



[Turkey Deploys Troops to Support UN-Backed Government in Libya](#)

Turkey has begun moving troops to Libya in support of the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), following a vote in parliament. The leader of the GNA, Fayed al-Sarraj, officially requested Turkish support for his ongoing battle against militants led by General Khalifa Haftar. General Haftar is supported by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates, and has been waging an insurgency against the UN-supported government from eastern Libya. Prime Minister al-Sarraj counts on support from Qatar in addition to Turkey, and has also received tacit backing from the United States. The movement of Turkish troops to the country adds yet another party to a conflict that is already overcrowded.

Turkey deployed its first troops to Libya on Sunday evening, ahead of a year-long planned campaign to support the al-Sarraj government in Tripoli. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated his desire for Libya to return to traditional political processes, coupled with a cessation of violence. Turkey is planning on developing Libya's national army in addition to creating an air and naval base in the country, potentially in the coastal city of Misurata. During interviews, President Erdogan has stressed that Turkish troops would not be on the frontline of combat missions, but would instead be training and advising Libyan soldiers.

In addition to supporting the Government of National Accord, Turkey will also provide support in the battle against ISIS in Libya. Multiple countries have contributed to the effort to prevent ISIS from gaining a foothold in Libya during the turmoil, including Russia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The United States has also conducted airstrikes against ISIS militants in Libya, although the most recent strike was as far back as September.

Experts have noted that Turkey has been increasingly interested in expanding its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the move to deploy troops to Libya could be aimed at giving it a physical presence in the region. Turkey has been alarmed by the strengthening nautical partnership of Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, and Israel in the Mediterranean amid concerns over the demarcation of maritime boundaries. There are extensive amounts of undersea gas and oil in the Eastern Mediterranean, and countries have begun signing agreements to allocate the resources which exclude Turkey. Namely, Israel signed an accord to connect offshore oil fields in Israeli territory to Greece and Italy, while bypassing Turkey entirely. Because of this, Turkey was careful to include clauses that give it a right to prospect and procure resources from the Mediterranean in its agreement with Libya.

As a result of all the conflicting parties, the situation in Libya continues to devolve. General Haftar and his forces control huge swaths of territory throughout Libya, as the al-Sarraj administration struggles to hold on. There has also been an increase in militia activity throughout Libya, as the lawlessness has allowed them to flourish. As different countries continue to step up their presence in Libya, the likelihood of the situation devolving into a full proxy war increases as well. Turkey sending troops to Libya doesn't help the advocates for immediate peace in the country, and instead threatens to escalate and drag the conflict on.