



## Libyan PM vows support for Tunisia amid tough economic conditions

The Libyan Prime Minister, Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, said Libya won't leave Tunisia alone amid the ongoing tough economic conditions, adding in a joint press conference with his Tunisian counterpart, Hichem Mechichi, in Tripoli that his government will spare no efforts to boost economic, social and political relations with Tunisia.

The Libyan Prime Minister said restrictions on goods coming from Tunisia to Libya via land border crossings will be lifted and the issues of the Tunisian workers in Libya will be soon sorted out, adding that Libya asked Tunisia to retrieve seized Libyan money.

Dbeibah also said that Libya will send to south Tunisia medical aids to help them against the spread of the Coronavirus, including Coronavirus vaccines once there are sufficient doses in Libya.

He also said that the Libyan authorities are going to work on activating the bilateral agreements between the two countries, adding that both countries are working on solving issues such as security problems and debts, reiterating that Libya has signed agreements in land, sea and air transports with Tunisia.

Meanwhile, the Tunisian Prime Minister said his country was working on facilitating the entry of Libyans to Tunisia, adding that they had lifted restrictions on ownership for Libyans inside Tunisia, in addition to lifting restrictions on money transfers and exchange of goods between the two countries.

Mechichi said they had also agreed on lifting restrictions on trade exchanges, travel, and transfer of business and funds between the two countries, saying Tunisia has an encouraging investment environment, especially for Libyans, who will be given all expertise in all fields, including the Tunisian experience in infrastructure and administrative projects.

He added that Libya and Tunisia see eye to eye on regional issues, saying that his country is always ready to help Libya achieve peace, stability and national reconciliation.

Mechichi arrived in Tripoli Saturday with a high profile delegation and a number of Tunisian businesspersons who are scheduled to attend the first Libyan-Tunisian exhibition in Tripoli from 23 to 26 May.



## Qatari Foreign Minister reiterates support for Libya December elections

The Qatari Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, met with the Libyan High Council of State's Head, Khalid

Khalid Al-Mishri, in Tripoli and reiterated support for holding elections on December 24.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations and latest political developments in Libya as the Qatari Foreign Minister reiterated support for peaceful solutions in the country and welcomed the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum's agreement.

Meanwhile, Al-Mishri hailed Qatar's role in resolving the Libyan crisis and its efforts in pushing forward the political process in Libya.



## Visit to Libya fruitful, says Tunisian PM

Tunisian Prime Minister Hicham El Mechichi has ended his visit to Libya and summed up his meetings as "fruitful."

El Mechichi told reporters at a news conference upon his arrival to Tunisia on Sunday that he agreed with Libya's Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeiba to promote Libyan investments in Tunisia by tackling difficulties and simplifying procedures for investors.

He also indicated that they would boost trade movement at Ras Al-Jadir border and work to rehabilitate the crossing point at all levels.

Prime Minister El Mechichi confirmed that his government had adopted several decisions to facilitate investment between the two countries, including alleviating security measures to enable easy movement of Libyans to Tunisia.

Tunisian Prime Minister on Saturday arrived in Libya at the head of a high-level delegation consisting of government officials, representatives of Tunisian organizations, businessmen, and investors to attend the Libyan-Tunisian exhibition in Tripoli.



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Politics

### Libya's High Council of State passes constitution referendum law



The Libyan High Council of State (HCS) has passed the constitution referendum legislation that was devised by the House of Representatives (HoR) and asked the High National Elections Commission to commence work on the referendum.

The approval of the HCS of the constitution referendum legislation comes amid rejections by the Constitution Drafting Assembly and several Libyan personalities for the outcomes of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum's Legal Committee that include forming a joint commission to consider the Legal Committee's objections to the constitution draft.

Politics

### CDA member: HCS approval of constitution referendum legislation "unfortunate"



The member of the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) Salim Keshlaf said it was an unfortunate step by the High Council of State (HCS) to pass the constitution referendum legislation, saying the conditions they set were "unreasonable", and that the legislation itself was devised by "hardliners" at the House of Representatives (HoR) to impede the endorsement of the constitution.

Keshlaf said the HCS could be intending to get in the way of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), saying that approving the legislation as it is now would mean saying "No" to the constitution draft, which is already appealed at the Supreme Court's constitutional department.

