



LIBYA : A DIFFICULT PATH TOWARDS A PACIFIED DEMOCRACY

Report on the visit to Paris of a delegation from the House of Representatives of Libya by the France-Libya friendship group

23 to 26 October 2018

The France-Libya friendship group, chaired by Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard, welcomed a delegation of the House of Representatives of Libya in Paris from 23 to 26 October 2018. It was the first time since the 2011 revolution that a delegation of Libyan parliamentarians traveled to France for an official visit.

This visit followed the meetings of La Celle-Saint-Cloud (July 2017) and Paris (May 2018), which brought together under the aegis of the UN the Libyan parties on the invitation of the President of the French Republic,

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, and the meeting of the Friendship Group of the Senate with

Mr. Khaled Mechri, President of the High Council of State (May 29, 2018). The program of the delegation included meetings to discuss the current situation in Libya and the way out of the crisis.

The delegation, led by Mr. Yousef Agouri, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, was composed of Mr. Salem Gnan, MP and Minority Representative, and Mr. Hassan Misbah, MP. Its pluralist composition allowed for all aspects of the Libyan political dialogue to be tackled.



The Libyan parliamentary delegation: Mr. Hassan Misbah, Mr. Yousef Agouri and Mr. Salem Gnan

I. The context of the visit: The Libyan crisis

Libya, a Mediterranean and North African country, is open to both Europe and the African continent. With its 1,759,500 square kilometers, Libya shares vast borders with Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt. Its population (6 million inhabitants), predominantly Arab and Muslim, is very diverse, especially in the South and West of the country where Arab, Berber, Tuareg and Toubou communities live. Its economy is dominated by the income from the hydrocarbons sector.

Since Colonel Gaddafi's coup in 1969, relations between France and Libya have been tumultuous. Periods of rupture and periods of normalization have successively alternated. In February 2011, France supported the rebellion and intervened on the basis of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973. Since then, Libya has entered a difficult transitional phase towards democracy.

After the first elections in 2012, the 2014 parliamentary elections led Libya to a political crisis. The new House of Representatives was forced to settle in Tobruk, while the General National Congress elected in 2012 was maintained in Tripoli. This "institutional fragmentation" has also spread to the Central Bank and the National Oil Company (NOC), amidst armed conflicts between factions, militias or terrorist groups.

To overcome this deadlock, a political agreement was signed on 17 December 2015 in Skhirat. However, to date, little progress has been made to unblock the political situation.

The Skhirat agreement

It opens a one-year renewable transition period during which a national unity government is responsible for leading the country. It creates a specific body, the Presidential Council, composed of nine members led by Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj, in charge of forming the Government of National Accord. In addition, it transforms the National General Congress into a High Council of State, which has become the second parliamentary chamber.

This agreement was followed by several major steps: a new Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations to Libya (SRSG), Mr. Ghassan Salamé, was appointed (July 2017); a meeting was organized in La Celle-Saint-Cloud (25 July 2017) on the initiative of the President of the French Republic; General Khalifa Haftar agreed to renounce the use of force; and a new action plan for Libya was adopted by

Mr. Salamé on 20 September 2017.

Main steps of the Libyan political process, 2011-2018

- **2011**

February: beginning of the revolution and installation of the National Transitional Council (CNT)

March: NATO intervention

October: death of Muammar Gaddafi, and proclamation of the liberation of the country

- **2012** (August) : election of the National General Congress

- **2014**

February: election of the drafting committee of the Constitution

June: election of the House of Representatives

July: closing down of the French Embassy.

- **2015** (December) : Skhirat agreement
- **2016** (march) : installation of the Prime Minister in Tripoli
- **2017** (July) : appointment of M. Ghassan Salamé, UN Special Representative and meeting of La-Celle-Saint-Cloud between the Libyan Prime Minister and General Haftar
- **2018** (May) : meeting of Paris between Libyan Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and High Council of State and General Haftar

Following these initiatives and given the antagonism still opposing the Libyan parties, a new meeting was held in Paris (29 May 2018) on the initiative of France and under the aegis of the UN.

The main objective was to set a timetable for the political process to end the crisis: a constitutional law and an electoral law were to be adopted by 16 September 2018, while parliamentary and presidential elections were scheduled for 10 December 2018. The Paris Agreement also called for the necessary security conditions to be met and for the commitment of the parties not to hinder the process of ending the crisis. Since then, the Libyan political situation has not yet allowed for a constitutional law or an electoral law to be voted.

