

Politics

Bashaga: We will liberate Libya thoroughly and prevent Russia from establishing a military base



The Interior Minister, Fathi Bashaga said that the Libyan Army Forces would liberate Libya in its entirety, including all cities and villages still under the control of Haftar's militias, adding that the Government of National Accord (GNA) would prevent Russia from attempting to establish a military base, anywhere in Libya.

Bashaga told Bloomberg that the city of Sirte was of great significance to the army, as it had been retaken and liberated from terrorist organizations in 2016, with the high price of 718 martyrs giving their lives for its liberation, as he put it.

"The Libyan Army Forces will also liberate Al-Jafra military base in central Libya and the entire southern region, by the will of God; only then would the time be right to enter into political talks with the people of the eastern region," he said.

Politics

Haftar will be out of the political equation in Libya, says Erdogan



Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that he expects Khalifa Haftar to be out of the power equation in Libya after the recent events on the ground, stressing that military operations will continue until liberating the city of Sirte and the Jufra Base.

"The victories achieved by the Libyan legitimate forces had

made Haftar go mad," said Erdogan in an interview with the Turkish TRT channel on Monday evening.

Erdogan indicated that the Libyan file was at the top of the issues discussed with President Trump, during a phone call. "Trump is following closely the unfolding situation in Libya and had praised Turkey's efforts in Libya," Erdogan noted.

The Turkish president acknowledged that there are some challenges, as the city of Sirte is located near oil and gas wells, which makes the military operations in this region very sensitive, as he put it.

Erdogan indicated that Turkey's role in Libya comes in the framework of an agreement signed with a legitimate government, "but there is a renegade named Haftar", said Erdogan, insisting "We will continue to move forward regardless of the parties supporting him."

Politics

Gununu on "Cairo Initiative": We have no time for Haftar's nonsense on TV



The spokesman for the Libyan Army Mohammed Gununu has commented on the Cairo Initiative proposed by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, saying the Government of National Accord (GNA) has no time for watching Khalifa Haftar's nonsense on TV, adding that GNA forces were advancing on Haftar's forces and chasing them away from all post-April 04 positions.

"We haven't started this war, but we will see the date and place for its end." Gununu said after Sisi's joint press conference with Haftar and HoR Speaker Aqila Saleh.

He also announced the launch of "Doroob Al-Nasser" (Victory Paths) Operation to liberate Sirte and Jufra from Haftar's forces.

Meanwhile, the Head of the High Council of State Khalid Al-Mishri also commented on the initiative, saying Libya is a sovereign state and Egypt's intervention isn't acceptable.

Al-Mishri added that Haftar now wants to return to political dialogue after suffering humiliating defeats, saying High Council of State and GNA reject this and that Haftar's popular base no longer exists.

He also said it was very strange that Haftar was placing his own terms for solution while he is the defeated party militarily, saying HCS rejects Haftar's presence in political negotiations in the future, and that he should surrender and be court-martialed.

The Egyptian President proposed "Cairo Declaration and Cairo Initiative" to resolve the Libyan crisis in the presence of Khalifa Haftar and Tobruk-based House of Representatives Speaker Aqila Saleh on Saturday. El Sisi announced the "Libyan-Libyan" initiative in a joint press conference in Cairo without any representation for Government of National Accord at all and said it called for a ceasefire on June 8, 2020, then elections for a presidential council by the Libyan people under the auspices of the UN, in addition to the departure of all mercenaries from Libya, dismantling "militias and giving their weapons to the Libyan Army" and resuming the 5+5 military talks.

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Politics

Presidential Council member under fire for his call to halt GNA's Sirte attack



Social media pages have seen bitter criticism and anger over news about the interference of the member of the Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord (GNA) Ahmed Mitig who called for halting Sirte attack, saying it is a red line for Russia.

