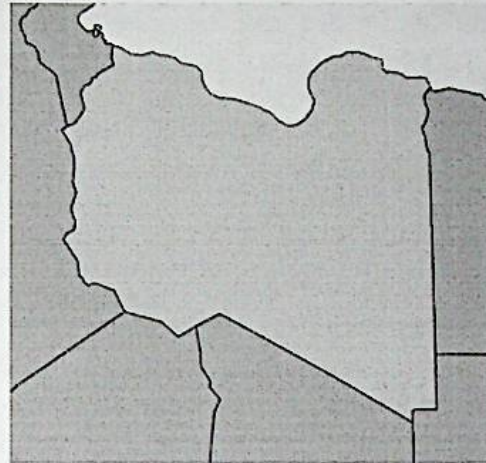

Libya

Jan 16-21

Summary

There were continuous power cuts this week that affected a large part of the country, with the exception of eastern Cyrenaica, due to a block in the al Salman pipe that supplies the al Zawiya power station.



Diplomacy

On Jan. 21, Cairo hosted the tenth ministerial meeting of countries bordering Libya, said the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in a statement. The event was chaired by Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and was attended by ministers from Libya, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Chad and Niger. Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit and UN Special Envoy to Libya Martin Kobler were also present. The meeting focused on Libya's status quo and ways to unblock the political process. The participants reviewed international and regional efforts to involve the various Libyan parties in positive internal dialogue with the aim of implementing the political agreement signed in Skhirat, Morocco, in December 2015.

Libyan and Tunisian authorities have reached an agreement over the crossing of people and goods at the Ras Jedir border crossing, Tahar Matmati, Governor of the southern Tunisian province of Medenine, told "Mosaïque FM". Last week, business owners in Ben Guerdane, the last city before the border with Libya, called for the border crossing to be permanently reopened. The following protests triggered clashes with the police, causing Tunisian Prime Minister Youssef Chahed to intervene, defining the protesters' requests as "unacceptable". He added that there were "problems" on the Libyan side of the crossing, confirming that the foreign minister was working towards resolving all issues.

Eastern Libyan authorities have prevented a United Nations aircraft from landing in Tobruk where the headquarters of the House of Representatives, the Libyan parliament recognised by the international community, is temporarily based, said UN Special Envoy to Libya and UNSMIL (United Nations Support Mission in Libya) Chief Martin Kobler. He added that this was not the first time this has happened. "Once again, we had to cancel a UN flight to Tobruk as the landing was not authorised. We cannot help if we do not have access to our Libyan partners, this access is especially necessary for our UN colleagues engaged in humanitarian and development activities: how can we help the population in eastern Libya?", wrote Kobler on Twitter.

Government of National Accord (GNA) Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj has cancelled his participation in the economic forum in Davos, Switzerland, to remain in Tripoli and follow the electricity crisis in the country. His official Spokesman Ashraf al Tuly wrote on Facebook that "al Sarraj stayed in Tripoli to hold a series of meetings to solve the problem of the electrical power cuts". The Libyan Presidential Council has created a task force to follow the crisis and solve the problem that has been affecting almost the entire the country, with the exception of a part of Cyrenaica, for roughly a week.

Politics

The Executive Director of the Libyan General Electricity Company, Osama al Saiti, has announced that Libya "needs more than 7,000 megawatts to resolve the electricity crisis affecting the country". Speaking to "al Libiya", al Saiti said that "to reach this, we need links between our network and those of neighbouring countries because on our own we can only reach a maximum of 5,000 megawatts. The first problem is that our plants do not work at maximum, the second is that we are not linked to Egypt and Tunisia because we owe Tunisia 5 million dollars in debt and 18 million to Egypt and all links are blocked at the moment". GNA Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj called an emergency meeting this week with members of the electricity company's board of directors to draw up an emergency plan and find a solution to the blackouts. According to a statement on the Tripoli government's Facebook page, the meeting was held at the Abu Seta naval base and addressed every aspect of the electricity shortages as well as the necessary measures to secure the power stations after militants occupied the electricity company's headquarters and are "obstructing the work of the technicians". The meeting also focused on the lack of gas supply to the power stations as well as the need to carry out technical interventions in various structures. Tripoli residents have been in the dark since Saturday evening. The electricity company had warned that this would happen because of an interruption in gas flow from the al Salman pipe that supplies the al Zawiya station.

MPs from the southern Libyan region of Fezzan have decided to withdraw from Tobruk House of Representatives sessions. The decision was made in protest over the difficult situation facing the populations in southern Libya due to the lack of electricity, services and security. MP Ibrahim Rajab told "al Wasat" that "electricity has been out for days and state officials are doing nothing to solve the problem". Southern Libyan councils have proclaimed the region of Fezzan as a "disaster area" and have called on local representatives to return to the south "to take full responsibility of the situation facing local populations". A statement released at the end of a meeting held at the Sebha electricity station this week said that "the situation is dramatic because electricity has been out for days. We call for the return of all members of the (Tobruk) House of Representatives, the (Tripoli) Council of State, the (dissolved Tripoli) General National Congress, the Presidential Council (led by Fayez al Sarraj), the transitional government, the Government of National Salvation and in all ministries".

Security

The Spokesman for the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) Special Forces, Milud al Zawi, has announced that his forces now control 80 percent of the area of Bousanib, western Benghazi. Al Zawi added that "we will take the remaining 20 percent shortly", confirming that his men advanced this week due to air cover aimed at various groups of Islamist militants in Bousanib and Ganfuda. "The explosions that followed the airstrikes came from mines and car bombs left by the terrorists that killed four soldiers". LNA Commander Khalifa Haftar's warplanes bombed the Derna outskirts, eastern Libya, this week. According to Omar al Mokhtar's brigade, the strikes were aimed at the Abu Salim brigade and Islamist militia near the Derna port. Russian-made MiGs hit a weapons depot and a fishing boat. Over recent days, Haftar's forces announced a ban on using boats off the Derna coast in order to block weapons trafficking to local Islamist militia. The Shura Council of Mujahedeen in Derna is the largest armed Islamist formation in the city of Cyrenaica. The organisation's first armed convoy entered Derna on Apr. 4 2014 flying the al Qaeda flag. Later, they rebelled against the Islamic State and formed an alliance with the Tripoli National Salvation Government, the pro-Islamist organisation that dissolved after Fayez al Sarraj entered the Libyan capital. The militia recently distanced itself from Tripoli, defining Sarraj as a "traitor".

Based on news from the following Libyan newspaper and websites: Ean Libia, al Wasat, Libya al Mustakbal, Libya Herald, Libyan News Agency Lana, al Hayat, al Quds al Arabi, al Arabiya, Sky Arabia, al Youm.