

# Libya's eastern parliament condemns deal with Turkey

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CAIRO: Libya's eastern parliament denounced Thursday a maritime and security cooperation deal between the Tripoli-based UN-backed government and Turkey as a "flagrant breach" of the country's security and sovereignty.

This parliament is allied with the self-styled Libyan National Army, which launched an offensive under the command of Gen. Khalifa Haftar in April to capture the capital from the Government of National Accord led by Fayez Sarraj.

Since 2015, Libya has been divided between two competing governments, in the east based in Benghazi and in the west in Tripoli. While the LNA and the eastern government enjoy the support of France, Russia and key Arab countries, the Tripoli-based government is backed by Italy, Turkey and Qatar. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office said Thursday that the Turkish leader and Sarraj, reached an agreement on the delineation of maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea while in Istanbul the previous day. The two leaders also signed a security and military cooperation agreement. Erdogan's office did not provide additional details.

The eastern parliament's Foreign and International Cooperation Committee issued a statement Thursday saying the deal amounts to a "defense pact" and grants the Turkish government the right to use Libyan airspace and waters as well as build military bases on Libyan soil.

The agreement "does not only threaten the Libyan national security but also threatens the Arab national security and peace in the Mediterranean Sea," read the statement.

Separately, the Libyan national oil company said Thursday that it resumed operations at the El-Fil oil field, following an earlier suspension due to fighting between armed factions.

The company's chairman, Mustafa Sanalla, declared Wednesday that operations were halted after clashes had erupted and militants allied with the UN-supported government had attacked guards protecting the field.

The facility, which pumps out 75,000 barrels a day was slightly damaged by the clashes and none of the workers were wounded, read a statement posted on the company's official Facebook page.

"I remind all parties that oil and gas fields are the main source of revenues in Libya and safeguarding them will benefit all Libyans. Hence, they should not be dealt with as military targets," said Sanalla.



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Libyan officials say US drone shot down by mistake

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## [Lebanese parliamentary panel to approve 2020 budget this year, committee head says](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Thu, 2019-11-28 13:23

BEIRUT: The Lebanese parliament's budget and finance committee will approve the 2020 budget by the end of the year and the next government must adopt it,

committee head Ibrahim Kanaan said on Thursday.

Lebanon has been grappling with the worst economic conditions in decades, amid protests that prompted Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri to resign on Oct. 29, leaving the country in politically deadlocked.

Kanaan said the committee must quickly finalize a budget needed to restore confidence in the country and take account of bruising economic conditions. "Before the end of next month, the holiday season ... we will have finished the debate and approval of the 2020 budget," Kanaan said in a televised news conference. "It is not possible for the new government not to adopt this budget because when this budget is approved it will become a law."

Kanaan said treasury revenues had been almost non-existent for the last 45 days, but assured Lebanese that public-sector salaries would be paid. Lebanon is hoping to enact urgent economic reforms that can convince donors to disburse some \$11 billion in aid pledged at a conference last year.

Meanwhile, Lebanon paid back a Eurobond worth \$1.5 billion that was scheduled to mature Thursday, a Finance Ministry official said, pacifying concerns of a first-ever default on its debt amid the worst financial crisis in three decades.

The tiny Mediterranean country's economic emergency has ignited nationwide protests against widespread corruption and mismanagement, bringing the country to a standstill for over a month. The protests were initially sparked by new taxes, but have snowballed into calls for the entire political elite to step aside.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in late October, meeting a key demand of the protesters. But that has plunged the country into further uncertainty, with no clear path to resolving its economic and political problems. The Eurobond announcement came as a top Arab League official arrived in Lebanon, expressing readiness to help the country solve its political stalemate.

The repayment was being widely watched in Lebanon, which has one of the highest debt ratios in the world, standing at \$86 billion or 150% of the GDP. There were concerns that Lebanon, which always paid back its debt on time, might default. Lebanon has in recent weeks imposed unprecedented capital controls.

The Finance Ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, gave no further details about the repayment. Local media reported that the payment was made from the reserves of the Central Bank. The office of Lebanon's president, Michel Aoun, said he discussed political and economic conditions with visiting Arab League assistant secretary general, Hossam Zaki. Aoun has not set a date for binding consultations with heads of parliamentary blocs to name a new premier. Hariri, who was Aoun's and the militant group Hezbollah's favorite to lead a new Cabinet, withdrew his candidacy on Tuesday.

Politicians have failed to agree on the shape and form of a new government. Hariri had insisted on heading a government of technocrats, while his opponents, including Hezbollah, want a Cabinet made up of both experts and politicians.

