

# Lebanese PM sues American University of Beirut over exit package

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BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab is suing the American University of Beirut (AUB), where he worked for 35 years as an academic, a spokesman for Diab said, in a dispute over his exit package from the financially struggling institution.

AUB, which has been hit hard by Lebanon's economic meltdown, declined to comment on the case.

Lebanon is grappling with a crisis caused by decades of state corruption and bad governance. A hard currency liquidity crunch has led to an 80% weakening of the local currency since October.

Diab presented his long-planned resignation in January – the month he became prime minister.

"... He asked for an exit package in line with common practices and precedents at AUB. This request was denied ...," the spokesman said.

Diab had "never made any special request for any payments to be made either in foreign currency or into foreign bank accounts. All AUB professors have their pensions paid in U.S. dollars, from a AUB foreign account", the spokesman said.

"What the PM expressed was only what was already stated in the AUB retirement plan regulations and policies."

The private AUB, founded in the 1860s, is alma mater of some of the Arab world's leading figures in politics, medicine, law, science and art. Its president told Reuters in May Lebanon's catastrophic collapse represented one of the biggest challenges in the history of a university which has weathered many crises, including Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

The state, which defaulted on its foreign currency debt in March, owes AUB's medical centre – which attracts patients from across the Middle East and Central Asia – more than \$150 million in arrears, AUB President Fadlo Khuri said.



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AUB's saga of survival in the limelight as Lebanon battles financial, coronavirus crises  
AUB president says liberal Arab thought at risk amid Lebanon's coronavirus, financial crises

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## [Turkey-Russia cease-fire negotiations for Libya: Any hope for durability?](#)

Thu, 2020-07-09 20:46

ANKARA: As Kremlin announced the ongoing consultations between Turkey and Russia for an immediate cease-fire deal for the longstanding Libyan conflict, the feasibility of such an agreement is being questioned more and more as the two countries support opposing sides.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the Libyan National Army (LNA), backed by Russia and led by eastern Libyan Commander Khalifa Haftar, is willing to sign a cease-fire document. Russia expects Ankara to convince the Government of National Accord (GNA) to proceed in the same way.

The ministerial-level talks have been ongoing for a while, with some

postponements last month over the technical disagreements.

Samuel Ramani, a Middle East analyst at the University of Oxford, is skeptical about a cease-fire working on the ground.

“The Libyan war is much more complicated than a mere Russia-Turkey proxy war, even though it is often oversimplified to this binary in Western media outlets. The UAE and Egypt will be much more hesitant than Russia about signing a peace deal with Turkey and might not view such as a ceasefire as credible,” he told Arab News.

According to Ramani, Haftar’s military actions in Libya could continue.

“Alternatively, Turkey has powerful interests against a cease-fire at this time and has also escalated tensions with France. Moreover, when Russia says the LNA is on board, there is a question as to whether he means Libyan House of Representatives Chief Aguila Saleh, who might be, or Haftar,” Ramani said.

Experts insist that the spheres of influence in Libya should be clearly outlined to prevent another failed cease-fire.

Regarding the red lines for a cease-fire, Ramani thinks that freezing the conflict areas in and around LNA-held Sirte and Jufra is an immediate priority.

Sirte bears strategic importance as it lies close to key energy export terminals on the Mediterranean shores, while Jufra hosts a strategic military base where Russian aircraft and Wagner mercenaries are reportedly located.

“An escalation from either side in these areas would be a red line. Also, there is a need for assurances from both sides that they won’t restart a broader war if they perceive their rivals as being weak,” Ramani said.

Aydin Sezer, an expert on Turkey-Russia relations, thinks that Russia is concerned about the increasing military support that Turkey gives to the GNA, which further escalates tension in the civil war.

“The only priority right now for Russia is to achieve a lasting peace through a sustainable ceasefire agreement. The same goes for France. Both these countries are also set to bring this issue to the UN Security Council. These latest ceasefire negotiations mean Russia wants to keep the diplomacy doors open for both sides,” he told Arab News.

Saturday’s attack targeting the strategic Al-Watiya air base in Libya damaged Turkish air defense systems where Turkey was reportedly planning to establish a permanent presence. The attack also came a couple of hours after Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited Libya.

