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WHAT'S NEXT FOR LIBYA? THE PATH TO PEACE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND GLOBAL
COUNTERTERRORISM

OF THE

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR LIBYA? THE PATH TO PEACE

Thursday, December 9, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., via Webex, Hon. Theodore E. Deutch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DEUTCH. The Committee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the subcommittee at any point. All members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation of the rules.

As a reminder to members, please keep your video function on at all times, even when you're not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves, and please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking, consistent with H. Res. 8 and the accompanying regulations.

Staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate when they are not under recognition to eliminate background noise and not to prevent embarrassing statements.

I see that we have a quorum, and I will now recognize myself for opening remarks.

Pursuant to notice, we are holding a hearing on the current situation in Libya and U.S. policy toward Libya.

I want to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Sasahara and Ms. Doherty. Thank you for joining us today. This is a momentous time for Libya. The stakes for U.S. interest in the Libyan people are very high.

Since the events of the Arab Spring and the subsequent fall of Muammar Gaddafi, there's been so much hope for the Libyan people as they attempted to transition to democracy. The fracturing of the country in 2019 resulted in violent conflict and good hopes of progress on pause as foreign actors seized attempts to jockey for influence in Libya.

However, significant progress has been made over the past year and a half: an effective cease-fire since October 2020, the establishment of a joint military commission to address security disputes, the restoration of oil production, and the establishment of the U.N.-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum which generated a credible political roadmap and led to the inauguration on March 15th of an

interim Libyan government of National Unity that had parliamentary support.

I commend the Libyan people and their representatives for taking these important and necessary steps, and I would note that these achievements are in no small part thanks to the efforts of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya—UNSMIL—and the engagement of the State Department and USAID.

When the interim government was inaugurated, there was a renewed glimmer of optimism about Libya's future. For the first time in years there was hope that Libya's divided institutions might find a way to unify and usher lasting stability to the country and that Presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for later this month would mark a pivotal turning point on Libya's path to peace and prosperity.

But the positive developments do not tell the full story and much of the promise of the political process has not yet materialized.

Libya's elections are, indeed, scheduled to begin on December 24th. But the long-awaited vote faces numerous challenges, including unresolved questions about the relevant election laws and the eligibility of candidates.

Despite their enthusiasm for holding a vote, some Libyans and analysts have called for postponing the election to allow more time for legal and logistical preparation.

Meanwhile, the U.N.'s top envoy for Libya announced his resignation last week. Against the backdrop of such uncertainty, I hope our witnesses will address what the U.S. sees as the challenge of ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in such a compressed timeframe.

There are two remaining long-standing challenges that have festered over the last year: decrepit public services, more than half a million migrants, many of whom are still kept in inhumane detention centers, nearly a million people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, and persistent human rights abuses, which seemingly occur with impunity.

We need to press harder for a humane migration policy in Libya, including through quick implementation of the U.N.'s plan for closing migrant detention centers.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about this and, in addition, the tools the Administration is using to promote accountability for human rights abuses, fight corruption, and improve governance, public services, and economic recovery in Libya.

These are all essential ingredients for promoting national reconciliation and sustainable peace. Progress in securing the withdrawal of foreign actors and mercenaries from Libya remains elusive.

The estimated 20,000 foreign mercenaries including the long-reported presence of the Russian Wagner Group and fighters who remain on Libyan soil are in violation of the cease-fire agreement and the U.N. arms embargo. Their presence aggravates the conflict, exacerbates humanitarian needs and human rights abuses, and it undermines Libyan sovereignty.

On this front, I encourage the Administration to apply all necessary leverage to allow for the swift departure of foreign merce-

naries from Libyan soil. We must ensure the terms of the U.N. arms embargo are enforced.

As we know, foreign weapons have long found their way into Libya, and I hope our witnesses will confirm that tough bilateral and multilateral diplomacy has been used and will be used to pressure all outside powers involved to respect the arms embargo.

More fundamentally, we are faced with the stark reality that Libya's lawless armed groups have entrenched themselves and expanded their influence over the past year, placing themselves in a strong position to shape the election's aftermath based on their interest rather than the people's will.

We need not wait until December 24th to find examples of what this looks like. Already we have heard accounts of judges handling election-related cases being threatened. Bearing all these challenges in mind, I would like to call attention to the bipartisan Libya Stabilization Act, which I introduced with Ranking Member Wilson, Mr. Lieu, and Mr. Malinowski. The bill passed the House in September and is now awaiting consideration in the Senate.

Our legislation authorizes significant U.S. support for good governance, anti-corruption, elections, and economic assistance. It also seeks to impose targeted sanctions on individuals who commit human rights abuses in Libya, violate the arms embargo, or support foreign military intervention and militias.

The bill demonstrates Congress' interest in ending foreign intervention, consolidating Libya's political gains, and encouraging long-term peace and stability, and I hope our Senate friends move swiftly to take up this legislation.

I was glad to see on October 26th the Administration sanctioned Osama Al Kuni Ibrahim, a migrant-smuggling kingpin who is responsible for the systematic exploitation and abuse of African migrants.

I'm encouraged by this action. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about further employment of the Administration's existing tools and the identification of areas where greater congressional support may be needed.

Finally, Libya's progress over the past last year, year and a half, is fragile and situation remains tenuous, I commend the Administration for returning U.S. attention to Libya and deploying significant diplomatic and economic tools to help the government of National Unity succeed.

But, clearly, there's much work to be done and I look forward to hearing from our two qualified witnesses about how the Administration views these challenges and is prepared to work with Congress and the international community to address them.

I will now recognize our acting ranking member, my friend, Mr. Burchett, for purposes of making an opening statement.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you to my good friend, Chairman Ted Deutch, and I want to thank you for holding this important hearing today. There's much optimism for the future of the Libyan people, but the next steps, I feel like, will be very critical.

As Libyans prepare for elections this month, it is critical that these be undertaken without the presence, of course, of interfering efforts by foreign governments. There are far too many foreign

fighters, mercenaries, and other foreign forces still in Libya, each asserting the interests of specific regional and global powers.

Russia, in particular, continues to exert its malign influence through private military contractors despite denying any involvement. A political solution is the only way forward in Libya. Prolonged fighting only empowers Russia and fosters conditions for conflict and chaos.

Unfortunately, Russia is not interested in solutions and continues to back the warlord, General Khalifa Haftar, of the Libyan National Army, whose forces continue to be involved in serious human rights abuses and war crimes.

I'm also more than concerned about human rights abuses by the Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how the Administration is approaching this challenged set of issues.

I thank our witnesses for their services and I also want to thank, again, my good friend, Chairman Ted Deutch, for putting on this meeting for us, and thank you all very much.

And I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Burchett.

I will now turn to our witnesses. Let me remind the witnesses to limit your testimony to 5 minutes. Without objection, your prepared written statements will be made part of the hearing record, and we're really grateful for your being with us today.

First, Ms. Karen Sasahara has served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa since November 2020.

She is an accomplished member of the Senior Foreign Service, previously served as the charges d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Oman as well as Consul General in Jerusalem. Ms. Sasahara holds a Master's degree from the George Washington University, a Bachelor's degree from University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

Ms. Sasahara, many of us have had the pleasure of seeing you in the region. It is great to welcome you to the committee.

Also with us today Ms. Megan Doherty. Megan Doherty has served as USAID's Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East since February 2020. In this position, she provides management and oversight of USAID programs across Libya, Tunisia, and the Palestinian territories.

Before this current position, Ms. Doherty served as director for North Africa on the National Security Council as well as Senior Advisor in the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau.

Ms. Doherty, you have previously testified before this subcommittee in a personal capacity, and it's a pleasure to welcome you back as part of the Biden Administration.

Thanks to everyone for being here today. I recognize the witnesses for 5 minutes each and without objection, again, your prepared statement will be made part of the record.

Ms. Sasahara, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF KAREN SASAHARA, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTH AFRICA, BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Burchett and members of the committee for this opportunity to discuss Libya's path forward.

As we mark the 1-year anniversary of the Libyan cease-fire agreement and approach the upcoming Libyan Presidential and parliamentary elections, Libya is at a critical turning point.

