

Libyan deputies pledge to end divisions

Author:

AFP

ID:

1606594361695312100

Sat, 2020-11-28 20:00

TANGIER: More than 120 Libyan deputies pledged Saturday in Morocco to “end the divisions” that undermine their country, starting by convening the elected parliament as soon as they return home.

The House of Representatives has not met for two years, and Libya has been wracked by violence and chaos since the toppling and killing of dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

Two rival administrations have been vying for control of the country – the Government of National Accord and an eastern administration backed by part of the elected parliament.

The latter is deeply divided, with sessions taking place in parallel in the east and west.

At the end of five days of talks in Tangier, Morocco, 123 of the parliament’s 180 members pledged on Saturday to put an end to “hate speech” and “divisions” that undermine Libyan institutions.

They vowed to hold “parliamentary elections and to complete the transition as soon as possible,” and that all members of the House of Representatives would meet in session “as soon as they return” to Libya.

The session will take place in Ghadames, a desert oasis near Libya’s borders with both Algeria and Tunisia.

Ghadames is considered to be far from the centers of power.

“Having 123 deputies at the same table is in itself a success,” Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said.

“Libya needs a House of Representatives that plays its role... The next meeting in Libya will have a great impact on political dialogue,” he said.

The talks come at a time of increasing moves to break the deadlock in the country, which has Africa’s biggest oil reserves.

In mid-November, a UN-sponsored political dialogue forum in Tunis agreed to hold elections on December 24, 2021, but not on who will lead the transition.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Libya](#)

[tangiers](#)

[Morocco](#)

German defense minister rejects Turkey complaint over Libya weapons ship search
Libyan rivals discuss transitional mechanism

[Five years on, calls continue for justice over killing of Kurdish lawyer](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-11-28 21:55

ANKARA: Kurdish lawyer and prominent human rights activist Tahir Elci's murder remains unsolved five years after his death amid claims that intelligence neglect may have played a part in the killing.

Elci was a key figure in Turkey's human rights movement and was also known globally for his efforts to represent human rights' violations before the European Court of Human Rights.

Nov. 28 marks the fifth anniversary of his assassination while giving a press statement as the head of the Diyarbakir Bar Association in Turkey's southeastern Kurdish-majority city in 2015 to protest armed clashes between

security forces and the youth wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

At least 43 international lawyers and human rights organizations joined forces to demand justice for Elci and his family with a joint declaration on Nov. 27. "We are concerned that the prosecution, as well as the court before which this case is being heard, fails to respect fair trial rights. We are further troubled by the Turkish authorities' continued violation of Turkey's international legal obligations to carry out a prompt, effective, impartial and independent investigation into the death of one of its citizens and to ensure a fair trial by an impartial and independent tribunal for those accused of the killing of Tahir Elci," they said.

His wife, Turkan Elci, wrote a song in Kurdish, "Hewar" (Cry), on the fifth anniversary of his death.

In an exclusive interview with Arab News, Turkan Elci said that the judicial process around her husband's killing fitted with the general atmosphere of impunity in Turkey.

She said that the independence of the judiciary could only be ensured if it was not under the influence of the executive: "A judge must decide according to the principles of universal law, the constitution and the law, as well as according to his own conscientious opinion. But it is a very remote possibility for the Tahir Elci case."

Elci's lawyers continue to try to ensure that his case file, started only five years after the murder, is not closed and are calling for the identification of the real perpetrators as they believe this is no ordinary assassination.

Following his comments about the outlawed PKK, which he said was not a terror organization but an armed political movement, Elci faced a "lynching" campaign in the mainstream media up until his death.

A 13-second section of the video footage from police cameras is missing, although Elci was killed within that time frame. The police have also failed to locate the bullet that shot him.

Forensic Architecture, a London-based independent research group, examined footage of the murder and determined that the three police officers at the scene were the most likely suspects. If the three officers accused of killing Elci are convicted they will face two to nine years in prison.

According to Ayse Bingol Demir, a human rights lawyer and co-director of the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project, ensuring a fair trial is extremely important for several reasons.

"First, Tahir Elci was a human rights lawyer who was killed while advocating ... for ending the violence in the Kurdish region. He was a prominent figure in the human rights community, especially known for his fight against impunity and systemic human rights violations committed by the state security forces," she told Arab News.

For Demir, Elci's killing in broad daylight – in the presence of the press and many others – and the failure of the judiciary to carry out an effective investigation into the incident, has had a severe impact not only on his family but the wider community in Turkey.

"Second, the main issue in this case is a violation of Tahir Elci's right to life, one of the core rights under international human rights law. Tahir Elci's family are entitled to the right to truth, access to justice, and an effective remedy for the violation they and their loved ones have been subject to," she said.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Kurdish](#)

[Tahir Elci](#)

Cover-up claims as police face trial over killing of Kurdish lawyer
Death of Kurdish lawyer on hunger strike sparks outcry

[Coronavirus threatens festive season in Lebanon](#)

Sat, 2020-11-28 21:20

BEIRUT: The two-week lockdown in Lebanon to limit the spread of coronavirus

ends on Sunday, but the continued high number of infections and deaths may limit the options of the government committee tasked with restoring normal life in the country.

