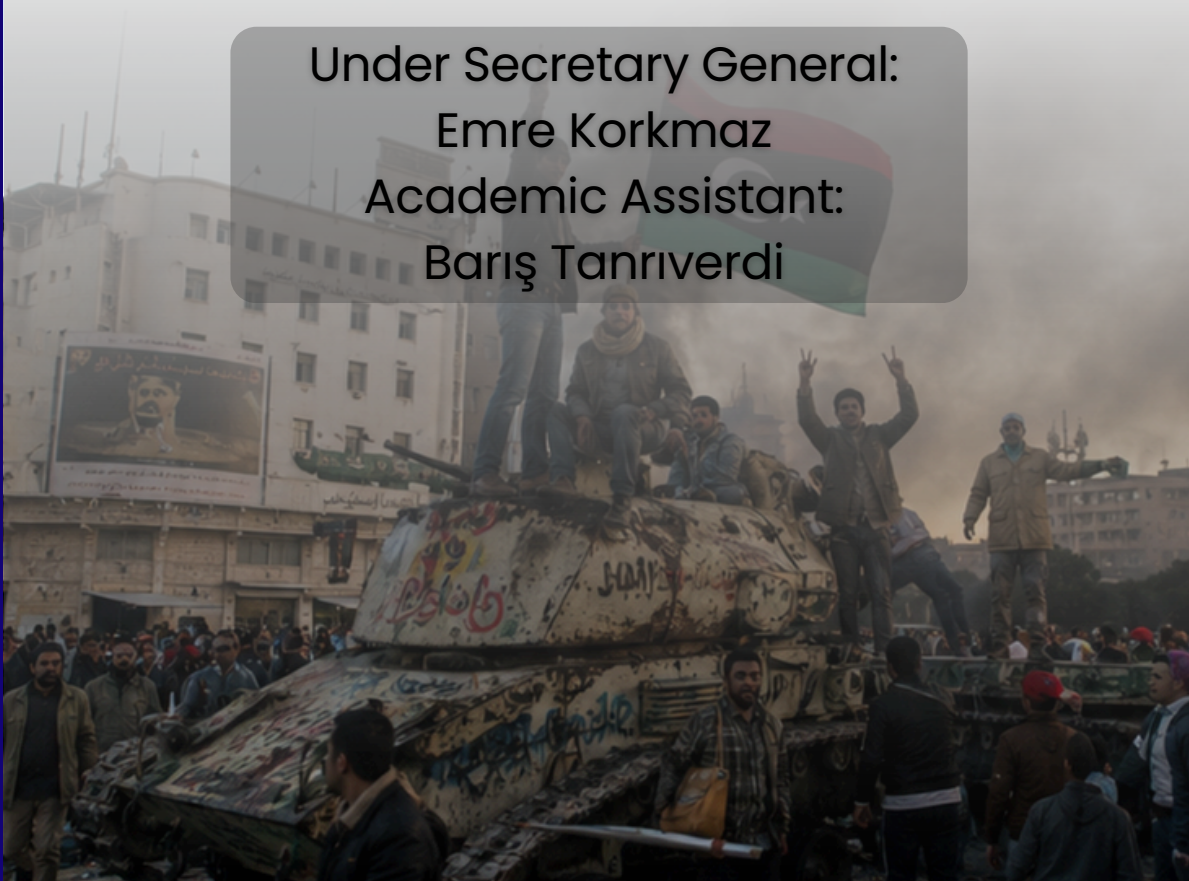


UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

STUDY GUIDE

2011 Libyan Crisis

Under Secretary General:
Emre Korkmaz
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MUNIFL'26

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Study Guide



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Letter from Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates, Dear Academic Team, Hardworking Organization Team, Advisors, Staff and Partners,

I would like to welcome all of you to the third official session of the Model United Nations of Izmir Science High School! I am Hazal KUŞ and I am more than proud to serve as your Secretary General in this amazing conference.

Our aim is to ensure that all of your needs are covered. While preparing for the conference, our executive, organization and academic teams worked really hard to provide you with everything and I would like to express my biggest appreciations to them for their efforts. We are sure that MUNIFL'26 will be the best conference you've ever been in!

