



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان  
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

## A Report on Mercenary Activity in Libya

**Submitted to:** The Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries

**Submitted by:** Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (an organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council).

**Submitted on:** Libya

**Submitted in:** March 2020

### 1. Regulatory Frameworks and their Application

Although Libya signed the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries in 2000<sup>1</sup>, the country's internal legislation and laws do not contain any provisions prohibiting the mercenary activities or providing for the imposition of penalties on them, along with the insufficient investigations to arrest a group of foreign mercenaries in Libya, due to the nature of the conflict between the warring forces and the proliferation of mercenaries to fight on all different sides, in addition to the free presence of a group of them working to carry out criminal activities and violations of human rights.

Despite the weakness of the Libyan state, the control of multiple parties over the decision-making system, and the grinding civil war

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<sup>1</sup> International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries .Untied nation treaty collection . .ديسمبر 1989 <http://bit.ly/2W4MWOK>

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between the various parties, there are insufficient investigations into the activities of some mercenary parties involved in the conflict in Libya. Among these investigations, arresting a Chadian citizen for recruiting mercenaries to fight on the different fronts, along with three others, in exchange for three thousand dinars per week.<sup>2</sup> The Libyan army has arrested 13 fighters in Tripoli, including mercenaries from Turkey, who were conducting combat operations in Libya.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of the various investigations, the 140<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the Libyan National Army arrested mercenaries fighting with the forces of Osama al-Juwayli, and those people appeared in a video after their arrest<sup>4</sup>. Some of the militias allying with al-Sarraj government arrested 31 militants inside the Libyan territory during the fighting, six of them are of Sudanese nationality, and 25 were from Chad<sup>5</sup>. The Libyan National Army arrested "Jimmy Spunogel," a 31-year-old American pilot from Florida who was fighting with forces allied with Libya's U.N.-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and was believed before his arrest to be Portuguese.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Chadian citizen arrested for recruiting mercenaries to fight with Haftar. Libyaobserver . March 01, 2020.

<http://bit.ly/3cO6M6t>

<sup>3</sup> Libyan army arrested 13 fighters in Tropoli, including mercenaries from Turkey .arabobserver21 . February 2020 ،

<http://bit.ly/2IAke00>

<sup>4</sup> LNA arrests mercenaries in ranks of GNA Forces . addresslibya.17 . June 2019 .<http://bit.ly/2THm7ys>

<sup>5</sup> Committee for documenting human rights violations reveals core evidence of mercenaries fighting with Haftar .

libyaobserver . February 08, 2020 . <http://bit.ly/2TGC0oH>

<sup>6</sup> ، يونيو 2019 ، <http://bit.ly/3cS4Qd8> بعد 6 أسابيع.. الجيش الليبي يطلق سراح الطيار الأميركي ، أسكاي نيوز ، يونيو 2019 ،

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## 2. Current Trends and Developments

Different waves of mercenaries are fighting in Libya. Many countries, private security companies, and non-state actors have employed many mercenaries to fight in the hotbeds of the conflict to support one of the parties involved in the fighting. So, we find fighters from Russia, Sudan, Afghanistan and many other countries. Some of them belong to non-state armed groups such as Al-Mu'tasim Brigade, the Sultan Murad Brigade, the Sham Legion and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, while others belong to companies such as the Turkish military contractor SADAT, with the support of relief organizations such as Qatar Charity that participated in smuggling combatants and weapons through various ways into the Libyan territory, with considerations of occasional cooperation between the different factions, and with contribution of the fight between the several factions within Libya and the absence of the rule of law.