Furthermore, the protesters are demanding that the country's ruling elite be replaced, blaming them for failures in years that followed the 1975-90 civil war. The protests have remained overwhelmingly peaceful, resorting to road

closures and other tactics in an effort to pressure politicians into responding to their demands.

But in recent days, scuffles broke out in Beirut and other areas between protesters and Aoun and Hezbollah supporters, leaving dozens of people injured. As tempers flare, there are real concerns Lebanon could be sliding toward a prolonged period of instability.

"The current situation cannot take conditions and counter-conditions. We should all work together to get out of the crisis in what serves the interest of the Lebanese people," Aoun said in comments released by his office Thursday. He added that Arab support "should be translated into actual steps regarding assistance to improve the deteriorating economic conditions."

Zaki told reporters said there must be solution for the Cabinet formation crisis, adding that "it is important so that Lebanon avoids negative effects on its economic conditions and civil peace."

Scores of Lebanese businesses have closed in recent months and thousands of employees were either laid off or are getting half their salaries amid the crisis. Local banks have imposed capital controls worsening the economic conditions amid a liquidity crisis and shortage in US dollars.

Since 1997, the Central Bank has kept the pound stable at 1,507 to the dollar thanks to heavy borrowing at high interest rates but on the black market, the price of the dollar reached in recent days 2,100 pounds, a 40 percent over the official price. \* with AP



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Lebanon bank deposits up 4% on year  
Lebanon protesters block MPs as street battles erupt

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## Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Dubai ruler

Thu, 2019-11-28 15:42

DUBAI: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum on Thursday.

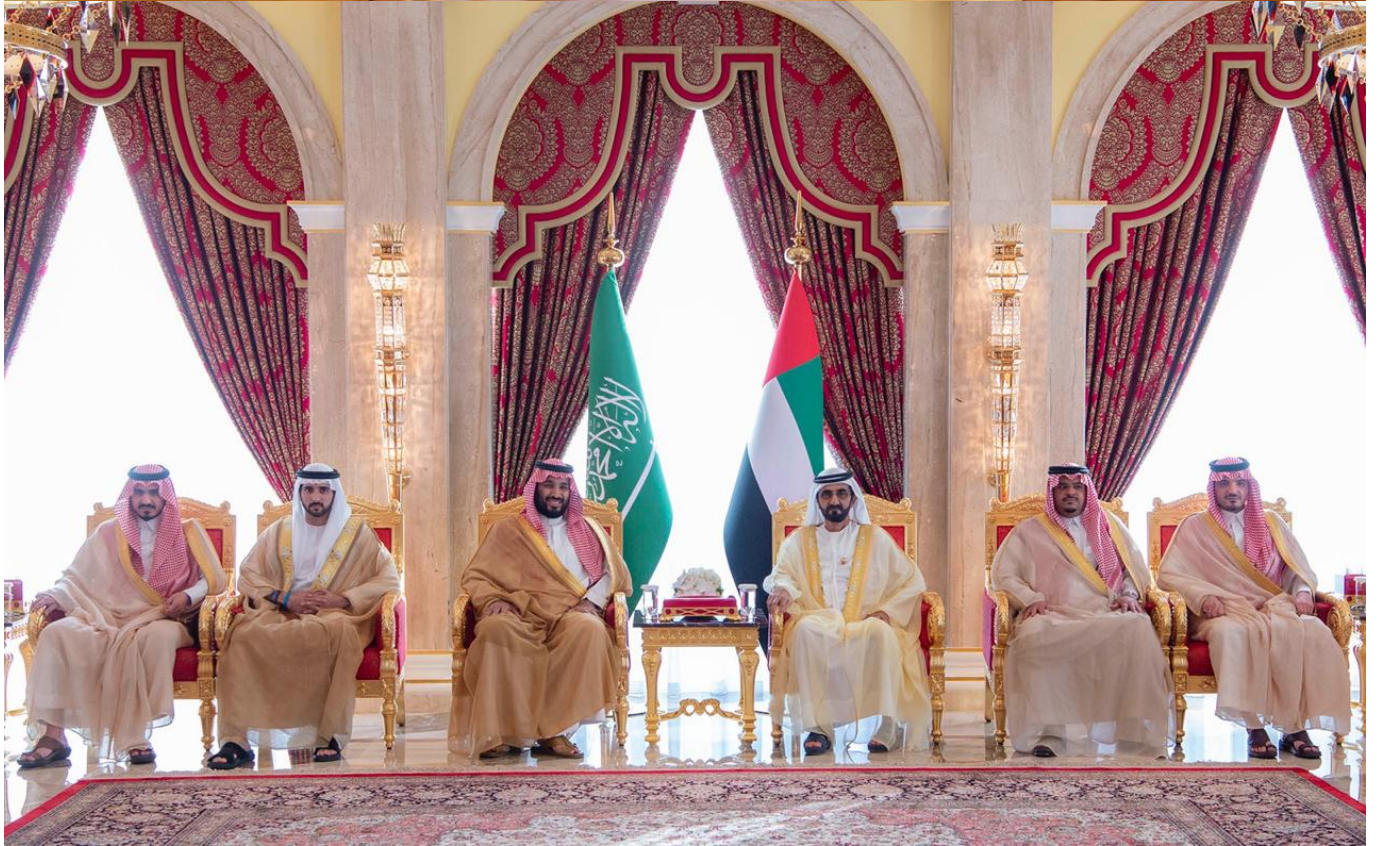
The meeting came after the crown prince arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday for an official visit.

