

Mercury is working with the Government of National Accord (GNA), the U.N.-backed interim government in Libya. I am submitting this op-ed for consideration on behalf of Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj. If you have any questions or need additional information for verification, please reach me at 609-802-3002.

If you are not interested in this for some reason, I hope you will let me know so I can try elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration!

Kind regards,  
Beth DeFalco

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***Op-Ed Submission***

*By Fayed al-Sarraj, Prime Minister of Libya*

Since toppling Muammar Ghaddafi in 2011, our country has struggled to achieve peace. However, following the establishment of the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in 2015, we have made meaningful progress. In partnership with the U.N., we were working towards much-anticipated national elections which would have ushered in a new, freely-elected government.

Instead, we are now fighting an aspiring military dictator funded and armed by external actors who wish to pursue their narrow self-interests at Libya's expense.

Instead of building on economic gains to create opportunities and prosperity in the country, we are defending Tripoli's civilians from the militias of Khalifa Haftar, accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

Instead of focusing on continuing to defeat ISIS, we are diverting forces in an effort to prevent what is likely to be a protracted civil war.

Hundreds of Libyans have already been killed, more than 40,000 have been displaced from their homes and hundreds of thousands could soon flee for Europe.

Haftar's so-called Libyan National Army is neither Libyan nor an army; it is a collection of militias relying on large contingents of foreign fighters. What's more, he has saddled Libya with billions of dollars in debt to fund attacks against his own people. His son, meanwhile, has stolen hundreds of millions of dollars in cash from Libya's Central Bank with no condemnation whatsoever from his father.

Amid his ongoing quest to take control of Libya with brutality and bloodshed, Haftar has said publicly that Libyans aren't "ready" for democracy, and even timed his Tripoli attack to derail the U.N.-sponsored National Congress that was to be the precursor to national elections.

These are warning signs of what life would be like if Haftar's militias seize power.

Many of our U.N. allies have taken an assertive position on the importance of de-escalating the crisis here and on brokering an immediate ceasefire. Yet others are using Libya as a proxy battleground for geopolitical influence, making Haftar's war possible through funding, training, military equipment, reconnaissance and even participating in operations targeting civilians.

The military escalation is creating chaos that will be exploited by ISIS and other terror groups which the GNA, in close cooperation with the U.S., had been successful in eliminating in Libya. Also, because of the violence, our children cannot attend school regularly, increasing the threat of radicalization.

Far from a partner in the fight against terror, Haftar will enable its resurgence and is known to have radical Salafists operating among his combatants. Put simply, his actions put us all at greater risk by facilitating the expansion of global terrorist groups.

Libya's problems cannot be solved through military means and violence against civilians. The only way forward is through political negotiations and national reconciliation. The GNA has been genuinely committed to both, and has set in motion Libya's economic recovery with increased oil production and a series of reforms.

We remain hopeful that President Trump will succeed where previous presidents have not – that he will use his power to help us create peace, stability, and security in our country and wider region. American influence is needed to reign in the foreign interference, thus creating the space for Libyans to solve Libya's problems.

The world has long looked to America as an example of what democracy can bring: liberty, stability and prosperity. Libya is ready for democracy. Libya is past due for democracy.

Libyans will not accept another Ghaddafi-style military dictatorship.