

Libyan PM warns 800,000 migrants could arrive in Europe if instability in the country continues

- Libya's government is asking for help to stop a rival group's offensive on Tripoli
- The government is warning that the offensive could displace 800,000 Libyans
- These refugees, and 400 ISIS prisoners, could then flee to Europe in the carnage



Libya Prime Minister Fayeza al-Sarraj has called on Europe to aid his government

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instability in the country continues.

The UN-backed administration in Tripoli issued the warning as it begged Europe to help stop General Khalifa Haftar and his rebel forces from marching on the Libyan capital.

Haftar has previously declared he was going to clear the city of 'terrorists' sparking fears civil war could trigger a mass displacement of civilians.

The country's Prime Minister warned that as many as 800,000 refugees could flee to the West.

The GNA claim that helping Libya is in Europe's 'best interests', warning that the fighting and instability could also displace 400 ISIS prisoners if Haftar reaches Tripoli.

The International Criminal Court has been gathering evidence following reports of war crimes being committed on the capital by Haftar's men.

There have been attacks on schools, homes and offices, with the buildings hit by rockets and bombs.

Prime Minister Fayyaz al Serraj told Sky News: 'We still want peace. But if we are forced to fight, we are up for the fight.'

'The international community must pressurize these forces and call it by its name and pressurize them to go back to where they came from.'

He added that he wants the fighters carrying out the attacks on behalf of the General to be tried for crimes against humanity.

GNA deputy prime minister Ahmad Maitig added: 'It interests the whole of Europe to see a peaceful and democratic Libya. 800,000 people can easily reach Europe.'



Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (right) meeting Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar (left) at the Ittihadia presidential Palace in the capital Cairo. Haftar has launched an offensive on Libyan capital Tripoli



The Libyan government is warning that the ongoing stability could lead to another migrant crisis (Libyan refugees pictured in 2016)



A Libyan displaced family, who fled their house because of the fighting between the Eastern forces commanded by Khalifa Haftar and the internationally recognized government



Members of Libyan National Army (LNA) commanded by Khalifa Haftar, get ready before heading out of Benghazi to reinforce the troops advancing to Tripoli

‘These [ISIS] prisoners are terrorists and we were working with the international community to keep them and hold them. At the same time we see some international partners, our international team players, supporting the attack and supporting Haftar.

‘This is something not understandable for the GNA.’

His words came following rumours that France and other European nations may support Haftar and his forces in the conflict.

Maitig brushed off reports France favoured Haftar, saying ‘the position of the French government is to support the national accord government’.

He also added that Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini 'shows big support for the peace process'.

However, he repeated warnings that the offensive by Haftar's forces could spark an exodus of displaced Libyans and migrants, as well as ISIS fighters.

There were 'more than 400 prisoners' in Libya whose whereabouts could not be secured should Haftar push on to take the capital, he said.

He also dismissed the idea that the government would intervene to prevent Libyans and migrants fleeing for Europe under an EU-approved deal signed between Italy and Libya in 2017.

'There is no agreement on keeping the migrants in Libya at all. Zero. The agreement was to prepare the Libyan coastguard... that is it.'

The accord for Italy to train Libya's coastguard - signed in a bid to end Europe's biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War - saw a significant drop in the flow of African migrants across the central Mediterranean.

Some 265 migrants have landed in Italy so far this year, compared to 7,500 last year in the same period and over 30,000 the year before, according to the interior ministry.

Libya has long been a major transit country for migrants desperate to reach Europe via the Mediterranean.

International aid groups have warned migrants could be used as human shields or forcibly recruited to fight.

Libya has been in turmoil since NATO-backed forces overthrew former dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Haftar's offensive began shortly before a conference set for this month to discuss Libya's future - an event the UN cancelled as the forces closed in on the capital.

Haftar, who leads the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA), has pushed out from his power base in the country's east towards the Libyan capital in the west, the seat of the UN-backed unity government.



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Last week, the only functional airport in the Libyan capital was hit by an airstrike amid clashes between rival armed groups for control of Tripoli.

The official Facebook page of the Mitiga airport said it had been attacked by a fighter jet.

There were no further details and no casualties were immediately reported.

A video circulated online shows a fighter jet firing and allegedly targeting the airport.

The airport, located five miles east of the city centre originally functioned as a military base.

Tripoli on high alert after General tells forces to take capital



Source:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6928407/Libyan-PM-warns-800-000-migrants-arrive-Europe-instability-country-continues.html>

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