Today, seven years after the revolution, Libya is, politically, a country held hostage by the "status quo party" which takes advantage of the current chaotic situation by not meeting political deadlines, not respecting the legitimacy of the authorities in place or by questioning their decisions. Economically, the country suffers from growing pauperization and the looting of the economy. In addition, the security situation remains very unstable in a country without any regular armed forces. Lastly, the organization of migration flows has become a "prosperous industry" beyond all other types of trafficking.

II. The meeting of the delegation

During the visit, the delegation met the main French actors or specialists of the Libyan dossier: in addition to the friendship group, they met:

- Mr. Christian Cambon, Chairman, Mr. Cédric Perrin, Vice-Chairman and Mr. Jean-Pierre Vial, Member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces;

- Mr. Jérôme Barthe, President, and a delegation of the Franco-Libyan Chamber of Commerce (FLCC);

- Mr. Philippe Dallier, Vice-President of the Senate;

- Mr. Sylvain Fourrière, deputy director for Africa and the Middle East, and Mr. Louis Dugit-Gros, desk-officer for Libya at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

• **During the lunch hosted by the friendship group**, President Yannick Vaugrenard stressed that this parliamentary delegation is the first one to be received in France. Along with Ms. Annie Guillemot, he welcomed its pluralist composition.

Mr. Yousef Agouri thanked the friendship group for its welcome and highlighted the common values and interests that unite France and Libya.



Ms. Angèle Prévaille, Ms. Corinne Féret, Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard, Mr. Yousef Agouri, Mr. Jean-Pierre Vial and Ms. Annie Guillemot

The meeting focused on the organization of the legislative and presidential elections as well as the adoption of the Constitution. The delegation argued that the Libyan elections could be held without the presence of international observers but that they implied guaranteeing reasonable security conditions. Regarding the Constitution, the delegation highlighted that it had to include all components of the society, including Amazigh or Tuareg minorities. The discussants agreed that the political transition was to end, seven years after the revolution. To that end, it was necessary that the Libyan people were given the opportunity to express themselves, and that consequently the House of Representatives adopted the electoral and constitutional law. Mr. Hassan Misbah referred to the work of the "Commission of 60" which drafted and adopted by a majority of its members (44 votes against 15) a constitutional project. He insisted on the necessity for the Parliament to respect this work and this vote. In response to questions from Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard and Mr. Jean-Pierre Vial, the delegation highlighted the smooth conduct of municipal elections in 2018, which showed the Libyan people's commitment to the democratic process.

In response to a question from Mr. Jean-Pierre Vial regarding the migration crisis, the delegation stated that Libya was a transit country and that international aid, in particular promised by the European Union, was insufficient (162 million euros). They called for international collaboration on this matter and highlighted the role that France could play.

Regarding Ms. Angèle Prévaille's question about the economic situation of the Libyan people, Mr. Hassan Misbah confirmed that the Libyans suffered from the state of economic and political anarchy.

- **During the meeting with the members of the Foreign Affairs Standing Committee,** Mr. Christian Cambon stressed France's commitment to the return to peace and stability in Libya, an essential condition to ensure the stabilization of the Sahelo-Saharan region. He

mentioned in this regard the migration crisis and the terrorist threat.

On the issue of migration, Mr. Yousef Agouri expressed his concerns regarding the lack of support from the international community and in particular from the European Union, stating that Libya could not intervene more in humanitarian terms. He deplored the lack of international action to encourage development in the countries of the region.

Regarding the political situation, Mr. Yousef Agouri assured the Committee of Libya's determination to restore a more stable security situation. He insisted on the current dramatic situation facing young Libyans, many of whom died during the different crises undergone by the country. Mr. Yousef Agouri called for France's help in the fight against terrorism, and within the limits of the Libyan sovereignty.

Responding to Mr. Christian Cambon's question regarding the legislative and presidential elections, initially set on 10 December 2018, Mr. Yousef Agouri and Mr. Salem Gnan argued that the elections could not be conducted on time due to the current security conditions.



The Libyan delegation (to the right) facing Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard, Mr. Christian Cambon, Mr. Cédric Perrin and Mr. Jean-Pierre Vial

In this regard, Mr. Yousef Agouri indicated that the members of the delegation had themselves been threatened by terrorist groups. Mr. Cédric Perrin underlined that the recent report on Libya by the Foreign Affairs Committee already demonstrated that the time limit set by the Paris Agreement would not be met.

Mr. Hassan Misbah and Mr. Salem Gnan added that the Constitution should be adopted before any elections could be conducted, provided that the constitutional text included all components of the Libyan people. In this regard, Mr. Yousef Agouri suggested that a broad debate be organized with the Libyans to ensure their support for the proposals submitted to them.