The crown prince was received by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on arrival. The two leaders discussed regional issues and bilateral relations.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said Dubai had received the crown prince "with all the kindness and love."

"You've been welcomed among your family and loved ones," Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said. "History is made by the courageous..and today the region's history is being changed because of Mohammed bin Salman."

The Dubai ruler hosted a lunch for the Saudi crown prince and his accompanying delegation, which included the deputy emirs of Riyadh and Makkah, as well as several Saudi ministers. From the Emirate side, Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohamed bin Rashed attended the feast as well as a number of ministers.











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## [Iraqi forces kill 22 protesters in Nassiriya after Iranian consulate torched](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Thu, 2019-11-28 07:09

BAGHDAD: Iraqi security forces shot dead 22 protesters in the southern city of Nassiriya on Thursday, medical sources said, and authorities imposed a

curfew in Najaf after demonstrators burned its Iranian consulate.

Authorities set up joint military-civilian “crisis cells” to try to stem unrest and a paramilitary commander vowed to use force to stop any attack against Shiite Muslim religious authorities.

The torching of the consulate in Najaf, the southern holy city, escalated violence in Iraq after weeks of mass demonstrations that aim to bring down a government seen as corrupt and backed by Tehran.

It was the strongest expression yet of the anti-Iranian sentiment of Iraqi demonstrators as the gulf widens between a largely Iran-aligned ruling elite and an increasingly desperate Iraqi majority with few opportunities and minimal state support.

The inability of Iraq’s government and political class to deal with the unrest and answer protesters’ demands has fueled public anger.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi has promised electoral and anti-corruption reform but barely begun delivering while security forces have shot dead hundreds of mostly peaceful demonstrators in the streets of Baghdad and southern cities.

The protests, which began in Baghdad on Oct. 1 and have spread through southern cities, are the most complex challenge facing the Shiite-dominated ruling class that has controlled state institutions and patronage networks since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled long-time Sunni ruler Saddam Hussein.

Young, mostly Shiite protesters say politicians are corrupt, beholden to foreign powers – especially Iran – and they blame them for a failure to recover from years of conflict despite relative calm since the defeat of Islamic State in 2017.

Security forces opened fire on protesters who had gathered on a bridge in Nassiriya before dawn, medical sources said. Some 22 were killed and 180 wounded, they said.

A curfew was imposed in Najaf after protesters stormed and set fire to the Iranian consulate late on Wednesday. Businesses and government offices remained closed in the city, state media reported.

“The burning of the consulate last night was a brave act and a reaction from the Iraqi people – we don’t want the Iranians,” said Ali, a protester in Najaf. “There will be revenge from Iran I’m sure, they’re still here and the security forces are going to keep shooting us.”

A protester who witnessed the burning of the consulate said security forces had opened fire to try to stop it.

“All the riot police in Najaf and the security forces started shooting at us, as if we were burning Iraq as a whole,” he said, declining to give his name.

‘INFILTRATORS AND SABOTEURS’

The military commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an umbrella grouping of paramilitary groups whose most powerful factions are close to Tehran, said the groups would use full force against anyone trying to attack Iraq's most powerful Shiite cleric, who is based in Najaf.

"We will cut the hand of anyone trying to get near (Grand Ayatollah Ali) Al-Sistani," commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis said in a statement on the PMF website.

Observers said the events in Najaf would likely bring a tough response, rather than pushing the government into enacting reforms.

"Apart from casual statements ... the government has not announced any plan (or) given any clear account of what measures it will take," said Dhiaa Al-Asadi, adviser to powerful populist cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr. "Initiatives are going to be scarce."

Fanar Haddad, senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, said the government might use the burning of the Iranian consulate as a pretext for an even more heavy-handed crackdown.