A mercenary person is defined as "any person recruited to fight in an armed conflict for obtaining financial gains." These conflicts may arise due to civil war or ethnic and racial conflicts. And those persons are not residents, nationals, members of the armed forces of one of the parties, or even members of the armed forces of any other country. In Libya, there are many mercenary individuals fighting with various parties, including the Russian "Wagner" group, as various estimates indicate that there are between 600 and 800 Wagner Group fighters in

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Libya carrying out combat missions inside Libya, serving the interests of the Russian state and protecting it. It is worth mentioning that the Russian businessman "Yevgeny Briggosen" is the one financing these groups in Libya.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, a number of recordings for these fighters appeared in a temporary combat break, and this group contains fighters of many nationalities from Ukraine, Russia and the rest of eastern European countries<sup>8</sup>. Some of the militias allying with the Government of National Accord announced the killing of about 7 individuals from this group in Tripoli during the various battles<sup>9</sup>. Such groups are specifically located in Al-Jafra, Bani Walid and Tarhuna and they use shells, tanks, drones and ammunition to carry out its various combat missions. It is worth noting that Wagner Group is a private security company established in 2014 to help the Russian government in its various external conflicts<sup>10</sup>. There are also a group of Russian snipers carrying out special missions.<sup>11</sup>

In this light, there is a group of Sudanese fighters fighting in Libya, represented by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, led by Mona

<sup>7</sup> Are there any Russian mercenaries in Libya to support Haftar's army? . bulgarianmilitary . Jan 24, 2020 .

<http://bit.ly/2xo2eDG>

<sup>8</sup> فيديو حصلت عليه الجزيرة نت.. مرتزقة كرايونيون في ليبيا في الجبهات الأمامية لقوات حفتر ، الجزيرة مباشر ، 2019/12/28 ،

<http://bit.ly/33biPX3>

<sup>9</sup> تمويلهم السعودية.. "فاغنر" يدبوتين القذرة في ليبيا ، الخليج أونلاين ، 2020-01-25 ،

<sup>10</sup> ماذا تعرف عن مرتزقة «فاغنر» الروسية؟ رهم في ليبيا؟ ، عين ليبيا ، 8 يناير 2020 ،

<sup>11</sup> Russian Snipers, Missiles and Warplanes Try to Tilt Libyan War . neryark times . Nov. 7, 2019 .

<https://nyti.ms/38Gwoir>

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Minawi and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council and the Justice and Equality Movement. Hundreds of fighters fight with the Sudan Liberation Movement, with 150 vehicles and each combatant gets a monthly wage ranging between \$ 250 and \$ 500<sup>12</sup>. Estimates indicate that 3,000 Sudanese mercenaries are fighting in Libya, and their primary goal is to make money<sup>13</sup>. The Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement forces are stationed in Um al-Aranib, al-Qatrun, Sabha, and in the vicinity of Kufra, all the way to Libya's oil crescent area, specifically the Libya's region of Zella<sup>14</sup>, while there were 700 mercenaries from Chadian Tanaweb and Witaq Front.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, there is a group of Russian fighters carrying out combat operations inside Libya, along with protecting some security and military figures as well as various oil resources. It is worth noting that Arie Ben Mannashi, an Israeli, who was trying to recruit a group of mercenaries, with multiple ethnic backgrounds, to fight in Libya. There are also some armed Chadian Tabu tribesmen participating in the

<sup>12</sup> جيوش احتلال» من نوع جديد.. خريطة انتشار «المرتزقة» في أفريقيا ، أهل القران ، 7 فبراير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/3cIWaGd>  
<sup>13</sup> Mercenaries flock to Libya raising fears of prolonged war . theguardian . <http://bit.ly/2vcxTaB>  
<sup>14</sup> 70 شركة مرتزقة تحتل ليبيا... أدوار راسية إماراتية إسرائيلية ، العربي الجديد ، 26 مارس 2018 ، <http://bit.ly/2TEqQRp>

<sup>15</sup> شركة مرتزقة تحتل ليبيا ، مرجع سابق ذكره

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fighting, with approximately 200 people, 50 military vehicles and medium weapons<sup>16</sup>.

