

# UN chief issues stark Libya warning as fighting rages south of Tripoli

Author:

Reuters

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TRIPOLI: UN chief Antonio Guterres pushed Friday to avoid a military escalation in Libya, as commander Khalifa Haftar's forces clashed with pro-government fighters south of the capital Tripoli.

Haftar on Thursday launched an offensive to take the capital, held by a UN-backed unity government and an array of militias.

The lightning assault was met with international appeals for restraint and an emergency UN Security Council meeting was set to be held later Friday.

I leave Libya with a heavy heart and deeply concerned. I still hope it is possible to avoid a bloody confrontation in and around Tripoli.

The UN is committed to facilitating a political solution and, whatever happens, the UN is committed to supporting the Libyan people.

– António Guterres (@antonioguterres) [April 5, 2019](#)

Guterres met Haftar in the eastern city of Benghazi at the end of a visit to the chaos-hit country, but neither his self-proclaimed Libyan National Army or the UN gave details of the talks.

"I leave Libya with a deep concern and a heavy heart," Guterres said in a statement.

"I still hope it will be possible to avoid a bloody confrontation in Tripoli."

Eastern Libyan forces seized the former Tripoli International Airport on the southern outskirts of the capital, a spokesman said.

Ahmed Al-Mesmari also told reporters his forces were in control of Tarhouna and Aziziya, two towns near Tripoli. He said five of his troops had been killed.

Militias in western Libya fought forces under rival army commander Khalifa Haftar on Friday, capturing 100 of his soldiers.

Earlier, LNA forces clashed with a pro-government alliance less than 50 kilometers south of the capital, a unity government source said.

Haftar's press office confirmed there had been "violent fighting on the edge of Tripoli with armed militias."

LNA forces had been pushed back Friday from a key checkpoint less than 30 kilometers from the capital, checking their offensive, a security source said.

Pro-government militiamen from the coastal town of Zawiya, west of Tripoli, retook the base after a "short exchange of fire," the source said on condition of anonymity.

The head of the UN-backed unity government, Fayez Al-Sarraj, visited the checkpoint on Friday accompanied by military commanders.

The Zawiya militia is one of dozens that have proliferated since the 2011 overthrow of dictator Muammar Qaddafi and are variously aligned with Sarraj's government and a rival administration in the east backed by Haftar.

Most of the pro-Haftar fighters who briefly captured the checkpoint late on Thursday were rival militiamen from the town of Sabratha, further west along the Mediterranean coast.

Dozens of them were captured and their vehicles seized, the security source said.

The Tripoli Protection Force, an alliance of pro-government militias in the capital, said its fighters had taken part in the recapture of the checkpoint. A convoy of vehicles from Haftar's forces on Thursday pushed toward the city of Gharyan, some 100 kilometers south of Tripoli on Thursday, witnesses and military sources said.

Haftar said "the time has come" to take Tripoli in an audio message released on Thursday, pledging to spare civilians and "state institutions."

Sarraj condemned the strongman's "escalation" and said he had ordered loyalist forces to prepare to "face all threats."

The announcement of the offensive came as Guterres was in Tripoli for talks with Sarraj ahead of a planned conference later this month on organizing elections.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that despite the flare-up preparations were continuing for the April conference.

The United States and its allies issued a joint statement urging "all parties to immediately de-escalate tensions."

"At this sensitive moment in Libya's transition, military posturing and threats of unilateral action only risk propelling Libya back toward chaos," they said.

Russia called for "all possible efforts to fully resolve the situation with peaceful political means."

"We believe that the main thing is for any actions not to lead to renewed bloodshed," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Analysts say the advance by Haftar's forces comes at a key moment as the UN bids to get elections back on track after an abortive effort last year.

"The risk of a flare-up has increased," said Jalel Harchaoui, a researcher at Clingendael Institute in The Hague.

"Capturing Tripoli... remains a possibility" for Haftar, with the support he receives from Saudi Arabia and its allies Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, he said.

