not a Libyan

One form of inequality in the distribution of relief supplies during the Ghat flood disaster and its surrounding areas is discrimination in distribution. A number of survivors contacted the organisation to report that the distribution of humanitarian aid was unequal in some instances, as certain groups received larger quantities of relief supplies, such as food and clothing, while other groups received smaller quantities of these supplies. The witnesses attributed the unfair distribution to what they described as (tribal and ethnic biases) among some local officials, as well as the result of diminishing the role of the Libyan Red Crescent Society in favour of inflating the role of other institutions and entities characterised by a lack of neutrality. In addition, there is a possibility of corruption in the distribution process.



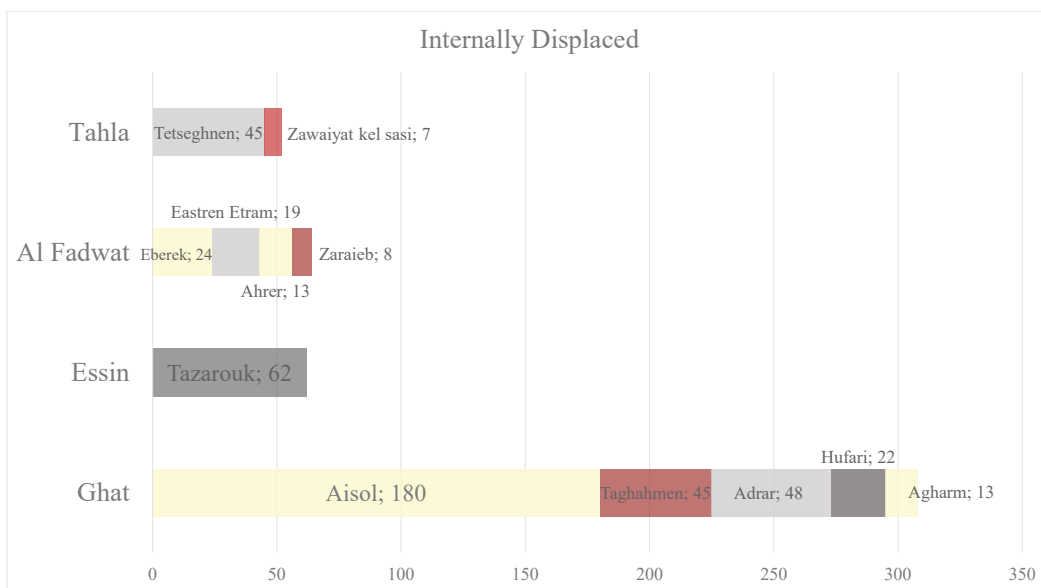
Statistics & Figures

Floods have led to the displacement of many families from their homes in Tahala, Al Barak, Ghat, and the surrounding areas, resulting in an increase in the number of homeless people. These families have lost all their personal possessions, including furniture, electrical equipment, and clothes, and need shelter, food, and clean water¹⁰. According to reports, only one person from the "Essin" area of the Al Barakat¹¹ municipality was recorded as deceased. The floods also caused around 70 houses to collapse in the Tahala municipality, leading to the displacement of over 500 families to the old Tahala neighbourhood, and approximately 100 families from Tahala to Ghat municipality. Despite the small number of human losses, floods and torrents have caused the displacement of hundreds of families that have lost their homes and places of residence. The organisation did not report any missing persons due to the disaster. The following infographics illustrate the number of displaced persons and their locations

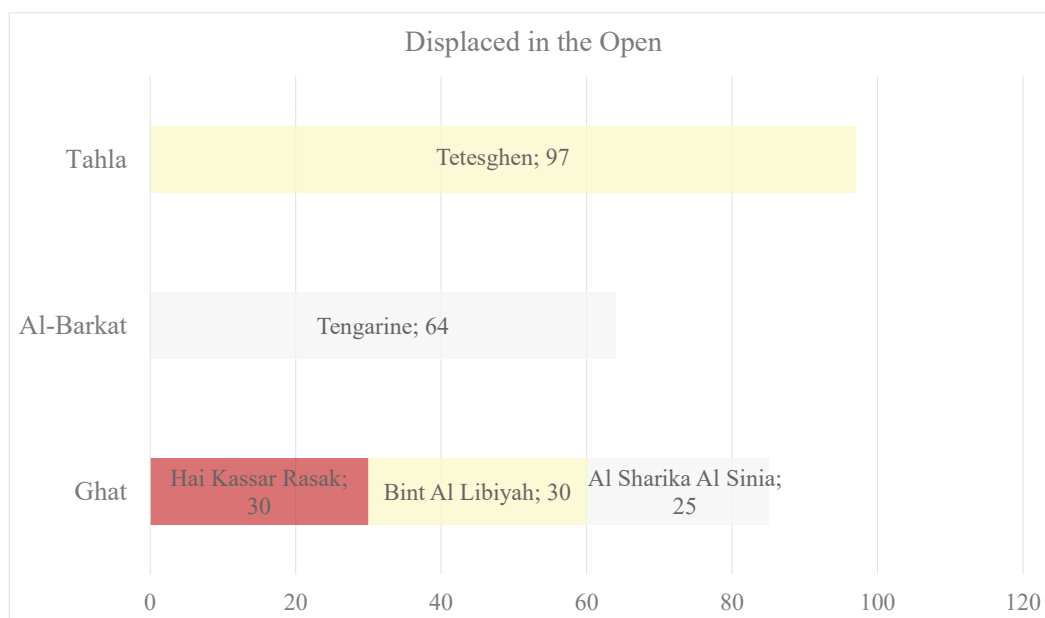
- **Tahala: 500 families displaced**
- **Al Barakat municipality: 1 person deceased**
- **Ghat municipality: 100 families displaced**
- **Surrounding areas: Unknown number of displaced families**

