



Libya

Last update:	13 March 2018
Population:	6,278,438 million (World Bank 2015 est.)
Prime minister:	Fayez al-Sarraj
Governemental type:	-
Ruling coalition:	-
Last election:	25 June 2014 (Council of Deputies)
Next election:	-
Sister parties:	None

Subsequently to the Tunisian uprising, first protests in Libya started halfway January 2011. One month later, the protests had turned into the most violent conflict between government and citizens among the different Arab uprisings at that time. After almost 42 years under the regime of Gaddafi the people of Libya found a momentum to take over control of their country. But what started as a popular uprising and outcry for political reform quickly turned into factional violence. The newly elected General National Congress (GNC) in 2012 tried to hold the country together. The rise of Islamic State in Libya and the contested 2014 elections resulted in the creation of a rival government in the eastern city of Tobruk. A second Civil War ensued. The reconciliation process initiated by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has so far failed to unite the country. The current internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in the original capital Tripoli, has limited power, while the HoR supported by Libyan National Army of general Khalifa Haftar rules more than half of the country.

Political Situation

Libya gained independence in December 1951 after being under UN supervision as Italy lost the territory during World War II. Following a military coup in 1969, Colonel Muammar Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi designed his own political system, the Third Universal Theory, later dubbing the country the 'Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya'. The system was a combination of socialism and Islam derived in part from tribal practices. Sanctions from the UN isolated Gaddafi from 1992 until 2003, after which the absolute ruler improved its relations with western countries. Libya appeared as an important but controversial partner for the EU in its dealing with migration issues. Furthermore, Libya served as an important export country for oil, which made up for 65% of its GDP. Libya ranks ninth on the list of countries with the biggest proved reserves of oil.

The 2011 Revolution

After almost 42 years under the regime of Gaddafi the people of Libya sought to take over control in their country. Subsequently to the Tunisian uprising, first protests in Libya took off halfway January 2011. On 26 February, the UN Security Council paved the way for foreign intervention. On 20 October 2011, Gaddafi was killed. The civil war ended on 20 November that year. The overthrow and death of Muammar Gaddafi have been followed by continuing political instability, amplified by the weak performance of the Transitional National Council (interim government), rivalries between heavily armed militias, allegations of fraud, and a growing east-west divide.

Under Gaddafi's rule, the political system was designed according to his own personal insights. He was the formal leader of the country, but took no position in the government. There was no real parliament, only a network of small congresses that could make decisions at a local level. The creation of a national parliament proved to be difficult. In 2012, under the auspice of the United Nations, the first post-revolution elections were organized. The Libyan people could elect a transitional government, the General National Congress, that would pave the way for elections in 2014. In the conservative Sunni dominated country it was expected that Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Construction Party would win. The more liberal minded National Forces Alliance won however the most seats. The elections showed the difficult situation in a country without a rooted party culture. Most seats were won by independents. The GNC was nonetheless installed on 8 August 2012.

The 2014 Crisis

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During its 18 month mandate the GNC encountered many obstacles in organizing elections. The lack of constitution demanded the formation of a democratically elected Constitutional Assembly. The Assembly elections in February 2014 failed. Some tribes boycotted the elections. Meanwhile factional violence intensified. Islamic State in Libya took control of some coastal cities. In the chaotic early months of 2014 the GNC seemed to be unable to organize elections or even hold the country together. General Khalifa Haftar launched in February 2014 an military operation against fundamentalists, dramatically announced in a televised speech, to save the country. The credibility of the GNC decreased leading up to the deadline of the mandate. The parliamentary elections in June 2014 were unsuccessful. Voter turnout was below 16% as a result of the factional violence and distrust of the GNC. Most seats went to secular candidates. The new House of Representatives took office in Augustus 2014. Islamists supported by likeminded militias didn't accept the results and created a new General National Congress. With violence erupting in Tripoli the HoR relocated to Tobruk, controlled by militias loyal to Haftar. The Supreme Court ruled against the elections and therefore the legitimacy of the HoR. Violence escalated in late 2014 when Islamic State attacked Benghazi and Sirte. Haftar started counterattack to reclaim these territories for the HoR.

