

Politics

## Turkey's Parliament approves extending troop deployment in Libya 18 months



The Turkish parliament approved on Tuesday a motion calling for an extension in troop deployment in Libya for another 18 months, according to Anadolu Agency.

The proposal was submitted by the Turkish presidency last week, in the light of a request by Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord for military assistance.

"There are threats from Libya to Turkey and the entire region, and if attacks resume again, Turkey's interests in the Mediterranean basin and North Africa will be adversely affected," the motion, signed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said.

The motion added that permanent peace and ceasefire which was agreed upon in October, as well as political dialogue in Libya is of great importance to Turkey, yet noting the GNA's call for help in November 2019 when warlord Khalifa Haftar attacked the capital Tripoli to seize power.

"Turkey, within the Memorandum of Security and Military Cooperation signed with Libya, will continue to contribute to the training and consultancy support to Libya." The motion said.

The motion also cites risks and threats as coming from Libya to Turkey and the whole region.

"In the case of restart of the so-called Libyan National Army attacks and the clashes, Turkey's interests both in the Mediterranean basin and North Africa will be adversely affected". The motion said.

In November 2019, Turkey and Libya's UN-recognized GNA signed an MoU on military cooperation, as well as an MoU on maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The one-year extendable deal involves technical information, support, development, maintenance, repair, planning and material support as well as training and consultancy services regarding the use of weapons system and equipment.



Politics

## Malta to issue Schengen visas to Libyans starting next January

The member of the Libyan Presidential Council Ahmed Mitig agreed with the Maltese Minister of Finance on the start of Malta's issuing European (Schengen Area) visas to Libyans by the end of next January.

The agreement came in a meeting between the two officials in Tripoli on Sunday, when they also agreed on reopening direct flights

from Tripoli, Misrata, and Benghazi to Valetta and from there to other European countries.

The two officials discussed joint cooperation and relations in economic and investment fields as well as development in various areas.

Politics

## Italian MP: The government lied about our fishermen in Libya, as they lived horrific situations



An Italian opposition parliamentarian has accused his government of lying about the Sicilian fishermen who were detained in Benghazi.

"The government lied about the issue of the Mazara del Vallo fishermen, and despite assurances about their health conditions in recent months, in response to our questions and protests, the fishermen confirmed that they have gone through horrific situations," the Italian MP Lorenzo Viviani said.

The MP -who is in the fishing committee of the Italian Parliament- demanded, in Monday's memo, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, to be more transparent about the negotiations that led to the release of the fishermen.

"The negotiations show that Italy is moving more and more towards a secondary position on the Mediterranean chessboard, a fact that would lead to a repetition of such abuse," as he put it.

A Tunisian fisherman, who was among the recently released Italian fishermen, had confirmed in statements to the Tunisian press that they had been severely ill-treated, despite not being subjected to physical violence.

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Italian newspaper La Repubblica has revealed that Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte carried a message from the Head of the Presidential Council Fayez Al-Sarraj to Khalifa Haftar when he visited Benghazi with the Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio. In the message, Al-Sarraj proposed to Haftar that he names a Prime Minister for the new government as part of a political settlement.

The Italian newspaper said Al-Sarraj told Conte and di Maio of his message to Haftar when he visited Rome before the Italian officials went to Benghazi for the release of the 18 fishermen.

Italian news agency "NOVA" reported Al-Sarraj's visit to Rome on December 15 with his wife.

Conte and di Maio arrived in Libya's Benghazi last week and met with Haftar for the release of 18 Italian fishermen who had been in detention since September.

Observers believe that the failure of UNSMIL to reach an agreement at the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum will lead to keeping the current Presidential Council until elections on December 24, 2021.



The President of The Democracy and Human Rights Foundation, Emadeddin Zahri Muntasser has sent an open letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, in which he addressed the developments in Libya, chiefly is the settlement plan led by the UN mission to resolve the conflict.

