Who has the Greatest Chances of Becoming the Political Leader of Libya?

The situation in the country remains tense ahead of Libya's first-ever presidential elections, scheduled for December 24. On November 12, an international conference on Libya was held in Paris to resolve the crisis in the North African country. Participants, who came from more than 20 States, reviewed the progress made in the political process and the implementation of previous decisions. The declaration adopted at the end of the conference included a clause on the withdrawal of mercenaries and military units from the country. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the withdrawal must be complete in full. Still, it must be carried out in stages, gradually and in a synchronized manner as far as the withdrawal of those who support the west and the east of Libya is concerned. What is important here is not to break the balance that has been established 'on the ground,' which has allowed the ceasefire regime to hold for more than a year now, Lavrov stressed. All political forces must have the opportunity to put forward their candidates for these elections, including supporters of the al-Gaddafi regime. The international community sees the election as a key step toward restoring stability to Libya after a decade of conflict that began after Muammar al-Qaddafi was overthrown in a war initiated by NATO forces.

The High National Election Commission of Libya accepts nomination documents for the presidential and parliamentary elections. Already more than 800 people have expressed a desire to compete for the right to enter the House of Representatives and more than two dozen citizens for the post of head of state.

The first contender was Abdel Hakim Bayou, Director General of Al-Hamra, with the son of Libyan late leader Saif al-Islam Gaddafi registering second. A political activist from western Libya Asaad Muhsin Zahio filed third, followed by Tripolitan human rights activist Dr. Faidan Hamza, the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Libyan Sheikhs and Elders, Sheikh Al-Senussi Al-Heliq Al-Zawi. Commander-in-Chief of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Field
Marshal Khalifa Haftar registered sixth, in addition to him, the outgoing Speaker of the House, Agila Saleh, former Minister of Interior of the Government of National Accord (GNA), Fathi Bashagha.

Abdulhamid Mohammed Al-Dabaiba, the current Prime Minister of Libya's interim Government of National Unity, has also decided to run for president, according to Address Libya. The current Prime Minister of Libya's interim Government of National Unity knows that the law does not allow him to run, but he is ready to press the High National Election Commission to register him as a candidate, the report said. Meanwhile, it was reported that Abdulhamid Mohammed Al-Dabaiba allegedly commissioned the recent cyber attack on the High National Election Commission website. Thus, he intended to mix documents and put pressure on Emad al-Sayah, Chairman of the High National Election Commission. At the same time, it was reported that current Prime Minister of Libya's interim Government of National Unity allegedly declared in a meeting with ministers that he did not care about the documents he had signed before the UN and the other members of the International Conference on Libya in Paris, promising not to run because, in his opinion, all delegates are corrupt.

Not only within Libya but also by external observers, the nomination process for the upcoming elections is being closely monitored, and various media materials are being published.

Thus, Libyan National Army commander Khalifa Haftar who left his post on September 22 to participate in the elections under the electoral law, was reported to have announced that 300 mercenaries supporting him would leave Libya at the request of France. However, some of Libya's political elites are not ready to see the Field Marshal as head of state. Moreover, they consider his nomination illegal.

The US is trying to interfere in the electoral process in Libya and, clearly considering Haftar a strong candidate, is striving to use various tools to put pressure on him. Thus, in mid-August, Richard Norland, the US Special Envoy and Ambassador to Libya flew to Cairo to meet with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, LNA commander, there. Recently, there has been a media campaign unleashed against Haftar in the United States, and a US District Court in Virginia instituted criminal proceedings against him because he is a US citizen. However, following the intervention of Libyan authorities, Leonie M Brinkema, Judge, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, suspended a series of civil lawsuits filed against Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, LNA commander, in the United States until after the North African country's presidential election.

Notably, amid rumors that the former LNA commander had pledged to recognize Israel after the December elections, Haftar's son Saddam allegedly flew to Israel on a private jet in early November, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. While there is no information on who Saddam met during his visit to Israel, Haftar has had ties to Israeli intelligence in the past. Libya and Israel do not currently maintain diplomatic relations. Still, Haaretz reports that Haftar has allegedly promised to start the process of state recognition, as the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco did before him last year, in exchange for diplomatic aid from Tel Aviv.

The candidacy of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, who was considered the political successor of Muammar al-Gaddafi occupies an essential place in the information space. He was sentenced to death a few years ago for his crimes during the suppression of the 2011 revolution.

After Saif-al-Islam applied to register as a candidate, the decision of the High National Election Commission, initially published on Facebook, disappeared ten minutes later. It was even initially reported that the application had allegedly been rejected due to protests against the candidacy of Muammar al-Qaddafi’s son, including among the High National Election Commission’s officials in Zawiya, Zliten, and Gharyan, who had stopped work. The local media reported that even the main military prosecutor's office of Libya allegedly opposed the registration on the pretext that al-Qaddafi’s son was accused of massacres of people.

Against the son of Muammar al-Qaddafi, an information campaign was launched in the USA, in particular The Washington Post, openly interfering in the election process in Libya, came out with the statement that the registration of al-Qaddafi’s son for the presidency intensifies the political crisis in Libya and exacerbates the situation in that country.

However, despite this, very soon, the High National Election Commission’s experts claimed that their page had been hacked and misleading information regarding Saif al-Islam had been posted. In addition, the UN supported the admission of al-Qaddafi’s son's candidacy for the Libyan presidential election, stating that only the Libyan High National Election Commission is responsible for approving or rejecting candidates for elections in the country.

According to various observers, the probability of al-Qaddafi Jr. winning the election is very high for several reasons.
First of all, his father, Muammar al-Qaddafi, continues to be associated with the "golden period of Libya" for the country's people, especially against the background of the tragic events that followed his death in the country, the destruction, and the military conflict. The country recognizes that there is no faction or political force behind Seif al-Islami. This will allow him to unite Libya's currently fragmented tribes - and they will be the ones to decide the president. He can become an arbitrator, a mediator to lead the country out of the current predicament.

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