

July 2005

1.Introduction

This Country Information Bulletin was produced by Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Bulletin identifies general background information about Côte d'Ivoire from a variety of recognised sources. The material identified concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom and is not intended to be exhaustive. None of the documents identified contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

The Bulletin provides a signpost to the source material, most of which is readily available in the public domain. For Home Office users, the Bulletin provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source number in the source list. For the benefit of external users, the relevant weblink has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.

As noted above, the source documents identified concentrate mainly on key human rights issues. For background, some basic information about Côte d'Ivoire, extracted from the Country Profile on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's website (www.fco.gov.uk), is also provided below.

2.Basic Country information

Area: 1.76m sq km

Population: 5.41m

Capital City: Tripoli

People: 97% Berber and Arabic

Language(s): Arabic. Italian and English understood in major cities

Religion(s): 97% Sunni Muslim

Currency: Dinar

Major political parties: None

Government: Jamahiriya

Head of State: Colonel Muammar Al Qadhafi, 'Leader of the Revolution (de facto Head of State)'

Prime Minister: Shukri Ghanem

Foreign Minister: Abdul Rahman Shalgam

Membership of/Participation in international groups/organisations: African Union, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDA), African Development Bank (AfDB), Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), Arab League (AL), Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Group of 77 at the United Nations (G-77), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRM), International Development Association (IDA), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation (Intelsat), International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Non Aligned Movement (NAM), Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Organisation of

Saharan and Sahelian States (CENSAD), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), United Nations (UN), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), World Tourism Organisation (WtoO), World Trade Organisation (WtrO - observer)

GEOGRAPHY

Libya is the fourth largest country in Africa by area. It lies on the North coast of Africa, on the Mediterranean Sea, and is bordered by Tunisia, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt. It is a low-lying country, much of which is desert. There are mountainous regions in the South and North West.

HISTORY

Recent History

Muammar Al Qadhafi came to power in a coup on 1 September 1969 which toppled the monarchy of King Idris. The ideological basis of Qadhafi's regime is Qadhafi's own political philosophy, the Third Universal Theory, set out in his Green Book. Drawing heavily on Islam, socialism and Bedouin tradition, the Third Universal Theory calls for a system of direct rule by the people through a series of committees. It is intended as an alternative to capitalism and communism, and is applicable to all countries. In March 1979 Qadhafi renounced virtually all his positions in government and thereafter became known only by the title "Leader of the Revolution and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces." There have been at least six coup plots during Qadhafi's period in power.

Longer Historical Perspective

For most of their history, the peoples of Libya have been subjected to varying degrees of foreign control. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, and Byzantines ruled all or parts of Libya. Although the Greeks and Romans left impressive ruins at Cyrene, Leptis Magna and Sabratha, little else remains today to testify to the presence of these ancient cultures.

The Arabs conquered Libya in the seventh century AD. In the following centuries, most of the indigenous peoples adopted Islam and the Arabic language and culture. The Ottoman Turks conquered the country in the 16th century. Libya remained part of their empire - although at times virtually autonomous - until Italy invaded in 1911 and, after years of resistance, made Libya a colony.

In 1934, Italy adopted the name "Libya" (used by the Greeks for all of North Africa, except Egypt) as the official name of the colony, which consisted of the Provinces of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fezzan. King Idris I, led Libyan resistance to Italian occupation between the two World Wars. From 1943 to 1951, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were under British administration; the French controlled Fezzan. Under the terms of the 1947 peace treaty with the Allies, Italy relinquished all claims to Libya.

On 21 November 1949, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution stating that Libya should become independent before 1 January 1952. King Idris I represented Libya in the subsequent UN negotiations. When Libya declared its independence on December 24, 1951, it was the first country to achieve independence through the United Nations. Libya was proclaimed a constitutional and a hereditary monarchy under King Idris. The discovery of significant oil reserves in 1959 and the subsequent income from petroleum sales enabled what had been one of the world's poorest countries to become extremely wealthy, as measured by per capita GDP.

King Idris ruled the Kingdom of Libya until he was overthrown in a military-led coup on 1 September 1969. The new regime, headed by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), abolished the monarchy and proclaimed the new Libyan Arab Republic. Col. Muammar Al Qadhafi emerged as leader of the RCC and eventually as de facto chief of state, a position he still holds. He has no official position.

