



# ARAB DISPATCH

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## **NORTH AFRICA #Egypt**

### **Egypt strengthens energy cooperation with Greece and Cyprus**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi signed in Athens an electricity agreement with Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and the President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades.

According to Egyptian President al-Sisi the agreement will reinforce energy security and cooperation while projecting stability in the region.

As some countries face energy crisis with natural gas, oil and coal rising their prices, the agreement will create interconnections between countries in Eastern Mediterranean and Europe.

Egypt will be the main supplier of electricity, mainly produced by sun, while Greece will be distributing energy

to Europe, transporting, de facto, a significant quantity of electricity.

The agreement was welcomed by the Egyptian President as a first step towards connecting the three nations' grids with Europe.

During the meeting the three countries also tackled the possibility of exploring and transferring natural gas in the region, as well as the ongoing Cyprus' dispute with Turkey. This hypothesis, as well as the mentioned electricity agreement, is based on two premises: stable political relations among partners and at least a Turkish neutrality on these issues.

Furthermore, the agreement is also designed to halt the growing influence of Turkey in Eastern Mediterranean.

The trio, in addition to cooperation in the energy sector, last April signed a military agreement to counter Turkey, which has drilling plans in waters claimed by Greece and Cyprus.

The agreement alarmed Turkey that was intentionally left out, after last year

Ankara sent an exploration ship to conduct research in waters that Greece considers its own, according to UNCLOS III.

At the announcement of the electric agreement Turkey's foreign minister highly criticised Egypt for cooperating with Greece and most importantly with Cyprus, officially in a state of war with Turkey since 1974.



Source: CNN

#### To know more:

- *Al-Monitor*, Egypt-Greece-Cyprus summit prioritizes energy cooperation, 19/10/21, available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/10/egypt-greece-cyprus-summit-prioritizes-energy-cooperation>
- *The National News*, Egypt, Greece and Cyprus sign deal to link power grids, 19/10/21, available at: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2021/10/19/egypt-greece-and-cyprus-sign-deal-to-link-power-grids/>

- *The Arab Weekly*, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus sign energy deal, Turkey resents being left out, 20/10/21, available at:

<https://thearabweekly.com/egypt-greece-cyprus-sign-energy-deal-turkey-resents-being-left-out>

## LEVANT #Lebanon

### US envoy to rekindle talks over Israel and Lebanon maritime borders

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the U.S. envoy and former presidential adviser, Amos Hochstein, landed in Beirut to rekindle talks resumed last October over the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, officially in a state of war since the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948.

In 2018 Lebanon signed its first contract with Total, Eni and Novatek for drilling in two areas of the Mediterranean, however one of the areas is extremely controversial as it is partially located in an 860 km<sup>2</sup> area claimed by both Israel and Lebanon as their own economic zones.

The last round of talks resumed in 2020 was held in May in the Lebanese border town of Naqoura and reached a deadlock with Lebanon, claiming that the map used by the United Nations needed to be modified.

Israel owns huge offshore fields in its waters, while Lebanon, facing an unprecedented fuel crisis, with significant fuel shortages that can guarantee to its citizens only one hour of electricity per day, is in extreme need of natural resources.

The extraction of natural resources in the disputed waters could help the country to deal with a collapsing electricity infrastructure, reduce its debt and create new job opportunities.

Furthermore, as stated by the Israel-born US. envoy “an agreeable solution to Israel and Lebanon maritime dispute could potentially benefit both countries and both people”, hence reinforce stability in the region.

Iran has already provided the country with an oil tanker sent through an illegal border point at the Syrian border. A short-term fix with however a significant

mediatic impact that has pushed the White House to resume the “moribond” talks.

The USA are currently working on steering a regional initiative involving Egypt, Jordan and the World Bank to help Lebanon and Israel to solve their maritime border dispute.



*Source: Arab News-UN ship in the southernmost area of Naqoura at the border with Israel*

### To know more:

- *The New Arab*, US envoy in Lebanon over Israel border dispute, 19/10/21, available at: <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/us-envoy-lebanon-over-israel-border-dispute-3>
- *The Arab Weekly*, US envoy in Beirut to discuss Israel-Lebanon border dispute, 20/10/21, available at: <https://thearabweekly.com/us-envoy-beirut-discuss-israel-lebanon-border-dispute>
- *The Times of Israel*, US energy envoy visits Lebanon, will discuss maritime border talks with Israel, 19/10/21, available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-energy-envoy-to-visit-lebanon-will-discuss-maritime-border-talks-with-israel/>

## GULF #Yemen

### Houthis advance into Marib

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October the Iran-backed Houthi militias launched a new attack on government troops in Juba to enter Marib.

However, according to the Saudi-led coalition, that intervened militarily in Yemen six years ago, the rebels were forced to retreat, after heavy losses.