A decade of civil conflict has deepened Libya's fragmentation and exacerbated local tensions. The United States has partnered with Libyan government institutions, the private sector, entrepreneurs, and civil society groups to mitigate drivers of violence, preserve the momentum of the political process, and improve Libyan lives.

The United States stands with the Libyan people as they work to establish lasting peace, security, and prosperity. We share their aspirations for a sovereign, inclusive, stable, and unified country in control of its own affairs.

Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, and U.S. Special Envoy and Ambassador to Libya, Richard Norland, have rallied the international community to support Libyan plans for free and fair elections, which is critical to establishing a pathway to peace.

With over 2.8 million Libyans registered to vote, there was an overwhelming desire to hold elections. Libya's High National Election Commission is aiming to hold the first round of Presidential elections on December 24th.

We expect the second round of Presidential elections to be held simultaneously with parliamentary elections in late February.

In addition to the technical support the United States has provided to the commission to promote free and fair elections with broad participation, the United States is also engaging closely with our international partners and Libyan political leaders to make clear that there will be consequences for any actors who undermine the elections or incite violence.

While the October 2020 cease-fire remains in effect, certain foreign powers continue to exploit the conflict and undermine Libyan sovereignty. The United States and international partners oppose all foreign military intervention in Libya.

The U.N. Security Council passed the U.N. Security Council Resolution 2570 In April, which calls for the departure of all foreign forces without delay. This includes Russian mercenary proxy forces, Turkish forces and their proxies, and all other foreign military forces, mercenaries, and foreign fighters, including those from Syria, Chad, Niger, and Sudan.

Russia's Wagner Group has been involved in facilitating multiple violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions and has been connected to human rights abuses in multiple countries.

Wagner continues to both destabilize Libya and use it as a platform to expand Russia's destabilizing influence in Africa. During the Libyan-led Stabilization Conference held in Tripoli this past October, the East and West military leaders comprising the 5+5 Joint Military Commission announced an action plan for the withdrawal of foreign fighters, mercenaries, and forces. The United

States strongly supports and commends the efforts of the 5+5 and encourages the swift implementation of its action plan.

Successful Libyan elections beginning on December 24th and a transition to a new government offer the best opportunity to curtail Russia's expansion into the Sahel and to remove Wagner mercenaries from Libya.

The United States continues to actively engage with our international partners in support of the withdrawal of all foreign forces. This will give the new Libyan government a chance to reestablish its sovereignty and rebuild a balanced range of security cooperation partnerships that will serve Libyan interests and promote regional stability.

We support the inclusion of Libyan civil society and women leaders in the ongoing political process, including to ensure stronger accountability for crimes committed in the country.

We were appalled by reports earlier in the year of mass graves in Tarhuna, and recent allegations of violence and abuse against migrants are similarly shocking. We need to make clear that those who commit human rights violations and abuses such as unlawful killings, torture, and forced disappearances must be held accountable.

Accountability for all responsible actors is key to strengthening the durability of a political solution, providing the Libyan people a genuine path to national reconciliation and justice.

Our commitment and partnership are demonstrated through long-standing U.S. assistance. Since 2011, the United States has provided approximately $900 million in foreign assistance for Libya, including nearly $400 million in U.S. stabilization, economic, and development support, $160 million in security assistance, and over $350 million in humanitarian assistance.

Libya also participates in the U.S.-funded International Organization for Migration Africa regional migration program, which builds national capacity to manage migration and increase regional cooperation on migration issues.

The challenges that remain are daunting, but it is hard not to be moved by the Libyan people's determination. After everything that they have faced, the Libyan people now have the best opportunity in a decade to lay the foundation for a stable democratic society.

Now is the time for Libyan political leaders to seek consensus, finalize preparations for national elections, and fulfill their commitment to the Libyan people to hold the vote on time.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to speak with you today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sasahara follows:]

Karen Sasahara
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State
House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism
"What's Next for Libya? The Path to Peace"
Thursday, December 9, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Thank you, Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to discuss Libya's path forward. As we mark the one-year anniversary of the Libyan ceasefire agreement and approach the upcoming Libyan presidential and parliamentary elections process, Libya is at a critical turning point.

A decade of civil conflict has deepened Libya's fragmentation and exacerbated local tensions. The United States has long partnered with Libyan government institutions, the private sector, entrepreneurs, and civil society groups to mitigate drivers of violence, preserve the momentum of peaceful political processes, and improve Libyan lives.

The Biden-Harris Administration stands with the Libyan people as they work to establish lasting peace, security, and prosperity. We share their aspirations for a sovereign, inclusive, stable, and unified country in control of its own affairs.

Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, and U.S. Special Envoy and Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland have rallied the international community to support Libyan plans for free and fair elections, which is critical to establishing a pathway to peace. With over 2.8 million Libyans registered to vote, there is an overwhelming desire to hold elections.

Libya's High National Election Commission is aiming to hold the first round of presidential elections on December 24. We expect the second round of presidential elections to be held simultaneously with parliamentary elections in late February. In addition to the technical support the United States has provided to the commission to promote a free and fair election with broad participation, the United States is also engaging closely with our international partners and Libyan political leaders to make clear that there will be consequences for any actors who undermine the election or incite violence.

While the October 2020 cease fire continues to hold, certain foreign powers continue to exploit the conflict and undermine Libyan sovereignty. The United States and international partners oppose all foreign military intervention in Libya. The UN Security Council passed UNSCR 2570 in April 2021, which calls for the departure of all foreign forces without delay. This includes the departure of Russian mercenary and proxy forces, Turkish forces and their proxies, and all foreign military forces, mercenaries, and foreign fighters including those from Syria, Chad, Niger, and Sudan. Russia's Wagner Group has been involved in facilitating multiple violations of UN Security Council resolutions and has been connected to human rights abuses in multiple countries. Wagner continues to both destabilize Libya and use it as a platform to expand Russia's destabilizing influence in Africa.

During October's Libya Stabilization Conference, the Libyan "5+5" Joint Military Commission, which brings together military leaders from the east and west of Libya, announced an action plan for the withdrawal of foreign fighters, mercenaries, and forces. The United States strongly supports and commends the efforts of the Libyan "5+5" Joint Military Commission and encourages the swift implementation of its action plan.

Successful Libyan elections and transition to a new government offer the best opportunity to curtail Russia's expansion into the Sahel and remove Wagner mercenaries from Libya. The United States continues to actively engage with our international partners in support of the withdrawal of all foreign forces. This will give the new Libyan government a chance to reestablish its sovereignty and rebuild a balanced range of security cooperation partnerships that will serve Libyan interests and promote regional stability.

We support the inclusion of Libyan civil society and women leaders in the ongoing political process, including to ensure stronger accountability for crimes committed in the country. We are appalled by reports earlier in the year of mass graves in Tarhouna, and recent allegations of violence and abuse against migrants are similarly shocking. We need to make clear that those who commit human rights violations and abuses, such as unlawful killings, torture, and forced disappearances, must be held accountable. Accountability for all responsible actors is key to strengthening the durability of a political solution, providing the Libyan people a genuine path to national reconciliation and justice.

Our commitment and partnership are demonstrated through long-standing U.S. assistance. Since 2011, the United States has provided approximately $900 million in foreign assistance for Libya, including nearly $400 million in U.S. stabilization, economic, and development support, $160 million in security assistance, and over $350 million in humanitarian assistance.

Libya also participates in the U.S.-funded International Organization for Migration Africa Regional Migration Program which builds national capacity to manage migration and increase regional cooperation on migration issues.

The challenges that remain are daunting, but it is hard not to be moved by the Libyan determination on display. After everything they have faced, the Libyan people now have the best opportunity in a decade to lay the foundation for a stable democratic society. Now is the time for Libyan political leaders to seek consensus, finalize preparations for national elections, and fulfill their commitment to the Libyan people to hold the vote on time.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to speak to you today and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Ms. Sasahara.

Ms. Doherty, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MEGAN DOHERTY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. DOHERTY. Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Burchett, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Libya's path forward and the role of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Libya's political transition is neither easy nor direct. The Libyan people have now endured a decade of insecurity, declining public services, and economic and government dysfunction.

But despite these challenges, the Libyan people want to move forward. The nationwide cease-fire that was agreed to in October 2020 has, largely, held and today nearly 70 percent of Libyan support holding elections. In fact, 90 percent of Libyans who registered to vote have already collected their ID cards.