The member of media office of Volcano of Rage Operation Abdelmalik Al-Madani said Mitig called the commander of Sirte-Jufra Liberation Room Ibrahim Baytalmal and urged him to halt Sirte attack and to pull out to Buwairat Hassoun area, saying there were large numbers of Russian mercenaries in Sirte, which he described as red line for the Russians.

"His message was recommended by the Egyptian Intelligence that fabricated the presence of Russians in Sirte and said it hindered the GNA forces' entry and control on the city. Mitig passed the lies to Sirte-Jufra Liberation Room and held them off at Buwairat Hassoun town." Al-Madani said.

He added that they had called the Head of the Presidential Council Fayez Al-Sarraj, who ordered continuation of liberation operations to free Sirte from Haftar's forces, saying the advance orders come from the command and field commanders only.

The commander of Sirte-Jufra Liberation Room Ibrahim Baytalmal told reporters that he had received Al-Sarraj's orders to continue the attack on Sirte and to pursue with the liberation efforts so that all Libyan soil can be under legitimate authorities, adding the orders only come from the Chief Commander of the Libyan Army, so all attempts by individuals to influence military operations are in vain.

Many activists called for Mitig to be sacked from the Presidential Council and for him to stand trial as he caused confusion on the frontline and made the Sirte advance fail, leading to a number of deaths.

The Libyan Army launched Doroob Al-Nasser (Victory Paths) Operation on Saturday to liberate Sirte and Jufra from Haftar's forces and GNA forces managed to enter many positions in Sirte before retreating under heavy airstrikes by UAE drones in support of Haftar.

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Politics

Abu Sahmain applauds liberation of Tarhuna, calls for emergency budget to assist war-affected



Chairman of Libya's former General National Congress, Nuri Abu Sahmain, has congratulated the Libyan army forces and the Libyan people for the new victories achieved in the city of Tarhuna and paid tribute to the families of martyrs and those wounded, hoping them a speedy recovery.

Speaking to Tanasuh channel, Abu Sahmain stressed the necessity to allocate an emergency budget in order to treat the wounded and help the families of the martyrs.

He also focused on the suffering of the displaced persons who lost their homes and property due to Haftar's aggression on Tripoli and elsewhere.

"It is time for the officials to take a serious stance towards the suffering of the displaced, and not repeat the same mistakes with the IDPs of Benghazi, Derna, Ajdabiya, and other cities," said Abu Sahmain, acknowledging that no official at the current or previous stages can excuse himself from neglecting the people of the south.

Abu Sahmain thanked the countries that stood with the Libyan people, especially Turkey and Qatar, and praised the courage and role of the forces assisting the Libyan army.

"The revolutionaries never failed to respond to the call of duty in confronting the enemies and defending the homeland," he said, underlining that the revolutionaries must be a priority to any future cabinet.

The Libyan army declared Friday the liberation of Tarhuna city from the grip of Haftar's militias, just one day after expelling them from Tripoli.

Politics

Qatar's Foreign Minister: The solution to the crisis in Libya is political not a military coup

The Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Thani, stressed that the terrible conflict in Libya must and should be resolved politically and not through a coup or any form of military aggression.

Al-Thani explained in an interview with the French newspaper, Le Monde, that Haftar has always favoured violence and appears to only be concerned with a political process when he is losing, however, he returns to the use of force and violence shortly thereafter.

He went on to say that the international community should comply with the political process, within the framework of international law and the United Nations resolutions, adding that possibly, this would have saved the souls of many Libyans and the waste of the country's extensive resources.



Politics

EU: Solution in Libya should be in line with Berlin Conference conclusions

The European Union has reaffirmed that the political solution in Libya should be in light of the Berlin Conference conclusions, which are supported by the UNSMIL.

The spokesman for the EU Commission Peter Stano said Monday that the situation in Libya started to change but the stance of the EU that calls for a ceasefire hadn't changed at all.

Stano called on all Libyan parties to return to negotiations as the military solution isn't possible in Libya, adding that the EU encourages all steps for peace and stability in the country under the auspices of the UN and in light of the Berlin Conference.