Since February, the Houthis started a heavy offensive to capture the city of Marib, the government's last stronghold in the north of the country and home to the Defence Ministry headquarters.

Marib represents one of the country's most strategic cities. Since 2015, the city, thanks to its natural resources, including oil, gas and irrigation from the Marib dam, has developed significantly, becoming quickly an economic, social, political and military centre.

Despite the dramatic civil war, the city remained relatively stable until 2019 and became home for internally displaced people hoping to resettle in the last government's stronghold in Northern Yemen.

Last March, the UN Security Council proposed a nationwide ceasefire to halt the Houthis offensive on Marib, ease restrictions on the Hodeidah seaport and a partial reopening of the Sanaa airport, to allow direct talks between warring parties in Yemen.

The initiative was rejected by the rebels that answered by demanding unchecked flights into and from Sanaa airport and a halt to the coalition's airstrikes on their forces.

Fighting between the Houthis and the forces of the Yemen's internationally recognized government, backed by the Saudi-led coalition, intensified significantly last month with the rebels launching attacks from west and south of Marib, breaking through new areas in Juba, Al-Mashjah, Al-Kasara, Serwah and Jabal Murad.

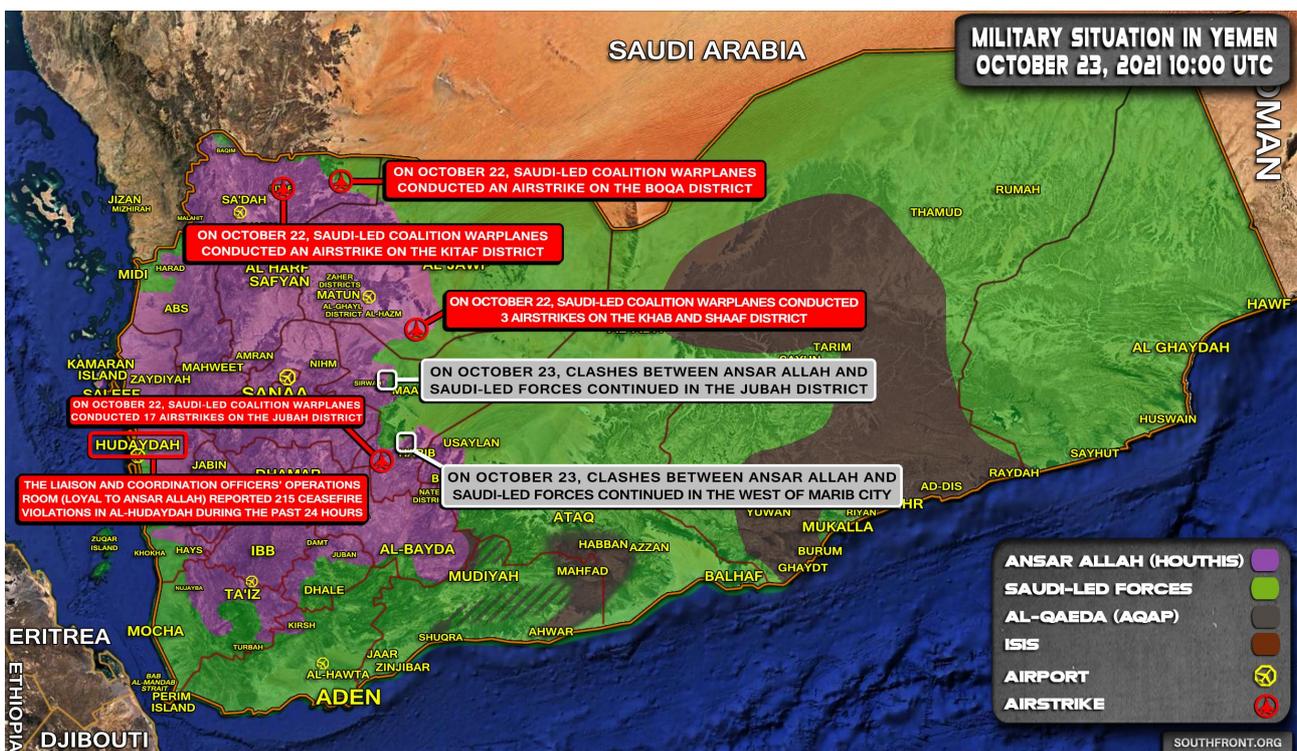
Villages and towns in Marib Province have been severely attacked triggering a new wave of internally displaced civilians. Among them, many have already fled several times before settling in Marib, the only area in the North that did not fall under the control of the Houthis. Recently, rebels have advanced north and west significantly.

The United Nations Security Council has repeatedly called to cease hostilities in Marib province with no progress. As reported by Arab News, the Houthis vowed to press ahead until they control the whole country.