Peace Process

The United Nations urges for unity in the country in order to overcome the violent breakdown of the state. In Tunisia a peace process was started that led to the Libyan Political Accord. Initially both Tobruk and Tripoli accepted the arrangement and the formation of a Government of National Accord. The peace between East and West was fragile. The HoR was supposed to ratify the accord, but the representatives couldn't reach agreement on certain key issues that would legitimize the GNA. Control over the armed forces was especially problematic. While the GNA took over control in East Libya, they were opposed by certain members of the GNC, now known as the Government of Salvation led by Khalifa al-Ghawil. New clashes in the West ensued. In the East the Libyan Army of Haftar drove back Islamic State. The power of Haftar grew as result of his success in the East. Haftar became one of representatives of the Tobruk government. UN initiated talks in 2016 and 2017 didn't have any results. The United Nations launched in late 2017 a roadmap to elections, possibly in 2018. Hoping that elections could overcome legitimacy issues and divisions in the country.

The players

There are currently five opposing faction in the country. Most of the eastern part of the country is controlled by the Libyan National Army of Khalifa Haftar in the name of the House of Representatives and its chairman Aguila Saleh Issa in Tobruk. They are opposed in Benghazi and Derna by Shura Councils, who advocate the creation of an Islamic Republic. In the west the Government of the National Accord of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj rules most of the coastal areas, but is opposed by the National Salvation Government of chairman Khalifa al-Ghawil in Tripoli and Misrata. The sparsely populated south is often controlled by local militias along Ethno-Tribal affiliations. Some of these tribes, like the Tuareg, have sworn alliance to the Government of the National Accord.

Elections

The election of a General National Congress in 2012

In July 2012, a GNC was formed, and it elected Mohammed Magarief of the liberal National Front Party as its chairman. This meant that he would be interim head of state. In October 2012, the liberal politician Ali Zaydan was elected to the post of Prime Minister. Meanwhile, however, violence had sparked again. In September, Islamist militants stormed the American consulate in Benghazi. The Libyan government condemned the attack, and used it as means to disarm several militias that had come into existence during the uprising against the Gaddafi regime. A new law was designed, that banned Gaddafi-era officials from holding public office. Therefore, Magarief resigned and was replaced by Nuri Abu Sahmein, a member of the Berber minority that was discriminated by the Gaddafi regime.

National Forces Alliance (NFA)	39 seats
Justice and Construction Party (JCP)	17 seats
National Front Party	3 seats
Union Party for Homeland	2 seats
Wadi Al-Hayat Gathering	2 seats

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Central National Current

2 seats

In February 2014, the GNC was supposed to resign and hand legislative power to a democratically chosen parliament. Yet, they refused to leave office and protests erupted once again. The GNC was supported by Islamic militias and the Libyan Guard, and with their support announced the extension of their mandate with one year. Prime Minister Zaydan was sacked and replaced, first by al-Thani and then by businessman Ahmed Maiteg. In May 2014, general Khalifa Haftar launched a military assault against the militant Islamist groups in Benghazi. Also, he accused Prime Minister Maiteg of being the Islamists' political string puppet. In June 2014, Maiteg resigned. Initially, former Prime Minister Zaydan condemned the assault by general Haftar as illegal, but after his resignation he decided to pick his side.

The 2014 elections

On 25 June 2014, Libyans could vote for a new Council of Deputies. Of the 1.5 million citizens who registered to vote, only 630,000 cast their ballots, a meagre 45%. This was partly due to the bad security situation. A number of polling stations were forced to close as a result of attacks or the threat of attacks by competing militant groups. Moreover, at least five people died in clashes between government forces and militants in Benghazi.

Because all candidates ran as independents, it is impossible to define the outcome of elections as a division of seats amongst parties. Of the 200 seats up for election, 188 were announced on 22 July, with the announcement for the other 12 being delayed due to boycott or insecurity in some electoral districts. Most of the seats were taken by secular factions, with Islamists only winning around 30 seats.

