



[U.N. Special Adviser on Libya Says That the Country Could Hold Its Postponed Elections by June](#)

U.N. Special Adviser on Libya, Stephanie Williams, has indicated that the country could hold its postponed elections by June. These were scheduled to take place last month in December 2021, but were delayed in part because of concern regarding the potential eligibility of controversial candidates like former dictator Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam and renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar. Authorities were worried that holding the elections at that time with such contentions may have had a destabilizing effect on the reconciliation process in Libya. Williams highlighted that the nation's institutions have suffered from a lack of widely accepted legitimacy and that only a peaceful and collaborative political process can help to address this. She is pressing leaders to agree to a binding electoral mechanism that is not open-ended, and outlined that Libyans desire an end to the long period of transition that the country has experienced since the events of 2011.

The interim Government of National Unity took office last year and was intended to administer the state until planned elections last month in December. One of the major fears is that the unilateral declaration of a different interim government could push rival groups back into violent conflict. Western countries and the United Nations have said that they will continue to recognize the Government of National Unity. The U.N.-backed plan for elections in December 2021 was crafted with the hope that it would be a way to end disputes between rival political groups and unite the country. However, controversial candidates emerged and legal disputes followed. The military commander of the government in the east, the prime minister of the interim unity government, and the son of the deposed and killed dictator of Libya have each declared their candidacy. The head of Libya's election commission said that without developments that cause additional delays, 6-8 months would be needed to organize and schedule a new election.

The likelihood of a June timeline this year was infused with uncertainty when the speaker of the eastern parliament issued a call for a new interim government to be established. This was echoed in the west when leaders there said that the authority of the interim unity government expired in December 2021 when elections were supposed to take place. The speaker of the parliament in the east has said that he would begin the process to draft a new constitution and establish the next interim government. If this decision is pursued, it would likely create a greater delay in elections and the formation of a single government. U.N. Special Adviser on Libya Williams has said that all sides should focus on delivering elections to Libyan voters rather than extending the division of the country through the establishment of another interim government.

Libya has been divided between rival parliaments in Tripoli in the west, and in Benghazi in the east. The U.S.-led NATO bombardment of the country and rebellion against Libya's longtime dictator in 2011 ushered in a decade of chaos and conflict. The rival governments in the east and west that emerged as a result of this had the support of different foreign entities. In 2019, renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar and his forces attempted to capture Tripoli with the support of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Early successes were eventually repelled when the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli received significant military support from Turkey and Qatar. Now, U.N. Special Adviser on Libya Williams is emphasizing that the most important element is to focus on holding legitimate elections and getting all parties to accept the results of this, no matter the outcome.