
Libya

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Summary

Following the Tripoli government's refusal to sign the Skhirat agreement with Tobruk, diplomacy has come to a halt and the week's news was dominated by security issues.



Politics

The Tripoli General National Congress has reiterated its position regarding its refusal to sign the Skhirat agreement: "dialogue should continue as it is our only strategic option". During a meeting, the GNC Political Affairs Committee discussed the dialogue sponsored by UN envoy Bernardino Leon and decided that "dialogue is the only way out of the current crisis in the country". The Committee also decided that "the amendments requested by the Congress to Leon's draft proposal have to be considered".

Security

There were armed clashes this week east of Derna between the Islamic State and the Libyan Army, Tobruk armed forces spokesman Abdul Karim Sabra told daily "Alwasat". He added that the clashes were triggered yesterday morning near Fattaih University where Islamic State militants are besieged by military forces that surround the area on the three sides. Sabra said that no accurate data is currently available on the presence of the Islamic State in northern Derna while in the east the group is under pressure from Libyan armed forces. The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for kidnapping three Christian men from Egypt, Nigeria and Ghana in eastern Libya. The group posted a message online in which they showed the passports of the three men. According to Tobruk's military spokesman Mohammad al Hejazi, the kidnapping occurred in Noufliyah, an Islamic State stronghold located south-east of Sirte. In the last year, the Islamic State has increased its activity in the country, taking advantage of the chaos and security vacuum caused by the two rival governments fighting for control of the country. Four Italian citizens were kidnapped on Sunday night in Sabratha in Libya, reported Libyan press agency "Al Tadamoun" quoting sources from within the gas and oil complex in Mellitah. The four Italian workers were kidnapped soon after returning to Libya from Tunisia. Sources say that local security forces are unaware of the identity of the kidnappers or the whereabouts of the kidnapped. The kidnapping comes two months after the plant's management signed a contract with a private company which guaranteed the safety of its foreign employees. In the same area, Libyan security forces arrested 110 illegal immigrants from various African nations preparing to set sail on a boat headed from Sabratha to Italy. The migrants were stopped on a truck while it was making its way towards the coast. The men were taken to Sabratha and the women to Sarman. Every day Libyan media reports stories of groups of migrants who are stopped by the authorities of the two governments controlling the country and prevented from boarding boats to Europe. The situation is tense in Tripoli due to violent clashes south of the city between two militia belonging to "Fajr Libya". According to "Al Arabiya", the militia are engaged in fighting along the road leading to the city's airport and ambulances were heard arriving in the area which

implies there were victims. The first militia is led by Ghiniu al Kakla while the second by Salauddin al Baraki who was killed a month ago. These are the two largest militia controlling the Libyan capital and are currently fighting over the division of a recent arms shipment. The clashes are still underway although they are sporadic. There was also violence in the south of the country where at least 40 people were killed and dozens wounded last week in clashes between Tebu and Tuareg militia. According to Libyan media, the clashes took place in Sebha, 750 kilometres south of Tripoli. The fighting has been underway for years but this week forced dozens of families to leave their homes as the situation worsens with both sides using heavy weaponry. General Khalifa Haftar's forces are advancing in Benghazi against Ansar al Sharia militia, a group affiliated to Al Qaeda. According to broadcaster "Al-Arabiya", Haftar's soldiers have taken control of a large part of the city, particularly strategic areas such as the port, the road leading to the airport and a barracks. Battalions 309 and 302 are engaged in a hard battle against Islamist militia using tanks and heavy artillery with the support of the air force. Islamist militia are barricaded in the al Leithi district and other small areas of the city. Over the last few days, the soldiers have captured numerous Islamist militia, most of them foreign nationals from Sudan, Ethiopia and Chad.

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.