Libya was forced to suspend contractual obligations by declaring a state of force majeure on some of the oil exports on Sunday. It also admitted disruptions which have lasted for a number of weeks, which reduced exports to their lowest level since the start of the civil war in 2011.

However, if the reopening of Marsa Harega port continued, it would indicate divisions within the striking workers in the sector.

A document issued by the Libyan National Oil Company (NOC) said the authorities had declared a state of force majeure on some of the oil exports from the ports of Zuwaitinah, Marsa Brega, Ras Lanuf and Sidr.

The document said the ports were closed due to a strike by the ports’ guards since the end of July 2013, adding that the state of force majeure was declared for that reason. The state of force majeure is a legal procedure which allows the suspension of contractual obligations.

A spokesman of the Libyan Ministry of Oil, however, said on Monday that the Marsa Harega port was back in full operation yesterday, and that it was ready for export, following labor strikes. The export capacity of the port is 110,000 barrels per day, but was suspended for three weeks due to the strike by workers of the Arabian Gulf Oil Company (Agoco), which operates the port. Only a few shipments of local consumption fuel were allowed out in the period.

The pay-related strikes and other protests at the two largest ports in Libya and at oil fields caused a drop in the production of crude oil and the export to the lowest levels since the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

A senior oil official said Idris Abu Khamadah, who took charge of security at oil installations since August 1, in place of Rashid Al-Saberi, was instrumental in restoring port operations. The official told Reuters that “he [Khamadah] was successful in defusing the crisis in Tubruq and Marsa Harega, and was now working on Zuwaitinah.”

Oil installations’ security guards work under the Ministry of Defense, although only around 2,000 of a force of 15,000 received military training. There are doubts in the market, however, that a number of false restoring of operations of other ports last week.

A trader, who owns an oil tanker which is waiting in a nearby area, speaking on a condition of anonymity, said “we want to see a ship dock and be loaded.” A spokesman for the Oil installations’ security guards said Marsa Harega port has started operating again and that some oil sector workers supported the government including some who work in a nearby port. He added: “We received a message from workers at Brega Port in which they said they objected to the closure of the port and that they will work under the orders of the government.”

The crisis reached its peak at the end of last week when the government threatened to take military action if the oil installations’ guards on strike at Side Port sold oil independently from the government.

Libyan sources said the striking guards were pressured by their peers in other ports, and it now seemed that they had failed in gathering support for the sale of oil without government approval.

The government said last week that Ibrahim Al-Jadran, chairman of the oil installations guards’ establishment, had intended to sell oil for the benefit of his striking workers. The guards’ spokesman said the Libyan army chief had relieved Jadran from his duties expecting work to start in other ports.

There are currently eight tankers waiting to be loaded in Sidr Port, which remains closed, but there are indications that some oil contracts may be signed independently from the governmental NOC. Some traders and workers have said there was a mysterious tanker waiting outside the port but no one knows who it belongs to. A port worker said on a condition of anonymity: “We tried to contact the ship, but we failed to reach its captain.”

Libyan authorities have increased their presence in the Port of Sidr. Windward Company which specializes in shipping data analysis said a Libyan Coastguard boat entered the Port of Sidr on Saturday.