

Libya interim leaders vow tolerance and respect for law

BBC ONLINE

Libya's new interim leaders assured world leaders yesterday that they will build a society full of tolerance and respect for the rule of law.

Speaking at a Paris meeting, National Transitional Council (NTC) head Mustafa Abdel Jalil promised a new constitution and elections within 18 months.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who chaired the meeting, stressed the need for "reconciliation and forgiveness". He said air strikes would go on as long as ex-leader Col Gaddafi was a threat.

Sarkozy said all 63 nations at the meeting were committed to returning frozen assets to the Libyan people.

Closed-door talks were continuing yesterday between representatives of those nations and Libya's interim authorities to determine how to spend \$15bn of unfrozen funds.

The focus would be on basic needs, such as medicine, food and water supplies, as well as ensuring security dur-

ing the transition period before democratic elections, organisers said, with more details expected later.

Gaddafi has still not been captured by the interim authorities.

In an audio message broadcast on a loyalist TV channel on Thursday, he vowed he would never surrender.

He was speaking on the 42nd anniversary of his emergence as Libya's leader, which until last year was an occasion for annual celebrations in the country.

Sarkozy hosted the conference jointly with UK Prime Minister David Cameron - the two leaders who were instrumental in passing the UN resolution that allowed Nato forces to intervene in Libya.

And both men stressed that Nato would continue its involvement as long as it was needed to protect civilians.

"We are determined to continue with Nato strikes for as long as Gaddafi and his supporters represent a threat to Libya," said Sarkozy.

And Sarkozy said everyone had agreed to unfreeze assets blocked when

Gaddafi was still in power.

He added that the NTC must engage in reconciliation in order to avoid the mistakes made in other countries.

Cameron urged the council to make sure perpetrators of the "unspeakable crimes" that were coming to light in Tripoli were brought to justice.

Speaking to the BBC after the conference, Cameron said that although there might be difficult days ahead for Libya, there had been a moral imperative for foreign intervention to "stop a slaughter".

"Success in Libya means the Arab Spring can continue, and I think that's good for democracy," Mr Cameron told the BBC's Today programme. "Gaddafi was a monster, he was responsible for appalling crimes including crimes in this country, and the world is better off without him."

Meanwhile, Jalil said it was now up to the Libyan people to push ahead with reconciliation.

"It's up to you [the Libyan people] to accomplish what we promised: stability, peace and reconciliation," he said.



France's president Nicolas Sarkozy (2ndL) shakes hand with British Prime minister David Cameron (2ndR) surrounded by Mustafa Abdel Jalil, head of the rebels National Transitional Council (NTC) (L) and the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (R) during a press conference following a summit on the post-Gaddafi held at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nato fights in Libya as long as necessary

AFP, Paris

Nato's operation in Libya will continue for as long as the civilian population there is in danger, the alliance's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and national leaders said Thursday.

"We have announced that operations will continue as long as necessary, as long as there is a threat to civilians," he said, after talks in Paris between Libyan rebel leaders and the international community.

France's President Nicolas Sarkozy and Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, whose militaries spearheaded Western support for the rebellion against Moamer Kadhafi, confirmed that their warplanes would stay in the air.

Rebel leaders outline 20-month road map

AFP, London

A council tasked with drafting a constitution for Libya should be elected within eight months ahead of presidential and legislative polls in early 2013, a rebel leadership official said yesterday.

"We have outlined a clear road plan, a transition period of about 20 months," Guma al-Gamaty, the National Transitional Council's representative in Britain, told BBC radio.

He said the process of transition was already under way and the NTC would move properly to Tripoli within a few days.

For the first eight months, the council would lead Libya, at the end of which time a council of about 200 people should have been directly elected, Gamaty said.

"This council ... will take over and oversee the drafting of a democratic constitution, that should be debated and then brought to a referendum," he said.

Within a year of the council being put in place, final parliamentary and presidential elections should take place, he said.

"So we have eight months and a year that will take us to final elections with both parliamentary and presidential elections," said Gamaty.

"And then hopefully by the end of about 20 months, the Libyan people will have elected the leaders they want to lead their country."