Meanwhile, the European Union has stressed the need for serious engagement by both sides in the UN-SMIL-facilitated 5+5 talks aimed at achieving a ceasefire, hoping that the latest developments on the ground would also lead to a return to the political track.

The EU also emphasized in a statement on Monday the humanitarian obligations of the conflicting parties to ensure the protection of civilians.

The EU also reviewed Operation IRINI and its mandate to contribute to the enforcement of the UN arms embargo as well as its role in curbing illicit oil transactions as exemplified by the disruption of a recent

Economy

Libya's NOC declares force majeure on Sharara oilfield, reopens it hours later



The Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) has declared force majeure on exports in Sharara oilfield Tuesday and then hours later lifted it and resumed operations, according to reports by Reuters.

The NOC said in a statement that an armed group threatened Sharara oilfield workers and coerced them to stop production, saying it strongly condemns the crime committed by an armed group, which came from Sabha and stormed the Sharara oilfield and pulled their guns on civilian unarmed workers, coercing them to stop production at the field at dawn on Tuesday, only three days after production was resumed.

NOC confirmed the shutdown of production and declared force majeure on the Sharara field crude oil exports since the morning.

NOC considered the acts of this armed group under the so-called Brigadier General Mohamed Khalifa, commander of the so-called Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) in the South, and Ahmed Ibrahim bin Nayel, to be a serious crime that amounts to treachery against the Libyan people and the national economy.

"The shutdown of production will cost the treasury further losses and will lead to new technical damages. NOC also expresses its concern about the breach by this armed group of the strict coronavirus pandemic control program followed in all the facilities of the corporation and considers their entry into the field in this way to be a serious threat to the health of workers." NOC said in a statement.

NOC also confirmed that it had informed the Public Prosecutor's office of this crime and that it will take every possible measure to pursue these criminals at the local and international levels.

It also expressed its total rejection of the presence of any armed personnel inside its facilities in all its sites, any interference in its work, and any attempts to use the Libyan people's sustenance and only source of living as a political or military bargaining chip.

The first reopening of Sharara oilfield since July was announced on Sunday, knowing that Haftar's loyalists shut it to use it as a pressure card in political negotiations at the time at Berlin Conference.

Economy

Administrative Control Authority nullifies PC decision to dismiss Economy Minister



The Administrative Control Authority has nullified a decision by the Presidential Council (PC) to exempt the Minister of Economy and Industry, Ali Al-Issawi, temporarily from his duties, replacing him, for the time being, with the Minister of Finance.

According to the Authority, the decision is contrary to the provisions of Article six of the political agreement, making the decision null and void. It confirmed in a letter addressed to the Legal Affairs Department of the PC that it had, in fact, initiated an appeal to cancel this decision before the relevant judicial department.

It added that according to the correctness of the law and public interest, this decision must be reversed and the matter solved in the appropriate manner, according to what is written in the political agreement.

Economy

Libya extends suspension of civil aviation



The Airports Authority has announced that it will extend the ongoing suspension of passenger flights until June 16.

In a notification issued yesterday, the Airports Authority said its decision was based on the Presidential Council's head orders, regarding declaring the state of emergency and the closure of all land and air outlets.

However, the decision excludes the Air Ambulance Service, cargo flights, official delegation trips, return flights carrying stranded citizens, and domestic flights.

Opinions

The time is ripe for the U.S. to do good in Libya

By **Mohamed Abufalgha**

After more than 400 days of fighting, the time has come for the United States to step onto the Libyan stage.

In April of 2019, former U.S. National Security Advisor, John Bolton, indicated to renegade general Khalifa Haftar that the U.S. does not oppose Haftar's plan to launch an attack on the Libyan capital city of Tripoli, in an attempt to overthrow the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). The idea was that Haftar's self-styled Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) would sweep into the city, push local armed groups aside, and take over the entire country. Though superficial and simplistic, this idea resonated with some foreign actors, especially in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Haftar promised to eradicate militias and Islamists, as part of his campaign. These promises come despite the fact that Haftar's own alliance contains several militias and some Islamist elements, namely Madkhalis.