¹⁰The organization obtained these figures from statements made by local authorities in Ghat and its surroundings, and from some survivor testimonies provided to the organization

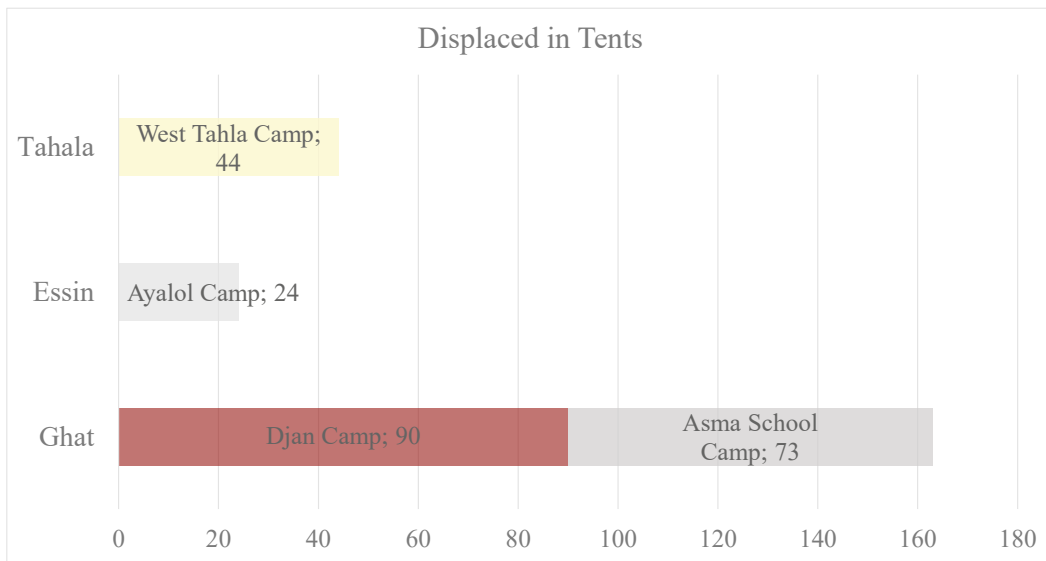
¹¹The body of Ya hya Muhammad Hassan was recovered by the Red Crescent Al Barakat branch on Sunday, August 18, 2024, after he was swept away by floods earlier



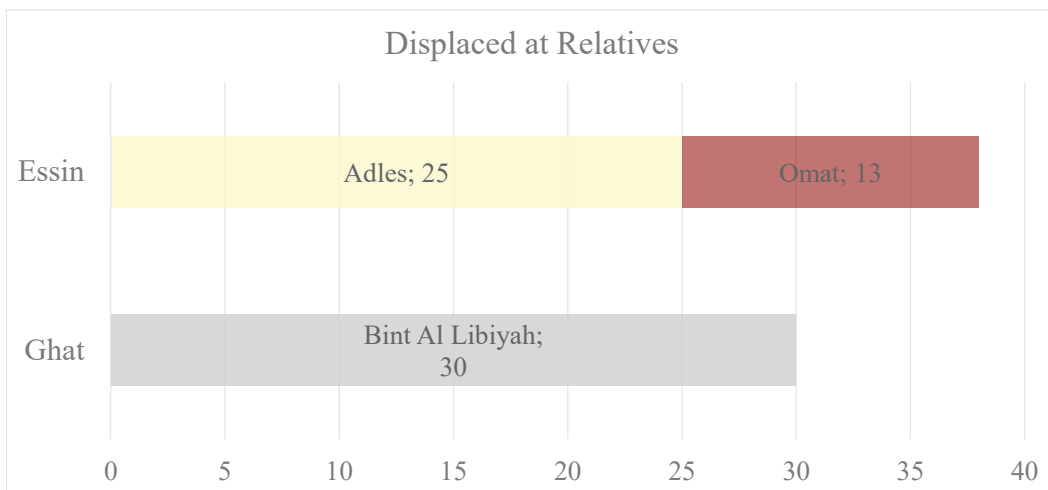
total of 486



total of 246



Total of 231



Total of 68

Total number of displaced individuals

1031

Note: The information provided in the infographics is based on reports from the organisation and may not be comprehensive or up to date

