



MaghrebiWeek

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WFP cuts food aid amid escalating war and famine in Sudan



Maghrebi.org and agencies

As the war in Sudan enters its third year and plunges the country deeper into famine, the World Food Program has been forced to cut food rations and scaled back humanitarian aid, Reuters reports. The organization has warned, on

April 25th, that aid for people facing severe food shortages will be undermined by the broader trend of donor states reducing humanitarian funding.

To feed an estimated seven million people from May through to September, the United Nations

appealed to donors for 800 million dollars. So far, it has reported a shortfall of a staggering 698 million dollars – a deficit that, it says, will be felt in the coming weeks.

In areas at risk of famine, rations have already been reduced to 70 percent of the standard 2,100 kilocalories per day. The WFP warns that by May, stocks of essentials like cereals, pulses, and ready-to-use food will begin to run dry.

“We are stressing the need to ensure funding flows at a very critical time” lamented the WFP’s Sudan country office emergency coordinator, Samantha Chattaraj to reporters in Geneva via video link from Port Sudan. “We are entering the rainy season and also

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News in Brief

France and Mali agree on travel documents

In spite of tensions between France and Juntas in Sahel, Malian citizens will be allowed to enter Europe under new travel documents with the logo of the newly formed Alliance of Sahel States, says le Monde on April 18th.

After a tumultuous period that saw the expulsion of the French forces from the Sahel and the creation of the new Alliance of Sahel, France and Mali have reached a milestone towards normalization.

The new passport, which contains the flag of the Alliance of Sahel States and its motto “one space, one people, one destiny” has been recognized by France after several months of procedure, according to diplomatic sources. It is produced by Idemia, a French company specialised in identity-related security services.

CAF-Royal Air Maroc deal may force Algeria to open airspace

Algeria faces a potential diplomatic challenge following an agreement signed on April 19 between the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and Royal Air Maroc (RAM), making the Moroccan airline the exclusive carrier for all CAF competitions.

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Algeria leaves over 1800 migrants stranded in the Sahara

Malaika Remedios

On April 19th, the Algerian authorities carried out a record expulsion, deporting over 1,800 migrants to a remote stretch of the Sahara along the Nigerien border, according to AP. The group was stranded at what humanitarian organizations have termed Point Zero, where Algeria has pushed back tens of thousands of sub-Saharan migrants in recent years.

Fifteen kilometers from the overwhelmed settlement in Assamaka, migrants were left to travel on foot, enduring extreme conditions without support. Local organizations have revealed that some migrants, including pregnant women and mothers with infants,

“collapse from thirst and exhaustion, and some die before rescue teams arrive.”

According to Abdou Aziz Chehou, the national coordinator of a Niger-based migrant rights group, the latest convoy brings the total number of expelled migrants arriving in Assamaka in April alone to over 4,000.

Algeria has long been a way-point en route to Europe for migrants fleeing poverty, conflict, or climate change. But as Europe tightens its border controls, many migrants are left stranded in transit countries like Algeria with “checkered human rights records,” says AP.

In 2024, Alarmphone Sahara recorded more than 30,000

migrants expelled from Algeria, with Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya imposing similar pushbacks.

It is no coincidence that this surge comes amid rising tensions with Algeria’s southern neighbors, all ruled by military regimes that ousted elected regimes once aligned with Algiers. Earlier in April, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger withdrew their ambassadors from Algeria over border security disputes.

Neither Algiers nor Niamey have commented on the latest expulsions, which are rarely reported in the Algerian press. However, Nigerien authorities have previously lamented that Algiers’ actions violate a 2014 agreement that allows only Nigerien nationals to be deported across the border.

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Libya: Women’s football decimated by war and patriarchy

Grace Shipp

Women’s football in Libya has been decimated by years of war, conservative and patriarchal judgement, and lack of resources, according to the first Libyan female coach.

In an interview with The National on April 22nd, Rasha Elghorour discusses her own career in Libyan football but also speaks to the wider structural issues surrounding women’s sport.

Libya has no female football clubs, no national team and no dedicated female facilities after the second significant wave of civil war in 2019 ended any ambitions for women’s football in the country.

Elghorour comments that “in other countries you can see women’s football is growing but Libya is still way behind. I want to do whatever I can help to help this but it is difficult.”