Palestinian statehood bid dangerous Says France

AFP, Paris

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said yesterday that a bid by Palestinians to win UN recognition as a state would risk triggering a dangerous diplomatic confrontation.

Palestinians, frustrated by the failure of the frozen US-sponsored peace process with Israel, plan to campaign for recognition at the UN General Assembly later this month.

"France hopes that they use the occasion for reopening the path to dialogue rather than risking a futile and dangerous diplomatic confrontation," Juppe told an annual gathering of French ambassadors.

France is hoping that the 27 countries of the European Union can establish a common position on Palestinian statehood.

FLOTILLA REPORT ROW Turkey expels Israeli envoy

AFP, Ankara

Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador to Ankara yesterday and suspended all military ties with its one-time ally after a UN report slammed the "excessive" force used in a raid on a Gaza aid flotilla.

A day after leaked extracts of the report into last year's commando raid appeared in the media, Turkey's foreign minister said that the government in Ankara had decided on a series of steps as a mark of protest.

And although the report has yet to be released, Turkey's President Abdullah Gul said that Ankara would reject it, regarding it as "null and void".

The Israeli government meanwhile indicated it would accept most of the findings, but claimed vindication over its right to impose a blockade on the Palestinian territory which is run by the Islamist movement Hamas.

Turkey pulled its ambassador out of Tel Aviv in the immediate aftermath of the raid and, speaking at a press conference in Ankara, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said ties would now be further downgraded.

"All officials over the level of second secretary, primarily the ambassador, will turn back to their country at the latest on Wednesday," he said.

The foreign minister also said Ankara planned to challenge Israel's right to impose a blockade on the Gaza Strip before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the United Nations' highest court.

WikiLeaks publishes all US cables

Media partners blast 'needless' release

AFP, London

Anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks said yesterday it had published its full cache of more than 250,000 US diplomatic cables, which could be accessed through an Internet link without a password.

"RELEASE CABLEGATE2: 251,287 US embassy cables in searchable format," said a message on WikiLeaks' Twitter account.

It was not immediately clear whether WikiLeaks released all the cables without redacting them, as the group had threatened to do on Thursday.

The United States and human rights groups have warned that releasing unredacted cables containing the names of people who spoke in confidence to US diplomats could put the sources' lives in danger.

Despite repeated attempts by AFP/WikiLeaks could not be contacted for comment.

Meanwhile, WikiLeaks' media partners yesterday blasted the decision to publish

unredacted its full cache of diplomatic cables, saying it was the decision of Julian Assange alone.

"We deplore the decision of WikiLeaks to publish the unredacted State Department cables, which may put sources at risk," said a joint statement from the Guardian, the New York Times, Der Spiegel and El Pais.

"We cannot defend the needless publication of the complete data -- indeed, we are united in condemning it." "Today's decision to publish by Julian Assange was his, and his alone."

Assange, the Australian who founded WikiLeaks, is living under stringent bail conditions in Britain while he fights extradition to Sweden where he is wanted for questioning over allegations of rape and sexual assault.

Earlier yesterday, WikiLeaks said it had released the files, but they could not be easily accessed and required specialist software. However, several hours later a link was posted on Twitter offering easy access to the cables.



Supporters of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), vice chairman Mohan Baidhay's faction, take part in a torch rally in Kathmandu yesterday. Nepal's former rebel Maoists handed over thousands of weapons, five years after the civil war ended, in a move seen as an important part of the nation's troubled peace process. PHOTO: AFP

Forces kill 14 across Syria in crackdown

EU tightens screw, slaps oil sanctions on regime

AFP, Damascus

Syrian forces killed 14 people yesterday, activists said as protesters piled pressure on the regime to quit while the EU tightened the noose on Damascus by slapping it with an oil embargo. Activists reported "huge demonstrations" after weekly Muslim prayers in response to calls from an Internet group that urged rallies against President Bashar al-Assad's regime under the banner "death rather than humiliation".

France also announced plans to further isolate Assad, saying it would boost contacts with the opposition, echoing calls from Spain for international support for the opponents of the embattled president.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said eight people were killed when

security forces intervened to disperse protests in several suburbs of Damascus including Douma and Erbeen.