In the Libyan Misurata, some people in the inner circles of the National Accord government and the Dawn of Libya forces<sup>17</sup>, specifically the Halbous Brigade, negotiated to contract with companies from Eastern European countries to bring in mercenary fighters to fight in various Libyan arenas, including Serb and Ukrainian officers who had participated in various conflicts in Africa, in conjunction with making deals to recruit fighters from a private security company headquartered in the Italian city of Palermo.<sup>18</sup>

The influx of Syrian mercenaries – a jihadist group fighting in Syria, such as al-Mu'tasim Brigade, Sultan Murad Brigade, Northern Falcons Brigade, Hamzat, Legion of the Levant, Suleiman Shah and the Samarkand Brigade - sent by Turkey in the wake of signing the security agreement with al-Sarra government to fight in Libya was publically announced when the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared, during his interview with CNN Turk, that the Turkish forces are gradually shifting to Libya to support the National Accord government against the forces of Libya's Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and the

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<sup>16</sup>شركة مرتزقة تحتل ليبيا ، مرجع سابق ذكره

<sup>17</sup>فجر ليبيا هو تحالف مجموعة ميليشيات إسلامية في ليبيا تضم ميليشيات بينها درع ليبيا الوسطى، غرفة ثوار ليبيا في طرابلس ميليشيات تنحدر أساساً من مناطق مصراته إضافة لميليشيات من غريان والزليخة صبراته. يري العديد ارتباطاً لها بجماعة الإخوان المسلمين في ليبيا

<sup>18</sup>ليبيا مسرح للمقاتلين المرتزقة الأجانب ، العربي الجديد ، يوليو 2016 ، <http://bit.ly/3cN3MY9>

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Libyan parliament. This comes after the Turkish parliament agreed to send Turkish military forces to Libya on January 2, 2020 in the framework of the security and military agreement, which was signed between the two parties on November 27, 2019.<sup>19</sup>

On December 24, 2019, 300 fighters of the Syrian jihadist factions moved towards Libya to fight alongside the militias allying with Al-Wefaq government, and were followed by 350 others on December 29, 2019. These fighters had received their special training in camps located in southern Turkey, and each of them earned \$2,000 a month, along with promises of obtaining Turkish citizenship. In this context, video clips of men with Syrian accents in Tripoli were posted on social media, with one of them saying, "The Free Syrian Army is in Libya to defend Islam." We liberated this entire camp from Haftar's forces.<sup>20</sup>" In the same context, the Qatari-funded Turkish military contractor SADAT trains forces and dispatches them to Libya to fight for a monthly salary of \$ 2,000. This private company is owned by Adnan Taneri Verde, a former military adviser to the Turkish president.<sup>21</sup>

In this framework, the Libyan army has published information on the arrival of a group of Turkish fighters from Syria. These fighters are reportedly having ties to al-Qaeda and many of them are wanted on anti-

<sup>19</sup>أردغان: جنودنا بدأوا التوجه بالفعل إلى ليبيا.. لا يزال لإدانة السعودية، سي إن إن العربية، يناير 2020، <https://cnn.it/36EL3dM>

<sup>20</sup> بالتواريخ الأرقام.. الإعلام الرسمي يوثق أن أردغان في دعم الإرهاب بليبيا، تركيا الآن، فبراير 2020، <http://bit.ly/37XkwIN>  
<sup>21</sup> من هي شركة "سادات" التركية المساعد الرسمي لتدخل أردغان في ليبيا؟، مونت كارلو الدولية، مارس 2020، <http://bit.ly/3aLuOgD>

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terrorist lists in many countries. Additionally, most of them were members of the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS and they belong to various nationalities, including the Osama al-Sayyid Qasim, who was nicknamed Abu al-Hareth al-Masri, an Egyptian, who is listed as a terrorist in many countries, Bilal bin Yusef bin Muhammad al-Shawashy, a Tunisian, who was nicknamed Abu Yahya Zakaria, Abdullah Muhammed al-Anazi, a Saudi Arabian, who was nicknamed Abu Muhammad al-Jazrawi, with the arrival of Yahya Taher Farghali, head of Ahrar al-Sham movement legal office, which is affiliated with al-Qaeda and the founder of nine combat brigades, called the Al-Fateh Brigades, most of which are located in Libya.<sup>22</sup>

