Overview
For over seven weeks, Libya has been witnessing continued heavy fighting between Government and Opposition Forces. Fighting has intensified in recent days, particularly in the city of Misrata. Heavy shelling of the port today (14 April 2011) resulted in a number of casualties and prevented ships from docking.

While the exact number of casualties since the beginning of violence is unconfirmed, rights groups have documented at least 250 deaths since the beginning of the hostilities in Misrata.

According to UNICEF, at least 20 children have been killed, including infants as young as nine months, and many other children have been injured by bullets and shelling over a period of 20 days.

Doctors, nurses and ambulances have also been affected. Medical personnel are among the casualties. Landmines, unexploded ordnance and remnants of war pose a serious threat to civilians, especially children. There are reports of limited access of civilians in the city of Misrata to food, water, electricity and health services. Over 3,500 families have reportedly migrated from the periphery of the city of Misrata towards the centre, to escape the shelling.

The situation of thousands of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) inside Misrata remains of particular concern. There are approximately 10,000 TCNs, including

more than 3,000 Egyptians, awaiting evacuation assistance.

Several hundred of these TCNs are from Sudan, Chad and Iraq who cannot return to their home countries for security fears. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, called for an immediate temporary cessation of hostilities to allow access for humanitarian assistance, on 8 April.

On 11 April, UNICEF called for an immediate end to the conflict in Misrata, warning that tens of thousands of children are at risk.

Facts and Figures
• Misrata commands an important geographic location and economic status as a commercial hub for the exchange of commodities and materials between cities inside Libya.
• The main contributor to the economy in Misrata is a steel mill. Other industries include production of carpets, textiles, baskets, pottery and hardware.
• The city hosts foreign oil and gas companies and has advanced infrastructure.
• Estimated population in the city of Misrata: 330,540 (2006 national household survey for Libya).
• Prior to the conflict, an estimated 33,000 non-Libyan nationals were living in Misrata.
• Over 50 percent of households in Misrata are connected with water and sewage networks.
• There are six hospitals, a university, a seaport and an airport in Misrata.

Map of City of Misrata
Needs

Humanitarian needs are increasing amidst the ongoing heavy fighting inside the city of Misrata. Thousands of civilians, including children and women, wish to leave Misrata but cannot do so due to the ongoing hostilities. There are approximately 10,000 Third Country Nationals (TCNs) awaiting evacuation assistance. Most have spent weeks living in the open in a worrying condition with limited food or clean water, and in fear. Several hundred of them are from Sudan, Chad and Iraq who are of particular concern as they cannot return home due to security concerns. There are reports of shortages of medical supplies, food and water.

The water supply to Misrata city has been cut off. Currently, wells are the main water source and there are reports of untreated sewage on the streets. UNICEF also reports that many children are traumatised from the atrocities they have witnessed.  

Response

Humanitarian aid organizations continue to respond to the needs inside Misrata. However, further efforts are needed to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Misrata, especially children.

Main assistance provided to Misrata includes:

3 April: The international medical humanitarian organization, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), evacuated 71 of the wounded people by boat from Misrata.

5 April: A Turkish ferry docked at Misrata Port carrying medical supplies, three ambulances and 15 health professionals. On the return journey to Turkey, the boat carried around 200 wounded Libyans.

6 April: The French Red Cross together with the Maltese Red Cross delivered 102 tons of food, medicine and hygiene kits.

7 April: A World Food Programme (WFP) chartered vessel carrying 800 metric tons of humanitarian aid arrived in Misrata. The ship contained medical supplies covering urgent medical needs for 50,000 people for a month provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF; and more than 600 metric tons of food enough to feed more than 40,000 people and 100 tons of water for a month. This is the largest relief supply in Libya that the United Nations has provided since the beginning of the crisis.

9 April: An International Committee of the Red Crescent (ICRC) ship delivered emergency medical supplies for 300 people.

10 April: An International Medical Corps (IMC) ship delivered surgical kits, emergency health kits and medical supplies to hospitals.

13 April: An IOM chartered passenger ship went from Benghazi carrying humanitarian relief to Misrata. This ship will also evacuate 800 TCNs from Misrata to Benghazi.

Endnotes

2. Emergency Relief Team of the Arab Medical Union, 11 April 2011.
3. Misrata Medical Committee, 12 April 2011.
5. The Libyan Government warned on 11 April that any humanitarian assistance besides aid coming from the Red Cross and the Red Crescent to the besieged rebel-held port of Misrata would be met by armed resistance.

For more information on the humanitarian response to the Libyan crisis, including OCHA Libya situation reports, please visit http://libya.humanitarianresponse.info/

Fore questions or comments, please contact Mai Yassin, yassinm@un.org