

Unified international approach required for Libya elections: Ex-UN official

Author:

Thu, 2022-05-05 21:22

LONDON: Elections can re-harness Libya's post-Gaddafi optimism of 2012, but only with the support of a unified international approach, a former UN official said on Thursday at an event attended by Arab News.

Registration for elections due to take place on Dec. 24 last year opened in November with strong turnout, but the nationwide vote was postponed amid disputes between rival factions on laws governing the elections.

Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah subsequently informed reporters in January that the intention was now to hold the elections in June this year.

Speaking at the launch of his book "All Necessary Measures? The United Nations and International Intervention in Libya," Ian Martin, who oversaw Libya's first post-Gaddafi elections in 2012 as UN head of mission, said the country was crying out for new officials.

"There's no doubt the country needs these elections, and the fact that such large numbers of people appear to be registering as candidates speaks to this," he added.

"The elections in 2012 were a success, but the government that was formed failed to address key issues linked to the ongoing conflict.

"And while the 2014 election produced the House of Representatives, it was with significantly fewer registrations and public confidence.

"Even so, after eight years of the same people officiating over the country, it seems the population are in search of change."

Noting that it is often external actors who "push for" swift elections in the wake of violent government overthrow, Martin said in the case of Libya, the desire for democracy was internal but was failed by a disjointed approach from the international community.

He urged external actors to come together and work out a plan to support the pending elections in a unified manner to address the decade-long turmoil gripping the country.

Part of this, he said, means not only recognizing the legitimacy of the winner but engaging them.

"I think these elections can be a success, but there are certain requirements for this; firstly, there has to be a set framework for them," Martin added.

“The 2012 framework worked quite well in electing the government, but it failed to address the urgent issue of security because it lacked the authority required, and this wasn’t helped by the fragmented engagement of international actors.

“Security remains a pressing concern, and resultantly the success of any new government will depend on its capacity to engage the international community in addressing it.”



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[Abdul Hamid Dbeibah](#)

UN official: Libya elections could be rescheduled for June
UN envoy says hard to hold Libya elections in December

[Yemeni government calls for global action to end Houthi violations of truce in Yemen](#)

Thu, 2022-05-05 20:08

LONDON: The Yemeni government has called on the UN and its special envoy to

the country, Hans Grundberg, to take “serious and real” action to end the continuing and escalating Houthi violations of a truce that came into effect on April 2, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Thursday.

“The escalation of the blatant Houthi attacks culminated in targeting the Taiz Security Department with drones (on Wednesday), which led to the injury of 10 people, including civilians, material damage and panic among children and families celebrating Eid Al-Fitr in a nearby park,” a government source said, according to a report by Yemeni news agency SABA.

The source stressed that the Iranian-backed militia’s repeated violations of the truce represent a real test of how serious the UN and the wider international community are about putting pressure on the Houthi militia to comply with peace efforts.

They also said that the continuing terrorist attacks by the militia and its consistent failure to respect the UN-brokered humanitarian truce from the moment it was implemented reflect the actions of the militia and its supporters to undermine all opportunities for peace and efforts to find a political solution to the crisis.

The government source also highlighted the need for the siege on Taiz Governorate to end immediately, in accordance with the terms of the truce.



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Yemen truce could help reverse humanitarian crisis: UNUN Yemen envoy seeks to rescue truce, resume flights from Sanaa airport

[Sudan's electric rickshaws cut costs, help environment](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-05-04 23:58

KHARTOUM: Sudanese entrepreneur Mohamed Samir watches proudly as workers assemble garishly colored rickshaws, unique in the North African nation because they run on electricity in a bid to tackle soaring costs.

In Sudan, three-wheeler vehicles – tuk-tuk rickshaws for passengers, and motorbike tricycles with a trailer attached for carrying goods – have long been a popular and affordable transport. Tens of thousands ply the streets of the capital Khartoum alone.

But with Sudan gripped by a dire economic crisis made worse by political unrest following a military coup last October, the cost of running petrol-oil engines has soared.

“People who use the fuel-run rickshaws are in pain, and they know the value of what we are offering,” 44-year-old engineer Samir said at the factory in North Khartoum.

“We want to offer solutions.”

There is a critical environmental impact too. Smoky petrol-powered vehicles, aside from fueling climate change, cause “significant noise and air pollution,” the UN Environment Programme warned in a report from 2020.

“Emissions from the three-wheelers reduce visibility, cause damage to vegetation and lead to respiratory illnesses in people,” it added.

