



Libya

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- New interim government chosen after Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was ousted from office
- New elections promised for July 2014
- The country is plagued by violence and fighting
- Fighting is often over the country's huge oil wealth
- Distinction between official security forces and unlawful militias is blurred



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1 New interim government

On 12 March 2014 the Libyan parliament (General National Congress) voted to remove the Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, from office and to hold new elections in July 2014. The congress appointed Abdallah al-Thani, the former Defence Minister, as the new Prime Minister, for a period of two weeks until a new candidate is chosen.¹

The following information on the composition of the cabinet came from the Europa World Yearbook, and updated to March 2014, but the situation remains in flux.

Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defence: Abdallah al-Thani.

First Deputy Prime Minister: Abd al-Salam al-Ghadi.

Second Deputy Prime Minister: (vacant)

Third Deputy Prime Minister: Abdussalam al-Mehdi al-Qadi.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and of International Co-operation: Muhammad Imhamid Abd al-Aziz.

Minister of Justice: Salah Bashir Abaj Margani.

Minister of the Interior: Sadiq Abd al-Karim Abd al-Rahman Krim (ad interim).

Minister of Oil: Abd al-Bari Ali al-Hadi al-Arusi.²

2 Violence and government instability

Since the end of the 2011 civil war, Libya has been awash with militia and state sponsored armed groups who had originally helped overthrow Muammar Gaddafi. They are now reluctant to disarm and are intent on grabbing a share of power and the country's immense oil wealth. In the face of Libya's weak and disparate government, these groups have taken the place of an effective army and police force and also dispense aid and humanitarian assistance to a beleaguered population.

In September 2012 the US ambassador, Chris Stevens, and three other staff were killed when gunmen opened fire on the car that he was travelling in. The attack took place at the US embassy in Benghazi and was said to have been carried out by the hard-line Islamist group Ansar Al-Sharia, in response to a film that they deemed blasphemous to the Prophet Muhammad.³

In October 2012 the Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, was kidnapped from his hotel in Tripoli by the Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room. They claimed that he was arrested under the Libyan penal code, in response to the Libyan government's handling of the capture of Abu Anas al-Liby, an al-Qaeda suspect, by the US. The US government said that the Libyan authorities were aware of the operation and al-Liby had been taken to a US warship in the

¹ "Congress sacks Zeidan: elections for new legislature "in July", *Libya Herald*, 11 March 2014 (accessed 3 March 2014)

² Cabinet (Libya), in Europa World online. London, Routledge. House of Commons. Retrieved 03 April 2014 from <http://www.europaworld.com/entry/ma.dir.241120111154>

³ "Chris Stevens, US ambassador to Libya, killed in Benghazi attack", *The Guardian*, 12 September 2012 (accessed 3 April 2014)

Mediterranean. Ali Zeidan later condemned the arrest and said that all Libyan citizens should be tried on home soil.⁴

In October 2013 the Cyrenaica region in eastern Libya, announced a new federalist government – consisting of Ajdabiya, Benghazi, Green Mountain and Tobruk provinces citing central government's inability to control the huge levels of violence and claims of corruption. The new Cyrenaican 'Prime Minister' said that the new government was necessary because the central authorities "have failed and have shown incompetence and corruption".⁵

In March 2014 the General National Congress (GNC), critical of the worsening crisis in the country, held a vote of no confidence in Ali Zeidan. This crisis was caused by rebel militias and other armed gangs who had established control over much of the east of Libya, including the oil and gas facilities and exporting ports.

3 Militias

3.1 State-Affiliated groups

Libyan army

- Not yet completely effective but attracting new and better trained recruits and becoming more viable.
- Deployed on the streets of Tripoli to provide security.

Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR)

- The LROR was set up through an executive order by GNC chairman Nuri Abu-Sahmayn in early 2013.
- Provides security on the streets on Tripoli but was stripped of responsibilities after allegations it was responsible for the kidnap of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan.

National Security Directorate

- Formed from militia groups and is Libya's police force.
- Has a presence across the country.
- Reports to the Interior Ministry.