And while the challenges should not be understated and there are deep political divisions, it is worth noting that those disagreements are taking place in courtrooms instead of battlefields.

That said, significant challenges remain in Libya. The United Nations estimates that nearly 900,000 people are still in need of humanitarian assistance. There are more than 600,000 migrants and 41,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers who are uniquely vulnerable and subject to egregious human rights abuses.

The recent conflict caused severe declines in services and access to water and sanitation, and COVID has further worsened the country's struggles. In some places, food costs for basic items more than doubled their prepandemic levels.

So in response to all of this, USAID's goal is to advance Libya's ability to establish a unified government capable of transparently managing its resources and serving its citizens.

Thanks to the generosity of Congress and the American people, USAID has partnered with the Libyan people to address these challenges to improve conditions and to strengthen prospects for longer-term stability.

In the last decade, USAID worked with the Libyans people to unify Libyans eastern and western power grids, decreasing blackouts. Following the liberation of Sirte in 2016 from ISIS, U.S. assistance helped stabilize the city and helped 90 percent of the people who had been driven from their homes by terror and conflict return.

USAID has also trained and empowered thousands of women, young people, and civil society activists to participate in politics and make their voices heard. Most recently, in response to COVID–19, USAID has helped Libya's health sector fight back.

Right now, we are working to support the Libyan people with their aspiration for national elections. While elections alone are insufficient, they are a crucial step forward for Libya and we are committed to ensuring that they are held as transparently, credibly, and securely as possible.

To that end, USAID has partnered with the High National Election Commission—HNEC—on all aspects of the election process from voter registration and ID cards to cybersecurity.

USAID has equipped HNEC field offices and polling stations across the country. We have worked with interior ministry officials on risk mitigation and election security planning, and we have trained judges and lawyers on election dispute resolution.

In addition, to counter a dangerous uptick in disinformation, we have worked with the Election Commission to set up a voter information hotline and with civil society to make sure that Libyans are able to fact check rumors in real time and have access to credible information.

Several challenges remain. Threats of violence and intimidation have risen against HNEC, against judges, and against candidates, particularly women, and spoilers continue to try and disrupt the process. And all of this reinforces just how important U.S. assistance and advocacy are to enable compromise.

In addition to supporting elections, USAID is committed to supporting the Libyan people in their broader aspirations for stability, accountability, and inclusive governance. Beyond elections, Libya will continue to face an array of challenges.

Government institutions will need to act swiftly to build trust and deliver improvements for the Libyan people. USAID stands ready to support these efforts.

Thank you for your time today and for your continued support for our work in Libya. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Doherty follows:]

Statement of Megan Doherty
Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development
House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism
"What's Next For Libya? The Path to Peace"
December 9, 2021

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the role of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Libya's political transition.

Libya's political transition is neither easy nor direct. Violence, corruption, and external interference have rolled back prior progress and remain threats to stability. However, despite the challenges, there is strong support from the Libyan people to chart a peaceful path forward and end more than a decade of chaos and setbacks. Today, 86 percent of Libyans who registered to vote in national elections have collected their registration cards and nearly 70 percent of Libyans support holding elections.

United States' Goals and Interests in Libya
The United States has a strategic interest in a stable and prosperous Libya. We work closely with the United Nations and across the broader international community to support the Libyan people in their democratic transition. Together, we focus on supporting a negotiated political settlement that advances Libya's ability to establish a unified government that is capable of securing its territory, transparently managing its significant resources, providing services to all of its citizens, and acting as a capable partner to mitigate threats of terrorism and violent extremism.

In support of this goal, USAID works to strengthen the foundations for a more stable, inclusive, and self-reliant Libya through two distinct but interconnected objectives. The first is to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of key governance institutions, and the second is to mitigate drivers of instability and conflict by empowering actors across civil society, marginalized populations, media, and the private sector.

USAID Assistance for Libya's Path to Stability
More than ten years after the February 2011 revolution, Libya is fractured, but still seeking to emerge from protracted civil conflict. National and local government institutions have struggled with weak legitimacy, low technical capacity, and fragmentation. Extensive foreign interference, particularly since the 2019-2020 conflict, has exacerbated instability and conflict.

Developments last year brought some promising signs of progress. The end of hostilities in June 2020 and nationwide ceasefire in October 2020 largely ended fighting and notably decreased the number of internally displaced people.[1] In November 2020, a United Nations Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL)-facilitated political process—known as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF)—produced a political roadmap for a unified government, including a plan for national

[1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Libya Fact Sheet, August 2021, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Libya%20Factsheet-August%202021_0.pdf

elections in December. Libyan parties have also taken important steps toward unification of economic institutions, including the Central Bank of Libya.

Despite these promising developments, significant challenges remain. The United Nations estimates that nearly 900,000 people are still in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.[2] Libya serves as a transit point to Europe for African migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. There are an estimated 600,000 migrants and 41,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Libya[3] who are uniquely vulnerable and often subject to egregious human rights abuses such as rape, torture, and forced labor in official and unofficial detention centers.[4] Smugglers and traffickers continue to exploit Libya's lawless borders. The protracted conflict in Libya caused a severe decline in access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Less than half of Libyan households are connected to the wastewater network.[5] Although more than 80 percent of the urban population in Libya now has access to electricity, blackouts remain frequent and rural access is under 10 percent.[6] Limited humanitarian access remains a challenge in the delivery of life-saving assistance to affected populations.

COVID has further exacerbated the country's struggles. Food costs for some basic items have more than doubled pre-pandemic levels. Access to cash, poor service provision, and lack of employment opportunities rank among Libyans' top concerns.[7]

Thanks to the generosity of Congress and the American people, USAID has partnered with the Libyan people to address some of these challenges, improve conditions, and strengthen prospects for longer-term stability. USAID helped unify Libya's eastern and western electricity grids and is working with the General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) to help it become a commercially viable company. For example, in the first three quarters of this year, GECOL dramatically improved by 207 percent compared to the same period in 2020. Following the liberation of Sirte from ISIS in 2016, USAID supported its stabilization by distributing food and school supplies, repairing and re-equipping government buildings, and restoring economic opportunities, enabling 90 percent of Sirte's internally displaced population to return within two years. USAID has also trained and empowered more than 100 civil society organizations to increase Libyans' engagement with governance entities and political participation of minority groups.

To address the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States, largely through USAID, has provided more than $23 million in supplemental and bilateral funds to support Libya's response, including

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[2] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Libya Fact Sheet, August 2021, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Libya%20Factsheet-August%202021_0.pdf

[3] UN IOM Libya-Migrant Report 38 (July-September 2021), https://migration.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-migrant-report-38-july-%E2%80%94-september-2021

[4] The New Yorker, "The Secretive Libyan Prisons That Keep Migrants Out of Europe," November 28, 2021, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/12/06/the-secretive-libyan-prisons-that-keep-migrants-out-of-europe

[5] UNICEF, Assessment of national water systems, 2019, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/libya/document/assessment-national-water-systems-libya

[6] Africa Energy Portal Country Profile - Libya, https://africa-energy-portal.org/country/libya

[7] USAID,OTI_NationalPerceptionsSurvey_September.pdf

direct support to health centers and medical professionals as well as the Ministry of Health to improve the agency's ability to respond to the pandemic and inform the public. As of November 28, more than 24 percent of eligible Libyans had received at least one vaccine dose.[8]

Libyan National Elections
Much of the focus in Libya is currently on the path to national elections. While elections alone are insufficient, they are a crucial step forward for Libya and we are committed to ensuring they are held as transparently, credibly, and securely as possible.

USAID has partnered with the High National Election Commission (HNEC) on all aspects of the electoral process from voter registration and identification cards to cybersecurity. In addition, USAID has also equipped HNEC field offices across the country, trained judges and lawyers on electoral dispute resolution, and worked with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) on risk mitigation and incident planning. To counter a dangerous uptick in electoral misinformation and hate speech, USAID helped HNEC set up voter information hotlines and supported civil society organizations to create fact checking websites to ensure Libyans have access to credible, timely information to combat rumors in real time. USAID is also working with television and radio stations, newspapers and social media platforms to secure their agreement to a code of conduct preventing hate speech and promoting unbiased coverage.

