

# Imperialist powers hold Libya “peace” conference, 10 years after NATO war

Will Morrow

16 November 2021

On Friday, government representatives of more than 30 countries gathered in Paris for a fraudulent “peace” conference ostensibly devoted to organizing a transition to “democracy” in Libya. The event was jointly hosted by France, Germany and Italy, and was also attended by US Vice President Kamala Harris.

In reality, the very same imperialist powers who professed their commitment to the “self-determination” and stability of Libya are directly responsible for plunging what was previously among the most advanced countries in Africa into a devastated society.

Ten years ago, Washington, Paris and London launched a seven-month war on Libya, cynically justified under the banner of “human rights,” involving a campaign of aerial bombardments and support for Islamist and tribal militia forces. The war led to the overthrow of the Libyan government and the lynching of its former President Muammar Gaddafi. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton infamously rejoiced at his grisly murder.

Ten years on, the infrastructure and social fabric of the country is destroyed, while it has been in a permanent state of civil war, with rival militia gangsters backed by competing regional and imperialist powers battling for control over the country and its lucrative oil reserves.

The Paris conference communiqué nonetheless grotesquely affirmed its “respect for the sovereignty, the independence, the territorial integrity and national unity of Libya and our firm commitment to them. We are opposed to all foreign interference in the country.” While it pledged to support “democracy,” among its main participants was Macron’s leading ally in Africa, Egyptian military dictator General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who took power in a 2013 coup and has since ruled Egypt through mass executions, torture and arbitrary

detention of protesters and journalists.

The Libya conference was ostensibly held to promote the upcoming elections on December 24 as a path to stability in the country. It is still unclear if the elections will actually be held. The *Guardian* newspaper, a vocal supporter of the 2011 Libyan war, admitted that “there is a strong chance that [the] militia will seek to intimidate voters.”

In the decade since the NATO war, the different local militias that NATO de facto placed in power have carried out war crimes, including mass killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and the expulsion of thousands of people from their hometowns. These were documented in a recent UN report, which avoided any mention of the NATO war and its responsibility for creating the present bloodshed in Libya.

There is currently no constitution governing the election, and candidates have not been announced, just over a month before polling day. Registration for candidates opened last week. Current Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah has still not announced his candidacy, and current electoral law states that any current office holder must announce his candidacy three months before the vote. The date of the vote remains unclear: presidential and legislative elections had previously been scheduled for the same date, but the legislative elections were pushed back to January in October.

It has been speculated that there will be election bids by Gaddhafi’s son, Seif al-Islam Gaddafi, and ex-CIA “asset” Khalifa Haftar. Haftar is the head of the so-called Libyan National Army, one of the country’s two main factions based in the east of the country, that has been backed by France, Russia, Egypt and the UAE.

The rival Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, which has been backed by Turkey, Qatar and

Italy, has already proclaimed that it will not accept the election results if Haftar is declared the winner. Chairman of the High Council of State Khaled Al-Meshri stated in televised comments that the group would resort to violence to prevent Haftar from taking office. An unstable truce has held since 2020 between the different factions.

The day before the Paris summit, Haftar's forces claimed that they would dismiss some 300 foreign fighters active in Libya, ostensibly to show their commitment to a de-escalation of the conflict. No information has been provided about the fighters' countries of origin. The announcement was clearly coordinated with Paris in order to provide legitimacy to the conference's call for the withdrawal of foreign fighters from Libya.

The French government has particularly demanded that Russia and Turkey withdraw their mercenaries from the country, absurdly presenting Paris as a defender of Libyan sovereignty.

In a press conference on Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron declared that "a first step has been taken with the announcement by the Libyan military committee for the retreat of 300 mercenaries. ... It is only a beginning. Turkey and Russia must also immediately withdraw their mercenaries and military forces, whose presence threaten the security and stability of the country and the entire region."

The statements point to intensifying geo-political conflicts and military tensions across the region and internationally. In April, Turkey summoned Greek and French ambassadors after a joint Greek-French naval excursion into territorial waters claimed by Turkey, while France has backed Greek claims over the territory.

The conference was also held amid a rapid escalation of tensions between Russia and the NATO powers over a border conflict in Eastern Europe, with the EU and NATO states illegally denying entry to thousands of refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border and accusing Moscow of carrying out "hybrid warfare" against NATO.

There is an escalating struggle for control over the geo-strategically and economically important region of northern Africa. France has waged a neo-colonial war in Mali and the Sahel since 2013, under the banner of combating terrorism. In September, the Malian

government announced that it had requested that Russia's Wagner security forces be deployed to the country in response to a French announcement of a withdrawal of occupying forces.

A further element in the European powers' determination to set up a neo-colonial government in Libya is that country's key role in enforcing the European Union's criminal refugee policy in the Mediterranean Sea.

The EU provides Libyan militias with funding and naval equipment to catch refugees who seek to travel by boat across the Mediterranean to Europe. From there they are thrown into prisons, tortured and held in inhumane conditions, and either held hostage until their families can pay their ransom or literally sold into slavery. These conditions are a conscious policy on the part of the European powers to deter refugees from exercising their democratic right to claim asylum in Europe.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**