



# **International Boundary Study**

**No. 121 – April 7, 1972**

## **Libya – Tunisia Boundary**

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**The Geographer  
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## **LIBYA - TUNISIA BOUNDARY**

### **I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

The Libya-Tunisia boundary is approximately 285 miles long. It extends southward from Ra's Ajdir on the Mediterranean coast to the vicinity of Bur al Hattabah in the Sahara. Although the alignment is determined in places by both wadies and ridges, the boundary consists primarily of short-line segments between pillars.

### **II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Both Libya and Tunisia came under Turkish suzerainty in the latter half of the 16th century. In 1881 Tunisia was occupied by France and was proclaimed a French protectorate, ending its nominal allegiance to Turkey. An agreement in 1886 between France and Turkey delimited a boundary between Tunisia and the Turkish vilayet of Tripoli in western Libya from the Mediterranean inland for a limited distance. A second agreement in 1892 delimited the boundary with greater accuracy than previously and inland as far as Ghudamis. On May 19, 1910,<sup>1</sup> a Franco-Turkish convention delimited the present-day Libya-Tunisia boundary which was demarcated with pillars by a joint commission in 1910-11.<sup>2</sup>

In September 1911 Italy occupied the vilayet of Tripoli, and on October 12, 1912, by the treaty of Ouchy, Turkey recognized Italian sovereignty in the entity. Italy administered the former Turkish territory, officially designated Libya in 1934, as a colony until World War II. From 1943 to 1951, the two Libyan provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were under British administration, and the French controlled the third province, Fezzan, located in the Sahara. In accordance with the terms of the 1947 peace treaty with the Allies, Italy relinquished title to Libya and agreed to accept the recommendation of the UN General Assembly with respect to Libya's future status.

On November 21, 1949, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution recommending that Libya become independent before January 1, 1952. Libya declared its independence as the Kingdom of Libya on December 24, 1951. The state adopted the name of the Libyan Arab Republic on September 1, 1969.

France granted internal autonomy to Tunisia in June 1955. With the termination of the protectorate and the recognition of Tunisian independence by the French Government, the Kingdom of Tunisia was proclaimed on March 20, 1956. On July 25, 1957, the Tunisian Constituent Assembly voted to abolish the Monarchy and establish a republic.

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<sup>1</sup> Martens, *Nouveau Recueil General de Traités, Troisième Série*. Vol. VII, pp. 91-93, Leipzig, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> The commission demarcated a line, indicated by pillars 31 through 233, from Ra's Ajdir to Qarat Hamil, 15 kilometers southwest of Ghudamis. The extreme southern part of the boundary in the vicinity of Ghudamis is now part of the Algeria-Libya boundary.

### III. ALIGNMENT

Signed by representatives of France and Turkey at Tripoli on May 19, 1910, the "Convention Relative to the Frontier between the Regency of Tunis and the Vilayet of Tripoli" delimits the present Libya-Tunisia boundary. The exact alignment is determined by the demarcation of 1910-11.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of the agreement and annexed protocol on the delimitation of the Algeria-Tunisia boundary between Bi'r ar Ruman and Libya, signed at Tunis on January 6, 1970,<sup>4</sup> the Algeria-Libya-Tunisia tripoint usually is considered to be located between pillars 220 and 221 of the demarcation of 1910-11 at about 30° 13.5' N. and 9° 33.5' E.

The Franco-Turkish convention of May 19, 1910, delimits the boundary as follows:

Article 1. The boundary between the Regency of Tunis and the Vilayet of Tripoli shall start at Ras Adjedir [Ra's Ajdir], on the Mediterranean, in a generally north-south direction: it shall follow the successive thalwegs of the Mogta [Sabkhat al Maqta] and the Khaoui Smeida [Khawi Smeida], leaving to Tunisia all the water holes west of the boundary and to Tripoli the right to use the wells of Ain el Ferth [Ayn al Fard], Ain Nakhla [Ayn an Nakhlah], Cheggat Meztoura [Shaqqat Meztoura], and Oglet el Ihmeur [Bi'r al Uhaymir]. The boundary shall then follow the watershed line between Wadi Tlets [Wadi Ath Thulth] and Wadi Beni Guedal [Wadi Bani Qidal] to the mountains of Touil Dehibat [Tawil Adh Dhahibat], where it shall continue to the geodetic marker, which is in Tunisia, then proceed to Graat er Rohi [Qarat ar Rahil], leaving the Chabet Taida [Wadi Tayda] valley in Tripolitania, and on to Dahret en Nousf and the mosque of Sidi Abdallah [Sidi Abd Allah], which belongs to Tripolitania.

From Qarat Afina, which is in Tunisia, the boundary line shall leave the valleys of the two Mortebea [Murtibah] wadis in the Regency of Tunis and shall follow, in a general way, the rocky crests dominating the valley of Mortebea Dahri wadi [Wadi al Murtibah Dahri], immediately to the east, until it reaches Lorzot wadi [Wadi Lorzot], but running in such a way that the upper valleys of the eastern tributaries of Mortebea and Menzels [Wadi al Manzilah] wadis shall belong to Tripolitania and the military road from Dehibat [Adh Dhahibat] to Djeneien [Al Jana'in] shall belong to Tunisia.

Article 2. From Mortebea wadi, the boundary shall follow the left bank of Lorzot wadi, running south of the military road from Dehibat to Djeneien; at approximately 20

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<sup>3</sup> A "Record of the Demarcation of the Franco-Turkish Frontier in 1911" is contained in the United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 300, p. 290 ff., of 1958. A map series of eight sheets titled "Frontiere Tuniso-tripolitaine" was published shortly after the completion of the work of the boundary commission indicating the locations of the pillars. Apparently pillar No. 81 in the vicinity of Saniyat Semida was never erected.

<sup>4</sup> "Decree No. 70-88 of March 14, 1970, providing for publication of the Agreement and Annexed Protocol on the delimitation of the Tunisian-Algerian boundary between Bir-Romane [Bi'r ar Ruman] and the Libyan boundary." Journal Officiel de la Republique Tunisienne, March 13-17, 1970, pp. 292-3.

kilometers from the government post of Djeneien, it shall turn south to Touil Ali Ben Amar [Touil Ali Ben Ahmeur] and Zar [Bi'r Zar].

Passing between the two open wells of Zar, located in Siah El Mathel [Wadi Sayh, al Mathil], it shall proceed toward Mechiguig [Bi'r al Mushayqiq], whose present well shall belong to Tripolitania, dividing the aquifer in such a way that the resources of the region will be shared fairly between the two countries.

The boundary shall then proceed toward Ghadames [Ghudamis], following a line halfway between the roads from Djeneien to Ghadames and from Nalout [Nalut] to Ghadames. At the junction of those two roads, the line shall proceed toward Ghadames, leaving the Sinaoun [Sinawan]-Mezezzem [Mujazzam]-Ghadames portion of the road two kilometers inside Tripolitania. It shall then run along the diversion channel joining the two salt marshes known as Sebkhah El Melah [Sabkhat al Mallahah] and Sebkhah Mezezzem [Sabkhat Mujazzam], following its northern bank; it shall then turn west, then south, following the edge of the salt works at a distance of one kilometer, and leaving the Sebkhah El Melah in the town of Ghadames.

The last section of the boundary shall turn south, to a point located 15 kilometers south of the parallel of Ghadames.

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