Several challenges to elections remain. In addition to militia posturing, disruptions by political spoilers, threats of violence and intimidation have risen against HNEC, electoral dispute judges, and candidates - particularly minorities and women. At the same time, disputes over the legal basis for elections and continued efforts by some actors to derail the political process show progress is neither linear nor guaranteed, making U.S. assistance and advocacy critical to enable broader political compromise.

Beyond Elections
In our experience worldwide and after more than a decade of work in Libya, we have learned the hard lesson that elections are important, but not an end goal - they are one critical step on a long journey to a credible, capable, and inclusive government. USAID is committed to supporting the Libyan people in their broader aspirations for stability, accountability, and responsive governance. Beyond elections, Libya will continue to face an array of challenges ranging from a fractured political landscape, an urgency to rid the country of foreign fighters, to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of Libyan militias and armed groups, and addressing the inhumane treatment of migrants. The health and economic impacts of the pandemic will also continue to challenge Libya. Government institutions will need to act swiftly to build trust and deliver change and improvements for the Libyan people. USAID stands ready to support these efforts.

Thank you for your time today and your continued support for our work in Libya. I look forward to your questions.

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[8] Our World in Data, https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=LBY

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks so much for your testimony, Ms. Doherty.

I will now recognize members for 5 minutes each, and pursuant to House rules all time yielded is for purposes of questioning our witnesses. Because of the virtual format of this hearing, I'll recognize members by committee seniority, alternating between Democrats and Republicans.

If you miss your turn, please let our staff know and we'll circle back to you. If you seek recognition, you must unmute your microphone and address the chair verbally.

And I will defer to later and I will start by yielding to Mr. Cicilline for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Chairman Deutch and Ranking Member Wilson, for holding this hearing and thank you to our two witnesses. This is very useful.

Ms. Sasahara—I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly—in October, the Human Rights Council voted unanimously to renew the mandate of an independent fact-finding mission, which has investigated and reported on extensive allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Libya. As part of this work, the mission has assembled a list of perpetrators responsible for gross human rights violations in the country.

Would you speak a little bit to how the United States is working to support these efforts to really hold individuals responsible for committing international crimes in Libya and how our new reentry into the Human Rights Council in January 2022 after 3 years of absence might facilitate that effort and, you know, just sort of what is underway and how we can make certain that it is successful?

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you very much for that question, sir.

This is very much at the core of our policy in Libya. It is a deviation and distraction from the real task at hand.

In the Berlin Two and at the Paris Conferences that were held this past June and in November, respectively, we called on the Libyan authorities to respect and fulfill their obligations under international rights and humanitarian law, and we have condemned all violations and abuses of migrants, migrant smuggling, and human trafficking.

We do support the U.N. fact-finding mission on Libya and its unhindered access to all Libyan territory to carry out their work. This also includes support for the Berlin Process, the international followup committee for Libya, humanitarian law, and the Human Rights Working Group to promote accountability through direct engagement with Libyan leaders.

We are also providing funding to the U.N. agencies and civil societies to document human rights abuses through our department's annual reporting on human rights trafficking and religious freedom.

It is extremely important that we have rejoined this body in Geneva. It is very much at the heart of this Administration's foreign policy.

I believe the President said that, Secretary Blinken had said that, and this enables us to get back at the table to be able to put some action behind those words, and Libya is definitely on our screen.

We continue to have discussions through the Ambassador's Special Envoy Norland directly with the most senior Libyan leadership and to consult constantly with our partners, whether it's the closest partners, the Berlin Conference, and those to continue for a full court press.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you very much.

Ms. Doherty, thank you for your testimony as well. You noted in your testimony more than 900,000 people are still in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in Libya, and while USAID and the U.N. are leading the effort to help supply aid on the ground, instability caused by the election could further jeopardize vulnerable populations in the country.

And so would you speak to USAID's preparation to work with the U.N. to really scale up humanitarian activities in Libya if fighting does break out during or after the election and do you have the resources you need to provide the level of assistance that will be necessary if that does happen?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you for your question. There's always a risk that elections can stoke tensions or be exploited by spoilers and, as we noted earlier, the environment is fragile.

But we are doing everything in our power to ensure that the Libyan elections are set up for as much success as possible, and our goal is to minimize the potential for violence.

So we, to that effect, are working with the Election Commission and the Interior Ministry on a joint elections security operations center. We have helped establish a national election security plan and provided training on election security for HNEC officials.

We have also helped the Interior Ministry set up an election violence monitoring dashboard to provide early warning of potential violence and to help them respond.

In addition, on the civil society side we are supporting strong anti-violence messaging and public awareness campaigns throughout the country. So our goal is to keep Libyans participating in the process and keep the process peaceful.

Now, these are all technical solutions, and the drivers of violence are inherently political. So this makes the diplomatic efforts that DAS Sasahara was speaking to and our support for the U.N.-led negotiations even more important.

And in addition to all of this, we will continue to provide robust humanitarian assistance as needed to the Libyan people; and beyond that we have flexible assistance so we're able to support conflict resolution in local communities, early warning, and in addition, public information campaigns and significant support to Libyan civil society to encourage peace and resolution.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you so much for your work, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. And with that, I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. Burchett, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to note that it's pretty cool that you wait to the last to go for the questioning. You miss all the good—then all the good questions are taken. You've just got to kind of get involved in casual conversation.

Mr. CICILLINE. If you're as brilliant as Ted Deutch you do not have to worry about them.

Mr. DEUTCH. All right. Everyone stop.

Mr. Burchett, you're recognized.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DEUTCH. This is eating away your time. Go ahead.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, brother.

Ms. Sasahara—I think I said that right. I do not know if I did, but my name gets murdered all the time anyway.

So does Libya have a chance at remaining stable should Gaddafi or Haftar win the election? What is the outcome should Gaddafi win and what about Haftar?

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you for that question. That, I think, is the million-dollar question and I think it's one that every Libyan is asking themselves, whether it's the Libyan population but also the powers that be.

I think they are surprised, I think, but they're also contemplating what that could mean and whether that is good for the country. I think that the chairman alluded to it before about the judiciary rulings and I think that that is underway. The High National Election Commissioner is looking at that as well and there is a lot of intense consultation that is going on in terms of the qualifications of the candidates.

Mr. BURCHETT. Ma'am, also, but do you think we should be concerned with Turkey's extensive presence and influence in Libya?

Ms. SASAHARA. I think that—in our consultations with Turkey directly they understand that foreign forces need to withdraw, to leave from Libya. That is in the October 23d, 2020, cease-fire agreement. It's in the UNSCR's 2570.

We believe that they are aware of that and we continue to discuss that with them and as well as our other partners about that.

They understand how the Libyan leadership and the Libyan people feel about the withdrawal of all foreign forces, militaries, fighters, and proxies.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK. I think you sort of answered this, but could you describe in a little further detail our efforts to negotiate Turkey's exit? Should other international forces exit as well?

Ms. SASAHARA. I think what we're doing is just talking to the leadership in those capitals to try to coordinate a balanced and a synchronized withdrawal of all of the foreign forces. It's quite a task, as you can imagine. I think there's a little bit of distraction by some people from the political developments.

But we have to continue on this track. All of these tracks are crucial—the political, the military track. There are certain things that you cannot do on one track if certain things on another track do not happen.

And so we feel very, very strongly that this must happen. But I think, as you know, there are senior levels of leadership that are questioning that. But we continue to work with them very intensely on a sequenced balancing synchronized withdrawal process.

Mr. BURCHETT. How do you feel the State Department is planning to counter the increased Russian involvement and influence in Libya, ma'am?

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes. It is a destabilizing force. We have said that binationally. We have said that in multilateral fora. We have—the

United States itself has sanctioned Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Wagner Group.

We will continue to push and to consult with our partners. The Libyans themselves want it. Their senior leadership has traveled to Ankara and to Moscow to relay that directly. I cannot think of anything more definitive and authoritative than the Libyan people and the Libyan leadership making that request.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK. Real quick, Ms. Doherty, can you describe how the U.S. is working to help combat the human trafficking in Libya in North—excuse me, North Africa, overall?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you. I'll actually redirect that question to DAS Sasahara, given the State Department's role in human trafficking.