The U.S.' initial approval of the offensive did not require much action from the global superpower. Although some elements in Congress opposed Haftar's offensive, the U.S. remained on the sideline throughout the war. The extent of its involvement did not transcend some generic statements made every now and then, urging "all sides" to halt operations.

Then, the Wagner Group landed on Libyan soil. A few months after launching his offensive against the GNA, Haftar sought military support from Russia. Eager to gain yet another strong foothold in the Mediterranean, Russia deployed mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a private military company led by one of Putin's closest associates. In recent years, the Wagner Group has been the unofficial military arm of the Russian state. Wagner mercenaries have been deployed to Syria, Ukraine, and Georgia among other countries to support groups aligned with Putin.

The deployment of the Wagner mercenaries sounded warning alarms across the hallways of the U.S. administration. U.S. officials in both the legislative and executive branches have repeatedly called out and condemned the deployment. While fear of mounting Russian involvement caused the American tone to slightly change, the U.S. failed to take serious measures to stop Haftar's dangerous gamble or to counter Russian interference.

The campaign against Tripoli has harmed American interests in multiple ways. First, the attack pressured the GNA to shift its attention from combating the remnants of the Islamic State to defending Tripoli. The U.S. found a reliable partner in the GNA forces in the fight against IS in 2016. The partnership proved fruitful and effective as it pushed the terrorist group from its biggest stronghold outside Iraq and Syria. Second, the U.S. has been collaborating and coordinating efforts with the GNA on political and economic reforms. All these efforts were put on hold as a result of the attack. Third, the LAAF has been deliberately targeting civilians, committing war crimes, and carrying out gross violations of human rights. Principles of international law and human rights, often championed by the U.S. have been massively defied and broken by Haftar's forces. Last but not least, the LAAF, through its reliance on Russian mercenaries and equipment, is handing the country over to the U.S.' rivals in the region.

Despite the Russian and African mercenaries, the UAE-supplied drones and weaponry, and the Egyptian logistical support, Haftar's LAAF failed to enter Tripoli. Instead, it resorted to shelling and bombing of residential areas to create a state of terror among civilians.

The last few months witnessed a major shift in the ongoing conflict. The GNA - thanks in part to support from the U.S. ally and fellow NATO member, Turkey - managed to push the LAAF back away from some key positions. In April, the GNA took over several coastal cities in Western Libya in a matter of hours. LAAF's retreat continued. In May, al-Wattiya airbase, a major strategic position, was captured by the GNA forces after a deliberate air campaign that took multiple Russian air defense systems out in the process.

On May 19, the LAAF spokesperson announced that his forces are "repositioning" for tactical reasons. The LAAF later announced that it will retreat for 2-3 km to "allow civilians to observe Eid." In reality, the LAAF had to engage in such a retreat to minimize its losses, not for humanitarian motives. The decision to move forces back, however, allowed Tripoli to have its first free-of-shelling night in months.

The recent blows to Haftar's campaign have shaken the confidence of his backers in his capabilities. Should they continue to bet on the clearly losing horse, Egypt and even the UAE risk sabotaging their own interests in a future Libya. An Egyptian official recently told Mada Masr that "no one can bet on Haftar again." The Russians have already hinted at their desire to find a replacement for the renegade general. Their contacts with the House of Representatives' speaker, Agilah Salih, indicate their discontent with Haftar. In addition, the released footage of several Russian Pantsir-S1 systems being destroyed by the GNA must have been another wake-up call for the Kremlin.

The recent shift in events provides the U.S. with a chance to interfere diplomatically and bring an end to the hostilities in Libya. Although the Administration has been more outspoken, in statements, about its support for the GNA in the last few weeks, these statements are not enough. The U.S. should use its diplomatic power to pressure the UAE, Egypt, and Russia to end their support for Haftar.