Speaking to The Libya Observer on Saturday, Muntasser, who is also a member of the Libyan American Council for Public Affairs (LAPAC), said that his letter was attached with a petition, signed by over ten thousand Libyans, in which they confirm their rejection of the UN-led process and their right to sovereignty and freedom to choose who should be nominated to represent the nation in this critical period.

According to Muntasser, the petition represents the largest public expression of Libyan opinion since 2014, indicating that the list of signatories included is three times greater than the verifiable number of participants in any survey, event, or conference organized by the UNSMIL or the Center for Humanitarian Dia-

Dialogue, a step which will have significant resonance in the UN halls and among US politicians.

"The petition reflects the widespread public opposition in Libya against the political and military dialogue in their current form," Muntasser says.

He noted that the letter was forwarded to senior American politicians in Washington, pointing to the importance of public pressure, which should be expressed first by protests, and secondly by addressing international bodies, in diplomatic language, based on facts, not on emotion, to deter any attempt to include "war criminals, murderers, or corrupt persons" in the new government.

Muntasser called on Libyan civil society organizations, civil and political gatherings to support his letter of the Democracy and Human Rights Foundation and to issue statements in this regard.



The Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov has told UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres he will be unable to take up the role as United Nations Libya envoy next year due to "personal and family reasons," the UN spokesman said on Tuesday.

The UN spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, told reporters that Mladenov informed Guterres on Monday that when his current role finishes on December 31 he will resign from the United Nations and "will not be able to take up the position as special envoy for Libya for personal and family reasons".

Mladenov has been the UN Middle East envoy since 2015, charged with mediating between Israel and the Palestinians.

The UN Security Council last week approved Guterres's proposal to appoint Mladenov as Libya mediator and Norwegian Tor Wennesland to succeed Mladenov as Middle East envoy.

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**Economy**

## Libya's Central Bank approves exchange rate of LYD4.48 to USD



The board of directors of the Central Bank of Libya approved Wednesday the recommendations of the technical committee and endorsed the new exchange rate of the Libyan dinar (LYD) to US dollar (USD) to become 4.48 per 1USD starting January 03, 2021.

The decision was made in a meeting for the board of the Libyan Central Bank in which discussions centered on the recommendations of the technical committee, deciding to have the new fixed rate for all governmental, commercial, and personal uses.

The Central Bank of Libya also said in a statement after the endorsement of the new exchange rate that there will be more meetings in the coming weeks to resolve banking sector problems to achieve fiscal and financial stability that alleviates the suffering of the Libyan people.

The Economist confirmed in a report on growth for next year that the high growth rate in Libya mirrors a modest recovery from the disaster of war and ranked Libya third after Macau, which was the fastest growing country in GDP by 35%, followed by Guyana in second place with an estimated growth rate of 23%.



**Economy**

## Libyan delegation meets with Prime Minister of Bosnia to discuss investment

The Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted a delegation of the Libyan Foreign Investment Company to discuss possible cooperation and investment opportunities between Libya and Bosnia.

According to a statement by the Libyan embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the meeting came as part of a visit by the Libyan delegation, with hopes to enhance joint cooperation and investment opportunities.

Both sides also discussed facilitating investment opportunities and the best system of communication between the Libyan Foreign Investment Company and the relevant institutions concerned with investment in Bosnia.

**Economy**

## Russian oil company Tatneft considering return to Libya



The Russian oil company Tatneft is examining the possibility of resuming its operations in Libya, having ceased its works following the revolution of the 17 February, 2011.

The Media East Monitor website reported that the company wished to return and resume production and exploration operations in several locations in Libya.

According to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Tatneft, Rustam Minikanov, they are presently examining the possibility of returning to four exploration sites in Libya.

**Economy**

## UK court ends receivership on Libyan frozen funds in Britain



The Libyan Investment Authority (LIA) has managed to lift the judicial guardianship over Libyan assets and funds, belonging to the Authority, whilst remaining frozen in Britain.

