

## Mainstream media: Civilians accuse NATO of massacre in Sirte raids

By [Global Research](#)

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The civilians pouring out of the besieged city of Sirte accused NATO of genocide yesterday as rebel forces called in reinforcements and prepared for a fresh assault on Muammar Gaddafi's home town.

Long lines of civilian vehicles were leaving after a night of NATO air attacks on the town. Rebel forces fighting for the National Transitional Council added artillery and mortar fire.

The people leaving the town, many looking scared, said conditions inside Sirte were disastrous. They made claims which, if verified, are a challenge for NATO – which operates under a UN mandate to protect civilians – saying the NATO bombing raids hit homes, schools and hospitals.

“It was worse than awful,” said Riab Safran, 28, as his car was searched by rebel fighters outside Sirte. His family had slept on the beach because the houses were being bombed, he said. “They hit all kinds of buildings – schools, hospitals,” he said.

He could not distinguish between the NATO bombs and the rebels shells, he said, but believed it was a NATO bomb that destroyed his home on Saturday.

NATO said its warplanes bombed a number of military targets, including a rocket launcher, artillery and ammunition stores.

Some of those interviewed said the Gaddafi forces were making people stay in the city. Others said residents were frightened of the rebel fighters, who were reported to be abducting women from cars trying to leave Sirte. NTC fighters denied the charges.

Residents said power and water had run out and petrol was 88 Libyan dinars (\$72) a litre. The water shortage has produced an epidemic of diseases, according to medical staff at a clinic in the town of Harawa, 40km east of Sirte.

But the Gaddafi forces had supplies of ammunition, pasta, oil, flour and food, residents said. They used an open radio channel to taunt the rebels, insisting the city would never be taken.

Meanwhile, Libya's transitional justice minister said he had imposed a measure abolishing the country's state security, prosecution and courts, which sentenced regime opponents to prison.

At a press conference in Tripoli, Mohammed al-Alagi said he had signed the order to disband the security agencies, but it still needed approval by the NTC.

He said the order included the abolition of a special court where many opposition members were sentenced to life in prisons such as Abu Salim in Tripoli, where inmates were reportedly massacred by the Gaddafi regime.

Rebel leaders are pressing ahead with efforts to do away with some of the hated remnants of the former regime even though fighting continues and Gaddafi's whereabouts remain unknown.

In a boost to Libya's economy, Italian and French energy companies have begun oil production in Libya after months of civil war, a potential economic lifeline for the new government.

Officials of the transitional administration are still awaiting international action to unfreeze billions of dollars in Libya's assets. They say the funds unfrozen so far are not enough to rebuild the country after 42 years of the Gaddafi regime.

The de facto prime minister, Mahmoud Jibril, asked the UN Security Council to lift some of the economic sanctions on Libya, but said NATO should stay until civilians were no longer being killed.

Italian energy giant Eni said yesterday it had resumed oil production in Libya. By Monday, 15 major wells had been tapped, producing 31,900 barrels of oil a day.

French energy company Total said it also started oil production in Libya last week.

*Additional reporting: AP*

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