



## PERSPECTIVES

THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

### **Libya in Chaos: Where To?**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Post-Qaddafi Libya is divided between two governments, and the consequence of that division is mounting chaos. Europe, the US, Canada, and the UN will have to decide at what point it will be necessary to go back into Libya to restore order.**

On August 15, 2018, Tripoli's Appeals Court sentenced 45 convicts to death by firing squad for opening fire on August 21, 2011 on residents abandoning Tripoli while it was falling into the hands of anti-government insurgents. The 45 are all ex-members of Muammar Qaddafi's security forces.

On the same day, August 15, 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for Mahmoud Werfalli, a senior commander in the Libya National Army (LNA). According to the indictment, Werfalli "appears to be directly responsible for the killing of, in total, 33 persons in Benghazi or surrounding areas, between on or before 3 June 2016 and on or around 17 July 2017, either by personally killing them or by ordering their execution."

Armed groups have been executing civilians in Libya with almost complete impunity ever since the toppling of Qaddafi's government in 2011.

As of 2018, after the demise of ISIS in Libya due to its defeats at both Sirte and Benghazi (an unknown number of currently inactive ex-ISIS fighters remain in Bani Walid and south of Sirte), the country remains divided between two governments: 1) the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, which is backed by the UN and headed by Fayeze Sirraj; and 2) the Benghazi government, which is based on Libya's national army, headed by

General Khalifa Haftar, and backed by some Arab governments (Egypt, the UAE).

Oil plays a dominant role in the competition between the two rival governments. The UN and its affiliate in Libya, UNSMIL (UN Support Mission in Libya), arranged for Libya's oil to be re-exported through the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation, oil exports being the main pillar of Libya's exports.

In the last year of Qaddafi's government, 1.6 million barrels of oil per day were exported. Oil exports were heavily slashed due to the conflict in Libya, but by the end of 2017, they had regained a level of 1.2 million barrels per day.

But through an understanding between the Haftar government and the UAE, 850,000 barrels per day are exported directly by the Benghazi government through UAE companies based in the Benghazi part of the country. (In 2017, the UN accused the UAE of supplying military equipment to Haftar's forces in violation of an international arms embargo.)

In June 2018, the Ras Lanuf and Sidra oil fields were seized by Haftar's forces and their production taken away from the national oil company of Tripoli. As a consequence, oil exports from the ports of Zweisatun and Harjia were stopped.

An attempt in July 2018, supported by the UN, to reconcile the two rival governments failed over Haftar's demand that he remain chief commander of the united army. The conflict continues.

The consequences of all this are detrimental to the chances of finding any reconciliation between the two governments in Libya. The state is divided, and there are no prospects of a solution in the foreseeable future.

The chaotic situation enables the emergence of enclaves of terror, inspired by the ideology of ISIS and al-Qaeda. The world should make sure that Libya does not turn into another pre-2001 Afghanistan-like state on the doorstep of Europe.

Since there is almost no power on the ground in Libya with which the EU can come to an agreement to stop the influx of illegal migrants from the sub-Saharan states through Libya to Europe, this migration route will probably continue to be a gateway for many more thousands of Africans into Europe. The consequences for the EU are complex and difficult.

The question that Europe, the US, Canada, and the UN should deal with is this: in what situation will the world intervene in Libya once again to contain the domestic chaos before it spills out to other parts of the world? The sooner this question is answered, the better.

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