“Houthis military operations inside and outside Yemen will continue until the siege is lifted and foreign forces leave the

country”, stated the Houthi leader, Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, on Twitter.

Yemeni military officials are highly concerned about the escalating violence of the last month and stressed that international calls will not end Houthis attacks and called for punitive measures against countries that are supporting ideologically, military and financially the Houthis.



Source: Southfront.org

To know more:

- Arab News, Arab coalition strikes military sites in Houthi-held Sana, 21/10/21, available at:

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1952511/middle-east>

- Arab News, Houthis reject calls for

truce intensify attacks on Marib, 30/09/21, available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1939021/middle-east>

- *Anadolu Agency*, Houthi conduct over 300 missile attacks on Yemen's Marib alone since 2014, 28/09/21, available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/houthi-conduct-over-300->

[missile-attacks-on-yemen-s-marib-alone-since-2014/2376794](https://www.arabnews.com/node/1939021/middle-east)

- *Al-Mashreq*, Arab Coalition thwarts Houthi drone boat attack on Red Sea Port, 21/09/21, available at: [https://almashareq.com/en\\_GB/articles/cnmi\\_am/features/2021/09/21/feature-04](https://almashareq.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_am/features/2021/09/21/feature-04)

## ARAB INSIGHT

### #Libya

#### Ten years after Gaddafi's death Libya's future is still uncertain

After ten years since the leader of the [Libyan Jamahiriya, Muammar Gaddafi](#) was overthrown by Libyan rebels the country is still struggling to emerge from the violence sparked after the end of the regime.

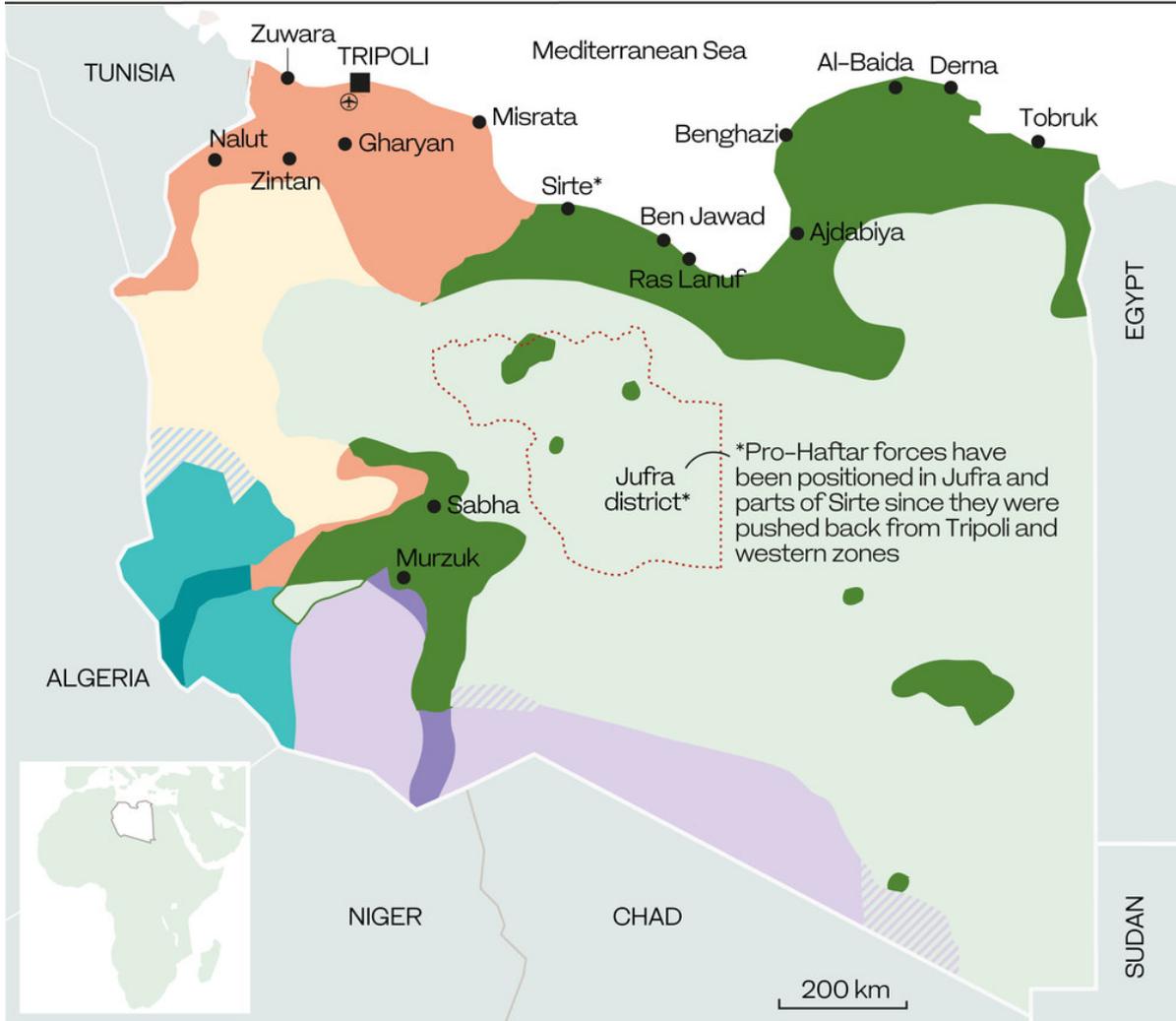
Muammar Gaddafi, who took power after a coup against monarchy in 1969, ruled the country for 42 years, fighting any kind of opposition. In 2011, following the wave of protests sparking in the Middle East and North Africa, Libya was toppled in a revolt backed by NATO. Few months later rebels captured Muammar Gaddafi in his hometown, Sirte, and killed him in the street, displaying his body in public.

