



[Rights Advocates Urge Libya's Elections Commission to Reject Two Potential Candidacies Due to Serious War Crimes Charges](#)

Rights advocates have urged Libya's elections commission to reject the potential candidacies of former dictator Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam and renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar, on the grounds of their history of atrocities and the egregious war crimes charges against both of them. Many are calling on the commission to deny the election bids of those who have used excessive force against the Libyan people or are the target of arrest warrants from the country's courts and intergovernmental organizations like the International Criminal Court (ICC). Saif al-Islam Gaddafi is wanted on war crimes charges by the ICC and Khalifa Haftar has committed crimes against humanity in his role as head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), whose forces engaged in an offensive on the capital city of Tripoli in an attempt to gain control of the nation from the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Libyans have taken to the streets to protest against the candidacies of Gaddafi and Haftar, while civil society groups and activists have issued statements expressing their strong opposition to the two controversial figures' efforts to participate in the planned upcoming election next month. Gaddafi and Haftar have analysts justifiably worried about Libya's delicate democracy backsliding due to the pair's long-documented history of human rights abuses and their desired eye towards authoritarian rule.

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's record of human rights violations is quite long and troublesome. In 2017, an ICC prosecutor called for his arrest upon being freed from jail after he had been convicted for his involvement in crimes against humanity in the brutal suppression of pro-democracy movements during the 2011 Libyan uprising. With Libyans keen to make civic progress following the 2011 revolution which ousted his father Muammar Gaddafi's ruthless authoritarian regime, the consideration of the younger Gaddafi's quest to assume power has elicited concern among many. Furthermore, the active ICC criminal cases against him and the absence of validity for his candidacy because of that worries observers about the message that a potential Gaddafi electoral victory would send to the world regarding the state of progress in Libya. Even though most regional experts believe that a substantial number of Libyans would be unlikely to support Gaddafi, the mere possibility of his success is disconcerting in itself.

The other questionable figure who is attempting to run as a candidate is well-known warlord Khalifa Haftar. Under his direction, the LNA initiated an aggressive siege on Tripoli in an attempt to oust the internationally-recognized and supported government there. Several prominent and reputable rights groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have contended that the LNA has committed major war crimes. Many of these took place during the LNA's failed offensive on Tripoli, and include the mass murder of opposition forces and civilians, extrajudicial killings, and the weaponizing of aid.

The plans for Libyan elections next month in late December are a milestone in the efforts to spur progress in the country after years of conflict since the 2011 Arab Spring uprising. Rights activists emphasize that Libya's election laws should disqualify both Gaddafi and Haftar from running for president because of the human rights abuses they have committed and the ongoing criminal investigations against them. Ultimately, there has been a call for tighter restrictions to prohibit any such candidacies of war criminals or human rights violators so as to ensure progress in the strides for a secure and stable Libya.