“After that attack, Ankara felt obligated to be much more cautious regarding the fragile dynamics in Libya. The situation on the ground is complicated and time is not on the Turkish side. Therefore, the cease-fire is necessary for Ankara more than ever,” Sezer said.

For Wolfram Lacher, however, senior associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Russia and Turkey may well try to broker a ceasefire and thereby become the two key players in Libya, but it is doubtful whether such a cease-fire could succeed.

“Haftar has more room to maneuver with regard to Russia than Turkey has with regard to the GNA because he can still rely on Egyptian and UAE support. So, he may reject the terms of a Russian-Turkish ceasefire,” Lacher told Arab News.

According to Lacher, other powers – including the US, France, Egypt and the UAE – want to prevent a Russian-Turkish arrangement in Libya and instead want ceasefire talks to take place under the UN auspices.

“This competition over the forum for ceasefire talks will also make any cease-fire initiative more difficult,” he said.

On the other hand, Bill Park, senior lecturer in the Department of Defense Studies at King’s College London, thinks Moscow is uncomfortable with the implications of Turkey’s escalation in Libya.

“Russia wants to demonstrate that there might be limits to what it will tolerate,” he told Arab News. “At this stage, Ankara should be willing to take risks while Russia should meet the challenges for a negotiated agreement and manage the hostility between France and Turkey.”



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Russia working on immediate Libya cease-fire with Turkey Battle looms for key Libyan city Sirte

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## [Britain calls on Houthis to allow UN access to Yemen's time bomb oil tanker](#)

Thu, 2020-07-09 20:55

LONDON: The UK urged the Houthi militia to allow UN inspectors access to a derelict tanker and remove the oil it contains on Thursday.

FSO Safer has been moored 7 km off the coast of Yemen since 1988 and fell into the hands of the Houthis in March 2015.

The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office said the 1.14 million barrels of oil onboard could leak into the Red Sea "if nothing is done" and that the tanker is an "environmental disaster waiting to happen."

The FSO Safer is an environmental disaster waiting to happen. If nothing is done, 1.14 million barrels of oil could leak into the Red Sea. Houthi Authorities must allow UN inspectors to access the ship and remove the oil. [pic.twitter.com/1TKBRk8V7t](https://pic.twitter.com/1TKBRk8V7t)

– Foreign Office (@foreignoffice) [July 9, 2020](#)

The Houthis have actively prevented international engineers from boarding FSO Safer to carry out essential repairs.

There are fears that the oil it contains will start to seep out as the vessel's condition deteriorates.



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Yemen PM slams Houthis for preventing UN assessment of decaying oil tanker in Red Sea  
Seawater seeping into decaying oil tanker off Yemen coast

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## [Oxfam: Yemen most at risk of virus-related hunger](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-07-09 20:41

LONDON: Yemen and Syria are among the countries most at risk of hunger crises in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a new Oxfam report titled "The Hunger Virus: How COVID-19 is Fuelling Hunger in a Hungry World."

Yemen was ranked as the country most at risk of a hunger crisis, with Oxfam saying 15.9 million people, or 53 percent of the population, could face starvation.

The report cited how conflict had damaged the country's infrastructure and its ability to both produce and import food.

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The economic shock to the Gulf caused by COVID-19 and unprecedented slumps in the oil industry also had an impact on Yemen, with financial support through remittances and donations down over 80 percent from neighboring countries in the first four months of 2020, said the report.

It added that food imports to Yemen, which was already importing 90 percent of its food before the pandemic, were down 43 percent in March and 39 percent in April.

In June, the report said, Yemen had discovered more than 900 COVID-19 cases and recorded over 250 deaths, but those figures were likely to be underestimates due to the state of the country's health-care services.



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UN warns Yemen on brink of famine again Yemen receives COVID-19 aid as medical sector struggles with virus

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## [Battle looms for key Libyan city Sirte](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2020-07-09 19:08

CAIRO: A military buildup around the Libyan city of Sirte has raised fears of a major battle for control of the area's strategic oil reserves.

The Libyan National Army (LNA), which has occupied Sirte since May, accused Turkey of targeting the oil-rich city and supplying militias in the area with weapons.