During the conference, you will not only be a part of diplomacy and discussing current topics, but you will also engage in meaningful debates, exchange diverse perspectives, and develop critical thinking and communication skills. At the same time, you will create strong bonds with others, build lasting friendships, and gain unforgettable experiences that go beyond the formal sessions.

As the Secretary General of this conference, I suggest you to read your study guides properly and do research about your agenda item as it will make your experience even more productive. I hope you all will have a fantastic conference full of unforgettable memories.

Best Regards!

Hazal KUŞ
Secretary General
hazalkus02@gmail.com

Letter from Under Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council. My name is Emre Korkmaz and I am the Under Secretary General responsible for this committee. During the 3 days our committee will be following the agenda item that is 2011 Libyan Crisis. Our procedure throughout the conference will be Special GA. You will be proposing your motions, debating on semi-moderated caucuses. Since our committee is an advanced one I expect all of you to come prepared and do your research on 2011 Libyan Crisis. I expect each delegate to read this study guide carefully and do their research well prior to the conference. If you have any questions, any concerns or anything that you want to ask me regarding the committee you can always reach out to me. See you all at the conference.

Sincerely,

Emre Korkmaz

Under Secretary General of United Nations Security Council

emo.kmz@hotmail.com

Letter from Academic Assistant

Dear Participants,

First of all, I proudly welcome you all to the United Nations Security Council of MUNIFK'26. I am thrilled with great enthusiasm to be the Academic Assistant of this committee. Rest assured that I will do my very best for every one of you to have a good time.

The topic of Libyan Crisis is an interesting one. And I am hopeful that you will all attend the conference well-prepared and the very best you can do for that is to thoroughly read this study guide. It is essential for you all nonetheless to do your own research. Documentaries, video essays and all kinds of texts are available regarding our topic. Nevertheless, do not forget to have fun and enjoy yourselves during our sessions. Please do not refrain from contacting me for any and all questions. I would be happy to help you with anything. See you all at the conference.

Barış Tanrıverdi
Academic Assistant of UNSC

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Introduction to the Committee

Since it is primarily in charge of preserving world peace and security, the Security Council occupies a special place within the UN. The Council, which has fifteen members, has the power to directly influence international affairs and its decisions are legally binding. One of the pivotal events of the previous 20 years is still the Libyan Crisis of 2011. The Arab Spring inspired protests soon turned into a bloody conflict between the opposition forces and the Libyan government.

Background of the Libyan Crisis

The Libyan Crisis of 2011 cannot be fully understood without looking at both the internal dynamics of the country and the broader regional context in which it unfolded. For decades, Libya had been ruled under the leadership of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who came to power through a coup in 1969. His rule combined elements of authoritarianism, populism, and an unconventional political system based on his “Green Book” ideology. While the regime projected an image of stability, it relied heavily on centralized control, repression of dissent, and the use of oil revenues to maintain loyalty.

By 2011, Libya was not an isolated case. Across North Africa and the Middle East, a wave of popular uprisings known as the Arab Spring was spreading rapidly. Citizens across the region were protesting corruption, economic inequality, and decades of political repression. These movements inspired Libyans to voice long-suppressed grievances against the Gaddafi regime, demanding reforms and greater freedoms. What began as peaceful demonstrations in February 2011 soon escalated into violent clashes. Security forces responded with heavy force, leading to widespread civilian casualties. In a matter of weeks, the situation developed into a full-scale conflict, with opposition groups organizing under the banner of the National Transitional Council (NTC) to challenge Gaddafi’s rule.

Historical Context of Libya Before 2011

To understand the Libyan Crisis of 2011, it is important to look at Libya’s historical development as a nation. Libya’s modern history has been shaped by colonialism, monarchy, and eventually decades of authoritarian rule under Muammar Gaddafi.

Libya was an Italian colony from 1911 until World War II. After the defeat of Italy, the country came under British and French administration until its independence in 1951, when King Idris I established the United Kingdom of Libya. At that time, Libya was one of the poorest countries in the world, with little infrastructure or economic development.

The discovery of significant oil reserves in the late 1950s transformed the country's future. Oil revenues gave Libya sudden wealth, but political dissatisfaction grew under the monarchy. In 1969, a group of young military officers led by Muammar Gaddafi staged a coup, overthrowing King Idris and establishing the Libyan Arab Republic.