On Saturday, owners of shops, stores, restaurants and cafes protested against measures that would keep their businesses closed, especially as the lucrative festive season approaches.

"If the state decides to continue closing our institutions during the festive season, these tourist establishments will declare their bankruptcy," Jean Beirouti, secretary-general of the Federation of Tourism Trade Unions, told Arab News.

Darkness prevails in Beirut markets that are usually vibrant at this time of year. "Black Friday didn't activate any commercial movement," Yehya Kasaa, chairman of the Lebanese Franchise Association, told Arab News.

"We don't know how long it will be possible to hold out if a good government isn't formed. Politics in Lebanon is fighting the economy," he said.

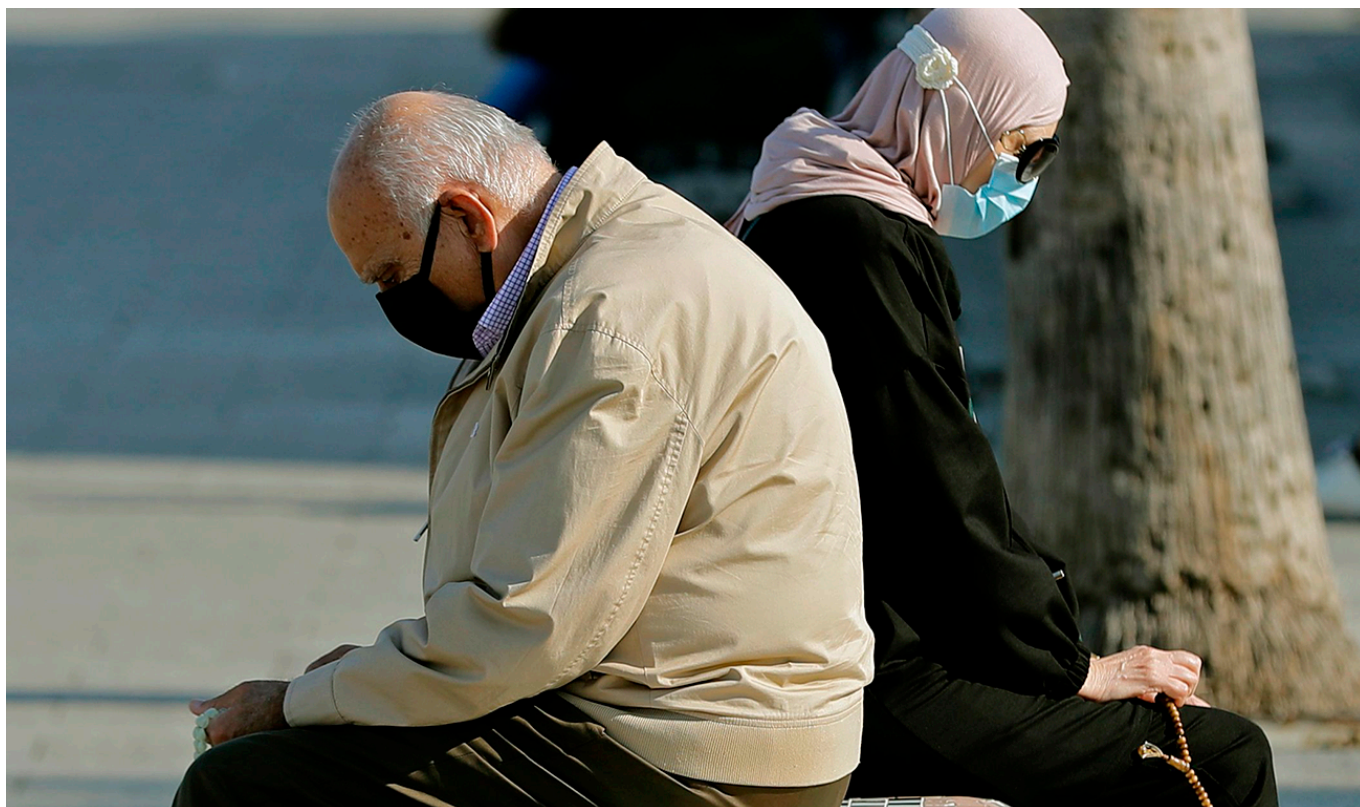
"Staying at home indeed provides safety for everyone, but in a country like Lebanon, which suffers economically, it's impossible. People need to work and earn their daily living," he added.

"The franchise sector used to provide work for 100,000 workers. Now half of them have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis. Moreover, the Beirut Port explosion destroyed 70 percent of the sector, especially in central Beirut, and these shops haven't reopened yet."

As of Saturday morning, there were more than 35,000 violations of the lockdown recorded by security forces.

"People are groaning from the difficult economic situation we're in," said Col. Joseph Mousallem, head of the Information Branch at the Internal Security Forces.