On February 4, 2020, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights announced the arrival of 4,700 fighters from the Al-Mu'tasim Brigade, the Sultan Murad Brigade, the Northern Falcons Brigade, Al Hamzat, the Legion of the Levant, Suleiman Shah, and the Samarkand Brigade to Libya to fight alongside the Libyan militias<sup>23</sup>. This comes in light of international news agencies' speech about the arrival of two thousand Syrian fighters from various militias to Libya to support the National Accord government, 650 of these fighters came from the 2<sup>nd</sup> division of the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army and other 1350 fighters came from al-Sham Brigade, who will form a division under the name of the

<sup>22</sup> بالوثائق.. تركيا أرسلت أخطر قيادات «القاعدة» □ «داعش» لدعم حكومة «الوفاق» ، تركيا الآن ، فبراير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/2umcZoT> ،  
<sup>23</sup> □ وصل عددهم 4700.. المرصد السوري: تركيا لا تتوقف عن إرسال المرتزقة إلى ليبيا ، تركيا الآن ، 2 فبراير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/3a3Iqnn> ،

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Libyan Mujahid Omar Mukhtar, fueling the conflicts and civil war among the various parties within Libya.<sup>24</sup>

A group of fighters have expressed their happiness to fight inside Libya and the privileges they obtained from fighting in Libya<sup>25</sup>, with the existence of 229 critically dangerous Islamic terrorist belonging to al-Nusra Front, a Turkish-backed and al-Qaeda-linked jihadist group in Syria.<sup>26</sup> On January 12, 2020, three Syrian Turkish-backed fighters were killed in skirmishes in Libya,<sup>27</sup> while 3 others of the Mu'tasim Brigade and 3 from the Sultan Murad faction were killed during various clashes in Libya.<sup>28</sup>

On March 7, 2020, the number of Syrian mercenaries in Libya reached about 6000 fighters, and about 117 of whom, who joined the battles of Tripoli militias with the Libyan National Army in Salah al-Din, Ramla and al-Hadba, were killed. From the above, we conclude that Turkey sent a number of jihadist mercenaries, from various militias, such as Al-Mu'tasim Brigade, Sultan Murad Brigade, Northern Falcons Brigade, Al-Hamzat, Legion of the Levant, Suleiman Shah, and Samarkand Brigade, to fight in Libya, and these militias have indeed

<sup>24</sup> <http://bit.ly/2HS2L2A> أردن غان يعلن دعمه لمليشيات حكومة «الوفاق»: حتى تبسط سيطرتها على كامل ليبيا، تركيا الآن ، فبراير 2020 ،

<sup>25</sup> These Mercenaries Believe Whatever Turkey Tells Them". Investigativejournal. FEBRUARY 5, 2020. <http://bit.ly/2vgtkfq>

<sup>26</sup> In Libya 229 ISIS Fierce Leaders with 4700 Turkish-backed Jihadists. UN Investigates, Europe Sleeps . Gospanews .Febbraio.

<sup>27</sup> Turkish-backed mercenaries continue to be killed in Libya and Information about field executions carried out by them near Tripoli .Syria observatory for human rights . 12 January . <http://bit.ly/2IAUe11>

<sup>28</sup> مرتزة أردن غان..خطر يتهدد ليبيا ، بوابة إفريقيا ، 15 يناير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/3cJM2gp>

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committed numerous human rights violations in northern Syria. Moreover, it has been reported that some of these jihadists were linked to the terrorist organization ISIS, and the Qatari-funded Turkish military contractor SADAT trains fighters and dispatches them to Libya, raising international concerns about the situation of Libya that turned into an incubator for terrorism due to the large number of combatants affiliated with terrorist organizations and those possessing a range of different weapons and are beyond control.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Mercenary Activities' Effects on Human Rights

