



### [The Publication of a Final List of Presidential Candidates is Delayed in Libya and Casts Doubt Over the Planned December 24th Elections](#)

The likelihood of planned elections in Libya taking place next week on December 24th faces serious uncertainty, as the country's election commission has delayed the publication of a final list of candidates. Calls for an election postponement have been mounting in recent weeks due to significant challenges, and the candidate list delay is just the latest development casting doubt on the scheduled vote. Observers are concerned that two scenarios – either holding the election as planned with the existing major contentions or postponing it to a later date – could have a destabilizing effect on the reconciliation process in Libya and ignite conflict. The electoral commission tasked with overseeing the slated vote ultimately announced that it could not approve the list of candidates because of legal disputes. Approximately 100 people have applied to run for the presidency but the commission, fearing that an election conducted with disputed candidates would jeopardize public recognition of the results, has been unable to finalize the ballot. In one such controversial case, court decisions have overturned the election commission's decision to block the candidacy of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi – son of the former dictator who has been convicted of egregious war crimes. Additionally, the potential approval of both renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar and Libya's interim prime minister Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah have also presented substantial challenges.

In a country which is still struggling with the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries, an election conducted with disputed candidates makes the situation subject to potential extreme volatility. The United States Ambassador to Libya, Richard Nordland, stated that anything which obstructs the ability of elections to take place puts the fate of the nation at the mercy of these fighters and mercenaries and their external backers. Under the current conditions with disputed candidacies and armed groups supporting specific candidates, some experts have expressed worry that the elections could create more problems than they would solve – especially with a lack of consensus or agreement on the viability of certain individuals. Adding to Libya's electoral difficulties are disputes regarding the laws which govern the electoral process and a void in the constitution over the powers of the presidency. Approved candidates are also supposed to be granted at least two weeks to be able to campaign, so the fact that the election commission has yet to publish the final list of candidates now less than 14 days before December 24th is another factor that is raising serious doubts about the ability to hold the planned vote.

Libya has been split between parallel governments in Tripoli in the west and Benghazi in the east. When the Arab Spring erupted and Libyans were demanding a departure from Muammar Gaddafi's dictatorial rule, he predictably responded with brutal force. It was at this point that the Obama administration in the United States became involved in regime change under the auspices of shielding Libyans from possible war crimes and mass killing. The country was able to overthrow and rid itself of the ruthless Gaddafi regime, however as a result as well, Libya has been pushed from four decades of dictatorship to a decade of conflict which has hampered its stability. The United Nations-backed plan for elections was crafted with the hope Libyans shared that it would be a way to end prolonged disputes between rival factions and unite the country.