The HCS passed Monday the constitution referendum legislation that was devised by the HoR and asked the High National Elections Commission to commence work on the referendum.

This came as many Libyan personalities as well as the CDA had rejected the LPDF Legal Committee's constitutional basis proposal to form a joint commission with the CDA to go over objections to the constitution draft.

Politics



### Head of Libya's Presidential Council uses Haftar's private jet to visit Nigeria

The Head of the Libyan Presidential Council, Mohammed Menfi, arrived in Nigeria on Monday to participate in the extraordinary

summit of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), landing in the Nigerian capital on a private jet notoriously used by Khalifa Haftar in the past years, which opens doors to interpretation as to what kind of relationship Menfi and Haftar - who so far has no state political or military capacity - have.

Menfi attended Tuesday the LCBC summit to discuss the political and security impact of the unrest in Chad upon an invitation from the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

The fact that Menfi chose to use Haftar's private jet stirred a heated controversy in Libya, especially that the plane left eastern region - where Haftar is located - and arrived in Tripoli Monday for the Nigeria trip.

The controversy doubles up when knowing that the (Falcon900 P4-RMA), which Menfi boarded, was implicated in UN and other international reports as being used by Haftar and his allies to "smuggle Libyan gold to Venezuela".

This all comes as Haftar is reported to have been preparing for a massive military procession to commemorate the seventh anniversary of his so-called Operation Dignity that was launched in Benghazi in May 2014, despite Menfi's previous orders - as the Libyan Army Chief Commander - that prohibit military movements or media statements for military officers without prior permission from him: orders that Haftar and his entourage haven't abided by so far.

### Audit Bureau, Oil Ministry discuss developing transparency system



The Libyan Audit Bureau Head, Khaled Shakshak, and Minister of Oil and Gas Mohamed Aoun have discussed developing disclosure and transparency systems as they met to talk over the year-end closing account of the National Oil Corporation (NOC).

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The meeting dealt with the assignment of an international institution to audit the NOC accounts, besides activating and establishing governance systems in the oil sector, thus giving the ministry the ability to play its role.

Both sides emphasized the importance for oil companies to hold annual meetings to achieve effective accountability, stressing that it is one of the main pillars for good governance.



### Tunisian firms renew readiness to resume work in

The Libyan Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Kamal Al-Doukh, as well as his accompanying delegation of firms' representatives briefed the Libyan Minister of Housing, Abu Bakr Al-Ghawi, about the projects that his ministry took part in and had been suspended since 2011 over security reasons, saying they were ready to resume work and sign contracts for new projects.

The discussing came in a meeting between the two sides in Tripoli on Monday. The Tunisian Minister and delegation are attending the Libyan-Tunisian Economic Exhibition along with other Tunisian officials.

In the meantime, Al-Ghawi presented to the Tunisian Minister and delegation a briefing about his ministry's work and projects, saying Tunisian firms "are part of these projects", adding that they had always played a momentous role in Libya.

"One of the main roads in Tripoli - Ain Zara main road: 16km - is being built by a Tunisian company." He added, inviting the Tunisian Minister to an expanded meeting on Tuesday for more cooperation discussions.

### Economy

## Libya and Algeria discuss final touches of the Joint Economic Forum



The President of the Misrata Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Mohamed Al-Raed, held discussions with the ambassador of Algeria to Libya, Kamal Hegazy, regarding the re-strengthening of trade and economic exchange between both countries.

The meeting, which took place at the Chamber's headquarters in Misrata, covered the ongoing preparations for the Libyan-Algerian Economic Forum, which is set to be held at the end of May in the Algerian capital.

Both parties also discussed the possibility of enhancing the exchange of economic, commercial and investment visits and experiences between the two countries, in addition to inviting traders and businessmen to participate in the upcoming Libyan-Algerian Economic Forum.

### Economy

## Libya's HoR approves public salary funds out of 2021 budget



The Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) approved Monday the first item of the public budget for 2021 - the salary funds for state institutions - that is worth 34.6 billion dinars, canceled the emergency fund and froze the development fund item.

The HoR, according to sources, will hold a session on Tuesday to discuss the rest of the budget.

