

## Scores killed in Libyan violence

### Benghazi airport closed as at least 75 die in Libyan fighting



At least 75 dead as Libyan violence continues Photo: AFP

By Reuters

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Civilians were told to leave Benghazi by the renegade leader of the self-declared Libyan National Army before it launched a fresh attack on Islamist militants.

The warning came a day after dozens of people were killed in the worst clashes in the city for several months.

Families could be seen packing up and driving away from western districts of the port city where Islamist militants and LNA forces led by retired General Khalifa Haftar fought for hours on Friday.

Dressed in military uniform, Haftar – whom the speaker of parliament accused of plotting a coup – said his troops had temporarily withdrawn from Benghazi for tactical reasons.

"We'll come back with force," he said at a sports club in Abyar, a small town to the east of Benghazi.

"We've started this battle and will continue it until we have reached our goals," he said.

He said government and parliament had no legitimacy as they had failed to achieve security. "The street and the Libyan people are with us," he said, adding that his troops were spread out in several parts of eastern Libya.

In Tripoli, parliamentary speaker and military commander-in-chief Nuri Abu Sahmain said Haftar was trying to stage a coup.

"(LNA) members who have carried out the clashes in Benghazi are out of the control of the state of Libya and they are trying to attempt a coup for their own interests," Abu Sahmain said in a televised news conference.

A Health Ministry official said the death toll had risen to 43, with more than 100 wounded. Haftar said 60 militants and six of his soldiers were killed, and 250 militants and 37 of his men wounded.

Libyan news website Ajwa Belad said 175 people had been killed and 141 wounded.

A worker in a hospital that received at least 40 corpses said: "More bodies are coming in from areas outside Benghazi."

Authorities extended the closure of Benghazi's Benina airport on Saturday. Egyptair halted flights to Benghazi until the security situation improved.