The Senators stressed the necessity to set a date, even if it implied postponing the date that was initially set. The compliance with this commitment must then be ensured, as elections are a prerequisite for a return to peace. They also highlighted the risks faced by Libyan MPs every day in working towards a democratic system.

About this issue, Mr Christian Cambon mentioned the example of Mali, a country that was able to rebuild itself after holding elections. He stressed that France was giving full support to Libya and highlighted its current engagement in the region, especially the French military presence in the sahelo-saharan region in order to fight terrorism and the considerable means invested in counter-terrorism. On the diplomatic level, he argued that France, on many occasions, had tried to gather all the stakeholders to accelerate the peace process, particularly on the occasion of the Paris Conference on Libya in 2018.

At the end of this meeting, the Senators expressed their wish to see the emergence of a real state in Libya, with institutions set up by universal suffrage. They were reasonably optimistic about the massive inscription of Libyans on the electoral lists and the population's mobilisation during the last municipal elections.



Mr. Hassan Misbah, Mr. Tarek Choucair, Mr. Ahmad Jaleddine, Mr. Olivier Meyruey, Mr. Jérôme Barthe, Ms. Angèle Preville, Mr. Salem Gnan, Mr. Yousef Agouri, Mr. Wael Alashebe and Mr. Jean-Daniel Blasco

• **During the meeting with the French-Libyan Chamber of Commerce (FLCC)**, Mr. Jérôme Barthe, President, made the point that his delegation represented all the active economic sectors in Libya.

Mr. Yousef Agouri praised the quality of the economic relations between France and Libya. Mr Jérôme Barthe highlighted the fact that the companies were in an on-hold period, but were still ensuring the equipment's maintenance in order to be ready to restart as soon as human and goods' security is guaranteed.

Mr. Hassan Misbah indicated that the security situation was undergoing a clear improvement, due to armed forces' presence in almost all the Libyan territory, mainly in oil fields.

Mr. Jean-Daniel Blasco, Vice President of the FLCC, approved the improvement of the security conditions, especially to the west of the Sirte Basin. However, the situation remains fragile, which explains why certain companies are reluctant to develop their activities.

In this regard, Mr. Yousef Agouri mentioned the lifting of the embargo on weapon sales, which would allow the Libyan army to dispose of the required means to ensure the security of the country.

Mr. Hassan Misbah stressed that many French companies were known for their expertise and "savoir faire". He suggested that they establish contacts with the Libyan Parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowing French companies to have local speakers. Mr. Jérôme Barthe evoked the companies' wish to extend their partnerships and train a new generation of local engineers.

In the field of defense, Mr. Tarek Choucair mentioned that several contracts were suspended.

Regarding infrastructures projects, Mr. Eric Grasset, FLCC's Secretary General, stated that a number of projects were pending such as the rehabilitation of Tripoli international airport and road works in Misrata, due to the lack of reliability of the banking system.

Mr. Salem Gnan explained these difficulties by the existence of two central banks in Tripoli and in Al Bayd (not recognised by the international community). He denounced interventions on the exchange rate and the subventions to the oil sector from Tripoli central bank. He admitted that economic reforms cannot be implemented while the two central banks still exist.

Concerning the oil industry, Mr. Jean-Daniel Blasco said that the production level was close to the level during the period before the revolution. However, the lack of plants' maintenance makes oil production very difficult. In order to remediate to this situation, the FLCC proposed financial support and technical assistance to the Libyan maintenance teams, asserting that French companies were concerned about contributing to the local development, such as in Zawiya.

About this topic, Mr. Yousef Agouri, President of the Oil and Gas Committee in the Parliament, attested that 80% of oil fields were now controlled by the armed forces. The safeguard of oil resources, principal source of income, is one of the parliamentarians' essential missions.

Furthermore, Mr. Agouri raised concerns about Total's recent decision to purchase shares of the company Marathon Libya in Waha, owned predominantly by the National Oil Company (NOC). He regretted that neither the Parliament, the Parliamentarian committee of oil and gas, nor the NOC were consulted for this deal.



Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard, Mr. Philippe Dallier, Mr. Yousef Agouri, Mr. Salem Gnan and Mr. Hassan Misbah

- **Welcomed on behalf of Mr. Gerard Larcher, President of the Senate, by Mr. Philippe Dallier, Vice President**, in charge of international activities and friendship groups, the delegation praised the military aid given in 2011 by France to the new Libyan regime. They expressed their worries regarding the lack of help received after the revolution and stated that Libya was neglected, especially against the terrorist threat and militias.