"The decline in the number of infections hoped by the Ministry of Health didn't happen during the lockdown."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Lebanon](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Charges filed against customs officials over Lebanon port blast
Lebanon on borrowed time not addressing Hezbollah's weapons

[US navy denies carrier group moved into Gulf after any 'threats'](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1606579288844269200

Sat, 2020-11-28 15:53

WASHINGTON: A US aircraft carrier group has moved back into the Gulf region, but a navy spokeswoman said Saturday its return was not triggered by any "threats" after the killing in Iran of a top nuclear scientist.

Tensions in the region are extraordinarily high after the assassination Friday of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, an act still unclaimed but which Iran has blamed on close US ally Israel.

But naval commander Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the US 5th Fleet, told AFP the return Wednesday of the carrier group led by the nuclear-powered

USS Nimitz was unconnected to any “specific threats.”

“There were no specific threats that triggered the return of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group,” she said in a statement.

“The return of Nimitz is centered on maintaining CENTCOM’s ability to remain postured and prepared to help preserve regional stability and security,” Rebarich said, referring to the US Central Command.

The Pentagon said earlier that the carrier group would be providing combat support and air cover as the military withdraws thousands of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan by mid-January, under orders from President Donald Trump. About 2,000 troops will be pulled from Afghanistan and 500 from Iraq, leaving roughly 2,500 in each country.

The flotilla led by the Nimitz – one of the world’s largest warships – had recently joined Australia, India and Japan in scheduled exercises in the Arabian Sea.

The 5th Fleet’s Twitter account showed pictures of the Nimitz’s air wing conducting flight operations there Saturday.

Carrier groups typically include a cruiser, a destroyer squadron and an air wing.

Nimitz-class carriers are more than 1,000 feet (300 meters) long, have a crew of more than 6,000, and carry up to 90 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[US navy](#)

[Gulf](#)

Suspected Iranian nuclear mastermind Fakhrizadeh assassinated near TehranUS-Gulf trade ties set to begin new chapter

4 killed in southern Yemen province as Arab coalition bombs Sanaa

Sun, 2020-11-29 01:00

AL-MUKALLA: Four people were killed on Friday during a mortar fire exchange between government forces and separatists in the southern province of Abyan, local military officers told Arab News.

Government forces stationed in the Sheikh Salem area shelled forces loyal to the pro-independence Southern Transitional Council (STC) on Friday night, killing four fighters – including two officers – a government officer and STC media said. The STC forces responded by shelling army locations in Abyan, causing no casualties. The STC leader, Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, mourned the four fighters in a letter to their families, describing the government's attack on his forces as a "treacherous terrorist operation."

STC media outlets said that the deadly attack was carried out by a Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drone that government forces have allegedly obtained recently. Local army commanders strongly denied receiving or using Turkish drones. "No, no, we did not use drones and we do not have any. We shelled them with 120mm mortars," the government officer, who asked to remain anonymous, told Arab News.

Sporadic fierce fighting and an exchange of artillery fire between government and the STC have occurred over the past couple of months despite the two parties' commitments to adhere to the Saudi-brokered Riyadh Agreement. The agreement, aimed at defusing tension between the two parties, started in early 2018 by including the STC in a shared government in exchange for removing forces from Aden and other contested areas in southern Yemen.

Prime Minister-designate Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed has missed several deadlines to form a new government as political forces wrangle over key ministries and which should come first; announcing the government or withdrawing forces from contested areas.

In Houthi-held Sanaa, Arab coalition warplanes on Friday targeted a number of military sites suspected of storing ballistic missiles and drones, Yemen's defense ministry said. Warplanes hit Faj Attan and Ayban mountains west of the capital, Al-Sama military base in Arhab district, outside the capital, and the Houthi militia's military gatherings in Jarban and Riymat Hamed military bases south of Sanaa, the ministry said in a statement on its news site. Large explosions rocked Sanaa as thick smoke billowed from targeted sites.

At the same time, fighting raged on Friday and Saturday on major battlefields across the country as government forces fought off Houthi attacks in the provinces of Taiz, Jouf, Marib and Sanaa. Local media reported on Saturday

that government forces and allied tribesmen engaged in heavy fighting with the Houthis in contested areas of the central province of Marib. Arab coalition warplanes launched many airstrikes in Marib, targeting Houthi military gatherings and military equipment, which enabled government forces to push back rebels.

In Sanaa province, a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis on Saturday from an area north of the capital failed to reach its target and landed in a village shortly after its launch. Yemen Today TV and other anti-Houthi local media outlets reported that the Houthis sealed off the area where the missile landed, preventing people from leaving or entering houses.

The current conflict in Yemen began in late 2014 when the Houthis stormed the capital, Sanaa, and later expanded rapidly across the country, triggering fierce fighting with government forces.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Sanaa](#)

[Yemen](#)

13 dead in south Yemen clashes: military sources
Saudi project empowers 500 orphans in Yemen