Seeking new directions, the RCC's motto became "freedom, socialism, and unity." It pledged itself to remove backwardness, take an active role in the Palestinian Arab cause, promote Arab unity, and encourage domestic policies based on social justice, non-exploitation, and an equitable distribution of wealth.

An early objective of the new government was withdrawal of all foreign military installations from Libya. Following negotiations, British military installations at Tobruk and nearby El Adem were closed in March 1970, and U.S. facilities at Wheelus Air Force Base near Tripoli were closed in June 1970. That July, the Libyan Government ordered the expulsion of several thousand Italian residents. By 1971, libraries and cultural centres operated by foreign governments were closed. Libya claimed leadership of Arab and African revolutionary forces and sought active roles in various international organisations. In the late 1970s, Libyan embassies were redesignated as "people's bureaux," as Qadhafi sought to portray Libyan foreign policy as an expression of the popular will. The people's bureaux, aided by Libyan religious, political, educational, and business institutions overseas, exported Qadhafi's revolutionary philosophy abroad.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

The General People's Congress (GPC) is constitutionally responsible for formulating policy and passing laws in accordance with the decisions of the many local and regional People's Congresses. The GPC Congress meets annually and comprises delegates from the Basic People's Congresses and Sha'abiyat (regional level) Popular Committees. Representatives from the trade unions and professional organisations also attend.

The GPC provides a forum for debate and criticism and has on occasion obstructed policies proposed, but it can follow strong direction from the leadership. At its meeting in February/March 2000 the Congress devolved significant responsibility for local services (notably health, education and transport) to the 26 administrative regions, or Sha'abiyat powers.

Central government is made up of Secretariats that cover the core national issues: Foreign affairs, Finance, Justice, Public Security, Economy and Trade, Workforce and Training, Planning and Tourism, Energy, etc. Members hold the equivalent of Ministerial rank and act as a link between the Popular Committees and the Executive. The Congress Secretary for Foreign Affairs acts to some extent as an alternate Foreign Minister.

DEFENCE

Colonel Qadhafi, as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, exercises control over the defence establishment and security services. All male Libyans should complete two year's conscription in the armed forces.

The EU arms embargo on Libya was lifted on 11 October 2004. All defence exports to Libya will require an export licence. Licence applications will be judged against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria on a case by case basis.

LIBYAN OPPOSITION GROUPS

There are numerous small groups opposed to the regime, the vast majority of which are based outside Libya. The National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) are perhaps the best known groups in the external opposition. The latter composed of dissident former Libyan POWs in Chad. The NFSL's importance reflects its financial strength. Internal opposition is repressed although there were significant disturbances in the East of the country in 1993 and 1996.

ECONOMY

Basic Economic Facts

Libya is a major oil producer. Despite efforts to diversify its economy, the hydrocarbons sector still accounts for 95% of total exports (much of it to Spain and Italy), 30% of GDP and 75% of total fiscal revenue. Key areas of the economy (including oil) are in state ownership and government controls continue to constrain the private sector. Prime Minister Ghanem has committed himself to economic reform but so far there have been few significant moves towards expanding the private

sector.

GDP: \$35.5bn (2003 est, purchasing power parity)

GDP per head: \$6,400 (2003 est)

Annual Growth: 3.2% (2003 est)

Inflation: 2.8 % (2003 est)

Major Industries: Oil and gas, petrochemicals

Major trading partners: France, Germany, Spain and the UK.

US sanctions on Libya were eased in April 2004 although prohibitions still apply to exports of equipment that might be used for military purposes.

Exchange rate: £1 = 2.2 Libyan dinar, \$1 = 1.2 Libyan dinar (July 2004)

Source: CIA Factbook

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Libyan Relations with the International Community

Africa has occupied a central position in Libyan foreign policy for some years. Libya hosted an extraordinary summit of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) in September 1999. Libya has lobbied intensively to promote the OAU and its successor organisation, the African Union. Libya set up the Organisation of Saharan and Sahelian States (CENSAD, formerly COMESA) in 1998 to foster regional integration and security co-operation. Libya assumed the Chair of the Arab-Maghreb Union in 2004.

Relations with neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia have improved in recent years. Economic links with Egypt are particularly important: there are some 750,000 Egyptian workers in Libya and considerable Libyan investment in Egypt.

Libya is the only Mediterranean rim country which does not have formal relations with the European Union. However Colonel Qadhafi visited Brussels on 27 April 2004. During his visit Colonel Qadhafi reiterated Libya's intention to join the 35 nations of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership - also known as the Barcelona Process. Libya currently attends Barcelona Process meetings as an observer.