Mr. Yousef Agouri specified that the mere organisation of elections could not be seen as a token of stability for a country. He thus mentioned the troubled situation in Iraq, despite regular elections in the country. Moreover, Mr. Hassan Misbah requested the lifting of financial sanctions weighing on Libyan funds abroad, for purposes of funding measures for the population.

Concerning the migratory crisis, Mr. Salem Gnan underlined the responsibility of the European Union and France, which knows well emigration countries such as Chad and Niger. He wished that France could contribute to the public officials' training in charge of the fight against illegal immigration.

Mr. Philippe Dallier and Mr. Yannick Vaugrenard stressed the necessity for Libya to respect the constitutional process, and to build stable institutions accepted by all, which are preconditions for France to support the new regime. Mr. Philippe Dallier noted Mr. Yousef Agouri's demand about the lifting of sanctions on Mr. Aguila Salah, President of the House of Representatives, in order to allow him to accomplish his mission.

- **During the meeting with Mr. Sylvain Fourrière, deputy director for Africa and the Middle East** and Mr. Louis Dugit-Gros, desk-officer for Libya at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the French attachment to a crisis recovery in Libya was reminded.



Mr. Hassan Misbah, Mr. Salem Gnan, Mr. Sylvain Fourrière, Mr. Yousef Agouri and Mr. Louis Dugit-Gros

In response to Mr. Sylvain Fourrière, who was inquiring about the current state of the political process, Mr. Hassan Misbah underlined all the efforts made in order to form an executive council with representatives of both chambers. He highlighted that adopting a Constitution before the elections was a priority, which would put an end to the temporary transition period. Mr. Sylvain Fourrière congratulated the current mobilisation of the House of Representatives, which now meets regularly, as well as the work of the High Electoral Commission – despite the attack it suffered - and the good running of municipal elections. He questioned the contradictory statements made by the President of the House of Representatives after the Parliament's vote on the referendum legislation on the new Constitution. Mr. Yousef Agouri insisted on the necessity to pursue a national reconciliation and the elaboration of a precise plan to retrieve weapons.

He also underlined that from his point of view, the House of Representatives was currently the only elected authority, and was thus legitimate.

Mr. Hassan Misbah and Mr. Youssef Agouri expressed their deception regarding the UN actions. Mr. Youssef Agouri asserted the parliamentary work of Libyan deputies. Concerning the military question, he said that the Cairo negotiations were evolving towards the formation of a national army and dissolution of the militias.

Mr. Yousef Agouri stated that, along with Mr. Salem Gnan, his objective was the reunification of the NOC. About that, Mr. Salem Gnan blamed the Presidential Council for privileging the west of the country.

To Mr Louis Dugit-Gros' questions concerning the Palermo Conference in November 2018 and the future of the central bank's governors, Mr. Salem Gnan answered that Mr. Aguila Salah would send an envoy to the Palermo Conference, and that the central bank would

shortly recover its unity. To Mr. Hassan Misbah's question on the vision government officials in charge of French diplomacy had of Libya, Mr. Sylvain Fourrière noted that the Libyan crisis was complex and that there was a necessity of actions in three fields: political process, security and the end of economic predation.

Mr. Yousef Agouri concluded the meeting by expressing his fear that Libya might become a "new Iraq", which calls for prudence in the political process, especially in the electoral field.

Interview with Mr Yousef Agouri, Chairman of the delegation

(France 24 – october 24, 2018) :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-Sn3Y6GPw>

Composition of the French delegation



Mr. Yannick VAUGRENARD
President of the friendship group
Senator of Loire-Atlantique
(SOCR)



Ms Corine FÉRET
Vice-president of the friendship group
Senator of Calvados
(SOCR)



Mr. Jean-Pierre VIAL
Vice-president of the friendship group
Senator of Savoie
(Les Républicains)



Ms Angèle PRÉVILLE
Member of the friendship group
Senator of Lot
(SOCR)



Ms Annie GUILLEMOT
Member of the friendship group
Senator of Rhône
(SOCR)

Composition of the delegation from the House of Representatives of Libya



Mr. Yousef AGOURI
President of the foreign affairs and
international cooperation Committee



Mr. Salem GNAN
MP
Minorities representative



Mr. Hassan MISBAH
MP
Member of the foreign affairs Committee
and international cooperation Committee

Composition of the friendship group : http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_657.html