Mercenaries are used for implementing various illegal activities in Libya, including the ongoing armed conflicts in the Libyan territories, and despite the use of mercenaries mainly in fighting with various parties, they also are used to carry out other operations such as drugs smuggling, kidnappings, human trafficking, and other activities, ensuring its funding and continuity and threatening the basic rights of citizens in the Libyan interior from the right to life and freedom, in the presence of an appropriate environment for the continuation of various conflicts. It is worth noting that there are various methods used by different parties to recruit these fighters in the hotbeds of conflicts which will be indicated.

In this context, a group of Qatari charitable institutions has recruited a group of fighters willing to fight inside Libya through

<sup>29</sup> 117 fatalities among Syrian mercenaries in Libya. Egypttoday. Mar. 7 <http://bit.ly/2Ua6P4n>

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multiple means, and Ali Al-Salabi has played a coordinating role between extremist movements and Qatari charities, as the organization has multiple charitable networks through which it recruits and attracts fighters from different nationalities to fight inside the Libyan territories.<sup>30</sup>

In the same context, Mahdi Al Harati and Abdel Hakim Belhaj coordinated the entry of fighters into Libya<sup>31</sup>, and the Libyan Afriqiyah Airlines company and Ajniha company, owned by Abdel Hakim Belhaj, which move fighters from Syria to Libya, and on January 1, 2020, 4 planes carrying fighters from Syria landed in Libya via these lines<sup>32</sup>, while Abu Ali Sijo, director of the security office for the Bab al-Salama and Zakaria Eid, coordinate the travel of a group of extremists from Syria to Libya.<sup>33</sup>

In this context, the SLA in Darfur tried to recruit gold miners from Berri in the Tibesti region of Chad to fight inside Libya,<sup>34</sup> and Abd al-Hadi Makhoulf recruits a group of mercenary pilots to fight in Libya side by side with the government of National Accord, and that recruitment was carried out through partnerships with a number of security companies such as Middle East and North African

<sup>30</sup> ميليشيات ليبية تنافس تجار المخدرات العملات المزورة ، الشرق الأوسط ، فبراير 2017 ، <http://bit.ly/3cPd7Pg>  
<sup>31</sup> ميليشيات ليبية تنافس تجار المخدرات العملات المزورة ، الشرق الأوسط ، فبراير 2017 ، <http://bit.ly/3cPd7Pg>  
<sup>32</sup> ليبيا... هبوط 4 طائرات تحمل مقاتلين سوريين في مطار معيتيقة ، الانتدابيات البريطانية ، يناير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/2THH5NK>  
<sup>33</sup> انفوجرافيك | "أبو علي سجو" .. من تاجر مخدرات مهرب بشر إلى سمسار مرتزقة أردن غان ، أخبار ليبيا ، فبراير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/2TUjKap>

<sup>34</sup> LibyaCountry Report.. eu-listco. 2018 . <http://bit.ly/38FGDUq>

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Transportation and Logistics Services, which recruited a number of Ukrainian officers, engineers and aircraft leaders from Ecuador, Portugal and even the United States, in exchange for a monthly payment ranging between 10 and 20 thousand dollars, to fight with the government of National Accord, backed by the arrest of people fighting alongside the government of National Accord and holding multiple nationalities<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, a Syrian refugee named Mansour, living in Gaziantep, southern Turkey, 30 km from the Syrian border, in the Al-Hamzat faction, recruits people from Turkey and dispatches them to Libya, in coordination with the Turkish Intelligence Agency.<sup>36</sup>

