



[Libya Confirms the Departure of Some Foreign Fighters as the Country Seeks International Help to Expel Those Who Still Remain](#)

During a news conference earlier this week, Libyan Foreign Minister Najla El-Mangoush commented on the status of expelling external fighters from the country, confirming that there has been a “very modest start” to the process. Libya, which has grappled with high levels of foreign interference, has placed a great deal of emphasis on ousting these mercenaries and groups from its borders, and is seeking the international community’s help removing those who still remain. Throughout the course of the Libyan conflict, the regimes in nations such as Egypt, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates played a destructive role by backing warlord Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA) forces in their attempt to gain control of the nation from the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). The United Nations, the interim Libyan government, and others have called for the complete departure of all foreign fighters within Libya to ensure domestic stability as the country approaches planned presidential and legislative elections in December 2021 and January 2022, respectively. Later this month, in the lead up to these elections, Libya’s presidency council is aiming to hold an international conference to address some key issues, including the ongoing efforts to expel foreign fighters.

Since the 2011 NATO-assisted removal of despot Muammar Gaddafi from power, Libya has been entangled in a complex and multi-faceted conflict. While the GNA was backed by the international community at large, nations including Russia, Egypt, and the UAE sponsored foreign mercenaries to assist the LNA in its attempts to take control of Libya. As a December 2021 election looms, advocates worry that the foreign presence will undermine the democratic process. Last year, the LNA engaged in a 14-month assault on the capital city of Tripoli until being pushed back. Following that, a ceasefire was arranged which included both sides agreeing to remove all foreign mercenaries. However, although some have left, many still remain.

The LNA’s military mission against the GNA prolonged the conflict until last year’s ceasefire. While much of the international community and internal actors within Libya supported the upholding of the GNA, the LNA took part in serious crimes against humanity in a futile effort to gain political legitimacy. Back in June of last year, a United Nations fact-finding mission found that the LNA was eliminating opponents and civilians in mass killings. Upon the GNA’s liberation of a formerly LNA city, there was the discovery of the graves of over 150 people. Numerous human rights reports over the past few years found that the LNA, who coordinate with foreign mercenary groups, engaged in drastic crimes against humanity.

The conflict in Libya, perpetuated considerably by foreign regimes, has led to humanitarian crimes against the civilians of Libya. A recent UN special fact-finding mission uncovered a long and troublesome pattern of war crimes being committed, especially by the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group, who have been active in Libya since at least 2016. War crimes, extra-judicial killings, torture, and enslavement have all been used as deliberate tactics by these mercenary groups. As a result, various advocacy organizations have called on the mercenaries to be ousted from Libya. The continuous focus on this issue makes it clear that the removal of all foreign fighters is imperative to the prospects for long-term peace and stability in the country.