"The downside from the protesters' point of view is this might reinforce the government's narrative that protesters are infiltrators, saboteurs and up to no good," he said.

"It sends a message to Iran but also works to the advantage of people like Muhandis ... (giving) a pretext to clamp down and framing what happened as a threat against Sistani."

Sistani rarely speaks on political issues but traditionally wields enormous influence over public opinion, especially in Iraq's southern Shiite heartland. He has used Friday sermons in recent weeks to urge the government to enact real reform and stop killing demonstrators.

Security forces have used live ammunition, tear gas and stun grenades against mostly unarmed protesters. Some demonstrators have lobbed petrol bombs, bricks and fired slingshots at police.

Authorities set up "crisis cells" in several provinces to try to restore order, a military statement said on Thursday. They would be led by provincial governors but include military leaders who would take charge of local security forces.

The violence has killed more than 350 people, according to police and medics.





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Iraq condemns attack on Iran's consulate in southern Najaf – Foreign Ministry  
Casualties mount as Iraq protesters block highways to press reforms

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## [CAATSA sanctions against Turkey: Is the genie out of the bottle?](#)

Author:

Thu, 2019-11-28 02:59

ANKARA: Ankara tested its S-400 Russian-made air defense system this week. That move is unlikely to shield the country from sanctions, though. Indeed, it seems likely the US Senate and the US Treasury will bring forward some sanction packages in retaliation against Turkey moving forward with the Russian system.

The chairman of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, the Republican Jim Risch, has already introduced legislation that would impose stiff sanctions on Ankara following its military incursion into northern Syria. The

senate only refrained from enacting those sanctions – which have bipartisan support – on the condition that Turkey remove the S-400 system from its arsenal.

The committee was set to re-examine the situation early in December, but is now understood to be growing impatient with Ankara's defiance and strongly considering the enforcement of the 2017 Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), along with banning US purchases of Turkish sovereign debt, and punishing the Turkish banking and energy sectors.

During his meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Nov. 13, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was asked to abandon the Russian system that began arriving in Turkey in July at the Murted Air Base in Ankara with much fanfare. In response, Washington removed Ankara from the multinational manufacturing program for F-35 joint-strike fighter jets and banned the sale of those aircraft to Turkey.

This week, Turkey unexpectedly tested a component of the S-400 radar system in Ankara for two days while US-made F-16 jets flew low across the Turkish capital. It had been expected that Turkey would keep the Russian system deactivated in order to avoid US sanctions.

Instead, Ankara is widely considered to have issued a challenge to Washington that will likely see more voices urging congress to push ahead with CAATSA sanctions against Turkey as the radar tests are seen as a threat to NATO's security systems.

CAATSA sanctions include a range of options – from denials of visas of Turkish officials and the prohibition of export licenses to harsher measures such as the blocking of any transactions with the US financial system.

In a recent interview with the Turkish broadcaster NTV, Erdogan said he would continue trying to resolve the S-400 dispute with Washington until April 2020, when the system would be fully deployed. On Wednesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu made it clear that Turkey needs the system. "A product is not bought to be kept in the box," he said.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, described Turkey as "a hybrid state" in global politics, meaning it hopes to deepen its ties with Russia while remaining a member of NATO.

"We haven't seen Turkey's final word regarding the S-400 issue. Due to (Turkey's) hybrid nature, every discussion that Erdogan has with Trump has to be run by (Russian President) Vladimir Putin afterwards before he can finalize whatever he discusses with Trump," he told Arab News.

There is a general expectation that Ankara will only declare its final intent after Putin's visit to Turkey in January.

Aaron Stein, director of the Middle East program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said the implementation of the sanctions is up to Trump, but he expects some congressional efforts to insert related clauses into the consensus bill for the National Defense Authorization Act.

“Trump is holding off an increasingly angry congress and, I think, eventually, he will capitulate,” Stein told Arab News.

According to Cagaptay, Erdogan is still betting on Trump’s desire to preserve Turkish-US ties to hold off sanctions.

“We can expect very severe sanction legislation to be brought forward both in the House and Senate. But every sanction package has national security waivers that Trump can use to rescue Turkey again. Analysts are chronically underestimating the role of the Trump-Erdogan relationship to rescue (Turkey) from the crisis,” he said.

Stein agrees, to an extent.

“Ankara has placed all its bets on Trump. It is working, for now. But let’s see what happens if Trump caves to his own Republican caucus,” he said. “I think much of Turkey’s response will depend on the severity of the sanctions.”



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Turkey’s efforts to solve S-400 missile row with US to continue until April