



Child injuries highlight devastating effects of conflict in Libya



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Ayman, 14, and Mamud, 9, arrive by boat to Benghazi to receive emergency medical treatment. Ayman lost both his hands when an unexploded munition blew up.

By Rebecca Fordham

BENGAZI, Libya, 24 May 2011 – Ayman Ali, 14, is lying on a stretcher bed in the medical tent of a boat arriving into Benghazi's port from Misrata. Both his wrists are heavily bandaged and his eyes stare out ahead of him.

His cousin, nine-year-old Mamud Ali, lies on the bed next to him, his face and arms scarred with burns.

"I arrived at the hospital to find my son lying covered in blood. He has lost both his hands," said Ali Abdul Latif, Ayman's father. "The children were playing on the street near our house and there was an explosion. It just happened. How can it be?"

Brutal impact of conflict

The boys' fathers stand by their bedsides, waiting patiently for their children to be taken to shore, where the Libyan Red Crescent will take the children to hospital. The doctor says Mamud has severe damage to his abdomen and thighs, and has lost his genitalia.

The incident, which happened less than two weeks ago, is another tragic story of children's lives devastated by the on-going conflict in Libya. Fighting has eased in Misrata, but the security situation remains uncertain.

The fighting has resulted in an unknown number of civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure. A large quantity of unexploded munitions has been reported in the city.



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After arriving from Misrata, Mohammed Hamo and his family get ready to leave Benghazi for Egypt. Nearly 850,000 people have fled Libya since the crisis began.

UNICEF is supporting partners who are holding workshops in camps for displaced people in Benghazi to raise awareness of unexploded weapons and to educate children and their parents about the dangers and how to protect themselves. This will be essential when the families return to their homes.

The UN, led by the UN Mine Action Service, the International Committee of the Red Cross, other non-governmental organizations and local partners are working to assess the situation of unexploded ordinance across the eastern parts of Libya, and the whole country once the situation allows.

Fighting is on-going in several towns in the Nafusa Mountains area, where access is urgently needed to reach children and their families. The towns of Yafran, Al Qalaa, Zintan and Nalutare are thought to be most affected. Fighting and interruption of supply routes has restricted the replenishment of basic supplies.

Displaced, injured seek refuge

The boat, chartered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was carrying approximately 600 people, including the two injured children, and an estimated 45 families, most of whom were third country nationals. The injured are being treated and will be taken to a transit centre in Benghazi.

Some of the Libyan families will stay with host families in Benghazi or camps for displaced people. Third country nationals will proceed to the Saloum transit camp on the Egyptian border.