Impact



Health effects

The disaster caused by the Ghat floods, and its aftermath severely affected the already weak healthcare infrastructure, making it challenging to access essential health services and increasing the likelihood of disease outbreaks, particularly water pollution and poor hygiene. In the Tahala municipality, the problem of mixing rainwater with sewage water led to uninhabitable homes, exacerbating the deteriorating health conditions at the Asmaa Bint Abi Bakr Al Siddiq School shelter centre.

Psychological impact

Following the floods, the organisation documented that some individuals experienced psychological trauma due to the events, including the loss of their homes and property, as well as the loss of communication with their relatives. In addition, there was uncertainty about the future, loss of trust and hope in the authorities, and increased rates of anxiety and depression among survivors, particularly among children and women. Despite the presence of government bodies concerned with this matter, no response was recorded regarding psychological support teams.

Economic impact

Severe floods have caused widespread damage to vital infrastructure, including roads, which has disrupted people's livelihoods and made it difficult to access basic services. In addition, the agricultural property in the region, which is known for its crops and livestock, was severely affected by floods, leading to the destruction of agricultural fields and the loss of many livestock, which negatively impacted the affected population's food security and livelihoods. As a result of the destruction of property and loss of income, poverty rates have increased among the affected population, particularly among families that rely on agriculture and trade, leaving them facing a dire situation with limited resources.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction to the Legal Context

After Hurricane Daniel, which devastated the city of Derna in September 2023 and caused the collapse of its two dams, leading to the accumulation of rainwater that swept through the city and left thousands of victims, missing persons, and displaced individuals,¹² several problems arose, including the need to investigate and apprehend perpetrators and the issuance of rulings in this regard.¹³ Additionally, there were issues related to the search for and identification of missing persons, as well as the displacement, compensation, and the state's responsibility for all these matters. Some individuals even warned of the dangers of climate change and urged the state to take proactive and protective measures to avoid such harm as well as to consider its responsibility in the event of such damage.

¹²Derna incident Casualty figures

investigations into responsibility of powerful military and political actors over catastrophic derna floods

¹³The verdict issued against 12 defendants in the Derna dam collapse incident

Despite having previously mentioned warnings and predictions about the likelihood of thunderstorms in the southwestern areas of Libya, including Tahala, Al Uwaynat, Ghat, and Yaseen, the response from the two governments the Libya administration in the eastern and southern regions of the country and the Government of National Unity in the western part of the country fell short of what was expected. In the aftermath of rainfall and flooding that submerged Tahala in the southwest, the two governments established separate crisis committees to address the situation, demonstrating that no proactive or preventative measures had been taken in advance.

State Responsibility

The Hyogo Framework¹⁴ for Action assigns the responsibility of implementing disaster risk reduction measures to states. While joint responsibility exists between states in addressing the risks and consequences of natural disasters, the state ultimately bears the responsibility for the impact of these disasters, regardless of whether its citizens or others are affected. The State holds the primary role and responsibility for providing care to victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring within its territory. International assistance should only be rendered with the state's approval and through a specific appeal, in accordance with the provisions of the third and fourth articles of United Nations Resolution No. 182 /46, out of respect for the sovereignty of states.

Despite the responsibility placed on the Libyan state and issuance of Resolution No 1035 in 2007 and Resolution No. (121) of 2022, which assigned the National Crisis Management Center the tasks of predicting disaster indicators, assessing risks, setting policies and standards related to response and recovery, and coordinating with the relevant authorities regarding the preparation of shelters in buildings and facilities before and during crises or disasters, there was a lack of effective action in the recent floods in the southwestern region of Libya. The National Crisis Management Center issued a mere post on its official account via the Facebook application, stating that it was following recent events in the city of Ghat and its surroundings, calling on citizens to exercise caution, and urging the media to verify the accuracy of what was published¹⁵ This lack of an adequate response highlights the state's clear negligence and full legal responsibility for the events that occurred in the city of Ghat and its surroundings.

