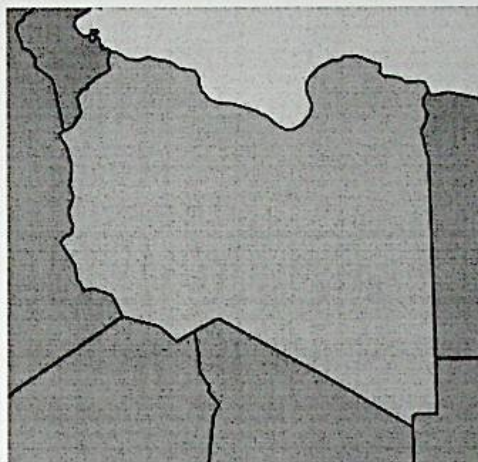

Libya

Feb 6-11

UN Envoy to Libya Martin Kobler was replaced by Salam Fayyad this week. Clashes broke out west of Tripoli while the Libyan National Guard was formed in the capital against Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj's Government of National Accord (GNA).



Diplomacy

UN Envoy to Libya, Martin Kobler, will be replaced by former Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad. According to Libyan media, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced his intention to replace Kobler, whose mandate has been extended to Sept. 15 2017, in a letter to rotating Security Council President Volodymyr Yelchenko. Fayyad was prime minister of Palestine from 2007 to 2013 and was considered moderate.

Italian Ambassador to Libya Giuseppe Perrone travelled to Tobruk this week to meet with Libyan Speaker Aguila Saleh and discuss the political situation in the country and ways to implement the political agreements and pass confidence for the Tripoli GNA, said sources from Tobruk's House of Representatives. Saleh's Spokesman Fathi al Marimi told Libyan media that "the Italian Ambassador in Libya, Perrone, said his country is ready to open a consulate in eastern Libya to simplify the process of issuing visas and to strengthen cooperation in all sectors. His country values stability in Libya and is working to help all Libyan parties achieve peace". After the Italian embassy in Tripoli closed on Feb. 15 2014 due to a lack of security, Italy has once again resumed diplomatic activity in Libya.

Politics

The Tobruk-based Libyan parliament has criticised an agreement signed between the Chairman of the Presidential Council, Prime Minister al Sarraj, and Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, on development cooperation and combatting illegal immigration and human trafficking. The parliament said in a statement that the agreement was "null and void as it did not respect legal regulations in relations between Italy and Libya" and that "based on the Constitution, the Presidential Council has no jurisdiction" to sign such an agreement. "The issue of illegal immigration is one of the most important issues linked to the choice of the Libyan people through the representatives that they elected democratically, and not the interests of individuals that do not have the confidence of the House of Representatives, which is the legitimate power", said the statement. "It is not in the interests of the Italian Republic to sign such an agreement", concluded the note.

Libyan MP al Salihin Abdel Nabi al Gheithi has said "Martin Kobler's replacement as UN Envoy to Libya will have no effect on the Libyan crisis". Speaking to "al Wasat", al Gheithi added that "it seems strange that the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, should make a decision of this kind without consulting the Libyan parliament, which is the only legislative body in the country". "On the ground, nothing will change and it will be just the same with Fayyad as it was with his predecessors", he concluded.

Libyan militants from the "al Bunyan al Marsoos" operation this week allowed 400 displaced families to return to their homes in the 700 District in Sirte after they fled the city during its occupation by the Islamic State and lived in the outskirts of Tripoli and Misrata for over a year. The second phase of the operation will commence next week.

Security

Clashes between rival militia west of Tripoli have killed 10 people this week. According to the President of the Wershefana Military Council, Abdel al Aal al Shibani, fighting began in the Siad area last Wednesday between the Fursan Janzour Brigade (loyal to the Tripoli government) and Khalifa Haftar's Wershefana Brigade (led by the general of Muammar Gaddafi's former regime, Omar Tantush, who also controls a large area west of Tripoli) for the control of the coastal road that is considered the main link in Tripolitania. Al Shibani added that a ceasefire was underway and the situation was relatively calm.

Armed clashes were recorded during the night of Feb. 9 between rival militia in Tripoli. According to residents in the al Hadaba area in Tripoli, the fighting continued until after midnight. Several armoured vehicles have been deployed in the area. "Libya Herald" reported fighting between the Ghneiwa special security forces, close to the Presidential Council, and militia loyal to Salah al Burki, close to former prime minister of the National Salvation Government Khalifa Ghweil.

A parade of Islamist forces hostile to the GNA, called the Libyan National Guard (LNG), was held in Tripoli on Feb. 9. Images of the parade were broadcasted by "al Tanaseh". During a press conference, LNG head Mahmoud al Zaqal confirmed "full support to all state institutions to defend the country's land borders, helping the creation of a joint army against the proliferation of weapons". The new armed formation also said it was ready to "combat illegal immigration endangering the country".

Khalifa Haftar's warplanes conducted airstrikes this week on the al Jufra airbase located in the city of Houn, central Libya. An al Jufra Council member said three bombs struck a position of Islamist militias that fled to the area from Benghazi. "There was a loud explosion from the airstrike", he said, adding that the base is controlled by the Benghazi Islamist militia. A source from the al Jufra airbase told "Agenzia Nova" that the planes belong to the Karamam operation led by Khalifa Haftar. A source from the al Afia Hospital told "Agenzia Nova" that two bodies and 12 casualties arrived in the hospital after the attack. Al Jufra is considered the second most important airbase in Libya and has already been attacked by Haftar's planes in the past.

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.