Sources from LIA said that the English Commercial Court in London agreed to bring the Libyan assets back under the control of the legitimate Libyan Investment Authority.

The court order took place in accordance with the legal conditions agreed upon between the Libyan Investment Authority and the judicial guard.

LIA described the court order a positive one, as it allows the management of Libyan assets in Britain by the Investment Authority, although remaining frozen.

**Economy**

## Misurata discusses developing free trade area



The Economic and Social Development Fund held a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Free Zone in Misurata city on Sunday.

The attendees reviewed several topics, including cooperation and partnership between the two bodies to develop the free trade zone in Misurata, with the support of holding companies affiliated with the fund.

According to the Economic and Social Development Fund, the meeting concluded to accord priority to the completion of the Misurata Port pier, which is deemed of utmost importance for the movement of goods.

**Economy**

## The Economist: Libya is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world



The Economist newspaper estimated that Libya would achieve a GDP growth rate of 20.9% by next year, making it amongst the ten fastest growing countries in the world, particularly since the recovery of oil and gas production in the country.

Opinions

## The advantages and disadvantages of the new exchange rate of the dollar at 4.48 LYD

By Al-Sanousi Al-Bsikri, a Libyan writer



At the beginning, I express my dissatisfaction with the reluctance of those responsible to appear in the media in times of crisis and in critical circumstances that require communication with the public opinion to clarify what happened. The decision to fix the exchange rate of the Libyan dinar is a major event that has caused widespread controversy that could have been contained or mitigated if the governor of the Central Bank or a member of the bank's board of directors appeared to explain the reasons for the decision to adopt the rate of 4.48 LYD to the dollar.

### What does the new exchange rate mean?

Countries resort to adjusting the exchange rate of their local currency, by raising and lowering, to meet conditions and developments that require such a policy, and the policy of lowering the exchange rate, which countries resort to in times of recession and in an effort to revitalize the economy by increasing the demand for local product in foreign markets, and reducing dependence on exports and what is available from the local market. However, this requires the economy to be productive, industrial and service, which is not available in the Libyan case due to the small size of the non-oil production base and dependence entirely on oil, which is a restricted commodity in terms of production quantities and price level.

However, the reasons for reducing the exchange rate of the dinar today are due to the deterioration of its value against the dollar and the negative effects that resulted from that, such as relying on the parallel market to sell currencies, the high prices of all commodities and the severe shortage of liquidity that created a difficult economic situation for the Libyans.

### Adjusting the exchange rate, not charging fees:

The Government of National Accord adopted the mechanism of imposing fees on selling the dollar as a solution to the dinar crisis, high prices and lack of liquidity in banks, as the exchange rate of the dinar was not affected and the imposition of fees on selling it amounted to 183%, bringing the value of the dollar from about 1.40 to about 4 dinars per dollar. The policy achieved relatively satisfactory results, especially stopping the noticeable rise of the dollar in the parallel market, which exceeded 9 dinars and eliminating the phenomenon of long queues as for banks seeking cash.

However, the imposition of fees opened the debate about the proceeds from the sale of the dollar, which exceeded the oil revenues estimated in the Libyan dinar, among the reasons for the outbreak of the dispute between the financial and monetary policy makers was, 'what if the proceeds of selling the dollar were controlled, this mechanism would be the most appropriate under the political and economic conditions in the country as a temporary solution until political and economic stability is achieved.

### Advantages and disadvantages of adjusting the rate:

The new exchange rate will deal with obvious imbalances, including eliminating the double exchange rate of the dollar between an official rate in banks and a parallel rate on the black market, which opened the way for corruption to grow by obtaining dollars at a reduced rate from banks and selling it on the parallel market by a large difference. The double price also caused problems related to smuggling and confused the economy's movement due to its dependence on the fluctuations of the dollar's price in light of the recurrent crises.

