

# Libya UN envoy expects election date to be set at coming talks

Author:

Wed, 2020-10-28 01:39

TUNIS: The United Nations acting Libya envoy expects coming political talks to designate a date for national elections, she told Reuters on Tuesday, after the country's two warring sides agreed a cease-fire last week.

"What resonates is a clear and direct desire for there to be elections in as rapid a timeframe as possible," Stephanie Williams said.

Libya has been split since 2014 between factions based in the capital Tripoli, in the west, and in the city of Benghazi, in the east.

Last week a truce was agreed in Geneva by the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized by the UN, and Khalifa Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA).

Previous cease-fires have collapsed and earlier efforts to agree a wider political settlement have run aground. The political talks have started online and will move to Tunis on Nov. 9.

The UN has said it is imperative to agree on arrangements to hold elections as soon as possible, including by forming a new unified leadership to oversee them.

"Whatever executive authority they agree on really needs to have a clear focus – preparing for the elections," Williams said. "I do fully expect there to be a date designated for elections."

Williams said she was hopeful for the talks, citing a recent lack of fighting, progress in ending an eight-month oil blockade and reopening internal transport routes, and involvement of figures from across Libya's political spectrum.

"We have learned from previous political processes not to exclude any political constituency and so in this dialogue you do also have representation from the previous regime," she said.



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## [New co-chairs of UK Parliament Palestine group urge settlement goods boycott](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-10-27 22:17

LONDON: The two new co-chairs of the Britain-Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) have urged the UK government to “stand up for international law” by banning all imports from illegal Israeli settlements.

Julie Elliot, a member of the UK’s main opposition Labour Party and one of

the two new co-chairs, also said Britain should recognize Palestine as a state.

In a message released online to mark her election to the APPG, she said: "It's time that the British government stood up for international law, sought action against products from the settlements – ban them in this country – and also move towards helping to end the blockade on Gaza, which has brought such dreadful, dreadful suffering to the people of Gaza." She added: "It's time for the British government to recognize Palestine. The time is now."

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, the other new co-chair and former co-chair of the governing Conservative Party, said: "Palestinian rights must be continually raised in the UK Parliament. It's vital that we continue to pressure the UK government to act to end the occupation and to stand up for international law."

APPGs are groups in UK politics convened across party lines that meet to discuss, campaign on and promote a certain issue. They are often effective parts of wider parliamentary campaigns.

Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding, welcomed the election of Elliot and Warsi as the APPG's new co-chairs.

"They're two politicians who understand the Palestinian issue, and it's really important to push things, as they both have, such as British recognition of a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines with Jerusalem as its capital," he told Arab News.

"The Palestine APPG is one of the best supported in Parliament – that's a sign of the interest in the issue."

But Doyle said they may have their work cut out in getting their message on Palestine across. "The challenge right now is to give airtime to any issue that isn't COVID-19 or the American elections," he added.

"The conflict issues in the Middle East are starved of the sort of attention they need because of the pandemic."



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## [Houthi minister shot and killed in Sanaa 'was victim of internal feud'](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-10-27 21:24

AL-MUKALLA: Gunmen shot and killed a senior Houthi official in Sanaa on Tuesday as an internal feud among the Iran-backed militia group threatened to spiral out of control.

Hassan Zaid, minister of youth and sports in the Houthi administration, died in hospital from his wounds after gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on his car in an area of the Yemeni capital that houses embassies.

His daughter, who was driving the car, was wounded in the attack. Witnesses said she cried for help and pleaded with passers-by to rescue her dying

father.

The Houthi interior ministry alleged, without evidence, that Zaid was shot by “criminal elements” linked to the Saudi-led military coalition supporting the internationally recognized government.

However, Zaid was the most prominent of several Houthi officials killed this year in the capital and other militia-controlled areas, and experts told Arab News he was the victim of infighting between rival political wings.

Hardline Houthis from Saada, the rebels’ heartland, are settling scores with moderate figures such as Zaid who joined the group later, analysts said.

Zaid was a founding member of the Al-Haq party and a senior member of the Joint Meeting Parties, a gathering of opposition groups formed during former president Ali Abdullah Saleh’s administration. He became a minister in Khaled Bahah’s government in 2014.

When the Houthis overthrew Yemeni president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi’s government in early 2015, Zaid switched sides and joined the rebels.

In 2017, he proposed closing schools for a year and sending students and teachers to fight. In 2017, the Arab coalition placed bounties on dozens of Houthi leaders, including Zaid, accusing them of orchestrating and supporting Houthi terror.

Meanwhile dozens of Houthi fighters, army troops and allied tribesmen have been killed in the past two days during fierce battles in the provinces of Sanaa, Jouf and Marib, local officers said on Tuesday.

Brig. Gen. Abdu Abdullah Majili, a Yemeni army spokesman, told Arab News that army troops backed by air support from coalition warplanes engaged in heavy fighting with Houthis in the Najed Al-Ateq region in Sanaa after rebels tried to seize a strategic military base.