After the fall of the Jamahiriya and the death of its leader Muammar Gaddafi, Libya fell into chaos. Rival administrations and foreign militias were competing to control the oil-rich country, with foreign powers including Turkey, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt, France and Russia all getting involved. In 2014 Libya was divided into two governments: the internationally recognized government in Tripoli and a separate administration backed by the House of Representatives in the east.

Last October, a ceasefire supported by the United Nations led to the appointment of a transitional unity government headed by Abdel Hamid al Dbeibah expected to guide the country to the next legislative elections scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> of December.

## FORCES IN LIBYA

An interim govt. is running the country until elections in December



Controls territory

Has influence (sparsely populated area)

- Abdul Hamid Dbeibah's Government of National Unity (GNU) and allies
- Rival Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Khalifa Haftar, and allies
- Tuareg militia
- Tubu tribal militia

Source: Risk Intelligence, AFP bureaus as of June 21, 2021

ARAB NEWS

After 10 years since the death of Colonel Gaddafi the Libyan democratic transition is highly uncertain and fragile, hence Libya's political stability is increasingly precarious.

Many experts doubt that the next elections will lead the country to political stability and a democratic transition. Political institutions are still embedded in old dynamics and practices that belong to Gaddafi's era. Tribalism and regionalism are still controlling the country along with foreign parties that are fighting inside the country, halting any possible political solution.

Gaddafi created de facto an incredibly strong military apparatus whose internal rivalries survived for years after his death creating factions, with conflicting interests and ambitions at regional and tribal levels, that are still fighting each other on the ground.



*Source: Sputnik News*

According to the newspaper, [Annahar](#), divisions inside the country are still intense, as highlighted by the latest dispute during which the House of Representatives based in Tabrouk (Tobruk) withdrew its support for the Unity Government based in Tripoli. Ongoing internal frictions between political parties might lead to the emergence of two new competing governments halting any political progress.

As reported by [Al-Hurrah](#), the Libyan political analyst, Mahmoud Khalafallah, voiced doubts that the upcoming elections will put an end to the Libyan crisis. The country is still absorbed by significant social and political changes and politicians lack the necessary political experience. According to the analyst, the country needs to get rid of foreign interference in the country's internal affairs and, most significantly, Libyans need to choose their leadership disregarding tribalism and regionalism. All sides should then accept the outcome of the elections, and this will require additional efforts.



*Source: Atalayar*

On the other hand, the political analyst, Adel Abdel Kafi stated to [Al-Hurrah](#) newspaper that, after ten years since the fall of the Jamahiriyah, the country has witnessed significant improvements, in terms of personal freedoms, and positive developments in the economic sector, especially the private sector. He added that there is a new generation of Libyans that wants to root out the country's old dynamics, inherited from the old regime. Political awareness is growing among young Libyans along with their ambition towards a stable political situation. Today Libyans are looking forward to voting in the next elections and to achieving political stability hence, security.

As pointed out by the Libyan analyst, Ahmed al-Mahdawi, even though Libya has recently made some progress, through the appointment of a unity government, the

path towards stability will be long and tortuous. Surely erasing 4 decades of Gaddafi leadership will require a lot of efforts by all the parties involved.

Today the words pronounced after the announcement of Gaddafi's death, by the then [UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki-moon](#), inviting Libyans to lay down their arms to realise the country's future through national unity and reconciliation, seem to be way too optimistic. After ten years the country is still witnessing major instability and many of the country's problems are still unresolved.

Certainly, one of the main challenges for the future government will be controlling the military and armed groups. The military are not sufficiently under control, while many armed groups might ignore election results.

Maria Bagnara

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