



Leaders from Rival Libyan Factions Meet in Moscow for Negotiations

The leaders of Libya's warring factions met in Moscow this week, amid negotiations aimed at ending the fighting. The Moscow talks are seeking a resolution to the war in Libya through an unconditional and open-ended ceasefire. Russia and Turkey were key in negotiating an initial ceasefire between the Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, and the Libyan National Army, led by General Khalifa Haftar. Russia and Turkey are on opposite sides of the conflict, but are working closely to push the two Libyan sides to an agreement. The GNA is backed by the United Nations and views itself as the legitimate political body in the country, whereas General Haftar's Libyan National Army has fashioned itself as an anti-terrorist federation and has received backing from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Despite backing opposite sides, Russia and Turkey have been vocal proponents of a ceasefire deal in Libya. Turkey's parliament approved troop deployment to Libya last week to support the Government of National Accord, and Russia has long held a presence through mercenaries backing General Haftar. The Moscow negotiations are not the first time that meetings have been held with the goal of achieving a ceasefire in Libya; there was a conference in Paris last May that failed to reach a meaningful solution. Prime Minister al-Sarraj has publicly supported a ceasefire, saying it was time for Libya to "turn the page on the past." The prime minister signed a peace accord during the meeting in Moscow, but General Haftar requested more time to consider the document and left Russia without signing it.

The Moscow negotiations come at an interesting time, as there has been a long-scheduled United Nations summit in Berlin to discuss a peace deal in Libya on January 19. The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, welcomed the news of the Moscow meeting, but said it was vital that the United Nations led the peace talks. Russia hosting the current negotiations is the latest example of President Vladimir Putin's increasingly hands-on foreign policy in the Middle East. In recent months, Russia has stepped up its presence in Libya, Syria, and Egypt as it fills the void left by the United States decreasing its authority in the region. The meeting in Moscow also brings Turkey and Russia closer together as they strengthen their bilateral relations through mediating a settlement for Libya.

The future of Libya seems to be in the hands of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and General Khalifa Haftar. There is no shortage of interested parties in Libya, although most of them are keen on a peace deal. If Haftar and al-Sarraj can come to an agreement over military boundaries and the future of Libya's political system, a lasting ceasefire does not have to be a distant dream. However, with the war in Libya reaching its ninth month, both leaders have been proven to be stubborn and strong-willed. Both men appear to have Libya's best interests at heart, and a negotiation with concessions on both sides would almost certainly spell peace in Libya. Although al-Sarraj and Haftar were unable to find an agreement in Moscow, both sides have expressed optimism toward the upcoming conference in Berlin, and continuing negotiations.