Under Gaddafi's rule, Libya pursued an independent and sometimes confrontational foreign policy. The state promoted pan-Arabism, supported various revolutionary movements abroad, and often found itself at odds with Western powers. Domestically, Gaddafi introduced a political system based on his *Green Book*, which rejected both capitalism and communism in favor of what he called the "Third International Theory." While the system promised direct democracy through local committees, in practice it concentrated power in Gaddafi's hands and left little room for dissent.

By the early 21st century, Libya had one of the highest GDPs per capita in Africa thanks to oil wealth, but deep inequalities and widespread repression remained. Political opposition was harshly silenced, and state institutions were built around loyalty to the regime rather than accountability. Beneath the appearance of stability, grievances against corruption, lack of freedoms, and uneven economic opportunities continued to grow.

Gaddafi's Rule and Political Climate

Muammar Gaddafi's rule over Libya lasted more than four decades, making him one of the longest-serving leaders in modern history. His government was built on a combination of ideology, oil wealth, and strict political control.

After seizing power in 1969, Gaddafi sought to dismantle the old monarchy and replace it with a new system based on his political philosophy. This was outlined in his *Green Book*, which rejected traditional democracy and instead proposed governance through a network of "People's Committees" and the General People's Congress. In theory, this system was meant to give power directly to the people. In reality, the committees functioned under Gaddafi's influence, leaving him as the central figure of authority.

Libya's vast oil resources allowed Gaddafi to consolidate his rule. Revenues from oil exports funded infrastructure projects, free education, and healthcare, raising the overall standard of living compared to many neighboring states. However, wealth distribution was uneven, and much of the country's prosperity remained tied to loyalty to the regime. Those who challenged the government often faced imprisonment, exile, or worse.

Politically, Libya under Gaddafi was isolated and unpredictable. Relations with the West were tense throughout much of his rule, particularly during the 1980s, when Libya was accused of supporting terrorist organizations and became the target of U.S. airstrikes. The 1988 Lockerbie

bombing further deepened Libya's pariah status until the early 2000s, when Gaddafi sought partial reconciliation with the international community by abandoning weapons of mass destruction programs and re-engaging diplomatically.

The Arab Spring and Spark of the Uprising

In late 2010 and early 2011, a wave of popular movements swept across North Africa and the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring. Citizens across the region rose up against decades of authoritarian rule, economic inequality, corruption, and lack of political freedoms. From Tunisia to Egypt, these uprisings showed that entrenched regimes could be challenged by mass protest movements, inspiring populations throughout the Arab world including Libya.

In Libya, the spark came in February 2011, when demonstrations broke out in the eastern city of Benghazi. Protesters demanded political reforms, an end to corruption, and greater freedoms. Initially, these demonstrations echoed the largely peaceful calls for change seen in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt. However, the Libyan government responded with harsh repression. Security forces opened fire on demonstrators, and the use of heavy weaponry against civilians escalated tensions dramatically.

The crackdown did not intimidate the opposition; instead, it fueled it. Protests spread quickly to other cities, and what began as peaceful demonstrations soon developed into armed resistance. Opposition groups, many of them loosely organized at first, began to coalesce under the newly formed National Transitional Council (NTC), which declared itself the legitimate representative of the Libyan people.

Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, where leaders were ousted within weeks, Libya descended into a violent conflict. The government's refusal to step down, coupled with its use of overwhelming force, created a situation that rapidly became a civil war. International observers and organizations reported alarming human rights abuses, and there was widespread fear that mass atrocities were imminent.

