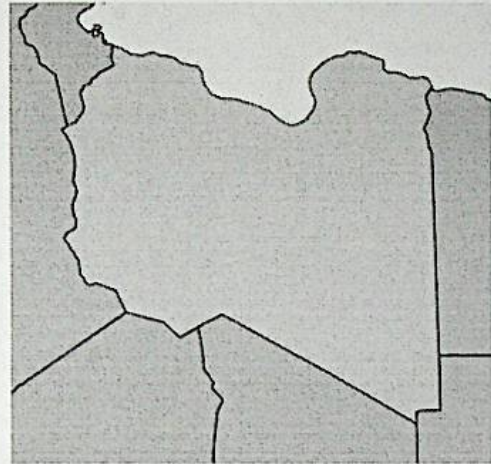

Libya

Jul 17-22

Summary

An initiative from Libyan Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj to find a political solution to the crisis in the country was presented this week.



Diplomacy

The meeting between the Government of National Accord (GNA) Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj and head of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar is scheduled to take place in Paris on Jul. 25 on invitation from French President Emmanuel Macron, said "al Hayat", quoting diplomatic sources. The newspaper added that the meeting has been made possible due to efforts from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. One of the goals of the meeting is to facilitate the work of the new UN Envoy to Libya Ghassan Salamé, who will take up the position on Aug. 1. The Tripoli government and LNA forces in Benghazi have yet to confirm the reports. Al Sarraj and Haftar met for the first time on May 5 in Abu Dhabi on invitation from the United Arab Emirates government.

Politics

GNA Prime Minister Fayeze al Sarraj has proposed a new political programme to hold parliamentary and presidential elections in March 2018. In a message to the population, al Sarraj called for the elections to be monitored by the UN, the African Union and the Arab League and that the electoral process be based on political agreements between the parties, including those signed in Morocco in December 2015. Al Sarraj and LNA Commander Khalifa Haftar reached a further agreement in a meeting held in Abu Dhabi last May to launch talks between the two factions. According to "al Arabiya", al Sarraj and Haftar agreed on most points discussed during the meeting, including the annulment of Art. 8 of the December 2015 national reconciliation agreement signed in Morocco, according to which the president will also hold the position of head of state while the armed forces will be led by the Presidential Council. Al Sarraj and Haftar also agreed to open a continuous dialogue channel between the two parties to hold political elections by March 2018, to launch a working group that agrees on the formation of an independent government different from that represented by the current Presidential Council and to discuss military issues. The Speaker of the Tobruk House of Representatives Aguila Saleh has rejected al Sarraj's proposal to create a "roadmap" in order to put an end to the political crisis underway in Libya. Speaking to "al Libya", Saleh said he will not permit "any kind of elections without the approval of a new constitution". Immediately after his remarks, Libyan MP Sultana al Mismari also rejected the roadmap, defining al Sarraj's government as "unconstitutional". The MP, considered close to Khalifa Haftar, added that "the political agreement signed in Skhirat, Morocco, in December 2015 is not contained in the Constitutional Announcement and therefore all its decrees are illegal". A further MP Milud al Sawad, member of the "al Wifaq" parliament group, has rejected the programme as "it goes above the two parties who should be the key players of the talks, the parliament and

the High Council of State". The Misrata national youth movement has called on al Sarraj to resign as the initiative he presented this week to solve the internal crisis "is not on the same level as the suffering felt by Libyan citizens". In a statement, the movement said it was surprised by al Sarraj's appeal to hold elections that come "before the restoration of stability and security throughout the country and before the approval of a constitution". The group added that it rejects "al Sarraj's initiative that undermines the spirit of reconciliation and strengthens the state of suffering of the Libyans". In a statement, the Justice and Construction Party, linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, said it was in favour of the initiative as "the principle of elections as a way to restore legality in Libya is positive", adding that it is necessary "to complete constitutional and voting measures, guarantee a peaceful transition of power and put an end to the transitional phase and division underway in the country".

Security

The Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar is ready to launch a new offensive on Derna, eastern Libya. During a press conference held in Benghazi, Colonel Salem al Rafadi, head of the Omar al Mukhtar operations command, said that "at the end of the battle with Islamist militia here, we are ready to launch a new one for the control of Derna". The city is located 214 kilometres east of Benghazi and is controlled by the Derna Mujahedeen Council, made up of Islamist militia. "The Libyan army is ready to enter and liberate the city. We have drawn up a joint plan with the Interior Ministry of the transitional government based in al Bayda (unrecognised by the international community) for the management of security in the city. We have lost time up until now because talks are underway with authorities in Derna to find a peaceful solution and avoid pointless clashes", added al Rafadi. He said that food, medicines, electricity and fuel are available to civilians in the city. Derna is currently the only city in Cyrenaica that is not controlled by Haftar's forces. Derna MP Intisar Shanib has said that Haftar met with a delegation from the High Council for the reconciliation of the city, adding that the meeting "was positive for the achievement of an agreement". Speaking to "al Wasat", she said that "the Derna delegation left the city of al Bayda after the meeting with Haftar held in the Marhaba hotel where the foundations were laid to build future relations". Negotiations are underway to reach an agreement before Haftar's forces launch their attack on Derna. Shanib said that the Derna Mujahedeen Council is "ready to dissolve and join the Libyan army". Speaking to "al Wasat", she called on Libyan institutions to "take advantage of this opportunity in order to save the people of Derna from another war", in light of the imminent offensive on the city by Haftar's troops. "The Mujahedeen Council is ready to dissolve and enter the army and for this reason its representatives will be present at the meeting scheduled for the near future with General Haftar at his base in al Rajma".

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.