The most important issue is to provide a large cash flow to the public treasury that covers expenditures and increases, so at the current level of production and price of oil, and after deducting its production expenditures and other basic expenditures in dollars, it is likely to achieve an annual income of 16.5 billion dollars, while what the general budget needs, which based on the new exchange rate is in the range of 10.5 billion dollars, which means covering public expenditures and achieving a surplus in hard currency that can be directed to projects developments.

On the other hand, the price officially stabilizes inflation at a level close to its current level, which means that the incomes of most Libyans will become very low, given the new exchange rate of the dinar, and because of the total dependence on consumption on the outside.

### Conclusions and caveats:

The desired goals could have been achieved at an exchange rate lower than the approved price, especially maximizing revenues in the Libyan dinar while reducing the burden on the large number of Libyans, who have low-income, as the price of 3.75 would have covered public expenditures and constituted an acceptable decline in the general price level, and therefore the government is required to address the problem of inflation and lower incomes in a way that improves the standard of living of the Libyans and does not have negative economic impacts.

On the other hand, the exceptional and difficult economic situation may give the new rate advantages and may achieve positive results, as mentioned above, but this will depend on the availability of the dollar to its applicants and preventing any fraud that may occur in banks leads to the continuation of the duality in the price of the dollar even after adjusting and unifying it against the dinar.

Finally ... it should be noted that the current crisis has its own specificity by referring to its causes, the most prominent of which is the manipulation of the source of income, which is oil, and deficient financial and monetary policies, but it belongs to the origin of the economic crisis that goes back to the eighties of the last century, which is the period of the adoption of socialism and the resulting of imbalances that still accompany and destroying the national economy.

Therefore, after political stability, addressing the Libyan economy should go towards fixing the structural defect by expanding the production base and ending the state of total dependence on oil.

**Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of The Libya Observer**

Health

## UNDP, Ministry of Health launch telemedicine initiative



The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has launched the telemedicine initiative in Libya in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the "Speetar" private project.

In a press conference, the Health Ministry highlighted the advantages of telemedicine, especially in light of the current circumstances caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

One of the biggest is connecting patients with doctors without the need for a face-to-face physical assessment.

During a telemedicine consultation, the person receiving treatment could obtain medical support and information head-on from a specialist through electronic communications.

It would also reduce the burden of travel and mobility for people suffering from chronic diseases besides the elderly who need regular health monitoring.

During the conference, the telemedicine was put under test via the Speetar application to evaluate the platform reliably and measure its effectiveness, according to the ministry's statement.



Health

## Ministry of Health organizes a workshop on 'Digital Health Prospects'

The International Cooperation Office of the Ministry of Health organized on Tuesday a workshop entitled 'Digital Health Prospects', in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP).

The workshop, which was held at the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli, was attended by a number of health sector officials, and representatives from the General Information Authority, the General Communications Authority, Al-Madar Company and Speetar Digital Health Platform in addition to a member of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum.

It included lectures on the National E-Health Program, discussing the importance of digital health and exploring prospects for cooperation in this field, according to the Ministry of Health.

The workshop came within the framework of strengthening the Libyan state work, which include achieving universal health coverage and providing the best health services.

Health

## UNDP: Renovation of two hospitals and provision of medical equipment to 65 health centers in Tripoli



The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Libya has announced the renovation of two hospitals in Greater Tripoli, and the provision of medical equipment for 65 health centers and an ICU ambulance to the Kidney Clinic.

The UNDP explained that this support comes under the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which includes ensuring healthy life and well-being for people of all ages.

According to a statement made on Friday, the UNDP provided assistance to the Ministry of Health of the Government of National Accord to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic, by providing equipment for early virus detection.

Health

## OCHA: Libya with highest COVID-19 reproduction rate in North Africa



The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has confirmed that Libya has the highest COVID-19 reproduction rate among the North African countries.

The UN organization warned in an official report that the spread of the disease in Libya is high compared with its neighbouring countries, due to the ongoing conflict and the internal security, political and economic crisis.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) and leading medical and health institutions have urged the world to "Stay Home, Save Lives" in an effort to combat the pandemic. Unfortunately, this is a luxury for 392,000 Libyans who are still displaced," the OCHA said. The report indicated that out of every 1,000 people in Libya, 13 have had Covid-19, which is the most critical rate in the region.