The Libyan Football Federation (LFF) originally supported the establishment of a Libyan national women’s team and selected Elghorour as a senior player.

Yet years later, despite Elghorour’s qualifications in the Fifa’s Master’s programme, the LFF will not permit her to become a board member. Aside from a single board member, there is no other female representation at the federation, making it increasingly difficult for social progress to occur. “We have women in politics and we have women in business but for some reason women in sport is just not accepted in the same way in Libya,” she notes.

Whilst the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime seemed the perfect opportunity for female advancement, the dream of playing an international game has been thwarted at every turn. Depicted in the Libyan-British documentary Freedom Fields, the

plight of Libyan female footballers is brought to light.

The documentary shows how the LFF deliberately obstruct women’s sports; how timing and conservative feelings damage women’s accessibility to football pitches; how legislation has prevented women from gaining travel visas or travelling without a male guardian; how international sanctions and border closures have prevented travelling; and, how war has damaged freedom and security.

“Women in Libya have so many obstacles, but there are other, more general issues that everyone faces, such as being unable to get a visa just because you’re Libyan, not having freedom of movement because of war and security, or not having cash, water or electricity,” Naziha Arebi, the documentary’s director, says. However, the LFF have suffered from a damaged reputation in recent years with allegations of



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corruption alongside the recent sanctioning by the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

Maghrebi reported in October 2024 that the LFF were fined \$50,000 and given a 3-0 loss against Nigeria when the match was cancelled after the Nigerian team were landed in an airport hundreds of miles from where they were set to play. After arriving on October 13th, the Nigerian team were not met by any members of the LFF and players reported being left without food, WiFi or accommodation.

Despite this, African football seems to be on the come up, with Arsene Wenger recently introducing a talent development programme in Cairo, Egypt. The initiative is intended to improve the quality of football coaching, as well as develop young talent and football infrastructure in Egypt.

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WFP cuts food aid amid escalating war and famine in Sudan

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the hunger season in Sudan, a time when conflict is escalating, and displacements are increasing.”

Sudan's civil war broke out in April 2023, sparked by a power struggle between the army and a rebel group turned paramilitary organization called the Rapid Support Forces. The conflict has since displaced millions and put 30 million Sudanese on the brink of starvation.

The WFP is reportedly rallying support across the country including for some of the 450,000 people recently displaced from Zamzam camp in North Darfur after RSF forces took control earlier in April.

Despite the funding crisis, the organization still managed to reach over four million people in March, which is its highest monthly total since the war began. It is now able to better expand its outreach, having overcome bureaucratic barriers and insecurity, and aid trucks are expected within the next few days.



Since 2013, conflict in South Sudan has claimed thousands of lives and driven an estimated 3.3 million people from their homes. More than 2.4 million have fled to neighboring countries like Uganda while an additional 1.9 million people remain displaced within their own country.

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According to Atalayar, the deal would require Algeria to open its currently closed airspace to RAM flights or potentially face sporting consequences, including possible tournament expulsion or loss of television rights revenue.

The agreement comes as Morocco prepares to host both the 2025 African Cup of Nations and the 2024 Women's CAN in July 2025. CAF President Patrice Mostephe called the partnership “a historic moment for African football” that will better connect the continent's 54 member nations.

Algeria makes strides in economic diversification

Algeria is making significant progress on economic diversification, according to a new World Bank report highlighting the country's reduced dependence on hydrocarbons.

According to government-friendly AL24, the country's non-hydrocarbon exports have tripled between 2017 and 2023, boosted by key reforms including a digital port platform and the 2022 Investment Law that streamlines procedures



Tunisia: school wall's state shows cracks in the elite's grip of the country

for domestic and foreign investors.

Agricultural sector growth is accelerating with increased fresh food exports, supported by improved product quality certification through ALGERAC, which has expanded accredited laboratories by 75% over three years to ensure export standards are met.

Tunisians protest after the death of students

Protests have erupted in Tunisia in the town of Mezzouna after a wall collapsed, killing three students and injuring two others, says Le Monde on April 17th.

Tensions remain in the Sidi Bouzid governorate, the starting point of the 2011 revolution, with clashes between protestors and the police continuing, and injuring several protesters.

According to local media, the school wall, built in the 1980, had been showing cracks for several years with no actions taken to repair it.

