



### [Libya's New Leader of the High State Council Could Deepen Gridlock](#)

In a close vote of 67 to 62 votes, Mohammed Takala has unseated Khaled al-Mishri as the leader of Libya's High State Council (HSC). Many observers are concerned that the introduction of a new leader at the helm of a key political institution could hamper ongoing negotiations with the other main political institution in Libya, the House of Representatives (HoR), to hold nationwide elections. Mishri has led the HSC since 2018.

Election discussions are already fragile, with both sides wanting to replace the current interim government in Tripoli. A major reason they are occurring at all is because of pressure from the United Nations. The entire situation remains unstable, just last year, the head of the interim government, Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, had to fight off an armed attempt to remove him from power. Dbeibah is seen by both the HSC and HoR as a political rival. Both the governing bodies are pushing for a new interim government, but cannot agree on rules for an election.

The major concern among observers is the connections between Takala and Dbeibah. Takala was among the supporters of the latter when he was appointed as Prime minister. The former head of the HSC, al-Mishri, favored the creation of a new transitional unitary government. The election of a new leader may also through a wrench in the recently passed plan by the HoR to appoint a new interim government. This plan was supported by the HSC. A new unity government had the potential to be a catalyst for planning and executing a national election. Now, the HSC's support of the plan is called into question.

It is also unclear whether the desire to elect a new interim government was driven by a desire to hold elections or animosity towards Dbeibah. Neither side has any motivation to hold elections that would diminish their power. The sudden change in policy and preference could cause negotiations to fall apart, negating any progress made. This would reconstitute the political deadlock that has plagued Libya since negotiations began in 2020. Takala's also only achieved victory by 5 points, a thin margin could cause a split within the HSC and further fragment the country.

Adding to the already extremely complicated situation are multiple other actors. Internal actors include warlords that control areas of land. The most powerful of these is Khalifa Haftar, who heads the paramilitary group, the Libyan National Arab Army. External actors include Russia, Turkey, Egypt, the UAE, France, Italy, and Qatar. These countries have consistently fueled the conflict by unilaterally funneling weapons and money into the country to promote their interests. This has been taking place since the war began in 2011 after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. Libya's vast oil reserves are the primary driver for all this foreign involvement. Supporting the winning side would give the supporting country a leg-up in negotiating oil production. The current volatility of the oil market further motivates countries to become further involved.

The 6+6 Committee, a committee drawn from the HSC and HoR, remains the best hope of creating an environment where national elections can take place in Libya. The 6+6 Committee has recently stated that the rival legislative branches had resolved the key disputes that were preventing a national election from taking place. The introduction of a new leader in the HSC may through a wrench into these plans and move the negotiations back to square one.