The UN organization owed the worsening of the situation to the lack of basic services, including the continuous power cuts that affect water supply for over a third of the Libyan population in the northwest parts of the country, which makes it harder for people to stick to the necessary measures.

Health

## U.S. pledges half a million dollars to confront Coronavirus in Libya



The United States Agency for International Development has allocated half a million dollars in support of UNICEF's programs

programs to respond to the needs of people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in Libya.

The focal point of these programs is to support the Ministry of Health in launching communication efforts on major risks, community participation and capacity building in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

It is also aimed at assisting the National Center for Disease Control in creating a web-based application to link isolation centers throughout the country with its laboratories.

**Education**

### Libya, Malta to sign education MoU



Libyan and Maltese education officials have agreed to sign an MoU in education cooperation and to facilitate granting Libyan students visas to study in Malta after the country's embassy resumes work in Libya in the coming period, which will also see resumption of flights between the two countries.

This announcement came after a meeting for the Education Minister-designate Mohammed Ammari and Maltese Foreign Minister as well as a number of Maltese officials, as Ammari discussed with the Maltese Libya's desire to boost cooperation in education, saying Libya-Malta cooperation agreement of 2010 and Tripoli and Maltese universities' agreement is a legal foundation for this new MoU.

Meanwhile at the meeting, the deputy education minister Adel Jumua spoke about the legal and administrative challenges of Tajourni Institute - Libyan investment in Malta - and ways to resolve them. He urged for giving the institute the needed work license, scrap taxes on the institute and its workers.

The Maltese Education Minister Justyne Caruana said her country has sufficient experience to teach English to Libyans at Tajourni Institute, while the Foreign Minister said his country was eager to cooperate with Libya in education fields.



**Education**

### Ministry of Education certifies the results of secondary examinations

The Minister of Education, Mohamed Amari Zayed, on Wednesday, certified the results of the secondary school exams for the academic year 2019-2020 with a pass rate of 43.28%.

The pass rate in the scientific section was recorded at 44.97%, with 37.41% for the literary section. There were 29,879 students registered for the second sitting exams in the scientific subjects, compared to 9,818 in the literary field.

70,150 male and female high school examinations were sat this year, with distribution numbers at 54,449 in scientific subjects and 15,701 in the literary realm.



**Tech**

### IT and Telcom Strategies Forum in Libya

IT and Telcom Strategies Forum 2021 in Libya was launched Sunday in the presence of representatives from Huawei, Ericsson, Retelit, ZTE, and Nokia.

The Libyan Post Telecommunications & Information Technology Company said the forum aims to enhance and develop the Libyan telecommunications sector to reach international standards and to create a technological environment that can attract foreign investments.

The participating firms at the two-day forum displayed their cutting-edge IT features, especially 5G for higher internet speed, while a number of initiatives were announced with the aim of developing the infrastructure, telecommunications services, better internet speed, government online services, vocational training in telecommunications and IT in the three coming years.

Officials from the participating companies reiterated commitment to working with the Libyan Post Telecommunications & Information Technology Company to implement projects that enhance IT and Telcom sector in Libya.

The CEO of the Libyan Post Telecommunications & Information Technology Company Faisal Gergab said the forum was a step forward in the return of international companies to working in Libya, which will lead to boosted economy and partnerships with the private sector.



### University lecturer killed in Bani Walid

Dr. Abdullah Ali Suleiman, a lecturer at the College of Electronic Sciences of Bani Walid University, has been shot dead.

Sources from the town said a gunman stormed the campus and showered the victim with bullets, causing panic among students and the teaching staff. The reason of the heinous crime is still unknown.


The killer is still at large, according to the sources.