LNA spokesman Ahmed Al-Mesmari said that western Libya is under total Turkish control.

He said that Turkey aims to reach Libya's "oil crescent," a coastal region home to most of its oil export terminals.

The LNA is closely monitoring Turkey's moves in Sirte and Al-Jufra, he added. "We expect an attack on Sirte by Turkey and the militias at any time," Al-Mesmari said.

His statement was confirmed a few days ago on a social media account affiliated with Turkey, which posted a map of areas under its control as well as the latest developments in Libya. The map showed areas under the control of Khalifa Haftar, LNA commander, and the Government of National Accord (GNA). It also featured arrows illustrating that Sirte and Al-Jufra are the next targets of the GNA, despite a no-fly zone on the area imposed by the LNA.

The developments led UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to warn on Wednesday against a military buildup near Sirte, which is located between the capital Tripoli and Benghazi.

The warning came after LNA troops led by Haftar retreated and GNA troops led by Fayez Al-Sarraj, prime minister of the GNA of Libya, advanced.

In a UN Security Council meeting chaired by Germany via video conference, Guterres said foreign interference in Libya had reached "unprecedented levels."

He condemned the violation of a cease-fire in place since 2011, which also called for the handing over of advanced military equipment and a declaration of the number of mercenaries involved in the conflict. However, Guterres did not name the parties who violated the cease-fire.

Guterres called on Al-Sarraj and Haftar to engage in political negotiations



and agree to a cease-fire.

During the conference, the representatives of Germany, the US and France warned Turkey about its involvement in Sirte.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry indirectly criticized Turkey for sending Syrian militants to Libya.

"The transfer of Syrian extremist militants to Libyan territories by one of the regional parties aggravates the situation in Libya. This issue is a serious threat to the security of the Libyans as well as neighboring Mediterranean countries," he said.

Shoukry added: "These threats clearly and currently endanger Egypt, and we will not tolerate this type of threats which are close to our borders, at a time when foreign interferences provide those militants with support."

He said: "Supporting extremism must stop. We have to put an end to the sources of support by regional players who are confirmed to care less about the stability of the Mediterranean region. Solving this problem and resisting such policies is a prerequisite for the success of our efforts to protect the future of our peoples and that of the Libyan people."

Shoukry expressed Egypt's concern regarding the deployment of what he labeled "terrorist groups" west of Libya, with Daesh presenting the greatest potential threat. He said he considered such a deployment a threat to the security and stability of Egypt.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi suggested that any violation of Sirte and Al-Jufra will push Egypt to intervene in accordance with international norms and conventions.

Egyptian military expert Samir Farag said that oil is the main reason behind Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's interference in Libya. Farag said that Sirte and Al-Jufra are Erdogan's two main goals in controlling Libya's "oil crescent."

Farag said: "Erdogan knows very well the competence of the Egyptian forces and is afraid of facing them. President El-Sisi said that Sirte and Al-Jufra are red lines."

He added that if Turkey interferes in those areas, "there will be a strong reply." He said the Egyptian Air Force is ready and capable of reaching any place which poses a threat to Egyptian national security.

Farag hailed the French role in the Libyan crisis. He said a speech by the French representative during the Security Council meeting on Libya was clear and strong.

"Erdogan faces a difficult situation internally and externally," Farag said, adding: "Perhaps NATO would adopt resolutions on preventing Turkey from using military coordinates."

Mohamed El-Ghobary, former director of the Egyptian National Defense College, said Libya has become "an international venue for conflict that is not only regional."

"The whole world agreed that Sirte is a red line and that whoever crosses that line is an aggressor," he said.

El-Ghobary added that Sirte is in the middle of Libya and controls the transfer of oil from south to north, and that Turkey aims to deploy there because of this. But Egypt would not allow this, he said.

"Egypt has a development plan that requires it not to slip into any potential losses," he said.

The Egyptian leadership has a military strategy and political ideology. Any

intervention will be “accurately calculated,” El-Ghobary said.



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UN chief warns foreign interference in Libya ‘unprecedented’ Guards block oil tanker from loading at Libya’s Es Sider port