

Libyan Oil Export Agreement Between GNA and LNA the First Step Toward Peace

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Vice-Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya, Ahmed Maiteeq announced that he had reached a deal on behalf of the Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli and the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Brigadier General Khalifa Haftar. The LNA confirmed that an agreement to resume oil exports from Libya had been brokered with the GNA, who have been in armed conflict with each other.

Maiteeq is a Libyan businessman who was elected Prime Minister in 2014, but that vote was later ruled invalid. He now serves as a Vice-Chairman of the Presidential Council headed by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj.

Libya has been split between rival administrations based in Tripoli and Tobruk following the chaos which ensued after the US-NATO war on Libya to oust Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

The Sarraj government is controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and aligned with Qatar and Turkey. The Muslim Brotherhood is seen as an outlawed terrorist organization in several countries, including Egypt, Russia, and Syria. Haftar is fighting to establish a secular Libya and is against the Islamists' political ideology of Radical Islam.

Libya lost about \$9 billion because of the oil export blockade, which was caused by Libyan tribes that opposed the distribution of oil revenues they saw as uneven.

Previously, all oil revenues went to the Libyan Central Bank and were further distributed among the regions of the country. However, the tribes in the east and south of Libya, where the main oil fields are located, believed that a significant part of the income falls into the hands of the Islamists controlling the GNA in Tripoli, who accused the LNA of blocking oil exports.

Fair distribution of oil revenues is one of the most important issues that was reflected in the decisions of the Berlin Summit and UN Security Council resolution 2510. However, for a long time, it was not possible to solve it.

Ahmed Maiteeq and Khalifa Haftar have now achieved an agreement that meets the demands of the Libyan tribes. A joint commission would be established to control oil production and the distribution of oil revenues between the two sides of the armed conflict. This would open the way for the flow of funds into Libya and the re-establishment of basic services such as electricity, which recently caused protests in both the west and east of the country.

The agreement between Maiteeq and Haftar also opens up the prospect of further

negotiating in Libya and ending the war. This is important for the stability of the entire region, given that just a few months ago Egypt was ready to intervene in the Libyan conflict. If the agreement holds, it will become a symbol of a new *détente* in Libya, which is in the interests of both the country's citizens, neighboring countries, and the entire international community.

The agreement will be an additional factor that will put a hold on the military situation on the ground because otherwise, it threatens the resumption of armed clashes. In the future, an oil deal could help create conditions for a sustainable inter-Libyan inclusive political dialogue.

The agreement between Maiteeq and Haftar has been a catalyst for change within the GNA. Many figures, most notably Khaled al-Mishri, opposed it. Their positions are significantly weakened against the backdrop of a successful Maiteeq policy, which demonstrated that he could conduct effective negotiations with the opposite side of the conflict. Thus, in the face of the Libyan public and the international community, he has proved to be an effective diplomat on which to bet.

Major General Ahmed al-Mismari, the spokesperson for the LNA, said recently that the "terrorist Muslim Brotherhood" Khaled al-Mishri, is an agent for Qatar in Libya.

Al-Mismari used documents from the Qatari Foreign Ministry to prove that al-Mishri receives a salary of US\$250,000 a month from the Qatari intelligence services for his work in Libya. Al-Mismari went on to prove a link between the Muslim Brotherhood and the ISIS terrorists in Libya.

"I declare my sincere intention to hand over the tasks of power to the coming executive authority in time no later than October," Sarraj said recently in Tripoli. His announcement to step-down comes amid talks between the warring parties on ending the Libyan conflict. Recently, the two sides agreed to hold elections within 18 months and appoint a new government.

The announcement comes amid talks between Libya's rival factions on ending the country's conflict. Earlier this month, they had agreed to hold elections within 18 months and appoint a new government.

Chances of Maiteeq to take the post of Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya after the resignation of Sarraj is increasing. At the same time, since Maiteeq's people are likely to occupy key positions in the joint committee on oil exports, the Libyan politician will get powerful leverage to influence domestic politics.

Maiteeq is a secular politician with a good reputation. He is not a completely powerless figure like Sarraj, or warlords like Fathi Bashagha, or a direct supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood like Khaled al-Mishri.

Fathi Bashagha is of Turkish origin and is the current Minister of Interior of the (GNA) appointed by Sarraj on 7 October 2018.

Bashagha is described as a war-lord controlling the Mahjoub and Halbous brigades in Misrata, being the Muslim Brotherhood's agent in the GNA, and being tied to the government of Turkey. Some journalists have seen Bashagha playing a role in the GNA as important as the minister Sarraj.

Maiteeq is not affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and therefore looks like the best politician to possibly coordinate the peace process on the part of the GNA.

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