The US opened a liaison office in Tripoli in June 2004. US bilateral sanctions have recently been eased in response to resolution of the Lockerbie dispute and Libya's progress in dismantling its WMD.

LIBYAN RELATIONS WITH THE UK

The UK broke off diplomatic relations with Libya in 1984 after the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in St James' Square. Relations deteriorated further following the seizure of the 'Eksund' in 1987 loaded with arms and explosives for the IRA and in November 1991 the Lord Advocate of Scotland issued an arrest warrant for two Libyan officials in connection with the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie on 21 December 1988.

Diplomatic relations were resumed on 7 July 1999 following an agreement reached with the Libyans in which they accepted 'general responsibility' for the shooting of WPC Fletcher, made an apology and promised to pay compensation to the Fletcher family (since paid). They also undertook to co-operate with and abide by the findings of the Metropolitan Police investigation into the shooting. The first British Ambassador to Tripoli for 15 years arrived in December 1999. A new Libyan Ambassador arrived in London in January 2001.

Libyan Foreign Minister Shalgam's visit to London in February 2004 was the first visit to the United Kingdom by a Libyan Foreign Minister since Qadhafi came to power. It helped pave the way for Prime Minister Blair's visit to Libya in March 2004 - the first by a British Prime Minister since 1943. We are now looking to develop relations across the board, including the fields of defence, trade and culture/education.

Lockerbie

On 21 December 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 was blown up over Lockerbie in Scotland. All 259

passengers and crew were killed, as were 11 residents of Lockerbie. Two thirds of the victims were American and 44 were British.

In November 1991 the Lord Advocate and the US Acting Attorney General issued warrants for the arrest of two Libyans, Al-Megrahi and Fhimah. They were accused of placing a bomb on board the aircraft, and charged with murder. UN sanctions were imposed in March 1992, after Libya failed to respond satisfactorily to Security Council resolution 731. Sanctions were strengthened in November 1993 by Security Council Resolution 883.

Impasse ensued and UN sanctions remained in force until 1999. During most of this period, Libya maintained that a trial held in Scotland would be unfair. UN Sanctions remained. In August 1998 the UK and US Government agreed to allow the trial to be held before a Scottish court of three judges and no jury sitting in the Netherlands.

This initiative required a further UN Security Council resolution, changes to Scottish and Dutch law and a treaty between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The UK and US Governments engaged in a process of intense diplomatic activity to persuade the Libyan Government to comply. On 5 April 1999 Al-Megrahi and Fhimah were flown from Tripoli to the Netherlands. UN sanctions and the EU legislation implementing them were suspended immediately.

The Lockerbie trial began on 3 May 2000. On 31 January 2001 Al-Megrahi was found guilty; Fhimah not guilty. Al-Megrahi subsequently appealed against his conviction. His appeal was refused on 14 March 2002.

Trilateral talks began on 13 February 2001 to discuss how Libya could meet the Security Council's remaining requirements. As a result of these talks, in August 2003 the UK tabled a resolution recommending that the Security Council lift UN sanctions. That resolution was passed by the Security Council on 12 September 2003.

Trade and Investment

Libya is traditionally a strong British market. The invisible sector, city earnings on Libyan financial activities, remittances of UK workers and purchase of UK services is also substantial. British exports for 2003 were £241.7 million.

British imports from Libya consist almost exclusively of petroleum products. Total imports for 2003 were £202.1 million.

Cultural Relations with the UK

The British Council have an office in Tripoli. The Council aims to promote a positive image of Britain among educated young people and to counter young Libyans' misconceptions about the UK. They hope to increase the number of Libyans studying in the UK in line with the Prime Minister's student initiative and encourage the use of British goods and services in the education sector.

Recent Visits

Inward

- Abdulrahmen Shalgam, Foreign Minister, 10 February 2004
- Dr Abdulhafid Zlitni, Chairman of the Libyan National Oil Corporation, October 2002
- Delegation led by Suleiman al Shahumi, Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the General People's Congress, June 2002

Outward

- Prime Minister Tony Blair met Colonel Qadhafi in Tripoli, 25 March 2004
- Mike O'Brien MP, Minister for Trade, April 2004
- Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Minister of State, 12-14 October 2004
- HRH the Duke of Kent, 8-12 November 2004

- Lord Warner of Brockley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health, 20-23 March 2005

Information extracted from: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile Last updated 1 April 2005