The Trump Administration has refrained from taking an active role in Libya as such involvement would have been expensive. The current status, however, allows the U.S. to re-assume a leading role at no cost. All that the U.S. needs today is a work of diplomacy and political pressure. No American military involvement is necessary as the tide is already turning against Haftar. In addition, even for an operation to implement the arms embargo, the U.S. could delegate the military work to the European Union. Once the EU coordinates with the Libyan government, as per the guidelines of the Security Council, an operation like IRINI might suffice. Moreover, with the US's own Stephanie Williams leading the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the work of American diplomacy could be easier and more effective.



Opinions

Libya might be one of a few foreign policy issues that both parties in the U.S. agree on. The State Department, the foreign policy arm of the executive branch, warned repeatedly against the Russian interference in Libya. A top State Department official said in April that “Moscow is seeking an enhanced presence in Libya to expand its influence across the Med and also onto the African continent.”

Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell told the senate on May 7 that “Putin’s regime continues to threaten American interests along with international security— from bullying incursions in the free states it used to rule, to influence-peddling and mercenary adventurism in the power vacuums of Syria and Libya.”

A bipartisan group of congressmen from the House Committee on Foreign Relations wrote a letter to the Secretary of State in June of 2019 urging him to “exert U.S. diplomatic pressure to encourage a return to negotiations.”

This week, the Pentagon weighed in on the Russian support for Haftar. The Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, Gen. Townsend, said in a statement that “Russia is clearly trying to tip the scales in its favor in Libya.” Another commander warned that “Russia could seize bases on Libya’s coast,” which will prove costly to the U.S. and its allies in Europe.

The main U.S. foreign policy shapers, but the White House, seem to agree on the threat of conceding Libya today. The recent declared positions, especially those of the State and Defense Departments, might be aiming to “scare the White House into taking some kind of action,” as Libya Scholar Jalel Harchaoui stated to Foreign Policy. Given the apparent agreement on the urgency of the situation, the White House can and should adapt the same position.

Internationally, the U.S. could reassure its commitment to its European and NATO allies by preventing the emergence of a Russian threat some hundred kilometers away from European cities.

Domestically, a firm position against Russian interference in Libya could help clear the perception that the Trump Administration is soft on Russia. The situation in Libya today presents an opportunity for President Trump to stand up to Putin. In an election year, the president could use such a stance to discredit his opponents’ criticism of his position on Russia.

If the U.S. fails to take action soon, however, it risks being marginalized by other powers. The Russian intrusion would not have been possible in the first place without the vacuum caused by the U.S.’ indifference toward the North African country. Absent U.S. diplomatic interference today, the conflict would continue to rage on and the country risks further escalation. Russia and other backers would shift their support while maintaining their leverage. The U.S. risks allowing Russia to gain, yet again, access to the Mediterranean. In the long run, a continued conflict in Libya does not serve American interests, neither does a Russian presence in North Africa.

Through the inexpensive work of diplomacy, made feasible by the GNA’s recent advances, the U.S. could pressure Egypt and the UAE to abandon Haftar and return all other actors to a negotiating table.

Political talks in the future needs to exclude those who spoiled earlier attempts for peace, especially Haftar. There should be no doubt, at this point, that Haftar is not interested in a peaceful, political settlement. Failing to realize this reality would only take Libya further back a few years, risking the repetition of the same mistakes again, as the renegade general would continue his attempts to seize power. For the sake of its future, the country must move on and get past Haftar.

To achieve a political solution without the spoilers, the U.S. should rally Libya’s neighbors, especially Tunisia and Algeria, along with European states to support talks between the GNA and other Libyan actors who are interested in reaching a political settlement, under the leadership of the U.S. and the UNSMIL. With the recent blows to Haftar’s offensive, there is a chance for peace. Today, the time is ripe for the U.S. to do good in Libya; but the window of opportunity might be closing soon.