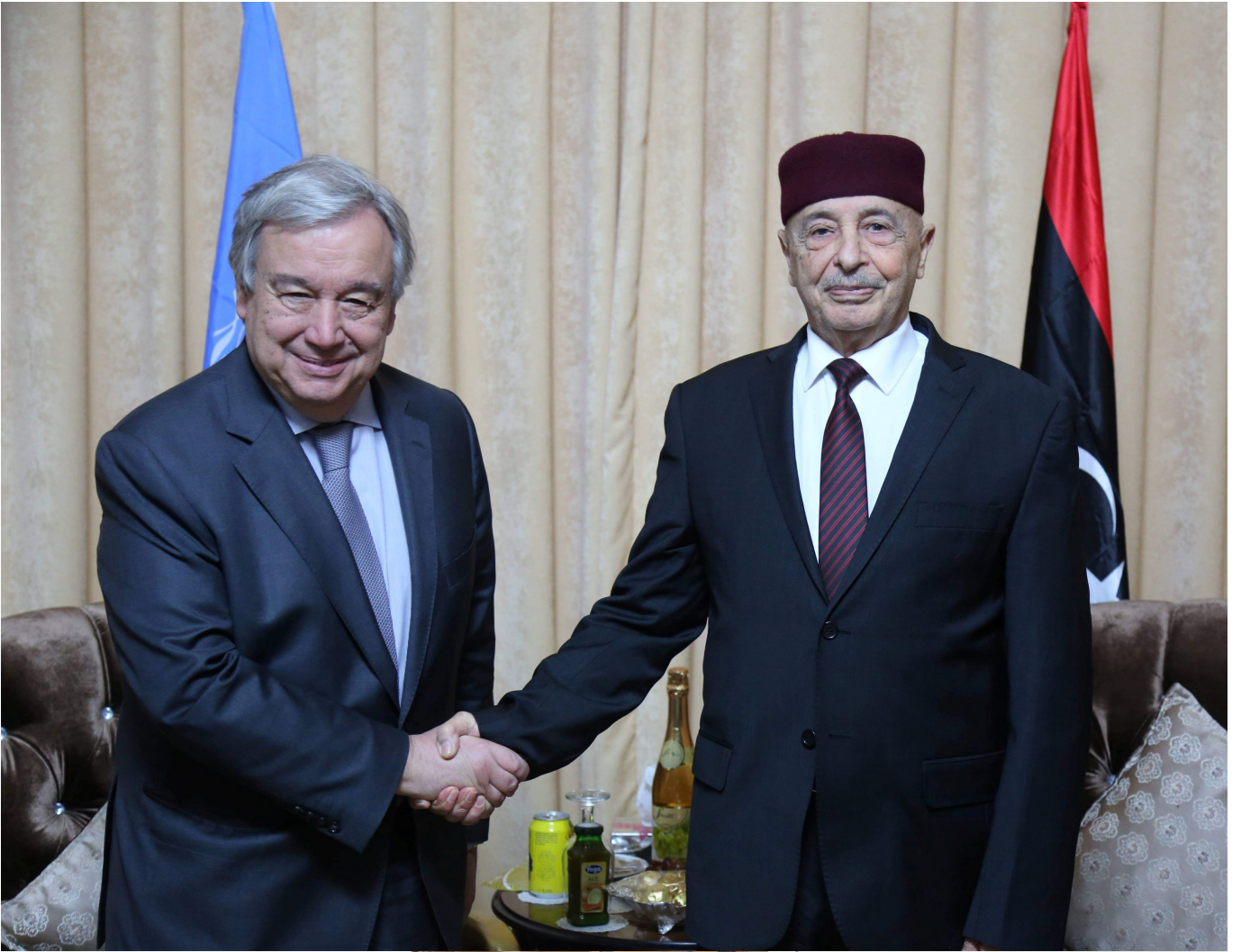
Haftar held talks in Riyadh late last month and his forces have reportedly received major arms deliveries from the UAE, including aircraft, despite a UN embargo.

They already overran most of the remote oil fields and oasis cities of the desert south during an offensive earlier this year.

The government's writ is now largely confined to the narrow coastal strip around Tripoli and third city Misrata to its east.









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Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar orders troops to advance on Tripoli  
Eastern Libyan forces ordered to move west to fight militants

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## [Chronology of protests that led to ouster of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-04-05 23:24

ALGIERS: Here is a timeline of the political drama in the north African nation:

- On Feb. 22, tens of thousands of people demonstrate in several cities in

the first major protests against Bouteflika's candidacy in planned April 18 elections. After rallying calls on social media, thousands turn out to chant "No fifth mandate!" – including in Algiers, where demonstrations have been banned since 2001. Police fire tear gas to block a march on the presidential palace, prompting some demonstrators to respond by throwing stones.

- On Feb. 26, thousands of students rally peacefully in Algiers. Two days later, a dozen journalists are detained for several hours as they participate in a rally against alleged censorship of protest coverage.
- On March 1, tens of thousands protest across the country, including in second and third cities Oran and Constantine. In Algiers, some protesters chant: "Regime murderers!"
- On March 2, Bouteflika, in Switzerland for nearly a week undergoing "routine medical checks," sacks his veteran campaign manager. The next day, state television airs a letter from the president in which he vows not to serve a full term if re-elected, and to organize early polls in which he will not stand. Shortly afterward, his new campaign manager formally submits the president's candidacy, just ahead of the deadline.
- On March 5, as thousands march again, the army chief pledges to guarantee national security, accusing unidentified groups of wanting a return to the "painful years" of Algeria's 1992-2002 civil war.
- Bouteflika on March 7 warns of "chaos" if troublemakers infiltrate the demonstrations.
- On March 8, tens of thousands in several cities take part in the biggest rallies yet against Bouteflika's candidacy.
- On March 10, Bouteflika returns from Switzerland. The next day, he pulls out of the race and cancels the elections. "There will not be a fifth term," he announces on official media. Interior Minister Noureddine Bedoui is named prime minister, replacing unpopular premier Ahmed Ouyahia.
- On March 15, a huge crowd marches through Algiers for a fourth consecutive Friday, demanding Bouteflika's departure. Major protests rock other key cities.
- On March 18, Bouteflika issues a statement confirming he will stay on as president beyond the end of his term on April 28 and until new elections are held, following a constitutional review.
- On March 22, exactly a month after the protests started, hundreds of thousands of Algerians again stage demonstrations across the country.
- On March 26 army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah demands Bouteflika step down or be declared medically unfit to rule. A day later the ruling party's long-time coalition ally, the National Rally for Democracy (RND) of former Prime Minister Ouyahia, says it "recommends the resignation of the president."
- On March 28, the president of Algeria's Business Leaders Forum, Ali Haddad,