The school director, who claims he alerted authorities in 2022 about the hazard, was subsequently arrested and charged for manslaughter. The opposition has called the government to recognise its

responsibility in the tragedy.

Tensions between Israel and Egypt rise

Tensions between Israel and Egypt have raised fears over a military confrontation between the two, fuelled by proposals to resettle Palestinians in the Sinai.

Reported by The National on April 21st, Egypt's recent arms purchases have contributed to the rising tensions whilst, in Egypt, anger and frustration are prominent after Israel embraced Trump's plan to resettle Gazans in Egypt and Jordan.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi has been a prominent critic of Israel's military actions in Gaza.

Rebel group reportedly kill 30 people in attack in Sudan

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebel group have killed more than 30 people in an attack on a city in the North Darfur region of Sudan according to locals, as reported by AP on April 22nd.

The attacks were launched over a two day spell, with dozens more people being injured as well as fatalities.

El-fasher was the target of the attacks, a city located some 800km

southwest of Khartoum.

Amazigh march for language rights and earth-quake recovery

Two marches commenced in Rabat and Marrakech on April 20th to mark the 45th anniversary of the Amazigh Spring, which commemorates the 1980 crackdowns in Algeria that killed several Amazigh protesters, reports Yabiladi.

Internal divisions saw Rabat protests rally around the legacy of Amazigh intellectual Mohamed Chafik, demanding recognition of Amazigh identity, language rights, and the release of “Hirak Rif” detainees.

Meanwhile, in Marrakech, economic neglect took center stage as protestors emphasized highlighted slow reconstruction and limited access to basic services in earthquake-hit areas like Al Haouz, where many survivors still live in tents well over a year later.

Libya: First female coach calls for return of women's football

Libya's first female coach has called for women's football to return to the war-torn country after the second significant wave of the civil war ended any ambition for women's sport.

Rasha Elghorour made her international debut for the Libyan national football team in 2016 but discussed in an interview with The National how the patriarchal orientation of society, in conjunction with war, halted the progression of women's sport.

With no clubs, no national team and no dedicated female facilities, Elghorour has a mountain to climb.

She recognises the gravity of the challenge ahead.

Israel revokes visas of 27 French MPs

Israel has revoked the visas of 27 French MPs days before they were due to visit the country, as Israel continues to isolate itself from the European left.

According to The National on April 22nd, after being invited on a five-day trip by the French consulate in Jerusalem to Israel and the Palestinian territories, the Interior Ministry cancelled their visas under a law that allows them to ban people who could act against Israel.

This is not the first time Israel has banned parliamentary members from entering the country as earlier this month two British MPs were also refused entry.

Protests in Morocco against aircraft shipments to Israel

Protests have taken place in the city of Tangiers in northern Morocco due to plans to dock a Maersk liner ship carrying parts of F-35 aircraft to Israel were announced, according to The New Arab on April 21st.

The Moroccan front for Palestine said that their country has a “responsibility not to become a gateway for facilitating genocide”. The protests were aimed toward the Maersk Detroit ship, which was expected to dock in the early hours of Monday at the Tangier Med Port.

Top EU official visits Algeria to boost cooperation

Stefano Sannino, European Commission Director General for the

The Moroccan front for Palestine said that their country has a “responsibility not to become a gateway for facilitating genocide”.

Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf, will visit Algeria from April 21 to 24 to strengthen bilateral cooperation. The visit aligns with the upcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean initiative.

According to EU Reporter, Sannino will meet with Algerian officials from the foreign affairs, Energy, Finance, and Culture ministries.

The EU seeks to expand the partnership beyond energy to include sustainable growth, reindustrialisation, and green transition. Key discussion topics include terrorism, migration management, and energy interconnection.

French FM travels to Iraq to gather support for two-state solution

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot (below) has recently travelled to Iraq in an effort to build support for a proposed two-state solution between Israel and Palestine while visiting the country on April 23.

As reported by The New Arab, the French foreign ministry stated that the visit aimed to help “prepare for an international conference” focused on the future of both Palestine and Israel.

The visit follows recent suggestions by French President Emmanuel Macron that France would be willing to recognise a legitimate Palestinian state.

Tunisian defence lawyer arrested on “conspiracy charges”

Tunisian authorities have arrested lawyer and former administrative court judge Ahmed Sawab on charges of “conspiracy against the state”.