Samir says the new electric vehicles check three boxes of the UN’s sustainable development goals: The fight against poverty, protection of health and protection of the environment.

“It also makes much less noise,” he added.

Samir faced years of grinding challenges to get his factory up and running, but once he opened, business has been brisk, selling over 100 goods tricycles and 12 passenger rickshaws since last year.

Fuel costs have more than doubled since the coup. On top of that, repeated fuel shortages have left drivers queueing up for hours outside filling stations to top up their tanks.

Drivers complain of earning less than they spend.

That was the key reason fruit seller Bakry Mohamed sold his old petrol-powered tuk-tuk and bought an electric tricycle last year.

"It used to cost more than it brought in," said Mohamed, who uses his vehicle to carry a stall of fruits through the streets. "Plus, I had to worry about where to find fuel, and where to change the engine oil."

Mohamed speaks proudly of his new electric tricycle.

"It has been extremely cost-efficient," Mohamed said. "Now, there are no more fuel queues. I charge it once, and it keeps running the entire week. My daily income doubled."

Some drivers struggle when they first make the switch, but Samir said there have been no major complaints – and the electric batteries require less maintenance than fuel-run engines.

"It's new, and they are not used to electric-run vehicles," he said.

The three-wheelers take about eight hours to be fully charged, with a tuk-tuk tricycle able to cover 80-100 kilometers (50 to 60 miles), while a rickshaw's range is even further, between 100 and 120 kilometers.

But amid the economic crisis, Sudan's electricity supplies have suffered too, with frequent power cuts.

In January, the government hiked electricity prices, with households seeing an increase of about 500 percent in the bills.

Yet Samir said the electric rickshaws are still more efficient and far cheaper to run than alternatives.

"The cost of charging the battery remains less than that of the fuel," Samir said, with a single electric charge costing less than half a liter of fuel.

Others, looking skywards to Sudan's year-round sunshine, have freed themselves from dependency on the power grid too.

Amjad Hamdan Hameidan, who bought several electric-powered rickshaws, powers his three-wheeler on the go.

"I use flexible solar panels," Hameidan said. "We place them on top of the rickshaw while driving, and it keeps the batteries charged."

Samir argues his factory is helping Sudan keep pace in a fast-developing world. "Everything run by fuel will be replaced with electricity sooner or later," Samir said. "We have the opportunity now to keep up with the rest of

the world.”



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Sudan frees ex-officials in effort to end political impasse
Clashes in Sudan's West Darfur killed over 210: governor

[Yazidis, displaced again, fear more strife in Iraqi homeland](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-05-04 23:22

ZAKHO, Iraq: Iraqis in a northern town still traumatized by memories of the Daesh group feared more violence Tuesday after hostilities between the military and a local militia erupted, people internally displaced by the fighting said.

Tensions reached a fever pitch when Iraq's military launched an offensive in Sinjar district on Sunday to clear out armed elements of the YBS, a local militia comprising largely minority Yazidis.

The YBS has ties to the insurgent Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, a separatist movement banned in Turkey.

The heavy fighting prompted over 3,000 people, most of them Yazidis, to flee toward the Kurdish-run north. It wasn't clear if there were any dead or wounded in the fighting: Iraqi officials have released no figures and have not commented on casualties.

Fighting ceased Tuesday and the Iraqi army said it had re-established control of Sinjar. But the violence and subsequent displacement dealt a blow to Baghdad's efforts to encourage more Yazidis to return to their ancestral homeland after years of war.

An agreement was brokered by the United Nations in October 2020 between Baghdad and the Kurdish-run government to implement order in the area. Under that agreement, the federal police are the sole state authority.

The accord has not proven successful. Critics have said this is because it did not consult powerful local forces in Sinjar or even Yazidi leaders. Local residents, who also include Arab Sunnis, are also deeply divided.

Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Al-Shammari, deputy commander of Iraq's Joint Operations Command, told a news conference in Sinjar that Iraqi forces have imposed security and law and order and have opened all the roads in the district.

"The goal of these operations was to impose the (rule of) law and security to secure a safe environment so that we can rebuild Sinjar and return the displaced."

But Yazidis, many displaced now for a second time, are reluctant to return.

Most of the displaced fled north to the Kurdish-run region where they were distributed across different camps. Many first fled in 2014 after IS's brutal onslaught and returned in recent years to rebuild their homes.

The memories are still fresh in Sewe's mind. His was among the dozens of families who made their way to the Chemishko camp in Zakho on Monday. He only gave The Associated Press his first name.