Timeline of the 2011 Libyan Crisis

The Libyan Crisis unfolded rapidly over the course of 2011, transforming from local protests into a full-scale civil war with international involvement. Below is a chronological overview of the key events:

- **February 15–17, 2011:** Protests begin in Benghazi, inspired by the Arab Spring. Demonstrations call for reforms but are met with violent repression. Security forces open fire on protesters, escalating tensions.
- **February 20–23, 2011:** Violence spreads as government forces use heavy weapons against civilians. Opposition groups gain control of Benghazi and other eastern cities. Reports of mass killings alarm the international community.
- **February 26, 2011:** The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1970, imposing sanctions on the Libyan regime, enforcing an arms embargo, and referring the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- **March 10, 2011:** The French government becomes the first to recognize the National Transitional Council (NTC) as Libya's legitimate authority. Other states soon follow.
- **March 17, 2011:** The Security Council passes Resolution 1973, authorizing "all necessary measures" to protect civilians, including the establishment of a no-fly zone.
- **March 19, 2011:** NATO-led forces begin airstrikes against Gaddafi's forces, aiming to prevent attacks on civilian populations, particularly in Benghazi.
- **April–August 2011:** Fighting continues between regime forces and the opposition. NATO air support significantly weakens the Libyan military. The NTC consolidates its control over more territory.
- **August 20–28, 2011:** The "Battle for Tripoli" begins. Opposition forces, supported by NATO, capture the capital city, marking a decisive turning point in the conflict.
- **October 20, 2011:** Muammar Gaddafi is captured and killed in his hometown of Sirte. His death effectively ends 42 years of rule and the civil war's first phase.
- **October 23, 2011:** The NTC declares Libya officially "liberated," beginning a transition process. However, instability, power struggles, and armed militia activity soon emerge, shaping Libya's post-war challenges.

Initial Protests and Escalation

The Libyan uprising began in February 2011 as part of the wider Arab Spring movement. What started as relatively small protests quickly spiraled into a national crisis due to the government's violent response. In the eastern city of Benghazi, demonstrators gathered to protest corruption, unemployment, and repression under Gaddafi's regime. These early protests were initially peaceful, echoing the calls for reform seen in Tunisia and Egypt. However, when security forces responded with live ammunition and heavy-handed tactics, the situation escalated almost overnight. Reports of indiscriminate shootings and the use of heavy weapons against unarmed civilians shocked both Libyans and the international community.

As anger spread, demonstrations erupted in other major cities, including Misrata, Zawiya, and the capital, Tripoli. The opposition quickly gained control of Benghazi, which became the stronghold of the anti-Gaddafi movement. This marked the first major turning point: instead of dispersing, the protests transformed into an armed uprising.

The government's strategy of brutal repression only deepened resistance. Many Libyan military units and officials defected, joining the opposition and supplying it with weapons and resources. At the same time, Gaddafi's regime used mercenaries, propaganda, and intimidation in an attempt to maintain control.

By the end of February, Libya was divided: the east largely under opposition control, and the west, including Tripoli was still in the hands of the government. This division signaled the shift from a protest movement into a civil war, with both sides preparing for a prolonged struggle.

Humanitarian Situation and Civil War Outbreak

As the Libyan uprising intensified into armed conflict, the humanitarian situation deteriorated rapidly. Civilians found themselves caught between government forces and opposition fighters, with widespread reports of killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture.

Cities such as Misrata became focal points of the conflict. Government forces besieged the city, cutting off food, water, and medical supplies. Civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, suffered extensive damage. International organizations reported increasing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), while thousands of Libyans fled to neighboring countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, creating a regional refugee crisis.

The outbreak of civil war also exacerbated existing economic vulnerabilities. Oil production, Libya's main source of revenue was disrupted, further limiting resources available for humanitarian aid. Humanitarian agencies faced challenges accessing affected areas due to ongoing fighting and government restrictions.

The crisis raised urgent international concerns. Reports of potential war crimes and crimes against humanity prompted the international community to consider intervention measures. The scale of civilian suffering highlighted the need for immediate action, ultimately influencing the Security Council's decisions to adopt Resolutions 1970 and 1973.

Refugee and Humanitarian Crisis

The escalation of violence in Libya in 2011 created a severe humanitarian crisis, affecting hundreds of thousands of civilians. As fighting intensified, many Libyans were forced to flee their homes, leading to both internal displacement and a regional refugee problem. Cities such as Misrata, Benghazi, and Ajdabiya experienced heavy clashes, with civilians trapped between government forces and opposition fighters. Families often sought shelter in overcrowded camps or with relatives, facing shortages of food, clean water, and medical care.