These persons are being recruited, trained and funded in order to support parallel militias countering regular armies, acquiring economic resources during armed conflicts, and exerting pressure on pro-national armies' governments while achieving the targets of specific countries promoting terrorism such as Turkey. In this context, various mercenary groups carry out illegal operations such as drug trafficking and smuggling, violating the basic rights of citizens.<sup>37</sup>

A group of mercenaries killed the Egyptian physician, Muhammad Ayyad, after he was kidnapped in Al-Andalus neighborhood of the Libyan capital Tripoli, after publishing a video clip in which he

<sup>35</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Turkey's Syrian mercenaries in Libya: 'We did it for the money' .Thenationa .eb 19, 2020 .<http://bit.ly/3aOrX6y>

<sup>37</sup> Sudanese militias play instrumental role in Libya's conflict .international research institute 17 .th January .  
<http://bit.ly/2TIKylc>

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appeared talking with a Syrian mercenary in the clinic where he works. These fighters belong to the Second Legion of Sham<sup>38</sup>, while the Sultan Murad Brigade, which contains a group of Syrian mercenaries have violated human rights in the Libyan district of Salah al-Din.<sup>39</sup>

In this light, various militias inside Libya and mercenaries are carrying out a range of illegal activities. The Islamist militia of Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade, which consists of 200 fighters, cooperated with ISIS in the drug trafficking in order to provide funds for the different mercenaries who are fighting within the country. These militias have four tanks and two Grad missiles, anti-artillery, and hundreds of light weapons and they control western Libya.<sup>40</sup>

While the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army, the Minni Minawi faction, carry out criminal operations such as looting, kidnapping and human trafficking<sup>41</sup>, along with the criminal activities carried out in southern Libya by rebel forces in Darfur, such as cutting off the only land route between Ajdabiya and Kufra, looting the property of travelers, kidnapping hostages and looting the sites of the oil fields in Kufra, Zella and gold mining areas located on the Libyan borders with Chad and Niger. They also steal the property of

<sup>38</sup> تفاصيل مقتل طبيب فضح مرتزقة أردنية غان في طرابلس ، صوت الدار 16 يناير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/39GZD61>

<sup>39</sup> تفاصيل مقتل طبيب فضح مرتزقة أردنية غان في طرابلس ، صوت الدار 16 يناير 2020 ، <http://bit.ly/39GZD61>

<sup>40</sup> ميليشيات ليبية تنافس تجار المخدرات العملات المزورة ، الشرق الأوسط ، فبراير 2017 ، <http://bit.ly/3cPd7Pg>

<sup>41</sup> Erik Prince behind some mysterious bombings in Libya ..digitaljournal .JAN 14 .<http://bit.ly/38JleJY>

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the Libyans and smuggle them into Sudan for sale. The number of these fighters is 850 and they have 112 armed vehicles.<sup>42</sup>

In this context, both the Chadian mercenaries and some Nigerian gangs such as Boko Haram carry out a group of smuggling operations in the Libyan south, ranging from illicit drug and firearms trafficking, migrants and outlawed smuggling and smuggling of goods and fuel.<sup>43</sup> The most prominent of these gangs are Ibrahim al-Jadran's militia.<sup>44</sup>

## Recommendations

To conclude, Maat for Peace recommends that the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries should visit Libya to monitor the violations committed by mercenaries in reality, with the need to put pressure on Turkey to cease sending mercenaries to Libya, and hold it accountable for the crimes committed by mercenaries against human rights in Libya.

<sup>42</sup> are-darfur-rebels-participating-mercenaries-libya .Ippmedia .<http://bit.ly/3cOQDh7>

<sup>43</sup>التهریب فی الجنوب اللیبی.. إرهاب□مخدرات□مرتزقة العین الإخباریة ، أكتوبر 2019 ، <http://bit.ly/2TXVEvq>

<sup>44</sup>التهریب فی الجنوب اللیبی.. إرهاب□مخدرات□مرتزقة العین الإخباریة ، أكتوبر 2019 ، <http://bit.ly/2TXVEvq>

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