This came contrary to the expectation of the HoR member Mohammed Al-Raeid who said the HoR would approve the whole budget as most lawmakers wanted to endorse it.

Controversial discussions at the HoR session included the lack of financial and spending plans by the Government of National Unity, and the fact that the expenditure projections are way more than the commitments the government has in its term that ends on December 24.

Meanwhile, some HoR members accused the Government of National of having shady aims and commitments that the budget will cover, while some others complained that there was no budget allocated for "The General Command" of Haftar's forces.

### Economy

## Reuters: Libyan Investment Authority to publish financial statements



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Libyan Investment Authority (LIA) has told Reuters that it will begin this month preparations to start reporting consolidated financial statements, after announcing it has \$68 billion in largely frozen assets following its first internal evaluation process in years.

Africa's largest sovereign wealth fund, LIA, is working to regain the trust of the international community after the United Nations froze most of its assets during the 2011 rising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi.

It said this month its first asset valuation since 2012 had revealed assets of \$68.35 billion at end-2019 compared to \$67 billion in 2012.

LIA Chairman, Ali Mahmoud, told Reuters in an interview that they are now planning to begin releasing financial statements on an annual basis, adding that LIA was preparing statements with EY acting as auditor.

"It may take a year and a half to publish the final financial statements once they had been audited. Through this process we will have a solid foundation for proceeding to invest. These are successes in governance and compliance with the Santiago Principles," LIA explained.

LIA Chairman also said that LIA was now compliant with 17 of the 24 principles, which aim to promote good governance, accountability, transparency and prudent investment practice.

Opinions

# The State of Citizenship, Not Quotas

By Abdullah Al-Kabir, a Libyan writer



The elections hold some hope at the beginning for coming out from getting lost, and perhaps the first ray of light at the end of the tunnel. However, many do not see it this way, and they do not hope for the positive results that can be achieved once the elections are due.

And they have a strong case for not going too far in optimism. At the national level, elections have been held twice. In the first, the General National Congress formation, and the second in the Parliament.

Both times, the elites did not transcend the state of division and meet on a national project that establishes a state of stability. Rather, the division revealed its ugly face after the election of Parliament, the political crisis deepened and wars broke out under different slogans, and the military, ideological, regional and tribal blocs emerged.

There is no disagreement about these developments that the country witnessed after the overthrow of the dictatorial regime, and it is a reflection of a deep structural crisis that was hidden under the layers of oppression. The totalitarian regime did not allow any trend to express itself, to pave the way for a free and comprehensive national dialogue between various trends and opinions that could lead to crystallize a national project that bridges the distances between the people of the homeland and its regions. Rather, it ably employed regional and tribal differences among the mechanisms that enable it to continue in power. After the fall of the regime, all trends began to crystallize into clear blocs, interact, support, grow, and announce themselves, and then proceed, seizing the opportunity of the elections, to push their candidate to positions of power.

Perhaps there was a hurry in conducting elections with no institutions protecting the path from any deviation, and it was better for the National Transitional Council to continue its revolutionary legitimacy and international recognition until it put in place the necessary legal legislation for the stage, rebuilds the security institution, and dismantled armed formations, in order to find the power resulting from the elections and the tools needed to work and move forward on the transitional path.

This is a fair and undoubted opinion, but elections are a democratic mechanism to gain power and administration, and are not responsible for the results and subsequent repercussions, it is the responsibility of the people and the elites and their awareness of the requirements of the stage, whereas the exposure of the democratic path to stumbling and blockage is a natural thing, and ancient countries in the democratic practice deal with it with more democracy, as if the elected authority fails, new elections are held immediately to form another government, there is no continuation of the losers.

The de facto authorities in Parliament have entrenched themselves in their positions and disrupted the elections, and did not adhere to the referendum to renew their legitimacy after the end of their mandate, as the February Commission's amendments stipulate the constitutional declaration.