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you. Again, as I've said, we worked on that binationally or nationally just in terms of the programs that we have that—to provide funding to Libya to provide humanitarian services.

We have partnerships with UNHCR as well as IOM to provide humanitarian services and assistance to the migrant population. It is appalling what is going on, as I've said in my testimony.

We have talked and will continue to talk and press the Libyans to abide by international humanitarian law. I was happy to hear that they did restart or reestablish the repatriation flights, which I think is very, very important for those that have decided they would like to return home. They can do so in a safe manner.

But for those that are left behind, as my colleague at USAID has said, it's far from over. We work with our colleagues to provide assistance. We work to ascertain or to monitor what is going on in the detention centers.

I think it's not just a question of talk, though. We have sanctioned one of the directors of the migration center, Mr. Kuni Ibrahim, for the horrible abuses—physical, sexual abuses—that were going on in that migration center. We will continue with that. We will continue to use that tool as the most effective way to stop these odious practices.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, ma'am. I believe I've gone over now and if I haven't, I yield back my time, Chairman Deutch. Thank you, brother.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Ranking Member Burchett.

Mr. Connolly, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me ask a devil's advocate question. I will stipulate that U.S. policy favors having an election and the withdrawal of foreign forces who might have a malign impact on those elections.

But sometimes having elections in countries that do not have any democratic tradition can actually lead to more instability because they're not ready and can, frankly, empower and embolden those forces that want to control the central government.

And so how do you answer—you know, with the best of intentions, the United States may find itself here supporting a actual element of instability by having elections, even though our motives are, presumably, good, but the unintended consequences may, in fact, contribute to further instability in a place like Libya?

Ms. DOHERTY. So we will support our Libyan partners. If their expert determination is that a delay is necessary, we will support them and we will work with them to address whatever the technical issues that they identify are.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Excuse me. Excuse me, Ms. Doherty. My question isn't what their intention is or what—you know, we're going to support whatever our partners support. It is, do we, in fact, spend any time looking at the unintended consequences that could occur and how do we address that?

Ms. DOHERTY. Yes. It's our responsibility to identify any number of outcomes and to proactively plan for them. And on the assistance side, we have maintained flexible approaches.

We're supporting violence prevention. We're working in local communities on conflict resolution, on early warning mechanisms. We're also providing support to the U.N.-led process to make sure that if there are any disruptions we can also help the process get back on track.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And is it our understanding that other armed groups operating in Libya are going to allow an election to take place in the territory they control and/or abide by the results of those elections?

Ms. DOHERTY. So our goal with our assistance is to make sure that Libyans continue to participate in the process peacefully. That's why——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. That's not my question. My question isn't about our goal. My question is about our analytical assessment of the situation on the ground.

Ms. DOHERTY. We're clear eyed about the challenges and we do expect that actors will continue to disrupt the process, and that is why we have been doing the contingency planning. But I know my State Department colleague has more.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Ms. Sasahara?

Ms. SASAHARA. Right. No, this—thank you very much, Congressman. That's a really good question and this is something that we do spend a lot of time with, you know, particularly those that have kind of seen this show before in other countries in the region where we have been.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Ms. SASAHARA. And you're right, this isn't a question of just here's a ballot box, let's have an election. This is a profound transformation, that Libya is going from a system of single dictatorial strongman model from 1969 with Gaddafi up until 2011, and then a little rough ride forward.

So you're right. What are the contingencies that are going to happen here? How can this go wrong when you—how can it go right if you do not have that history there.

This is actually what's been really actually kind of gratifying and a little bit surprising, not to be disrespectful. But you saw, as I said before, just under 3 million Libyans, they registered to vote.

They know what's going on with the militias, all of that. They've seen it. They've lived through this and they're, like, I am going to vote. I'm going to have this right. They know what it means.

The High National Election Commission has been working with the assistance of USAID to get down all of the logistics of an elec-

tion that you would see, something—I was really surprised to hear how far along they had been because I hadn't heard anything. And I'm, like, yes, they've got the observers. They've got the polls. They've got the security. Every single thing, checking every box down there.

So the logistics, the administrative, was really right on target. They know what they want. We have seen this anecdotally, we want to vote, and they're actually quite—they're watching what we say. They're watching what every Libyan politician says about the elections because they want it to happen.

So we think that they want it, they've work toward it, they are continuing to work toward it. Even with surprise candidates, the desire is still there. But the leadership—the Libyan leadership is very much aware of what the public sentiment is and, by turn, the militia leadership is aware of what the public sentiment is.

So you're looking at kind of a pause and a quiet, a little bit of uncertainty as people look around. But that electoral process machine is moving forward.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. That's very helpful and reassuring. Because, you know, the United States needs to be very clear eyed when we decide to do something like this and get behind it.

We cannot engage in magical thinking. There's a difference between what we want and the reality we face, and our foreign policy with respect to Libya or anywhere else needs to be very clear eyed, and I'm reassured by your answer. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

Mr. Mast, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Mast, I think you're muted.

Mr. Mast, are you talking to us even——

OK. Mr. Malinowski, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to our witnesses.

First, I just want to say in general that I applaud your efforts both at the State Department and USAID to support these elections and the Libyan people as they try to emerge from a decade of conflict.

I would recall that the last time we supported the Libyan people in holding elections they did an absolutely marvelous and spectacular job, surprising virtually every skeptic, including me, at that time. So let's hope that happens again.

I do want to come back, though, with you, Ms. Sasahara, to the question of foreign interference and our determination to hold people accountable for human rights abuses.

We talk about Russia, we talk about the Wagner group, and we should, but it's also easy to do so because it's easy to beat up on Russia. It's easy to sanction Russian entities. We have been doing it across the board for many years.

But let me ask you some tougher questions in this regard. Has the government of the United Arab Emirates ever acknowledged to us that they misused U.S.-provided equipment, including C–17 transport aircraft to ship weapons and supplies to the Haftar forces in Libya?

Ms. SASAHARA. I'm not aware of any conversation that they would have had with us about that issue.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, would we have had a conversation with them about that issue?

Ms. SASAHARA. I do not know.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. So it's been reported to the U.N. Security Council, acknowledged by DOD Inspector General reports, that the UAE was using our equipment to funnel masses of military equipment to the Haftar forces alongside Russia and we have never had a conversation with the UAE about that?

Ms. SASAHARA. I'm not saying, sir, that we didn't have a conversation. I just—I myself am not aware of that.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Well, I hope you would get back to us on that, because that's surprising. I mean, would it be appropriate for us to fulfill additional requests from the UAE for that kind of equipment including, for example, C–17s if they do not acknowledge having misused them in the past?

Ms. SASAHARA. No, I that's a good question.

Congressman, all of our sales come with a lot of conditions and a lot of discussions beforehand, and there are a lot of legal requirements, as you know, everything from the SU–35 that we sell, and that's all part of the discussion, and I'm going to assume that all of that is part of the discussion. It's not just an assumption. It is a legal requirement how our equipment is sold and how our technology is used.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK. Well, I'd like to ask you to followup with us specifically on the C–17s and what they have acknowledged to us because I think that's important.

The U.N. Panel of Experts, as you know, has also extensively reported to the Security Council about the role of private companies, including those based in our Gulf allies, including the UAE, in having illegally funneled weapons to warring parties in Libya, and, you know, some of those companies include Emirati companies like Lancaster 6, Opus Capital Assets, which funded and directed provision of helicopters, drones, cyber capabilities to the Haftar forces.

There was another company called Black Shield Security, which deceived Sudanese men into—by telling them that they were going to just do private security work and in the Emirates but, in fact, they were flown to fight alongside the Haftar forces in Libya.

The Administration has authority to sanction arms embargo violators and the House-adopted version of the NDAA asked you all to review companies listed in the Panel of Experts' report under that sanctions authority.

Is that something you are looking at, and if not, why not?

Ms. SASAHARA. I think that we're always looking at that, particularly the Panel of Experts' reports, and looking at sanctions, sanctions busters, and how we can remedy that. There is no role for those kinds of companies in Libya. There's no role for that exploitation of Sudanese to be used as cannon fodder. That's—it's not acceptable. That is not going to bring peace and stability. So we work——

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK.