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

**Al-Najjar:
Blood plasma from
recovered Coronavirus
patients to be used to
treat infected cases**



The director of the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC), Badr Al-Din Al-Najjar, announced the initiation of harvesting blood plasma of patients who have achieved full recovery from the Coronavirus infection.

The plasma is intended for use in the treatment of people presently infected with COVID-19, and possibly other viral diseases. He said that all recommendations of the Ethical and Biological Committee of the NCDC are strictly adhered to and all patients are fully informed about the procedure before making any decision on the treatment.



A member of the Coronavirus Scientific Committee, Dr. Suliman Abu Siryuyil, said that the epidemiological situation in Libya remains under control and is not a cause for major concern, reconfirming the intensive work carried out by the concerned authorities to contain the situation.

Siryuyil added that the jump in registered cases of the COVID-19 infection over the past few days is due to a cluster of cases, which was noted in the Sabha area.

He stressed that the responsibility to prevent the spread of the epidemic rests upon the shoulders of all citizens, stressing the crucial need for everyone to follow the regulations of public health and safety and to adhere strictly to social distancing and personal protective wear.



Health

Health workers in Sabha receive Covid-19 care training

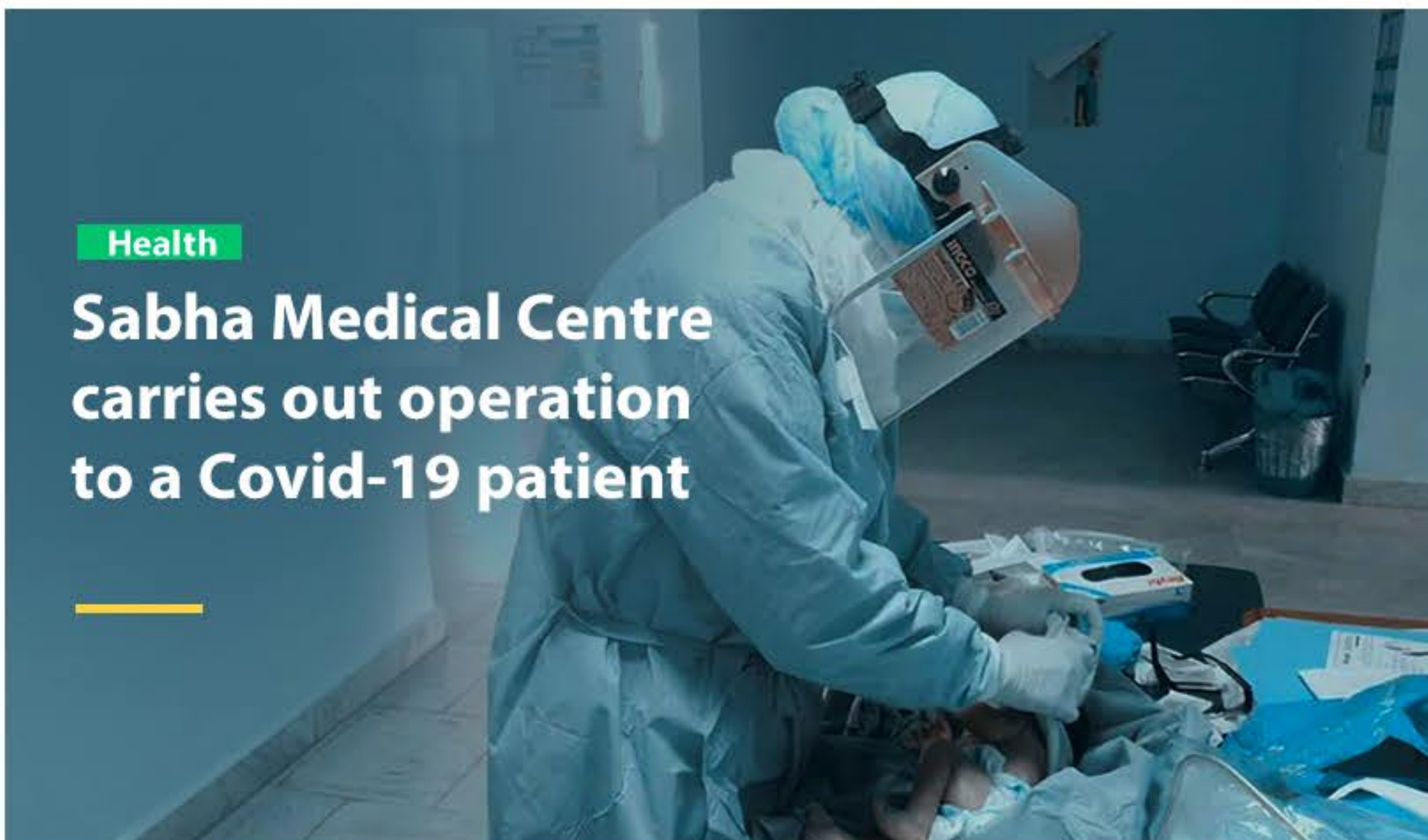
A medical team dispatched by the Health Ministry to the southern region has started training medical personnel in Sabha on how to deal and follow up cases infected with the Coronavirus in the city.

