

'600 killed in Bani Walid fighting in one day'

By [RT](#)

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Amid conflicting reports that the Libyan city of Bani Walid was captured by army forces, RT has learned that 600 people were allegedly killed in Wednesday's fighting, and over 1,000 have been hospitalized. Locals are appealing for international aid.

Libyan officials claimed that government forces conducted a 20-day siege before capturing Bani Walid, the last stronghold for supporters of the Gaddafi regime, and seized the city. Sources in the town gave conflicting reports, saying that local militias were responsible for the siege and now control of the area.

"We continue to receive conflicting reports. From sources on the ground, we're hearing that the army is withdrawing from the city, although we are hearing of widespread killings. Government sources say the city has fallen," RT correspondent in neighboring Lebanon, Paula Slier, said.

When asked why the West is ignoring the massacres in Bani Walid, US Department of State Spokesperson Victoria Nuland told RT that Washington is *"watching the situation very closely"* while its position on this situation remains *"absolutely clear."*

"We support the efforts of the Libyan government to get control of militias and to provide security throughout the country, including in Bani Walid, and to do so in a way that is respectful of the human rights of all citizens and allows humanitarian organizations to get in," Nuland said.

An individual in Italy who allegedly has relatives in Bani Walid spoke to RT about the current state of the city. Calling himself 'Alwarfally' - referring to a tribe from Bani Walid - he asked to remain anonymous for the interview.

He said he contacted his family in the besieged city, who told him that the situation there has stabilized: The militia retreated, but only after kidnapping a local member of the 'Council of the Elders,' which was tasked by Bani Walid's tribal leaders with governing the city after the fall of Gaddafi.



An injured man in Bani Walid (RT source)

"Bani Walid's people got the control of the city again," Alwarfally told RT. *"[The] situation in Bani Walid is better now. Militia fell back after the fight that happened yesterday, and everything is good."*

"Militia kidnapped the consul of Bani Walid, his health is poor," he said. *"They will take him to Misrata and I don't know what will happen to him. He is a very good man. He didn't have*

anything to do with what happened, he is just a council member in Bani Walid."

The Misrata militia that allegedly laid siege to Bani Walid was the same group accused of [war crimes](#) by Human Rights Watch last week.



An injured child in Bani Walid (RT source)

Alwarfally also claimed that at least hundreds of people were killed during the 20-day siege.

"The number is really big," he said. "One the first day that [the militia] came, there were about 70 bodies from the fighting. Yesterday night there was 600."

"The number of people in the hospitals is over 1000," he added.

An eyewitness in Bani Walid - who called herself Fatima - had a very different story to tell. She said the situation in the town is anything but stable.

"These are not governmental forces. These are militias and armed gangsters surrounding Bani Walid without any legitimacy. The media is prohibited from reporting on what's happening in the city. The situation is horrible. Crimes are committed. Communications were deliberately cut in order for these gangsters to prevent any person from communicating what is really happening. They are bulldozing houses. They're setting houses on fire, stealing everything they can find. They've committed massacres, killing as many people as they could," she told RT.

Whether government forces or militias are behind the violence, video footage from the town paints a very graphic picture.

"Some of the photos and video we've been receiving show dismembered bodies and children who have been killed. Some of that footage is coming from Bani Walid television," Slier said.

Militias blockaded the town for the past 20 days in an attempt to locate those responsible for the death of Omran Shaaban - the man credited with capturing Muammar Gaddafi last year. The Warfalla tribe controlling Bani Walid was accused of kidnapping and torturing Shaaban.

The people of Bani Walid have been appealing for help from the international community.

"People here in Bani Walid want to return to their homes. They say that their city is totally destroyed. Nevertheless, they want to go back and live in the wreckage. They refuse to be driven out of the city. Secondly, they request all humanitarian organizations, including the UN, to come to Bani Walid and see the destruction for themselves and see the devastation. We need immediate aide. We need humanitarian assistance urgently," Fatima said.

Aid efforts were stopped by the US earlier this week when Washington blocked a draft statement, proposed by Russia, on the resolution of violence in Bani Walid. The statement called for a peaceful solution to the conflict.



Pro-government forces fire their mortar launcher off the back of a truck on October 23, 2012, one kilometer from the northern entrance to the town of Bani Walid, one of the final bastions of Moamer Kadhafi's ousted

regime, as Libya celebrates the first anniversary of its “liberation” from the regime, even as fighting flared in a former bastion of the slain dictator (AFP Photo / Mahmud Turkia)



An injured man in Bani Walid (RT source)



An injured man in Bani Walid (RT source)



An injured man in Bani Walid (RT source)



Pro-government forces fire their gun off the back of a truck on October 23, 2012, one kilometer from the northern entrance to the town of Bani Walid, one of the final bastions of Moamer Kadhafi’s ousted regime (AFP Photo / Mahmud Turkia)

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