Al-Saiqa Forces

- Libya's elite army unit formed from ex paratroopers and commandos.
- Reports to the Ministry of Defence

Anti-Crime Unit

- Police force responsible for drug and alcohol offences
- Reports to the Ministry of Interior.

⁴ "[Libyan prime minister seized by armed men](#)", *Aljazeera*, 10 October 2012 (accessed 3 April 2014)

⁵ "[Cyrenaica "government" unveiled](#)", *Libya Herald*, 24 October 2013 (accessed 3 April 2014)

- Was accused, along with the LROR, of being responsible for the kidnap of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan.

Special Deterrence Force

- Combats drug trafficking.
- Reports to the Ministry of the Interior.

Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG)

- Formed in 2012 to protect Libya's oil installations.
- Reports to the Oil Ministry but financed by the Ministry of Defence.
- PFG leader, Ibrahim Jadhraan instigated the blockade of oil export ports, and was responsible for the formation of the federalist Cyrenaican government in the eastern region.
- Claims that there are 17,000 fighters under its command.

Libya Shield Force

- Formed as a way to integrate rebel fighters from smaller militia groups into a national fighting force.
- Reports to the Ministry of Defence.

3.2 Key militias

Al-Zintan Revolutionaries' Military Council

- Formed in 2011 and consists of 23 militia groups organised into five brigades.
- Best known for detaining Saif al-Islam Gaddafi after his capture in November 2011.
- Led by Mukhtar Khalifah Shahub, a former Libyan navy officer.

Al-Qaqa Brigade

- Commanded by Uthman Mulayqithah who defected from Gaddafi's regime after the 17 February revolt.
- Associated with Mahmoud Jibril the former prime minister and leader of the National Force Alliance, a coalition of 58 'liberal' political parties. Has responsibility for protecting officials and government ministers.
- Reports to the Ministry of Defence.

Al-Sawaiq Brigade

- Took part in the assault of Tripoli in September 2011.
- Led by Isam al-Trabulsi.
- Provides personal protection to members of the National Transitional Council.

- Reports to the Ministry of Defence.

Misrata Brigades

- Formed during 2011 and is regarded as a revolutionary militia.
- Registered with the Misratan Union of Revolutionaries (MUR) and consists of more than 200 'revolutionary brigades' made up of approximately 40,000 people.
- Heavily armed after capturing weapons and military hardware from forces loyal to Gaddafi in Misrata, Sirte and Tripoli.
- Attached to the Ministry of Defence because of its association with the MUR however, it often operates independently and sometimes against the Libyan Government.
- Accused of war crimes by the UN's International Commission of Inquiry on Libya.

17 February Martyrs Brigade

- The largest and best armed militia group in eastern Libya consisting of 12 battalions.
- Broadly Islamist in outlook.
- Funded by the Ministry of Defence

Rafallah al-Sahati Brigade

- Splinter group of the 17 February Martyrs Brigade and named after the first Libyan to die while fighting Gaddafi's forces.
- Operates mainly in Eastern Libya.

Ansar al-Sharia Brigade

- The name means Partisans of Islamic law – Sharia.
- Not a fixed organisation and more a coalition of Islamist and Salafist groups based in Benghazi and operating in Eastern Libya.
- Accused by the US of being the group that burnt down the consulate in Benghazi and killed the US ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens in September 2012

Small local forces

- Mainly operating in Libya's smaller towns especially in the south of the country.
- Has the task of protecting Libya's long and open southern borders.⁶

⁶ Based on the "[Guide to key Libyan militias and other armed groups](#)", *BBC Online*, 28 November 2013 (accessed on 2 April 2014)

4 Oil and the economy

95% of the country's wealth comes from oil and gas exports but the income from these has almost dried up since the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), led by Ibrahim Jadhran, was brought in by the government to protect oil and gas facilities from various armed militias and also from local citizens demanding jobs.