Ms. SASAHARA [continuing]. Through U.S., United Nations, with the Panel of Experts. We work with our colleagues to monitor that, and I do want to get back to you, as you said before, about the conversation with the UAE and find out. But that's——

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you.

Ms. SASAHARA [continuing]. There's no role for them.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Could I ask you to get back to us on companies specifically listed in the Panel of Experts' report and just to update us on whether there is serious consideration of using the sanctions authorities?

Again, it is always easier to sanction a Russian than somebody from a country that we consider a partner. I get that, diplomatically. But I hope you would agree that in this case it shouldn't matter.

If there's a private entity that was involved in these arms embargo violations it should be treated equally, no matter where it comes from. Would you agree with that?

Ms. SASAHARA. Well, I understand your point on that very, very clearly. You know, sanctions are sanctions. So we will get back to you. Thank you.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Malinowski.

Before we go to Ms. Manning, we'll see if Mr. Mast would like to be recognized.

[No response.]

Mr. DEUTCH. Ms. Manning, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very important hearing, and thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Sasahara, can you talk to us about how the Administration is working to address and remove the presence of Russian-backed forces from Libya?

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you, Congresswoman. Yes, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, what we have done directly the United States has sanctioned the Wagner Group.

We have sanctioned the group itself and, of course, its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and I believe there are other countries that have done that as well. I think the U.N. has. We are going to continue to push and to support the Libyan efforts to do such.

I mentioned a little earlier that shortly after they were sworn in, I think, that they foreign minister and the prime minister themselves traveled to make that point that they want all foreign forces out of Libya, and that actually is a direct reflection of what the Libyan people themselves want.

They want everybody gone. They want the opportunity to rebuild without having these kind of nefarious forces that are just pushing their own agendas or using Libya for their own regional purposes. So we will to push on that.

Ms. MANNING. OK. Are those efforts having any impact? Are you seeing any result of what you've just described?

Ms. SASAHARA. I think that they are. I think that there is—it is not a wide open space or free fire zone that Wagner works in there. There are limits on what they can do and there are, certainly, limits and the Libyan people themselves have been very vocal about what they do or do not want to see in their country.

Ms. MANNING. Can you talk to us about the extent to which the arms embargo on Libya is being enforced and what actions we're taking to get countries, including some of our partners, to stop sending arms to Libya?

Ms. SASAHARA. We are working with the Panel of Experts at the U.N. to monitor who is doing the sanctions busting, what is it that they're bringing in, and how we can stop that. It's hard. It's hard with all of—we have so many different forces that are on the ground there and it's difficult to monitor all of that.

So we do work with the United Nations and the partner nations to implement asset freezes, for example, travel ban measures on violators of the arms embargo.

In July 2020, the United States imposed sanctions on three individuals and five entities that are linked to the Wagner Group after the group placed land mines in civilian areas in Tripoli.

So we do have a number of concrete instruments and steps that we can take and that we have taken them.

Ms. MANNING. So, again, are those steps having any impact that you can see so far?

Ms. SASAHARA. They are not spreading their activities further throughout the country unimpeded and at free will.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you.

Ms. Doherty, I want to ask you about the status of women's rights and women's political involvement in Libya. The provisional government includes women but it still falls short of a minimum of 30 percent women in leadership roles that's called for in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum Roadmap.

Of the 98 registered Presidential candidates in the upcoming election, just two brave women have stood for election. What sort of threats do they face and how do we plan to monitor and prioritize the greater inclusion of women in Libya's political and civic life, going forward?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you for that question. Empowering Libyan women is a major priority for USAID and you've noted well the challenges that they face. We have seen brave Libyan women stand up to run as candidates and community leaders, and we have seen them be met with harassment.

We have seen them face actual in-person bullying. We have seen horrific online attacks. We have seen falsehoods spread about women candidates. We have seen their integrity challenged. We have seen violence and we have also seen abductions of women candidates.

So our goal in all of this is to make sure that women in Libya have the support and the protection that they need to stand up and to run for office and to be empowered civil society activists.

So right now through our programs we are supporting women as advocates, as candidates, and as election observers. We're partnering with the European Union and with U.N. Women on a number of training programs for candidates and campaign managers.

We have trained many women to safeguard the polls as domestic election observers and we have supported a 30 percent quota campaign, which is a women-led advocacy initiative pushing for a 30 percent quota in parliamentary elections.

And, in addition, we're also working beyond the elections themselves with the education ministry on a "Not Before 18 "campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of child marriage and, more broadly, supporting elected women leaders.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Thank you both. My time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Ms. Manning.

Mr. Vargas, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and, again, I want to thank the ranking member, Tim, as well as the witnesses today.

I do have some questions about the elections themselves now. Listening today, I understand that you have great sympathy and encouragement that the elections will be held, that the elections will work, and the Libyans want to vote, and I'm with you on that.

However, we do see from the congressional Research Service that they may not be aligned with that. They may think that, in fact, there will be delays and that there will be problems with the vote.

Could you explain here the difference? There seems to be a little bit of a different take on this issue of the elections.

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes. I think in terms of a delay, I mean, the target is still December 24th, as I mentioned just a little bit earlier, that election preparations—the technical, logistical and administrative tasks—are still being carried out.

But it's—there has been kind of a compressed time in which for that to happen, and I think people want to make sure that the elections are carried out well. There is an expectation, a public expectation, that they are going to happen.

If there is any kind of a delay in the elections, it's going to be because of technical issues. People want to make sure that everything is in place, that people have their voter registration cards, that they know where they're supposed to show up and that there is real security and integrity in terms of securing the ballot boxes and the counting.

So there are still a lot of technical steps that need to be carried out. But the intention is to hold it on the 24th.

Mr. VARGAS. OK. Let me read what they have written here because I think it's interesting. "These challenges may be compounded by the absence of an agreed constitutional framework proscribing the relative powers of newly elected entities."

I mean, it sounds like they're saying when I was reading this and looking at it, that, OK, we may have the elections but once we do all of a sudden we're going to have all these other problems because we really do not have a framework set up for these entities.

What can you tell me about that?

Ms. SASAHARA. Well, in early October, the House of Representatives actually did come up with a legal framework in which to hold the elections. I know that that had been something that had been dragging on for months and months and months.

But the speaker did announce and present a framework in which the elections could be held and that there was—there were a couple of rival power personalities, frankly, that did voice their opposition and I know that there was concern about whether this was good enough, whether this was legit, so that you could go ahead and go forward.

But it's December. Preparations are still going forward. The candidacy registration opened up in early November. The candidates registered. It's been closed. So all of the steps are moving forward.

Mr. VARGAS. OK. I hope you're right. It seems to me, too, that there's so many other groups that are trying to frustrate these elections that the elections may not work.

The reason I bring all this up is, of course, there's no history of elections there, really, that work, in my opinion. As you have noted yourself, you've had a strong man there, Gaddafi, for so long, and all of a sudden, we want these elections to work. I mean, we're democrats in the larger sense of the word.

But there's really no good history of this and it does seem to be that there's a lot of issues we may be pushing that may not work, at the end of the day, and we have a cease-fire right now that could fall apart because of these elections.

Ms. SASAHARA. No, that's a good point. Actually, I want to make the point. Congressman Malinowski corrected me when he pointed out that there were elections in 2014. So there actually—there is—there is a history there.

So I stand corrected. You're right, it is fraught with peril. It's a—there's a lot of firepower there. But there is a strong desire to do this, and I think the political elites are finally realizing that the Libyan people are going to hold them to an account.

Even through all of the doubt, all of the debate, all of the shenanigans, Libyans, millions of them, continued to register, continued to say, you know, I want to vote. I want this vote to happen.

So I think there is a realization there. But it is correct to say that there are still some technical aspects about the actual voting that still need to be worked out. But——

Mr. VARGAS. I just have 10 seconds left. I want to thank you. But I do want to just thank USAID. I appreciate the work that you do everywhere around the world, especially in these difficult locations, and thank you for what you're doing there. I wish you the best. I do. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Vargas. I echo your sentiments about USAID.

And I yield to Mr. Schneider for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'll echo the same sentiments about USAID and I thank the witnesses for joining us today.

I'm going to build on some of the things said by my colleagues, Mr. Connolly, Mr. Vargas.