The teaching staff at the University of Sabratha condemned the murder of Dr. Suleiman, calling on security authorities to conduct an investigation to uncover the circumstances of the incident and bring the perpetrator to justice.

weather

The Weather Channel

### Tripoli Weather Forecast

Fri 25	20°/12°	 Sunny	5%	WSW 21 km/h
Sat 26	18°/10°	 PM Showers	35%	W 20 km/h
Sun 27	17°/10°	 Partly Cloudy	25%	W 16 km/h
Mon 28	18°/10°	 Sunny	10%	SW 18 km/h
Tue 29	19°/11°	 Mostly Sunny	0%	SW 16 km/h
Wed 30	21°/12°	 Mostly Sunny	0%	SW 16 km/h
Thu 31	19°/11°	 Mostly Sunny	0%	WSW 21 km/h

### Photo of the Week



Features

## Nalut Palace (Ksar Nalut)



**Ksar Nalut** is a fortified granary, located in the center of the old town of Nalut district, Western Libya.

It has been abandoned but it is still a tourist destination. It was a communal building where the local families could store their grain in times of conflict.

It is rectangular in shape and differs from the building of a fort by its small openings, which are distributed on the outer wall, to provide the rooms with light and ventilation; however the writers who mentioned the palace before did not give many details about it. Mondadori, for example, said that "the palace looks like a castle and consists of 300 rooms, no ladder inside it, but rather small pieces of wood embedded in the walls, each room is one meter wide and high, contains barley, wheat and oil and suffices one family for a whole year. There is a man guarding the palace, but no one thinks about stealing his neighbor".

He also expected that the palace was built in the Byzantine era.

Despite the lack of space, markets were held in the courtyard of this palace.

The storage palace in Nalut is still in good condition, and its only entrance is on the northeastern side. Its width is about 1.10 m, and its height is approximately 2.10 m, it is of a semi-rectangular shape, measuring about 3.43 m in length, and surrounded by a stone barrage attached to the wall.

In the center of this palace there is another building, the walls of which rise to a higher level than the walls of the palace. This building is surrounded by a corridor about 1.70 m wide. This building, like the rest of the palace, is made up of storage rooms, which represent five floors on one side of the palace, and on the other side it consists of six floors.

### Inside the palace:

What is striking is the absence of the stairs that lead to the upper floors of the palace. It was replaced by small pieces of tree trunks in the walls, and these pieces were, and still are, the means of climbing into the rooms. The only way to get the needs or to place them in the rooms depends on one climbing these wood pieces to the desired room, where the climber places a piece of rectangular wood over the two trunk pieces fixed at the bottom of the entrance to the room, then uses the rope to raise or lower what he wants.

The storage rooms are characterized by their rectangular shape. Most of them are approximately 1.75 m in width and 1.65 m in height. Inside most of the rooms there are large jars used to store olive oil. And as some of these large jars are located in rooms with an entrance width of 85 cm and a height of 1.10 m, it is likely that they were placed in these rooms before the entrance is leveled. This is if the openings in the rooms have not been narrowed. All the rooms were covered with barrel vaults, and their doors were all made of tree trunks while the polished wooden doors are very recent.

Almost all the rooms have a small opening in the wall opposite the entrance opening. It used to provide ventilation and light to the room. It is what makes the viewer from outside the palace, thinks that it was used for surveillance as if the palace was a fortress.

Local materials consisting of mud, gypsum and tree trunks were used in the construction of the palace. This palace does not differ in its basic architectural elements from the rest of the storage palaces on Nafusa Mountain. It is appropriate for us to clarify that the historical sources in our hands do not assist us in determining a specific date for the construction of this palace. In the absence of historical and archaeological evidence, the proposed dates remain valid in all eventualities. It seems that the Nalut region gained some importance in the Roman era due to its geographical location. But this does not necessarily lead us to accept the Mondadori theory, saying that the history of this palace is dated back to the Roman or Byzantine era, because his opinion is not based on historical or archaeological evidence. But it is certain that this storage palace existed before the Ottoman period. Going further depends on evidence that is not available at the present time.

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