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Libya

A chain of disasters in Libya

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The carnage in Libya caused by a Mediterranean hurricane, known as “Daniel” or “medicane” [1], will take weeks to be quantified in terms of the number of dead and missing, probably in the tens of thousands, to which a million people have already been displaced.

This is by no means a natural disaster, but a hurricane whose violence has been increased tenfold by the warming of the Mediterranean. Torrential rain fell on Benghazi, Shahhat, Al Marj, El Beïda and Sousse, among others.

Dams not maintained

The heavy rains caused the collapse of the Bou Mansour and Al-Bilad dams, located on the Ouadi Derna, upstream of the city. These dams date from the Gaddafi era and were designed in the 1970s by a Yugoslav company [2], but had not been maintained for some twenty years and had cracked in 1998. However, a serious warning was issued in 2022 by Abdel-Wanis Achour, a university lecturer from El Beïda, at the end of a documented study of the dams on the Ouadi Derna: “Those in charge must take immediate steps to carry out regular maintenance of the existing dams, because in the event of a major flood, the consequences will be catastrophic for the inhabitants, whether riverside or city dwellers,” he said, before recommending that it would be necessary to “find a way of increasing the vegetation cover to combat desertification” and “alert the inhabitants living on the banks of the river to the dangers involved and the safety measures to be taken.”

Torrents of mud and health risks

The consequences of this predicted hurricane were not properly anticipated by the weather or civil protection services, which should have evacuated people as a precautionary measure.

And what should have been a “flood” (like in the Thessaloniki plain in Greece) turned into a surge of mud several metres high, sweeping a quarter of the city of Derna (population 100,000) into the sea, with the poorest neighbourhoods being the first to give way.

In addition to the traditional consequences of this type of disaster - a lack of drinking water and the risk of epidemics - there are now difficulties in accessing the victims, due to bridges and roads being cut off, and the existence of two authorities in Libya. The risk of contamination has increased tenfold, as it is difficult and time-consuming to find corpses in the mud, and there are no covers to isolate them. Finally, after a decade of fighting, there is a risk of contamination by buried toxic products from munitions that have been lying on the ground for years and have been released by the mudflow. The number of displaced people is likely to rise, as the people living near the dams are now living in fear. In turn, the mayor of Toukra and the Libyan Red Crescent warned of the danger posed to the population by the Jaza dam if it were to give way. Another warning has been issued concerning the Ouadi Al Qattara dam upstream of Benghazi.

The people of Libya, be they Libyan, Sudanese, Egyptian or others, are paying a high price for the counter-revolution led by Marshal Haftar, who is more concerned with gaining power than with the common good, and is supported by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, France and the Wagner militias. The only response from European

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governments to those fleeing the disasters caused by climate change is war.

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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[1] A rare but destructive meteorological phenomenon that scientists believe will intensify in our warming world. The word is a combination of the words "Mediterranean" and "hurricane".

[2] Wadi Derna | Libya - Hidrotehnika - Hidroenergetika a.d