



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Ankara Visit

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas in Ankara on Tuesday. Throughout the talks, the two sides focused on different files to deepen the cooperation between the counties. Of note, the Palestine-Israel issue took center stage in the discussions. President Erdoğan again iterated his support for the two-state solution in the Palestine-Israel issue. It is important to note that President Abbas's visit took place ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's projected visit to Ankara. After many years of tense relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv, the two sides mended ties and elevated diplomatic relations to the ambassadorial in late 2022. The Israeli Prime Minister's visit to Ankara was scheduled for Friday. Nevertheless, the planned visit was postponed further due to Netanyahu's recent health problems.

That said, President Abbas also held a meeting with with Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas, during his visit to Ankara. The meeting aimed at coordinating actions to confront the right-wing government led by Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. The meeting also served as preparation for the upcoming conference of general secretaries of Palestinian movements, scheduled to be hosted in Cairo, Egypt, on July 30, 2023. The two leaders agreed on the necessity of "unifying national efforts to counter the imminent risks facing the Palestinian cause," according to a statement released by Hamas on July 26, 2023.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi Met with President Erdoğan and Hakan Fidan

The newly appointed Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has paid a visit to Ankara and met with President Erdoğan and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to enhance bilateral cooperation in different fields. The two sides have held closed talks during the Minister's visit to Ankara. According to the written statement released by Xinhua, China's official state news agency, Minister Wang "expressed China's willingness to make good use of the mechanism of the China-Türkiye Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee to comprehensively advance pragmatic cooperation in various fields, facilitate the BRI construction, achieve a higher level of mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, and make positive contributions to global economic recovery."



UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen Calls for a Negotiated End to the Syrian Crisis

The UN's special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, during a UN security council meeting, called for a new round of diplomatic process to relaunch the long-stalled Syrian political process. The envoy reiterated the need for coordination and engagement among different actors of the conflict in an attempt to address the dire humanitarian crisis in Syria. Uttering his disappointment with the UN-led political process for Syria, the envoy claimed that a spirit of pragmatism and flexibility is

very much needed to shift the dynamics for re-engagement amongst the different parties of the conflict to address the needs of the Syrian people. Lastly, Pedersen claimed that if the parties do not engage in constructive talks, another missed opportunity is ahead in front of a negotiated end to the crisis at a time when the on-the-ground situation in Syria is deteriorating daily.



Secretary of State Blinken Reaffirms the US Commitment to Israel's Security

The United States of America has decided to deal with Israel according to the policy of 'Interception does not halt aid,' especially military aid. Despite Washington's objections to the judicial reform law and the resulting escalation of protests in Tel Aviv, it continues to pledge further military aid. Secretary of state Blinken Reaffirms, stated in Washington, There will be no reductions or halting of military aid, and there is an ironclad commitment towards Israel, its security, and the partnership with the United States, which will continue for decades. Israel is considered the largest recipient of cumulative U.S. military aid since the end of World War II, with the total currently amounting to approximately \$158 billion.

On Monday, the Knesset approved the first law that limits the Supreme Court from reconsidering government decisions. Some Israeli lawmakers claimed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is pushing Israel towards absolute rule. Meanwhile, during the voting, thousands of protesters clashed with the police outside. The United States of America, as stated by its Defense Secretary, Lloyd Austin, urged its Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant, not to jeopardize social cohesion. President Joe Biden also called on Israel to reach a broad agreement on comprehensive judicial reforms supported by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government, which has sparked protests across the country.



HoR Approves New Electoral Roadmap

On July 24, Abdoulaye Bathily, head of the UN Support Mission in Libya, met with House of Representatives (HoR) Speaker Aqeela Saleh in Benghazi to discuss an electoral framework for resolving outstanding issues with the electoral process; Saleh also met British and Italian ambassadors to discuss the roadmap. Bathily highlighted contentious issues in the draft laws, including presidential candidate eligibility, a mandatory second round in the presidential election, and forming a new interim government before elections. He also called for amendments to ensure inclusive and consensus-based elections, for which he may face accusations of foreign interference and meddling.

On June 7, the electoral roadmap was proposed by the 6+6 committee, and the High Council of State (HSC) approved it two weeks ago. On July 25, after some disagreements and subsequent delays, the HoR finally approved this roadmap. According to the draft, prime ministerial candidates will have to obtain recommendations from 15 HoR and 12 HSC members; a committee will then review and determine the candidate list. Separate televised sessions of the HoR and HSC will then conduct a secret ballot to vote, and the candidate obtaining the highest combined votes will be the elected head of government.

Many analysts perceive this move to be a sign of progress in Libya's journey to stable governance. However, both Prime Minister Dabaiba and General Haftar – two critical players – have objected (albeit on different grounds), which presents potential roadblocks. We have seen numerous moments of progress throughout Libya's peace process, only to be followed by infighting, disruptions and setbacks, so these delineated electoral laws (roadmap) may not be as promising as they appear.

Libyan Foreign Minister Lands in Tehran

After a period of relative stagnation, Libyan-Iranian relations have begun picking up steam, with discussions on reopening embassies, Iranian ships docking in Misrata port, and, most recently, Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush's visit to Tehran on Tuesday. During the meeting, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian applauded Libya's renewed stability and security, and he emphasized Iran's readiness to support Libya's reparatory process. The two FMs agreed on plans to resume the Libyan-Iranian joint committee, strengthen economic and trade relations, promote scientific and technological cooperation, and reestablish robust diplomatic exchange. There are various possible motivations for this move on Libya's part. On the military front, access to Iranian weapons may lessen Libya's reliance on Turkish weapons and counterbalance Turkey's involvement in the conflict. Wider geopolitical changes in North Africa may also be influencing Libya's actions, including the worsening ties between Morocco and Algeria, Egypt's waning presence in the region due to various political and economic missteps, and the instability in nearby Sudan impacts (which has impacted Haftar's supply lines).

As we see throughout the Middle East, strategic realignments are taking place in North Africa — and Libya deepening its ties with Iran seems consistent with these broader normalization trends. Just last week, Iraq sent a Premier to Syria for the first time since 2011; less than two weeks later, Mangoush becomes the first high-ranking Libyan official to visit Tehran in 17 years. It is certainly a noteworthy moment, cementing a renewed bilateral relationship and also signaling Libya as a viable player in the game of regional power politics. However, shifting intra-regional relations, world order reconfigurations, and consideration of the global arms race all render Libya's strategic measures this week par for the course.

ABOUT AL SHARQ STRATEGIC RESEARCH

A think tank that looks to undertake impartial, rigorous research to promote the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue and social justice.

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