"It is the second time that we escaped," he said. "We don't know where to go, we don't have a place to go, and we don't know where we are going now."

The YBS was created in 2014 with assistance from the PKK. They proved instrumental in driving out IS elements from the area after the collapse of the Iraqi army. The YBS has since remained a powerful local force in the area, citing deep mistrust of the federal government forces deployed to protect the area.



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For Iraq's persecuted Yazidis, return plan is fraught with risk
Displaced Yazidis head back to Sinjar as lockdown bites

[Expats prepare to vote, marking the start of Lebanon elections](#)

Wed, 2022-05-04 19:28

BEIRUT: Lebanese expats voting on Friday will inaugurate the first phase of this month's parliamentary elections.

Expats will vote in 59 countries, but just 10 nations will commence the first phase of voting on Friday. The expats in these countries, which include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria and Iraq, have a Friday weekend.

The second phase of voting takes place on May 8 in countries that have a Sunday weekend.

The elections in Lebanon will take place on May 15 with candidates competing in 15 districts in all of the governorates and districts to select new representatives for 128 parliamentary seats.

The term of the current parliament, elected four years ago, will end on May 21.

The code of conduct for candidates and media outlets comes into force 24 hours before the vote.

All means of invitation, intimidation and sectarian polarization have been used by the ruling parties to ensure their continuation in parliament, defeating tireless attempts by the opposition to turn the tables.

Regions with Christian influence top the list of candidates, with 269 registered in Mount Lebanon and 292 in the north.

The south, a region with a Shiite majority, has the lowest rate of candidacy, with just 105 standing, while Beirut registered 174 and the Bekaa region 203.

Nadim Abdelmalak, president of Lebanon's supervisory commission for elections, criticized "the chaotic opinion polls that claim the victory of one candidate and the failure of another, despite the warnings sent by the commission to those concerned. The election requires every opinion poll prepared for the announcement to be provided to the commission."

Abdelmalak criticized "the magnitude of hate speech and treason, given that the electoral law requires that such rhetoric be mitigated, steering away from abasement, revilement, incitement to sectarian conflict and sometimes terrorism, perhaps used to reinforce sectarianism."

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections said that money has been spent to buy loyalties to secure victory, in addition to providing aid, promises and electoral bribes.

The association added that violence, pressure tactics, influence, public resources, racist and sectarian rhetoric, libel and defamation had all been used by some candidates seeking an electoral advantage.

Intimidation began in the Sarafand region of southern Lebanon to prevent opponents of Shiite groups Hezbollah and the Amal Movement from announcing their candidacy.

Intimidation was also exercised in the northern Bekaa region by the same duo against other Shiite candidates, including Sheikh Abbas Al-Jawhari. Gunshots and rockets were fired in an electoral meeting he held.

Candidate Hassan Raad was beaten at a religious gathering in Baalbek. The Amal Movement and Hezbollah have previously pushed some families to disown female candidates participating in competing lists.

As a result, three Shiite candidates – Ramez Amhaz, Hayman Mchayek and Rifaat Al-Masri – withdrew from the election.

Intimidation also took place in the northern region of Jbeil. An unidentified drone was seen hovering over the district of candidate Faris Saeed, who opposes Hezbollah and the Iranian influences in Lebanese politics. A car was

also spotted around his house in Qartaba allegedly monitoring his activities.

The inciteful atmosphere reached the highest level when Sheikh Nazir Jishi called for the election of Hezbollah's candidates and attacked the Lebanese Forces Party, using derogatory terms against women in predominantly Christian tourist areas, to the extent that he was renounced by Hezbollah and the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council.

The visits of Gebran Bassil, president of the Free Patriotic Movement, to some regions have been met with popular denunciations against the backdrop of Bassil's alliance with Hezbollah. During his visit to the northern Lebanese region of Akkar, Bassil's convoy was blocked, and images and signs of the party were burned, escalating into a violent clash.

Sunni voters are divided into two categories. The first, with the majority being loyal supporters of Saad Hariri's Future Movement, will abstain from voting, whereas the second group says there is a chance for change, noting that the Sunni scene controls more than half of the electoral districts in Lebanon.

Hassan Nasrallah, chief of Hezbollah, described the vote as "the most important political battle in Lebanon." In March, he stressed that "it's important for all Hezbollah's MPs to win and that we should work toward obtaining the majority."



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200 European observers to monitor Lebanese elections; Aoun warns of low voter turnout
Lebanese expats angry with Beirut over potential internet collapse