The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum Disappointed those who Participated

The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, which was held in Tunis from November 9-15 under the auspices of the UN, and on which people had pinned particular hope for reaching a political compromise, and resolving the conflict in Libya, disappointed its participants and the countries in the region, leaving more questions than answers. Many observers noted that the UNSMIL failed to exert any impact on creating the constitutional and legal foundation for Libya, the participants did not agree on moving the Libyan capital, and did not examine ways to resolve the conflicts between the country’s eastern and western parts. A serious reason for public outrage was the presence of the head of the “Ministry of the Interior” for the Government of National Accord (GNA) Fathi Bashagha among the candidates considered for the post of Prime Minister of Libya.

Included in the principal scope of unresolved problems is putting together a transitional administration that is supposed to govern the country until elections are held. Here this entails both the Presidential Council and the Provisional Government (the Council is supposed to consist of a leader and two deputies that represent all three regions of Libya - Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan - and the head of the government and that person’s two deputies also need to be from different regions).

After Stephanie Williams, a US citizen, who is Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs in Libya, introduced a document that proposed having Tripoli retain the status of Libya’s administrative capital (although before that there were discussions that it would be moved to another city, Sirte) the antagonism between the forum’s participants intensified noticeably. Libyan political analyst Adel Khattab called this project openly provocative, since in this case the new Presidential Council would be subject to pressure from the Muslim Brotherhood - a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation - as well as from illegal armed groups with the GNA and other extremists, something that could lead to a new spiral of escalation in this North African state, and even to war. Along with that, this Libyan analyst underscored that Williams’s proposal clearly pushed Libya towards the scenario that cropped up in 2012 and continues to the present day, since this project is not aimed at resolving the country’s main problems, but rather, quite the contrary, is analogous to the Skhirat Agreement that plunged the North African country into chaos.

This means that virtually the only achievement of the meeting was the setting the date of December 24, 2021 for future elections in the country - a date that marks the 70th anniversary since Libya declared independence. However, no general consensus was reached on this issue either, since the Justice and Construction Party, controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization, that is banned in Russia, did not support holding elections in Libya in 2021. A similar point of view was expressed by representatives from the Supreme Council of State (SCS), who were clearly trying to delay the elections in order to score additional political points. It should be noted that representatives from the groups mentioned above, according to the Arab Research Center, are the least popular among Libyan politicians, and Khalifa Haftar, the commander of the Libyan National Army (LNA), leads in the ratings.

Speaking about the reasons for the backsliding at the Libyan forum, Tunisian writer and journalist Ghazi Moalla said that it had turned into something like a marketplace and stock market, where a number of participants in the intra-Libyan talks were offered cash rewards for votes to support a certain candidate for the post of the country’s prime minister. The journalist said that these “bidding sessions” were held without any hesitation in the Mövenpick Hotel and Golden Tulip Carthage Residence, located next to the forum.

Another activist from the African state, Adil Khattab, spoke about the same thing, and specifically emphasized that people lobbied especially hard to convince the participants in the talks to elect the “Minister of the Interior” for the
GNA, Fathi Bashagha, as the new Prime Minister of Libya. The amount of the bribes was astronomical, and closely echoed the “stock market” at the Four Seasons, where negotiations will take place for the next phase of the forum for the North African state. According to him, the price of one vote is set in a special price listing for the event, and it ranges from 300,000 - 750,000 dollars. The total amount of the bribes slated for distribution is approximately USD 30 million.

One member of the Libyan House of Representatives, Jabril Wahida, declared that despite these attempts the Libyan parliament managed to prevent the GNA and the Muslim Brotherhood (banned in the Russian Federation) from pushing through the nomination of GNA “Minister of the Interior” Fathi Bashagha to the post of the new head of government. And, according to him, even the media outlets financed by terrorists, Turkey, and Western countries could not help with that, even though they tried to promote the candidacy of GNA “Minister of the Interior” for the post of prime minister, whom they declared a “savior”.

Libyan political analyst and writer Muhammad Amami accused the UN of organizing the negotiations in Tunis too hastily, owing to which they repeatedly found themselves on the verge of collapse, “tripping over pitfalls”, and becoming drawn out. In particular, he drew special attention to the provocative nature, to say the very least, of the proposal put forth by Stephanie Williams, the Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs in Libya, and GNA leadership to hold an “exchange” of positions, making President of the Libyan House of Representatives Aguila Saleh the chairman of the Presidential Council, while giving the post of prime minister to “Minister of the Interior” Fathi Bashagha. But after this “idea” was aired, the delegates from eastern Libya threatened to abandon the negotiations.

Serious accusations were leveled at Stephanie Williams, who is the acting head of UNSMIL, by one member of the House of Representatives, Ali Saidi, who stressed that it was she who was to blame for the fact that most of the forum participants turned out to be members of various radical groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization (banned in the Russian Federation - Ed.). According to the statements made by the Libyan politician, by dividing the negotiation process into several stages, Williams managed to ensure that the jihadists had an advantage in terms of numbers, and as a result this representative from an international organization managed to remove from the political scene people who are real national leaders, and enjoy the support of the people.

Regional political analyst Abdallah Shibani condemned the actions taken by the UN Mission and the role played by its acting head Stephanie Williams from the US, as he too accused her of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and pointed out that, after receiving a majority in the Committee they would certainly act to make decisions that are beneficial only to them, meaning radicalize Libyan society. And, in this regard, the actions taken by Williams and the United States, which is clearly behind all this, are causing more than just misunderstanding in Libyan society, and in the region as a whole.

The role of Stephanie Williams was also given low marks by Libyan political analyst Muhammad Kashut, who emphasized that the results of her activities are only exacerbating the situation in the country, since they chiefly advance those who serve the interests of terrorists, and Turkey, to help resolve issues that are of national importance.

Against this backdrop, the North African Amazigh and Tubu tribes also criticized Williams’s selection of participants for the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Tunis, and threatened to reject the results stemming from the dialogue. Hisham Ahmadi, a member of the Libyan Amazigh Supreme Council, told the publication Libya24 that tribal representatives should be full-fledged participants in the forum, because they are an important part of the country - and political stability in Libya will not be achieved if the opinion of this people is not taken into account. At the same time, he stressed that the Amazigh and Tubu were not invited to Tunis, although the issue of their participation had previously been discussed with representatives from the UN mission.

However, criticism directed toward S. Williams is resounding not only in countries in the region, but also in Western Europe, which is not interested in encouraging profanation, but rather in taking genuine steps to help resolve the situation in Libya. For example, the Belgian publication EU Reporter emphasized the negative impact that S. Williams had on the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Tunis. The UN Mission to Support Libya (UNSMIL), by making GNA “Minister of the Interior” Fathi Bashagha - a candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization’s party (banned in the Russian Federation - Ed.) - a front runner at the meetings, has turned a blind eye to the corruption schemes spun by the “minister”.

Regarding the actions of the American diplomat S. Williams in Tunis, the issue concerning her authority also arises, since on November 4 her mandate expired, and no other appointment has been made yet. Consequently, all the actions by this UN special envoy to try to resolve the crisis in the country are no longer legitimate; nevertheless,
Williams actively lobbied for appointing the current GNA “Minister of the Interior” Fathi Bashagha as prime minister to serve US interests.

Under these conditions, a confrontation continues in Libya between supporters of different leaders, with increasing criticism targeted at the UN and the acting head of UNSMIL, the American Stephanie Williams, not only due to the patent inability to create the conditions for political dialogue that are acceptable and equal for all participants in the intra-Libyan conflict in Tunis, but even because of the political bias inherent in some of them.

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