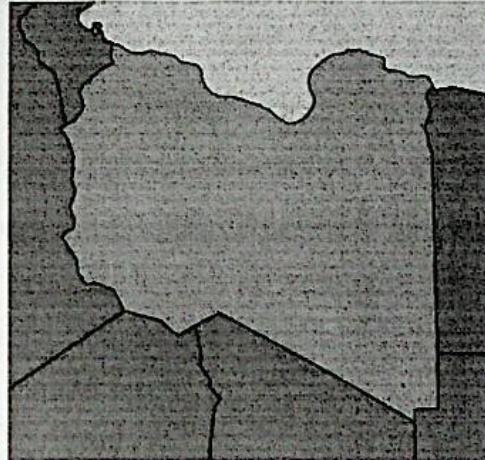

Libya

Feb 27-Mar 4

Libyan Prime Minister Fayed al Sarraj visited to Moscow this week while clashes continued in Benghazi and Derna.



Diplomacy

Abdelkader Messahel, Minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union and League of Arab States of Algeria, met with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA), Ahmed Maiteeq, in Algiers this week. Messahel wrote on Twitter that the parties discussed the situation in Libya and the possibility of increasing dialogue with all parties. On Feb. 26, Messahel met with a delegation from the Libyan commission for political dialogue, made up of political and institutional figures and MPs. According to a statement from the Algerian Foreign Ministry, "the initiative is part of talks that Algeria is holding with all Libyan parties to solve the crisis and bring the parties together". Libyan politicians explained their positions to Messahel who also met with GNA PM Fayed al Sarraj and General Haftar in Algiers in an attempt to mediate between the parties.

A delegation of Libyan tribal chiefs and military officials from Misrata has travelled to Qatar. According to Qatari news agency "QNA", the delegation met with Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdel Rahman al Thani to discuss the situation in Libya and the fight against terrorism in Sirte. Al Thani reiterated his support of the GNA and the political agreement and expressed hope in national reconciliation.

GNA Prime Minister Fayed al Sarraj travelled to Russia this week. The visit comes at a crucial time in negotiations to solve the Libyan crisis. Kremlin Spokesman Dmitriy Peskov said al Sarraj will meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergej Lavrov, but not with President Vladimir Putin. "Russia is interested in Libya becoming a stable state after this barbaric intervention that was conducted from the outside, that led to catastrophic consequences for the future of the Libyan people", said Peskov. "So we are interested in a solid authority able to launch the reconstruction process being established in Libya as soon as possible", he added. The Deputy Foreign Minister and President Putin's Special Representative Mikhail Bogdanov met with GNA Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Omar Maiteeq in Moscow to discuss a solution to the Libyan crisis. "The Russian party stressed the importance of complying with the inter-Libyan talks based on the Skhirat political agreement", said a statement from the Russian foreign ministry. This "vast and diverse" dialogue should be open to the participation of "all political, tribal and regional forces in the country", added the note. Bogdanov also expressed his country's readiness to "support Libya in order to achieve national reconciliation".

Politics

A former collaborator of Muammar Gaddafi, Omar Salem Ashkal, a member of Benghazi Islamist militia, was killed recently in an airstrike by General Khalifa Haftar's air forces, said the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries, a group considered close to al Qaeda's ideologies, that published photos of Ashkal's body on

social networks. Ashkal died while inside building 12, the final barricade of the few Islamist militants remaining in the Ganfouda area besieged by Haftar's forces. The reports have not been confirmed by Ashkal's family, while Haftar's troops have denied conducting a raid in the area. Ashkal was imprisoned in the Abu Hadima prison in Benghazi since the 2011 revolution. He failed to escape during the mass escape from the prison and the Benghazi Council of Revolutionaries refused to allow him to leave the district last December when a humanitarian corridor was opened. The Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna has commemorated Ashkal in a statement. "Omar Ashkal was one of the greatest supporters of the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna and quickly found a solution to the crisis of the besieged in Ganfouda, west of Benghazi". The group said it had been "in direct contact with Ashkal to solve the Ganfouda crisis step by step".

The imams from eastern Libya will hold a joint sermon on Friday in support of the measure implemented by the Derna military chief, Abdel Razzaq al Nadori, that was later withdrawn amid heavy protests, preventing women under 60 years of age to travel unaccompanied by a male relative. The sermon will condemn demonstrations organised by nonreligious NGOs and associations to protest al Nadori's measure.

The Prime Minister of the unrecognised transitional Libyan government based in al Bayda, Abdullah al Thani, has removed his Deputy PM, al Mahdi al Labad, and later reported him to the prosecutor for a series of crimes. The 2017 Decree n. 25 also accused al Labad of taking on a 28 million-euro commitment with a Lebanese company, B4 Trading, without an agreement signed by Libyan institutions and without permission to do so.

Security

Three young men from Sirte belonging to Gaddafi's tribe were kidnapped this week in Cyrenaica, eastern Libya. The tribe raised the alarm after reporting that a further member of the clan, a former Libyan Army officer, was kidnapped last Thursday in front of the Tobruk hospital. Cyrenaica is governed by an unrecognised "transitional" government based in al Bayda, mid-way between Benghazi and Tobruk where the House of Representatives, the Libyan parliament recognised by the international community, is temporarily based.

General Khalifa Haftar, Commander of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA), lost nine of his men this week while a further 30 were injured in fighting west of Benghazi and south of Derna with Islamist militia. According to "al Jazeera", three militants from the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries were killed. Two mediators trying to save people trapped in the area were also killed. The Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries is a coalition that includes Ansar al Sharia, linked to al Qaeda, the February 17th Martyrs Brigade and Libya Shield, close the Muslim Brotherhood.

The former head of the Tripoli High Security Commission, Hashem Bashar, has said that "forces under the government of national accord in Tripoli have been in a state of alert for four days". In a message on Facebook, Bashar added that "extraordinary activities are underway by the forces under the Interior and Defence ministries to guarantee security and stability that have been threatened by the presence of banned militia in Tripoli's outskirts". Convoys of military vehicles have been seen and roads have been closed in Tripoli in light of possible clashes between rival militia.

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.