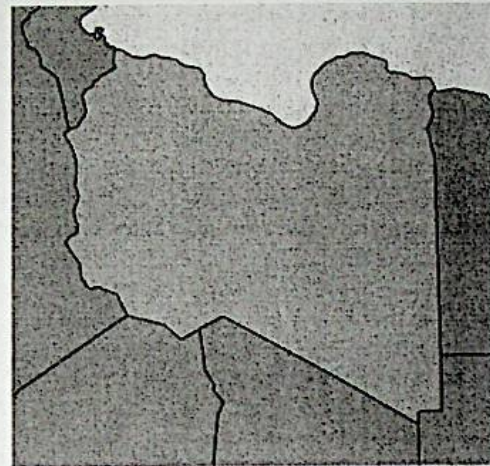

Libya

May 1-7

Summary

There was political debate this week over remarks made by Tripoli's foreign minister recognising Khalifa Haftar as the head of the Libyan army for the first time.



Diplomacy

The 11th meeting between countries bordering Libya was held in Algeria on May 8 to discuss the latest developments in the Libyan crisis. Minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union and League of Arab States Abdelkader Messahel welcomed the delegation heads and UN representative Martin Kobler. The meetings focused on the impact of the crisis on the security of bordering countries and the process to reach a political solution. Probably due to Egypt's simultaneous diplomatic efforts to reach an important political agreement between Libyan factions by May 15, attendance at the conference was low: only the Libyan, Sudanese and Nigerian foreign ministers, the Chadian foreign affairs secretary, African Union representative Jakaya Kikwete and Martin Kobler took part.

A conference on Libyan-US relations was held in Washington this week between political leaders considered opposed to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and close to Khalifa Haftar, commander of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA). Two members of the Presidential Council, Ibrahim Khaled al Qatrani and Omar Aswad, and two former prime ministers, Mahmoud Jibril and Ali Zeidan, were among the speakers at the conference organised by the National Council on US-Libya Relations. The conference comes after the meeting held on May 2 in the United Arab Emirates between GNA Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj and Haftar.

Politics

GNA Foreign Minister Mohammed Taher Siala and Minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union and League of Arab States Abdelkader Messahel have recognised that Khalifa Haftar is "undoubtedly" head of the Libyan army. In a joint press conference held at the International Conference Centre in Zeralda, Algeria, together with UN Envoy Martin Kobler, Siala and Messahel said that "Haftar has been duly confirmed as commander of the Libyan army". The Libyan High State Council criticised Siala's remarks in a statement accusing the "foreign minister of burying the political agreement text". The State Council called on the GNA to take a "firm position on the foreign minister's comments that go against the political agreements". The Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade has called for Siala's dismissal over the remarks and announced it has suspended all collaboration with the ministry. The militia's vehicles have been deployed in the roads surrounding the ministry where shots have been heard. "Al Wasat" reported that the Presidential Council is being pressured to dismiss Siala. The President of Libyan Freedom and Justice Party, Mohammed Sawan, said Siala's remarks were "strange" and that the "declarations completely go against the Skhirat political agreement", signed in Morocco in December 2015. In a message on Facebook, Sawan added that "it is as if Siala did not read the

agreements: it is necessary to repair the mistake immediately and withdraw these declarations that are hard to justify”.

Security

Derna Shura Council of Mujahedeen militia have released 27 of Haftar’s soldiers in the city’s Bashar prison. According to Libyan media, the Derna militia decided to free the men in view of the start of Ramadan at the end of May and as a demonstration of the group’s intentions to launch mediation to end clashes in the city. The captured soldiers were accused of being sent to Derna to gather information on behalf of Haftar’s air forces.

The Libyan coastguard has rescued 300 illegal immigrants off the coast of Sabratha, Tripolitania, and accused a non-governmental organisation of obstructing the operation. Libyan Coastguard Spokesman Ayub Qasem said that “Tripoli coastguard men intervened to rescue the migrants on board a vessel 19,000 nautical miles off Sabratha”. He added that a local NGO, Sea Watch, attempted to obstruct the operations. Sabratha is home to many human traffickers and detention centres for migrants.

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.