You know, Ms. Doherty, you said in your opening statement the United States has a strategic interest in a stable and prosperous Libya, which is certainly true.

You later went on to say that while elections alone are insufficient, they are a crucial step forward for Libya. And, Ms. Sasahara, you just said a moment ago elections are fraught with peril.

So I have three kind of related questions. First is what do you see as the necessary steps besides elections for a stable and prosperous Libya? What is the sequence of those steps?

Specifically, what has to happen before we can have success or expect successful elections, and how should we measure progress and readiness to increase the likelihood that the elections will be successful and the outcome after the elections will lead us to that stable and prosperous Libya that we're all hoping for?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you for that question.

DAS Sasahara, do you want to go and then I'll weigh in?

Ms. SASAHARA. Oh, sorry. No, I didn't mean to take your time, Megan. My apologies.

I think that the elections are a huge sign—signal of success that we were able to do this. We are truly making the transition from the strong——

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I agree, but what steps have to happen? And we're on a short timeframe, but what do we need to see in place to have the confidence or to help ensure that these elections and the post-period after the elections will put us on that path toward a stable and prosperous Libya?

Ms. SASAHARA. OK. I think what we're seeing—what we need is what we're seeing now is that the cease-fire that was broken October 23d, 2020, is still in place.

Yes, there are militias. Yes, there are other armed factions. But the cease-fire is holding. It is in place and that's very, very important. You know, people are allowed to—you know, they're making their statements. They're campaigning. They're traveling around.

As I said, the registration is going on. There has not been harassment, anything of that matter. People continue to register. They're able to pick up their voting cards. That's a very, very strong signal and I think that bodes very, very well, despite a lot of the things that are in the background there.

When you're talking about after the elections, and that is going to take a little bit—as I said, you have sequenced elections. You've got the Presidential one. The first round is going to be on the 24th. The second one is going to be simultaneously with the parliamentary elections.

So that's when you're really going to see what is this government going to look like. It's, obviously, going to take a couple few days for the final results to be announced.

And so I think getting back to your question, the next thing has to be that those results are respected, that a credible election has occurred. There is a winner. Those results have to be respected, and then a government needs to be formed.

There needs to—it needs to be the government not just of the west, not just of the east or the south, but it has to be a unified government in which they believe that they are better united than they are divided into these two factions. Foreign forces——

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And I'm sorry to interrupt but just to——

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Are there are things that we, our allies, the international community can do to increase the opportunity and the likelihood of a government forming? There will be winners and losers in election, by definition. But at the end of the day, the Nation has to be the beneficiary of the outcome of that election.

Ms. SASAHARA. Right. So we have already seen what that looks like. When the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum selected the interim government—February 25th or 26th it was—the government was then sworn in in Tobruk in Libya on March 15th and they immediately went to work.

So there is proof of concept that's already happened, and they continue to do their work to carry out their tasks based on their

ministries. So it's already happened. What we're looking at now is a permanent government.

What we're looking at is then good budget execution, services to people, and a more long-term vision, focus on the economic track. The security track is going well and we have to give a lot of credit to the military leaders of the east and the west that have actually come together in a group called the 5+5, kind of like, in my mind, sort of the unlikely heroes that realize that they are better united together. They themselves came up with a foreign forces withdrawal plan on October 8th.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. OK. And——

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes, please.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And I'm sorry to interrupt you. I only have a few seconds left. I want to make sure Ms. Doherty has a chance to talk about what she envisions as the other steps as well.

Ms. DOHERTY. Thanks so much. I appreciate that.

In addition to what Karen mentioned, the key point here is that elections need to lead to something. They need to lead to governance and they need to lead to change.

So your question of what are we doing to make sure to set this up for success, the answer is that we are working to plan robust governance support to make sure that any future government can deliver services and improvements for the Libyan people. We're working on conflict resolution in many communities throughout the country to make sure that Libyans who lose at the ballot box know that the government that is elected will respond to their needs and address their concerns.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Great. Thank you both. I wish we had not 5 minutes but hours to talk about this. There's so much here. You guys are dealing with this day in and day out, and I appreciate your commitment to it. As you said, we're all hopeful for a stable and prosperous Libya. We look forward to having further conversations.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you. Thanks, Mr. Schneider. Thanks once again to all of the members for outstanding questions.

I will yield myself the time that I need. I would like to followup on something that Ms. Manning asked about earlier.

Ms. Sasahara, the March 2021 Panel of Experts report says that the arms embargo remains totally ineffective. It said violations are extensive and blatant with complete disregard for the sanctions measures.

Do you agree with that? And clearly, whether it's a total failure or not, the massive flow of arms is a huge problem. What do we do to strengthen the enforcement?

I think you're muted.

Ms. SASAHARA. Sorry. Thank you for that. I do not think it's a total failure. I think if it were, we would see an incredible amount of weapons and we would see, I think, a lot of really dangerous behavior.

We do not see that now. It is difficult policing up all the borders. But we try to partner with the Libyans as well as with others to make sure that we keep as much out of Libya, off the battlefield. Again, I go back to the fact that the cease-fire continues to hold.

That took some doing, but it has been respected by all sides, which I think is the real success, that they realize that they're better off in a peaceful place than trying to win on the battlefield.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks.

Ms. Doherty, let me ask a question about politics as we approach the elections. There still seems to be this disunity at the national level and having municipal governments cope with the instability. What does USAID programming do? How do you work to strengthen and build capacity at the local level?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you, Chairman. The local governments in Libya have been bright spots over the past decade. We have worked with them for years. They have been great partners. And our goal in supporting the local councils has been to improve their service delivery and also help them build trust and credibility with their citizens.

So to give you a few examples of our work, we have helped 18 municipalities across Libya become financially self-reliant, helping them with financial planning and things like revenue collection.

We helped 24 local councils improve their budgeting and promote transparency, which is sometimes a radical concept, through things like town halls and publishing, sending information.

And, more broadly, we have supported 22 peaceful successful local elections for municipal councils, and we have been providing training and support to local elected officials including targeted support to elected women councilors.

And through all of this work across the country and with these local councils and in the communities, we have actually seen perceptions of local governance improve.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that.

I see Mr. Sherman has joined. So let me—let me just move on and go back to Ms. Sasahara. The House, as I mentioned earlier, passed the Libya Stabilization Act, which, among other things, seeks to impose targeted sanctions on individuals who commit human rights abuses in Libya, violate the arms embargo, and support foreign military intervention that threaten peace, security, and stability of Libya.

We want this to be a helpful tool. I'd like your thoughts on that and what else Congress can do to bolster the Administration's work on this issue.

Ms. SASAHARA. Thank you for that, sir. I think we agree. We want to have the right tools in order to make some concrete progress on that.

Now, I understand that the Administration hasn't yet taken a position on that legislation. But we welcome any legislative initiatives that contribute to further stabilizing Libya.

We believe that we do need those types of tools that have the broad range from, you know, pressure all the way up to something that has some teeth in it, as we have used before with that—the director of that migration center, Mr. Al Kuni Ibrahim.

Those are helpful tools and it does help to put those actors on notice that they have been used and they will be used and can be used.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that. In addition to the tools that we're trying to give you, if you could, finally, just speak to additional

measures you may be considering to compel foreign forces to leave and tell us about any conversations—ongoing conversations, pressure, on—there's been a lot of talk about the Russians and Emiratis, but the Turks as well.

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes. I think we—I think particularly following the elections. There's no pretext there. You're going to have a permanent government, a government that is going to want to decide what are the most appropriate military relationships that it is going to have with other countries, large and small, ourselves included, any of them.

So I think that that is going to be a very key point. We all know that every embassy has an attache and security assistance and these types of things. But we're looking at something that is very, very different. It is not even under a flag. There's a pretext that it's not linked to a government.

So I think that continuing to support and work with the Libyan people and the Libyan leadership in their often-stated, publicly stated, desire we want all foreign forces out. I think it would be very difficult for any country to try to defend its extensive military physical presence there.

Mr. DEUTCH. It would indeed. Thank you very much. Thanks to both of you. And Mr. Sherman has joined. Mr. Sherman, I'm happy to yield 5 minutes to you.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding these hearings. I want to focus on the involvement of Turkey and Russia and focus on what each country would hope to gain.