close to Bouteflika, resigns. The next day, hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters throng the streets of Algiers and other cities. Demonstrators say top loyalists' moves to abandon Bouteflika do not go far enough.

- On March 31, Bouteflika names a new government headed by Bedoui. Salah, the armed forces chief who has called for the president to step down, remains as deputy defense minister.
- On April 1, a statement on state media says Bouteflika will resign before his mandate expires on April 28.
- On Tuesday, Salah demands immediate impeachment proceedings against Bouteflika. Shortly afterward, state television reports that the president has informed the Constitutional Council that he is resigning effective immediately.
- On Wednesday, the Constitutional Council officially accepts his resignation and informs Parliament that his post is vacant. The new government makes a series of conciliatory moves toward the press, opposition, NGOs and unions. Bouteflika apologizes to the Algerian people, in a letter published by state media, but says he is "proud" of his contribution.



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Bouteflika seeks forgiveness from Algerians Algerians demand 'radical' change despite Bouteflika's vow to quit



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## Dozens of Palestinians wounded in Israel border clashes

Author:

AFP

ID:

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GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories: Dozens of Palestinians were wounded along the Israel-Gaza border fence during weekly protests Friday, the health ministry in the enclave said.

At least 83 people were hospitalized in Gaza, the ministry said in a statement, as thousands again demonstrated along the heavily fortified border.

It did not say how many of those were gunshot wounds but three people were reported to be in critical condition.

Numbers were lower than recent Fridays, however, an AFP correspondent said.

A spokeswoman for the Israeli military said some 10,500 Palestinians were taking part in the events, some of whom were throwing stones at soldiers.

At least 263 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the protests and clashes began a year ago.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period in Gaza-related violence.

Five men were killed on Saturday as tens of thousands gathered for the first anniversary of the protests.

Israel says its strong response is necessary to defend its borders and accuses Hamas, the political movement that rules the Gaza Strip, of orchestrating violence there.

A February United Nations report accused Israeli soldiers of intentionally firing on civilians, saying it could amount to war crimes.



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## [Yemen schoolchildren killed by unexploded ordnance: UN](#)

Fri, 2019-04-05 15:45

DUBAI: Two children were killed and eight critically wounded when an unexploded bomb went off at a school in the Houthi-held Yemeni capital, the UN children's agency said on Friday.

A child had found the bomb and brought it to Al-Fatah school in the Hamdan district of Sanaa on Wednesday to show friends, UNICEF said in a statement. The casualties were aged between 12 and 14.

Children often fall victim to unexploded ordnance, failing to fully appreciate the dangers.

"It is highly likely, as we've seen in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, that children will continue to be killed even when there's a lull in violence or the violence comes to an end," said UNICEF's regional chief of communications, Juliette Touma.

The Saudi Project for Landmine Clearance (MASAM) in Yemen extracted 14 anti-personnel mines, 625 anti-vehicle mines, 67 explosive devices and 665 unexploded ordnance – totaling 1,371 mines – during three weeks of February. A total of 44,743 mines have been extracted since the beginning of the project. An estimated 1 million mines have been planted by the Iranian-backed Houthi militias in Yemen over the past three years claiming hundreds of civilian lives.

MASAM aims to dismantle mines in Yemen to protect civilians and ensure that urgent humanitarian supplies are delivered safely. Houthis are developing anti-vehicle mines and turning them into antipersonnel explosives to intimidate and terrorize civilians.

The vast number of landmines continues to pose a threat to the lives of Yemeni people.



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# Erdogan says Turkey continues S-400 payments and US did not offer same terms for Patriots

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday Turkey was continuing to make payments under its deal with Russia to buy S-400 missile defense systems and the United States had not presented the same terms when it offered to sell Patriot missiles.

"The S-400 holds an important place in our talks. The United States' arguments are very wrong. We finished the S-400 process and our payments continue," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul when asked about his planned talks in Moscow next week.





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