“The national army and the tribesmen have foiled Houthi attacks and advanced on the ground,” Majili said.



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## [Full steam ahead for Egypt-Sudan rail network](#)

Tue, 2020-10-27 00:49

CAIRO: Egypt's Minister of Transport Kamel Al-Wazir has discussed plans with Sudanese counterpart Hashem bin Auf to build a cross-border railway network between the two neighboring countries.

The pair discussed terms of a joint cooperation document for railway connectivity, which aims to provide funding for an economic, social and

environmental feasibility study for the project.

The planned network will extend from the Egyptian city of Aswan across the southern border to Sudan's Wadi Halfa in its first phase.

Funding will be organized through cooperation between Egypt, Sudan and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Al-Wazir signed the document and delivered it to the Sudanese ambassador in Cairo for signing by the country's transport minister.

The two sides also discussed a number of road projects, including a prospective land road between Egypt and Chad through Sudan. The project aims to be a gateway for trade between the two countries, Chad and West Africa. The Cairo-Sudan-Cape Town road, which passes through nine African countries, was also mentioned by the ministers.

Al-Wazir also said that Egypt is building a Cairo-Arqa road corridor inside its borders, which passes through the governorates of Fayoum, Beni Suef, Minya, Assiut, Sohag, Qena, Luxor and Aswan, and then then extends to the Egyptian border, passing through the Toshka junctions to Arqa, parallel with Sudan.

He added that the new project is important in achieving land connectivity and increasing trade with African countries, as well as serving Egyptian and African citizens, opening new job opportunities and encouraging comprehensive development.

The Sudanese side also requested cooperation with Egypt in maritime transport and the training of maritime cadres at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport.

Al-Wazir said that Egypt will provide its capabilities to train the workers, whether through the Arab Academy, Egyptian ports or the Egyptian Authority for Maritime Safety.

The two sides also agreed to hold a joint meeting to follow up on the progress of other cooperation projects and to discuss the development of the Nile Valley Authority for River Navigation.

Al-Wazir's team said that the coming period should include urgent plans to develop the authority, train river workers and provide support through specialized technical cadres.



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## [Pandemic lockdowns fueling rise of sexual extortion crimes in Lebanon](#)

Tue, 2020-10-27 00:44

BEIRUT: Coronavirus lockdowns are fueling an increase in sexual extortion crimes in Lebanon, according to a security official.

Figures from the Lebanese Internal Security Forces showed that such crimes had risen significantly in recent months. Authorities received 47 complaints during July and 96 in August. The number of people arrested for these crimes this year has reached 133.

The security official, from the Public Relations Division at the General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces, said the victims of this type of

extortion were aged between 11 and 60, and the percentage of female victims was greater than the percentage of male ones.

“Such incidents are repeated daily, and the perpetrators may be Lebanese or non-Lebanese,” the official told Arab News. “These crimes increased during the presence of people in (their) homes as a result of quarantine due to the outbreak of coronavirus and people, old and young, resorted to social media.”

Despite information warning people against taking inappropriate photos and videos and under any pressure exerted on them, the official said, sexual extortion crimes were repeated because fraud took many forms.

“Perpetrators show their victims a measure of love and care that makes the victims believe them and feel secure with them,” the official explained. “It does not usually take long to convince male victims, while female victims usually look for someone who gives them great emotion to trust him, which takes longer. Usually, the female victims may be girls who suffer from difficult social conditions, and the start of the process of their extortion may take longer than with the male victims.”

Most of the perpetrators in sexual extortion operations had a prior history of such activity and were involved in fraud because it was lucrative, the official added.

The latest crime recorded by the Office of Combating Information Crimes and Protection of Intellectual Property in the Judicial Police Unit revealed that a Lebanese national was threatened with the publication of intimate photographs by someone she had met through Facebook.

A romantic relationship began between the two and she had sent him private photos and videos. He started threatening to upload these unless she sent him money, cell phone recharge cards, and new intimate images and videos of her. He also contacted and threatened one of her relatives, who capitulated and sent him more than 20 recharge cards and sums of money.

Brigadier Fadl Daher, a specialist in criminology and punishment and professor of criminal social studies, said there were three basic reasons for people committing this type of crime.

“The financial motive is the basis for crimes against money. These crimes resort, in most cases, to defamation, and they become more common when the surveillance and prosecution are reduced, and the perpetrator believes that he would not be held accountable,” he explained. “In the time of coronavirus, the family returned home but ... every person in the house resorted to social media so no one knows what the other is doing within the same house.”

Daher said that poverty and need made people resort to all available means to obtain financial returns, and that extortion through social media may be one of those methods as the difficulty of arresting people who used social media to commit their crimes was four times higher than arresting those who committed their crimes in the street.

“The danger of these crimes is that they may target children and minors,” he

added. "The lack of a social safety net through leniency in uncovering these crimes or talking about them led us in the past not to raise any talk about taboos to address them, and launching any campaign to break the silence now by asking victims to call the hotline is not helpful. An integrated mechanism of psychological, judicial and social treatment is required."



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