On this occasion, a new center was opened dedicated to receiving suspected Covid-19 patients and those suffering acute respiratory symptoms, said a statement by the Ministry of Health on Facebook yesterday.

Last month, the ministry dispatched a convoy of specialists in emergency medicine and intensive care, to oversee and conduct check-ups to critical patients.

The convoy also encompassed a PCR -a device used to detect the strain of the virus in a human body- and the newly approved GeneXpert from the US Food and Drug Administration which gives Covid-19 results in less than an hour, according to the Health Ministry.

Presently, Libya records 196 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 139 active cases, 52 recoveries, and five fatalities, according to the National Centre for Disease Control update on Wednesday.



Health

Sabha Medical Centre carries out operation to a Covid-19 patient

Sabha Medical Centre has conducted an operation to a Covid-19 patient to remove the gallbladder (cholecystectomies).

The centre pointed out via a post on its Facebook page that the patient was suffering from idiopathic cholelithiasis and required urgent surgery.

A team from the hospital had to prepare a special isolated operation room away from other departments to receive the Covid-19 patient.

The emergency operating room was ready in less than 24 hours, said a statement by the center.

The place was fully equipped to carry out the operation and perhaps more, as it also included an incubator and an intensive care bed to become an integrated operating room.

The center published pictures of the medical team that performed the operation upon completing their task, where they received a warm welcome and a "well done" by their colleagues and staff at the center.

Education

Ministry of Education postpones the return to studies until mid-July

The Ministry of Education has postponed the return to study until July 18 for preparatory and secondary certificate students and September 5 for primary year students.

The Ministry added that these dates were set following a meeting of officials in the Ministry of Education, headed by the acting Minister of Education Mohamed Amari Zayed, nullifying a previous announcement made on May 14, indicating a gradual return would begin on June 13 for preparatory and secondary students.

This new timeframe was decided with the health and welfare of all students in mind, as the country faces the challenges of halting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Migration

Interior Ministry thwarts illegal journey to Italy

A security patrol has raided a place in Garabulli used for gathering illegal immigrants and referred all of the migrants and human traffickers found at the site to the competent authorities to take legal measures against them, said the Ministry of Interior.

The Ministry explained that the Special Tasks Department of the General Department of Security Operations received information about the presence of illegal migrants from different African countries who were preparing to set off to Italy.

The operation was the result of strenuous efforts and investigations that spanned two months, conducted in cooperation with three other brigades, and resulted in foiling another dangerous journey involving about one hundred immigrants, among them women and children," the ministry added.

Education

Education Ministry explores initiative for developing legal education strategy in Libya



The Ministry of Education said Monday it is considering a project presented by law professor Souad Salem Abu Saad for developing legal education in Libya that aims to promote a paradigm shift in the educational, research, and legal training strategy in Libya.