Turkey, obviously, ruled the area for hundreds of years—hundreds of years ago, or a hundred years ago, although the level of Turkish control was never all that great.

Does Turkey aspire to have military and naval bases in Libya? Does it see itself as a regional power and does Turkey imagine that it will somehow get a big chunk of the oil revenues from Libya 1 day?

Ms. SASAHARA. I think that—I think there's always an element of looking at what how one can strengthen or, you know, project political influence and form new commercial partnerships, and Libya is an oil-rich country.

Libya is part of the Southern Med. So I think that there are a couple of different reasons why you would have a country like Turkey that's interested in Libya.

Like any other country, they have the right——

Mr. SHERMAN. But we haven't seen Turkey try to establish naval bases outside of its own region. It's not like they're talking to Algeria about putting naval bases there. Do they—are we aware of any plans that would provide tens of billions of dollars of profit to either Russia or Turkey as a result of their involvement?

Ms. SASAHARA. No.

Mr. SHERMAN. And now, Russia, the strategic—you know, their desire for warm-water ports and a revision—a return to great power status would, obviously, be helped if they could have a naval base in Libya.

How much effort is Russia and Turkey putting in in terms of their own money? Or is this being funded by Libyan oil? Is Libyan oil paying for the 20,000 mercenaries, et cetera, or are Turkey and

Russia dipping into their own revenues to pay for this involvement?

Ms. SASAHARA. No. Libyan oil isn't used to fund that activity. I think that, alluding back to what I—in my spoken remarks the Russians are definitely looking to get a foothold into the continent and Libya is an extremely attractive launching pad for them. And so it is in their interest to have a physical presence there.

That is not compatible with what the Libyan people have stated that they want. That is not——

Mr. SHERMAN. I'm just trying to see this from Moscow's perspective how expensive is this for them and are they dipping into their own pockets.

Let me ask another question about the Libyan people, and that is at various times in history this has been two countries, an east and a west. How much patriotism is there in the east and the west that this be one country, particularly when the oil is only—is predominantly in one section?

How strongly does—along the entire east-west coast is there a belief in Libyan unity? Or is there a separatist or, what I'd say, a de facto separatist support—there is support for de facto separatism?

Ms. SASAHARA. Yes. I think—like a lot of people, I think they recognize themselves as Libyans whether that's outside the country or whether it's inside the country, and it is true—you have touched on something—that it's, you know, where the oil is.

But I think that there has been equitable distribution. I think that, getting back to remarks about the occasional, you know, winner take all aspects of Libyan policy, this is where that can come into play. Oh, he's a westerner or, you know, he's an easterner.

Mr. SHERMAN. OK. I do want to squeeze in one question and that is are the various forces in Libya willing to accept international observation of elections from credible observers?

Ms. DOHERTY. Thank you. Yes. The Election Commission has invited international groups to observe and, in fact, we are currently exploring what we can do to support.

Already the African Union and the EU are preparing small missions as is the Arab Organization for Human Rights and also, I believe, the Arab Organization for Electoral Management Bodies.

Mr. SHERMAN. It is so important that the Libyan people accept the outcome of this election, and I could say that for another country that's important to me as well.

And I'll yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Sherman, and I thank all—I thank the witnesses, first of all, and all the members for being here today for participating.

Ms. Doherty, Ms. Sasahara, your insight is much appreciated. Your efforts are really significantly impacting Libya, and, as you can tell, the subcommittee has a keen interest in what happens in Libya, particularly at this critical juncture and we intend to continue to maintain our focus to ensure that post-election, we move toward a unified Libya with a government that functions well without the outside intervention of military groups.

And we acknowledge that this is going to require a concerted effort and ongoing focus from this committee, from Congress, and

from the Administration. We look forward to working with both of you, going forward, on these important issues.

And I would remind the members of the subcommittee that to the extent they have additional questions for our witnesses we ask them to submit those and that the witnesses will have the opportunity to respond in writing, and any witness questions for the hearing record should be submitted to the subcommittee clerk within five business days.

And, again, I thank you both so much.

And without objection, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:19 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism

Ted Deutch (D-FL), Chair

December 9, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held virtually by the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism via Cisco WebEx (and available by live webcast on the Committee website at https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/):

DATE: Thursday, December 9, 2021

TIME: 10:00 a.m., EST

SUBJECT: What's Next for Libya? The Path to Peace

WITNESSES: Ms. Karen Sasahara
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Ms. Megan Doherty
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for the Middle East
U.S. Agency for International Development

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism* HEARING

Day *Thursday* **Date** *12-09-2021* **Room** *Cisco Webex*

Starting Time *10:05 a.m.* **Ending Time** *11:19 a.m.*

Recesses ____ (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Theodore E. Deutch

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☑
Executive (closed) Session ☐
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To select a box, mouse click it, or tab to it and use the enter key to select. Another click on the same box will deselect it.

TITLE OF HEARING:
What's Next for Libya? The Path to Peace

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See Attached

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☑ **No** ☐
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*
SFR - Rep. Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED _____

Clear Form

Note: If listing additional witnesses not included on hearing notice, be sure to include title, agency, etc.

Subcommittee Staff Associate

WHEN COMPLETED: Please print for subcommittee staff director's signature and make at least one copy of the signed form. A signed copy is to be included with the hearing/markup transcript when ready for printing along with a copy of the final meeting notice (both will go into the appendix). The signed original, with a copy of the final meeting notice attached, goes to full committee. An electronic copy of this PDF file may be saved to your hearing folder, if desired.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED FROM REPRESENTATIVE CONNOLLY

"What's Next for Libya? The Path to Peace"
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism
10:00 AM, Thursday, December 9, 2021
Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

Libya faces a critical moment this month as it prepares to hold its first elections under the framework developed by the Government of National Unity. This framework, supported by the United Nations, assembles a political roadmap for inclusive elections ushering in Libya's fragile democratic transition.

The landscape has changed dramatically since the last time this subcommittee held a hearing on the instability and violence emanating from Libya. After General Khalifa Haftar ordered forces loyal to him to begin a unilateral military operation to seize Tripoli in April 2019, the country found itself on the verge of a largescale civil war involving various factions, militias, and foreign fighters. With the support of foreign allies, GNA Prime Minister-designate Fayez al Serraj mobilized pro-GNA forces and several local militias to resist the incursion. This confrontation resulted in the deaths of 500 civilians, displacing nearly 200,000.

On October 23, 2020, General Haftar and the interim Government of National Accord (GNA) reached a ceasefire agreement, calming the conflict but not successfully erasing the deep fissures that split the country into armed conflict more than a year prior. The ceasefire created a de facto partition in the country and an estimated 20,000 foreign fighters and mercenaries have yet to withdraw from Libya today.

The elections backed by the United Nations will feature a first round of presidential elections planned for December 24, 2021, followed by a presidential run-off and parliamentary elections early next year. I remain concerned that the composition of candidates, including some implicated in overseeing gross human rights violations and launching armed incursions to gain power will deny the Libyan people the credible election they desperately deserve.

After initially being ruled ineligible, the same General Khalifa Haftar that led the armed incursion on Tripoli in 2019 was ruled eligible by a Libyan court for the presidential elections. In 2020 the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of candidate and son of Muammar al Qadhafi, Sayf al Islam Al Qadhafi, for charges of crimes against humanity, murder and persecution, allegedly committed during the 2011 revolution in Libya. To add more confusion to the fray, the current head of the GNU, Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba threw his hat into the ring after he earlier denied the prospect of his candidacy.

A credible, democratic, civilian-led government is essential to providing the Libyan people hope to chart a future free of conflict and instability. The United States can assist Libya on this path by continuing to support civil society, the role of women in the government, and the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya which brings all relevant stakeholders together. The United States should work with our allies and partners to encourage all foreign mercenaries and support for factions in Libya to withdraw. The Libyan people, and no other government, must determine the fate and future of their country.

Libya is a U.S. national security priority and the subject of past NATO military action. In past years, Libya's security has dissolved into a puzzle of sub-state actors, militias, and violent extremist groups. A responsive, inclusive, and unified government, representative of the people, will best serve the interests of the Libyan people, the region, and the international community.

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