News sources report that Ibrahim Jadhran is behind the formation of the Cyrenaican government.⁷

It was these circumstances that led to the PFG initiating a blockade of ports resulting in the government having to suspend vital improvements to infrastructure across the country due to lack of funds.⁸

In March the *Morning Glory*, a North Korean registered oil tanker, left the rebel controlled As-Sidrah terminal laden with illegal Libyan crude oil and broke through a Libyan naval blockade before being intercepted and commandeered by US Navy Seals.⁹ It was reported in the *Gulf States Newsletter* that the oil was heading to the Gulf to be sold onwards to the Asian market.¹⁰

On the 1 April 2014 *Reuters* reported hopeful news, as one of the rebel groups has agreed with the government to end its seizure of oil ports, meaning that the eight month stalemate could soon be ending.¹¹

On the 2 April the *Libya Herald* also reported that the Cyrenaican government had reached a deal with the central administration 'that would allow "most" of the blockaded eastern oil ports to be reopened'. In return the Cyrenaican government demanded the formation of:

- a committee to oversee the loading of oil in future;
- international organisations to inspect what is happening in Libyan prisons; and
- the return home of displaced persons.¹²

5 UK position

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said on the third anniversary of the Libyan revolution that there had been progress, but challenges remained:

"On the third anniversary of the 17 February Revolution, I pay tribute to those Libyans who paid the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of freedom. The Revolution was a demonstration of people's ambitions to build a better Libya in which all people are free to voice their opinions and play an active role in deciding the future of their country. The UK is proud of the support we gave during the Revolution and we remain committed to supporting Libya overcome the legacy of four decades of Qadhafi misrule and its effect on both our countries.

⁷ "Cyrenaica "government" unveiled", *Libya Herald*, 24 October 2013 (accessed 3 April 2014)

⁸ "Libya burns cash, halts projects to battle budget crisis", *Ahramonline*, 1 April 2014 (accessed 2 April 2014)

⁹ "Seized oil tanker Morning Glory arrives in Libyan capital", *Reuters*, 23 March 2013 (accessed 3 April 2014)

¹⁰ "Oil traders embroiled in Libyan crude dispute", *Gulf States Newsletter*, 20 March 2014

¹¹ "East Libyan rebels to end oil port blockade within days: senior leader", *Reuters*, 1 April 2014 (accessed 2 April 2014)

¹² "Cyrenaican 'government' claims provisional deal with Tripoli", *Libya Herald*, 2 April 2014 (accessed 3 April 2014)

Libya has made progress since 2011, but significant challenges remain and urgent work is needed to realise the aspirations of the Revolution.

A new constitution that enshrines human rights for all of Libya's citizens and the peaceful exchange of views as part of an inclusive independently facilitated National Dialogue will be vital.

All Libyan institutions must uphold the principles for which the revolution was fought – freedom of expression, freedom of association, a fair and transparent justice system and a democratic political system.

The UK is committed to supporting all Libyans as they seek to secure a free and prosperous future. Our assistance in the fields of defence, justice and security is a testament to this."¹³

The FCO's [Working for peace and long-term stability in the Middle East and North Africa](#) policy states that the UK government, together with international partners, is providing a range of assistance to the new Libyan government.

The UK, together with international partners including the UN and the EU, is providing a range of assistance to the new Libyan government and civil society in support of prosperity, security and human rights. This includes promoting political participation and public voice, providing advice and training in the security, justice and defence sectors, strengthening public financial management, and promoting private sector development.

In 2012/13 the UK spent approximately £9 million in Libya. In 2013/14 the UK intends to spend over £20m in support of local activity. The money is used to fund projects that, for example, promote the development of an inclusive constitution and the participation of young people, women and minorities in the political transition.

In addition, as the Prime Minister announced at the 2013 G8 Summit, the UK, US and other European partners have offered to train more than 7,000 Libyan troops to help the Libyan Government disarm and integrate militias and improve the security and stability of the country.

As part of this package, the UK has committed to train up to 2,000 Libyan Armed Forces personnel, in tranches, in basic infantry skills. The training will take place in Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire. We will also provide increased training for the Libyan police and further support to improve Libya's border security through the EU Border Mission.¹⁴

¹³ [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), 17 February 2014

¹⁴ [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), 3 December 2013