The Speaker of Parliament loaded with a primitive tribal awareness, considering the state as a spoil that the largest share of it must be acquired. He was alone with some MPs in the decision that has become an expression of a single political trend, and lost its character as an inclusive parliament representing all spectrums of the people and the rest of the MPs lost the will to unify the situation to correct the course and end the domination of the presidency, which created a system based on regional quotas. Unfortunately, the influential political forces have participated in the consolidation of this quota system, and it was supported by the United Nations mission. And this quota system did not produce a fair distribution of government positions and responsibilities between the regions. Rather, the distribution was limited between the influential blocs, and this is how the power and influence were shared between the competing groups, and in the heat of the struggle over the spoils, the collective national identity plunged into a deep well, and regional and tribe sub-identities rose. The disastrous consequences of this system are numerous, the loss of the concept of citizenship, the incursion of corruption into the state, and the emergence of the class classification blatantly among the few who seized power and accumulated vast wealth with their followers, in addition to the deterioration of the standard of living for the majority of people.

There is no longer a solution other than elections to remove the political class, whether it invented this quota system, or that submitted to it and did not resist it in order to preserve its interests, with great hope that the people's awareness would rise so that they could participate effectively and present an alternative that does not promise them any special privileges but rather will support the unifying national identity, keen on the principle of efficiency first before any other characteristics and criteria. From here begins the civil state project, the state of justice, citizenship, and equal rights and duties, to break out of the cycle of conflict and save the homeland.

**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

## Libya surpasses 1-million mark for administrating Covid-19 tests

Libya has conducted more than one million Covid-19 tests since the pandemic emerged in the country about a year ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

The WHO indicated in its weekly report on the epidemiological situation in Libya that the number of infections has decreased 8% in overall national testing regions compared to last week.

"The rate of decline reached 16% in the western region, 37% in the eastern region, and 2% in the southern region," the WHO confirmed. As for the fatalities, the organization indicated that in Epi-week 20, the number of new deaths further decreased by 20% compared to last week.

It also noted that there were no reports regarding a shortage of tests or lab reagents from any COVID-19 labs across the country.



Health

## WHO confirms it continued support for Libya's health system



The World Health Organization (WHO) in Libya confirmed that it continues to support the health service system in the entire country, noting that the Ministry of Health of the Government of National Unity (GNU) had recently delivered a new batch of aid which included trauma surgery equipment, first aid supplies and various medications.

It also included Coronavirus prevention supplies for medical auxiliary and emergency medical teams located on the front lines of defense and intensive care departments.

The WHO said that it also contributed to providing a significant quantity of medical laboratory equipment and supplies to the Benghazi Medical Center, applauding all sectors in the Libyan state which are striving to overcome the difficulties facing them.

Health

## Coronavirus vaccination campaign launched in prisons

The Ministry of Justice of the Government of National Unity (GNU) on Sunday announced the launch of a vaccination campaign against the Coronavirus in all reform and rehabilitation institutions and prisons.

The Ministry said in a statement that the vaccination campaign



comes as part of the overall national campaign for vaccination against the virus, targeting in its first stage inmates who suffer from chronic diseases.

It added that the Health Care Department at the Ministry of Justice began the vaccination of a number of inmates in the first phase on Sunday morning in coordination with the medical unit of Mitiga Prison with the input of the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC), confirming its intention to continue targeting the remaining reform and rehabilitation institutions.

## Health Ministry provides medical equipment, medicines to health facilities in Sirte



The Health Ministry has handed over medical equipment, devices, and medicines to health facilities in Sirte, including the city's main hospital of Ibn Sina.

In a statement, the ministry explained that the step comes in response to the deficit of medical supplies in the city.

According to the statement, the supplies included ultrasound and x-ray machines, monitoring devices, ventilators, electrocardiograms, and an MRI machine, in addition to spare parts of cardiac catheterization instruments.

Besides medicines and equipment, the Sirte Oncology Center also received a mobile vehicle for early detection of breast cancer.

This step is part of the Health Ministry plan to provide the needs of health facilities to ensure the provision of medical services to all citizens across Libya without exception, the ministry said.



## Libya and Tunisia review cooperation in the field of health

The Minister for Health, Ali Al-Zanati, discussed with his Tunisian Counterpart, Fawzi Mahdi, ways of activating the agreements concluded between both countries.

The two ministers discussed, in a joint working session in Tunis, methods of cooperation and partnership in the field of health and the support for joint cooperation in medicines and the opportunity of benefiting from Tunisian experience in the field of health institution management.