اطار عمل سندي : وقد حل محله اطار عمل هيوجو (2005-2015) بناء قدرة الامم والمجتمعات على مواجهة الكوارث¹⁴

¹⁵ :Link to the news published on the center's page

Discriminatory decisions

When Tahala was inundated by floods, causing electricity and communication to be cut off, the Libyan government established an emergency and rapid response committee for the city of Ghat led by the Deputy Prime Minister on 15 August 2024¹⁶ as per Decision No. 167 of 2024. This decision only outlined the provision of urgent aid to affected families as per Article Two. Concurrently, the Government of National Unity issued Urgent Circular No. 14099, which carried the Prime Minister's instructions for the formation of an emergency committee headed by the Minister of Local Government to oversee the affected areas and offer support and relief to the citizens residing therein.¹⁷

By evaluating the decisions made regarding the crisis, it is evident that both governments failed to adopt the correct approach to targeting all categories and segments present in the affected areas in a clear and explicit manner. This may result in inequality in providing humanitarian aid during disasters, as the decisions of the two governments were specific to providing support and assistance to affected families and citizens residing in the area, without considering other categories such as stateless persons, irregular migrants, migrant workers and their families, and children of foreign born Libyan women. This may exacerbate inequalities in providing aid and support during crises and may violate the commitment to the minimum standards for disaster response, the guidelines for the protection of migrants in conflict and disaster affected countries, the International Convention for the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (158), and other international standards and charters. It is important to note that the organisation monitored the damage to 50 families from Sudan and 70 individuals from Niger due to the floods that hit Ghat and its surroundings.

The Libyan state has a legal obligation to compensate its citizens for any damage caused by natural disasters or catastrophes, as outlined in Resolution No. (184) of

This resolution permits compensation for citizens who have 2012¹⁸ suffered damage from natural disasters, including earthquakes, fires, and other disasters. The state is required to provide compensation for such damages, and citizens must report it within 20 days of their occurrence. However, this resolution only applies to citizens and does not extend to other groups that may also be affected by the damage, such as stateless persons holding administrative numbers, children of Libyan women married to foreigners, and others. This lack of consideration of these groups highlights the discriminatory nature of decisions.

¹⁶Resolution link

¹⁷Circular link

¹⁸Resolution No. 184 of 2012 regarding compensating citizens in cases of natural disasters and calamities: Link to Resolution No. 184 of 2012

Findings

- 1 The state's inadequate response to the crisis and failure to implement preventive measures prior to the disaster, despite previous alerts.
- 2 Noncompliance of government agencies in the state with international standards for disaster management.
- 3 Incompetent state agencies are unable to perform their duties, resulting in negligence and a lack of assistance for certain groups such as stateless persons, irregular migrants, and migrant workers and their families.
- 4 The exclusion of certain groups from receiving support and aid, such as the children of Libyan women married to foreigners and others
- 5 Local officials alleged corruption during the distribution of relief and humanitarian aid as well as incidents of discrimination during the distribution process by local officials.
- 6 There are shortages of basic necessities for certain groups such as women and children.
- 7 Weakness of the healthcare system and infrastructure in the city of Ghat and its surrounding areas before and after the disaster.

Recommendations

- Libyan judicial authorities are called upon to launch an investigation into the consequences and repercussions of the floods that ravaged Ghat and its surrounding areas to identify those responsible and take appropriate legal action against them.
- Emphasising the need for the formation of a national team for disaster management and emergency intervention that encompasses all stakeholders involved in the response, whether governmental or non governmental.

- Advocating for equal treatment of all individuals, regardless of race, gender, or legal status, in the provision of humanitarian aid and refraining from making distinctions between citizens and non citizens during its distribution.
- Immediate implementation of preventive measures to halt the construction of dams and similar structures to prevent the flow of floods and minimise future damage and losses.
- Calls for increased efforts to provide humanitarian aid and close monitoring and supervision of its distribution to those affected.
- The establishment of strategically located warehouses equipped with essential raw materials for prompt humanitarian responses to emergencies.
- Holding accountable individuals responsible for corruption resulting from the manipulation of financial and in kind resources and using them for personal or discriminatory purposes to the detriment of those affected.
- Ending discriminatory practices by the Ministry of Social Affairs when distributing humanitarian aid.
- Ensuring access to healthcare that upholds human dignity, providing minimum requirements for personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, and resolving the scarcity of potable water crises.
- Lifting restrictions on civil society and international organisations allows them to provide aid and alleviate suffering.
- Launching an advocacy campaign to support civil society organisations in Ghat and strengthen their role in times of crisis.
- Training stakeholders in responding to and intervening in emergency situations, equipping them with the necessary resources and tools, and activating their role and readiness for natural and man made disasters provided their work is neutral and purely humanitarian.
- Training members of civil society organisations in emergency response and working with authorities to develop response plans, including establishing strategic storage facilities and enhancing capacity.