Three other people died in rebellious Homs province and three in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor, said the Britain-based Observatory which earlier reported that a 16-year-old girl was killed in Erbeen and a civilian in Talbisseh, in the province of Homs.

Several people were also reportedly wounded, some in critical condition, when security forces opened fire on the protesters, activists said.

And as ministers from the 27-member European Union gathered in Poland to discuss the Syrian turmoil, the EU yesterday adopted a ban on crude oil imports from Syria to punish Assad's regime for its brutal repression.

Strong quake hits Alaska

AFP, Washington

A strong 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck Alaska's Aleutian Islands early yesterday, triggering a tsunami warning for the remote region that was later lifted, the US Geological Survey reported.

The underwater quake occurred at 1:55am some 130 kilometres from the town of Dutch Harbor, one of several spots in the Pacific island chain that host commercial fishing operations.

USGS initially put the magnitude of the quake at 7.1 but later downgraded it to 6.8. The quake occurred at a depth of 22 miles.

The epicenter was some 1,000 miles from the state's largest city Anchorage, USGS added. There were no immediate reports of damage.

Fighting erupts in Sudan's Blue Nile

AFP, Khartoum

Fighting erupted in Sudan's Blue Nile border state between the army and forces loyal to the elected governor Malik Agar, both sides said yesterday, less than two months after the secession of the south.

The clashes follow a build-up of troops in Blue Nile, and warnings that the three month-old conflict in neighbouring South Kordofan was likely to spill along the border between Sudan and South Sudan.

The attacks targeted the residence of Agar, the chairman of the SPLM-North, Sudan's main opposition party, and the position of Al-Jundi Suleiman, commander of special joint units in Blue Nile state, at the entrance to Damazin, the state capital, according to the statement.

Agar was unharmed, but the offensive was later intensified to include all SPLA positions, the statement added, without giving details of casualties.

The SPLM-North said tensions had escalated over the last four days because of the Sudanese army's large-scale troop and weapons deployment in Damazin, which included 12 tanks and 40 trucks mounted with heavy machine guns.

Army spokesman Sawarni Khaled Saad confirmed that fighting had erupted in Blue Nile, but insisted the SPLA was responsible.

NEWS IN brief

Turkey to host radar for Nato missile defence

AFP, Ankara

Turkey envisages hosting an early warning radar as part of Nato's missile defence system for Europe, a foreign ministry spokesman said.

Leaders of the 28-member Nato alliance endorsed plans in Lisbon last year to launch a Europe-wide ballistic missile shield.

The spokesman said technical negotiations about the deployment of the defence architecture in Turkey "have reached a final stage," adding that the Turkish contribution will "strengthen Nato's defence capac-

Serbia, Kosovo resume talks after border row

AFP, Brussels

Serbia and Kosovo returned to EU-mediated talks yesterday for the first time since border clashes erupted this summer, as Belgrade faced growing pressure to normalise ties with Pristina.

The top negotiators from the once-warring sides voiced hope that they would find a breakthrough to bury a trade dispute that was at the root of the violence centred on border posts in July.

The European Union called for progress on the eve of the sixth meeting between the two sides, which are seeking to resolve practical problems encountered by

Nigerian flooding claims 102 lives: Red Cross

AFP, Lagos

At least 102 people were killed when a dam burst in torrential rain and flooding in southwest Nigeria, a local Red Cross official told AFP Wednesday.

He said the Eleyele dam collapsed and several bridges were swept away at the weekend after heavy rains fell for more than seven hours around the university town of Ibadan 150 kilometres north of the economic capital Lagos.

An official of the National Emergency Management Agency (Nema) said the drains in the town were blocked by rubbish which meant the

48 dead in Ecuador from tainted alcohol

AFP, Quito

The death toll from consumption of tainted alcohol here has risen to 48, the Ecuadoran health ministry said Wednesday.

Nearly 600 people have been treated in the public health system since the outbreak began in early July when 20 people died in Los Rios province after drinking

E Timor army chief resigns ahead of polls

AFP, Dili

The head of East Timor's armed forces, Major General Taur Matan Ruak, said yesterday he had resigned, ahead of a possible run for the presidency in elections next year.

The veteran of East Timor's resistance struggle against Indonesia's occupation said that after three decades in the military he wanted to return to civilian life.

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