According to a statement by the Ministry on Facebook, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Authority Affairs, Centers, and Higher Education Affairs Dr. Muhammad Abu Bakr and Dr. Siham bin Khalifa, managing director of the ministry's departments were briefed on the project and voiced their support and appreciation to the efforts put in this initiative.

The project is based on the idea of reforming the educational process by keeping pace with the technological developments in this area and to institute innovative methods to deliver lectures by using modern techniques, in addition, to focus on developing the "thinking skills" in the light of legal principles.

Dr. Muhammad Abu Bakr stressed that the ministry would spare no effort to support ideas and projects that would serve development and progress.

For his part, Dr. Ayman Al-Qumati, Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs affirmed that the initiative coincides with the general thrust of the ministry in supporting innovation and enhancing creative culture in a way that contributes to developing the educational and training process.

weather

The Weather Channel

Tripoli Weather Forecast








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|--------|---------|---|----|-------------|---|
| Fri 12 | 32°/24° |  Sunny | 0% | E 31 km/h | ▼ |
| Sat 13 | 37°/24° |  Sunny | 0% | ESE 27 km/h | ▼ |
| Sun 14 | 29°/20° |  Sunny | 0% | NW 25 km/h | ▼ |
| Mon 15 | 26°/20° |  Sunny | 0% | NW 25 km/h | ▼ |
| Tue 16 | 27°/19° |  Sunny | 0% | NW 21 km/h | ▼ |
| Wed 17 | 29°/20° |  Sunny | 0% | NW 18 km/h | ▼ |
| Thu 18 | 31°/23° |  Sunny | 0% | NE 22 km/h | ▼ |

Photo of the Week



Features



Libyan Cuisine: Rishtat Burma

Rishtat Burma, a warm main dish for cold winter days, is a high calorie dish with a large quantity of legumes. It is considered one of the most popular and main dishes for Libyans and an ideal dish for camping too. It's a simple dish which does not need a refrigerator to keep the meat and with no much fuss of cooking utensils. It's made with dried meat, dried legumes such as Homs, lentils, beans and fenugreek, and a pinch of herbs grown in any home garden.

Although you could find the Rishta ready-made in the supermarkets nowadays, most Libyan women still stick to making it at home, like the old days.

To prepare Rishtat Burma, you need Hallat al-Rishta, a stick specially made and named after this dish and a small wooden table to work on the dough. Both are one of the benchmarks for a well-prepared kitchen in Libyan women's culture.

The meat used in Rishtat Burma is salted and dried in the sun yearly, usually in Ead Al-Adha, and then stored in containers for use when needed. It is cooked in a red sauce usually hot in spices, along with the legumes and a pinch of dried homemade tomatoes.

While leaving the sauce to simmer, Rishta is prepared by making dough out of plain flour and water. Good kneading is an essential part of making fine Rishta dough.

I remember my mother-in-law and women of her generation, pride themselves on who could make the Rishta's dough stiffer, the harder it is, the better Rishta you will end up with.

Stretch the dough and roll it with the Halla stick into a fairly thin sheet. The pastry is then formed into a neat round shape at the size of the Rishta's wooden table. Shake a little flour on the surface of the dough and then fold it into quarters or roll it around the pin, cut into long strips approximately 2 to 3 cm wide.

Then comes the tricky part; cutting it into thin, neat strips. I had the pleasure watching my mother doing this as quickly as a heartbeat. Practice and patience is needed to achieve this distinction.

Pour the Rishta pasta into the sauce after adding the right quantity of water and cook for another 10 to 15 minutes until tender, season with basil leaves, dill, a clove of garlic and green pepper.

Presentation of this dish is important, it's best served in a traditional wooden bowl called Qasah. A lemon juice, Haresa and crumbly whole-grain bread called Chisha will make the day.

The smell of the Rishta sauce makes its way through the neighbour's house, so make sure you make extra and have enough to go round. It's a tradition in the Arab world that if your neighbors smell your nice food you should send them a taster!

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