

[Libya: Tawerghans must not be held hostage to political crisis, UN says, urging safe return](#)

The United Nations and its partners in Libya have called for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the population displaced from the northern town of Tawergha without a delay, expressing deep concern about the situation faced by these people living in makeshift-tented settlements in nearby areas.

“Hundreds of people, wanting to exercise [their legitimate right of return](#) have been stuck in open areas under difficult weather conditions and without access to basic services for over three weeks,” said Maria Ribeiro, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, in a statement issued Tuesday by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“Their voluntary, safe and dignified return should not be delayed any further and Tawerghans should not be held hostage to the political crisis in the country,” she added.

According to a [press release](#) from the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#), the entire population of around 40,000 people in Tawerghan was forcibly evacuated in 2011 as collective punishment for their perceived support for deposed leader Muammar Gaddafi, with their return blocked by armed groups.

An agreement for the return was finally signed in March 2017, which was followed by a Presidency Council decree in December 2017 to initiate the return process from 1 February.

The Libyan authorities have the primary responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction and to prepare the conditions for their safe return, including the clearance of explosive remnants of war, Ms. Ribeiro said, expressing the UN’s readiness to support these efforts.