Thousands of Libyans also fled to neighboring countries, particularly Tunisia and Egypt, creating a significant regional refugee crisis. Humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and various NGOs, mobilized to provide aid. Despite these efforts, access to many affected areas remained limited due to ongoing hostilities.

Post Conflict Reconstruction and Security Vulnerability

Following the fall of Gaddafi in October 2011, Libya faced the enormous challenge of rebuilding a nation after decades of authoritarian rule and a violent civil war. The collapse of central authority created a power vacuum, allowing various militias and armed groups to assert control over different regions. This fragmentation complicated efforts to establish a unified government, restore public services, and secure the country.

The post-conflict period was also marked by political uncertainty and social instability. While the National Transitional Council (NTC) attempted to guide the transition toward a new political system, local militias often operated independently, challenging the NTC's authority. Infrastructure, including roads, hospitals, and schools, had been severely damaged during the conflict, making reconstruction difficult and slow. Furthermore, the disruption of oil production hindered economic recovery and limited resources available for humanitarian assistance.

These conditions created a complex environment for both domestic actors and the international community. Efforts to stabilize Libya required balancing support for governance and security with respect for the country's sovereignty. The post-conflict challenges in Libya highlight the long-term consequences of civil war and the critical need for coordinated international engagement in rebuilding and reconciliation.

Bloc Positions: Western Powers

Western powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, played a leading role in the 2011 Libyan Crisis. These countries were among the first to recognize the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people and actively supported international intervention. Their approach was shaped by a combination of humanitarian concerns, strategic interests, and the desire to uphold international norms against mass atrocities.

Through NATO, Western powers enforced the UN mandated no-fly zone and carried out airstrikes against regime forces, aiming to protect civilians and weaken Gaddafi's military capabilities. Beyond military support, they also provided diplomatic backing to the NTC, helping the opposition gain recognition on the international stage. While their intervention was credited with contributing to the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, it also sparked debate about the limits of external involvement, the consequences of regime change, and the balance between sovereignty and humanitarian responsibility.

Bloc Positions: BRICS and Non-Interventionist States

BRICS countries and other non-interventionist states generally approached the Libyan Crisis with caution, emphasizing respect for Libya's sovereignty and advocating for political solutions rather than military intervention. Russia, China, India, and Brazil expressed concern over the use of force under the UN mandate, warning that aggressive action could set a precedent for infringing on the sovereignty of other states.

These countries highlighted the importance of negotiation and dialogue between the Libyan government and opposition, and many were critical of NATO's military operations, fearing they exceeded the original mandate to protect civilians. Their stance reflected a broader principle of non-intervention and skepticism toward unilateral or externally driven regime change. While not opposing humanitarian aid, these states often questioned whether foreign military involvement would lead to long-term stability, emphasizing the need for careful international engagement that respects national sovereignty and regional dynamics.

Questions to Ponder

1. How should the Security Council balance the principles of state sovereignty with the responsibility to protect civilians?
2. Were the actions of the UNSC in Libya consistent with international law, and could they serve as a precedent for future crises?
3. How did Gaddafi's political system and decades of authoritarian rule contribute to the outbreak of the uprising?
4. Could Libya's historical context have allowed for a peaceful transition of power without conflict?
5. To what extent did the Arab Spring inspire or accelerate the Libyan uprising?
6. Could the escalation from protests to civil war have been prevented, and if so, how?
7. What responsibilities do international actors have in protecting civilians during internal conflicts?
8. How can humanitarian aid be delivered effectively when access is restricted by ongoing hostilities?
9. Did NATO's intervention in Libya adhere to the UN mandate, or did it exceed its intended scope?
10. How do strategic interests influence decisions on humanitarian intervention?
11. How did the interests of different international actors, including Western powers, BRICS, and regional organizations, shape the outcome of the crisis?
12. How should the Security Council navigate conflicts between opposing bloc positions to achieve consensus?
13. What measures are necessary to stabilize Libya after the fall of Gaddafi, and how should the UNSC support reconstruction?
14. How can the international community prevent a power vacuum from leading to ongoing violence or instability?

15. Is it ever justified for the international community to intervene militarily in another state, and under what conditions?
16. How can the Security Council ensure that its interventions do not unintentionally worsen the situation for civilians?