Both ministers also discussed cooperation in the field of combating new and emerging diseases, and the exchange of experience and skills in confronting the Coronavirus pandemic, stressing the need for the exchange of medical delegations and finding practical solutions in paying off debts arising from the treatment of Libyan patients in Tunisia.

Education

## Minister of Higher Education discusses difficulties facing Al-Marqab University



The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Omran Al-Qeeb met on Monday, with a delegation from Al-Khums municipality.

The meeting, which was held at the Ministry's HQ, discussed many issues related to Al-Marqab University, and overcoming the difficulties and obstacles facing its workflow.

Al-Qeeb stressed that the reform process in the higher education and scientific research sector requires the selection of competencies according to the standards of ability and competence, and they should not be subject to emotion, regionalism and tribalism, which is what the ministry aspires to implement.

Technology

## Digital Technology Forum in oil sector kicked off Monday



The Digital Technology Forum kicked off on Monday at the Arabi-nal Gulf Oil Company's HQ in Benghazi (Agoco), with the participation of oil companies' management committees, directors of IT departments, and relevant experts and specialists.

The four-day event will hold a series of discussion panels and workshops in cooperation with the General Administration of Communications and the NOC IT Department, besides international companies.

According to a statement by the company, the experts will exchange information and share their views on the most recent findings and practices in this field.

Member of the Board of Directors of the National Oil Corporation, Jadallah Al-Awkallithe, said that Agoco made remarkable achievements in its first decade of adopting digital technology.

For his part, Acting Chairman of the company's Management Committee Ashraf Al-Abbar explained that the forum aims to promote the use of digital technology by connecting with global companies in this field.

"This forum is an opportunity for information technology officials to meet closely with oil companies and enhance cooperation among stakeholders.

The company also renewed its deal signed with Microsoft for the fourth time in a row and discussed the terms and services provided through this agreement.



Migration

## Libyan coastguards rescue 261 immigrants

Libyan Navy personnel rescued Saturday 261 illegal immigrants from different African countries off the coast as they were making the perilous journey to European shores on a dinghy.

The Libyan Navy said on Facebook that its patrol rescued the immigrants after receiving a distress call, adding that they had been disembarked at Tripoli Naval Base before being sent to the Anti Illegal Immigration Center, where they would receive the needed care before repatriation each to their home country.

The Libyan Navy said this mission, just like others, is part of humanitarian and sovereign roles to protect the Libyan coast and provide necessary assistance at the Libyan search and rescue zone.



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|--------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------|
| Fri 28 | <b>31°/20°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 5%  | ENE 28 km/h |
| Sat 29 | <b>31°/20°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 5%  | ENE 23 km/h |
| Sun 30 | <b>27°/19°</b> |  Mostly Sunny  | 7%  | NE 22 km/h  |
| Mon 31 | <b>28°/20°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 10% | NE 18 km/h  |
| Tue 01 | <b>30°/21°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 10% | E 21 km/h   |
| Wed 02 | <b>29°/21°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 14% | E 23 km/h   |
| Thu 03 | <b>29°/21°</b> |  Partly Cloudy | 2%  | E 23 km/h   |

### Photo of the Week



Features

## The Mountain Town of Yefren



It is located at the top of the Nafusa Mountains in western Libya, in the Jabal Al-Gharbi District, 130 km south of Tripoli, and most of its inhabitants are Amazigh.

It is considered one of the most important cities in the Nafusa Mountains, as it is the largest city in the Mountains. It was the headquarters of the mujahideen against the Italians, as the mujahid, Suleiman Al-Baroni, took it as his headquarters and took it as the capital of the first independent government in 1912.

### Origin of the Name

It is an Amazigh word whose origin is "Ifrane", and its meaning is "the caves." This may be due to the large number of caves in the area.

### City Tourism

There is a Tourist Hotel in a good location. Also, there are several cafes, restaurants, and archaeological and natural places that are worth a visit, such as the Damoos Houses, Roman ruins (the Safit Kasbah), the ancient village of Tarbast, the Major Palace in Taghma, the ancient village of Qusayr and the ancient mosques. In addition to the ancient archaeological city of Umm Al-Jarsan, most of which is located underground and was built more than 200 years ago.



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