The next elections

Since the Libyan Political Agreement was signed in 2015, there has been talks of new elections within two years. Under the United Nations Action plan for Libya, which was initiated in 2017, it is expected that elections will take place in late 2018. The High National Election Commission announced in December 2017 that it had started the registration of voters in the country. In the meantime several groups in the country have been engaged in talks with the UN in organizing a national conference. During this conference several important issues have to be solved, such as the creation of a constitution by referendum. The HNEC announced that it would use the 2013 electoral law. As a result, it is unlikely that political parties will participate in the election. All candidates should run as independents.

Biographies

Abdullah al-Thani

Prime Minister of the Council of Deputies (22 July 2014 – current)

After being nominated Defense Minister in August 2013, Abdullah al-Thani became temporary Prime Minister on 12 March 2014. He nevertheless quit his post less than one month after his introduction. He declared that threats to his family had incited him to give up. After the election for the Council of Deputies, he was chosen Prime Minister. He was the one who ordered general Khalifa Haftar to attack Tripoli in October 2014. In March 2015, he officially appointed Haftar's troops as the armed forces of the Council of Deputies in Tobruk.

Khalifa Haftar

Libyan Ground Forces General

Khalifa Haftar is the principle military commander of the armed forces of the Tobruk-seated government. Under the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, he served in the Libyan army. Also, he took part in the coup that brought Gaddafi to power in 1969. He is known for his expertise, having commanded the Libyan army in the Yom Kippur War and his role in the war against Chad. During that war, he was taken prisoner in 1987. After his release in 1990, he lived in the United States for almost two decades. After his return to

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Libya, he held a major position in the forces which overthrew Gaddafi in 2011. When the GNC refused to give up power in 2014, he was commander of the Libyan Army. He then started Operation Dignity and eventually sided with the Council of Deputies in Tobruk.

Aguila Saleh Issa

President of the Council of Deputies (5 August 2014 – current)

Aguila Saleh Issa is a Libyan jurist and politician. Since August 5 2014, he has been the President of the Council of Deputies. Furthermore, he is a representative of Al Qubbah, a town in the east of the country. In February 2015, Saleh Issa became the victim of an assault by Islamic State when they bombed his residence. However, he was not at home at the time. A petrol station and police station were targeted as well. With over forty people dead, it was one of the deadliest attacks in Libya since the first civil war ended in 2011.

Muammar Gaddafi

Former Guide of the Revolution of Libya (1969-2011)

Muammar Gaddafi was born in 1942 and ruled Libya between 1969 and 2011, when he was ousted in the Libyan civil war. After his academic training, he joined the military in the Royal Military Academy of Benghazi. The military provided him with an upward social mobility tool.

Taking advantage of King Idris' growing unpopularity in the 1960s, he and his Free Officers organised an overthrow of the monarchy, by occupying airports, police depots, radio stations and government offices in the country's large cities. After abolishing the monarchy, he proclaimed the Libyan Arab Republic and became the country's leader at 27 years old.

At the beginning of his leadership he tried to destroy all Western influence from the country, as explained in his Green Book, which explains the problems with liberalism and capitalism. Nevertheless, he moved closer to the West from the 1990s on, when his power started to be challenged by Islamists.

The Arab Spring accelerated Gaddafi's downfall: after Tunisia and Egypt, Libya underwent large demonstrations. At the end of March, a NATO coalition began to provide support for the rebel forces in the form of airstrikes and a no-fly zone. When Tripoli fell to rebel forces in late August 2011, it was seen as a major victory for the opposition and a symbolic end for Gaddafi's rule. On October 20, 2011, Libyan officials announced that Muammar al-Qaddafi had died near his hometown of Sirte, Libya.

Fayez al-Sarraj

Prime Minister

Fayez al-Sarraj was born on March 30th 1960 in Tripoli. His father was a member of parliament during the reign of King Idris of Libya. Being part of a wealthy family, Sarraj was able to study architecture and became a career civil servant in the department of housing during the Gaddafi era. After the revolution he decided to run for parliament in 2014, winning a seat for his district. During the Battle of Tripoli he fled with his fellow representatives to Tobruk. In 2015 he was asked by the United Nations to form a national unity coalition. As a result he became the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord. In 2016 he landed in Tripoli. His authority is restricted to the coastal areas of Eastern Libya.

Source

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