As reported by Middle East Monitor on April 22nd, lawyer Sami Ben Ghazi's posted to Facebook that: “Security forces raided the home of professor and former judge Ahmed Sawab, and then he was taken to the headquarters of the Tunisian National Counterterrorism Commission (CNLCT) in Bouchoucha.”

The Tunisian authorities have not directly replied to the reports.

Pakistan expels nearly 20,000 Afghans, saying it can't cope

Pakistan has expelled nearly 20,000 Afghans in April 2025 in its bid to deport all undocumented migrants, saying it can no longer cope.

More than 3.5 million Afghans have been living in Pakistan, 700,000 of whom came after the Taliban takeover in 2021 which saw the return of a brutal, Islamist regime after the departure of the United States, according to the BBC on April 19th.

The government of Pakistan has said the burden of Afghan refugees is now too high, saying it poses a risk to national security and causes pressure on public services.

Moroccan conference vows to fix water crisis

At the opening of the 17th SIAM in Meknes, agriculture and water ministers to Morocco signed two landmark agreements to bolster coordination on water resource management and climate resilience.

As reported by the Moroccan gov-





ernment friendly Atalayar on April 22nd, agriculture Minister Ahmed El Bouari highlighted promising seasonal forecasts and reaffirmed the country's commitment to the Green Generation 2020–2030 strategy.

Water Minister Nizar Baraka outlined plans to expand desalination, optimise dam use, and integrate unconventional water sources to secure Morocco's future water and agricultural stability.

Rival Syrian Kurdish groups in Syria set for unity talks

In a potentially game-changing development, rival Syrian Kurdish factions, including the Autonomous Administration-linked PYD and the opposition-aligned Kurdish National Council (KCK), will convene on April 26th for a unified conference aimed at crafting a shared political vision. According to The New Arab, the meeting, pushed forward by SDF commander Mazloum Abdi and backed by US diplomatic pressure, could pave the way for a long-elu-



Nizar Baraka

sive Kurdish delegation to enter talks with Damascus.

While hailed as a milestone by Kurdish leaders, the conference follows years of mistrust and internal fragmentation between the rival Syrian Kurdish groups, particularly accusations from the KCK of marginalisation within the current Kurdish governance structure.

Rabat archbishop a contender after Pope Francis' death

In the wake of Pope Francis' death on April 21st, Cristóbal López Romero, 72, the Spanish Archbishop of Rabat, is among the contenders expected to gather in the Sistine Chapel to elect his successor, reports the Moroccan government friendly Hespress on April 23rd.

The Rabat Archbishop López Romero's international pastoral experience, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts, resonates with the vision Pope Francis championed: one rooted in interfaith dialogue and global outreach.

Prominent candidates span a wide range of regions and backgrounds, including José Tolentino de Mendonça, 59, a Portuguese cardinal known for his deep engagement with culture and education, and Pierbattista Pizzaballa, 59, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and a key voice in the Middle East.

Sahrawi groups condemn claimed actions of Moroccan authorities

Morocco has expedited the process of systemically removing the Sahrawi people from the Western Saharan region, claims Algerian

media AL24 on April 23rd.

The act is reportedly aimed at displacing the native people in a bid to change the demography of the region according to a statement released by the Sahrawi Association ASVDH.

They condemned the actions as being part of Morocco's sovereignty ambitions.

Morocco and Spain strengthen security cooperation

Morocco's security chief, Abdellatif Hammouchi, met with Spain's new Civil Guard intelligence head, Luis Baliz Piñero, in Rabat. They discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation against terrorism and organised crime, with special focus on Sahel threats.

According to the Moroccan government-friendly Atalayar, the DGSN-DGST highlighted this meeting as Piñero's first international trip since taking office, underscoring Morocco's strategic importance to Spain.

Both officials emphasised improving coordination mechanisms, particularly in preparation for co-hosting the 2030 World Cup with Portugal, aiming to ensure complete safety for the global event through proactive security measures.

Narcotics and alcohol seized in Moroccan security force raids

Two operations by the security forces took place on the 22nd of April, which saw the seizure of narcotics and alcohol, as the authori-

ties continue to fight crime.

According to the Moroccan government-friendly Hespress, the two raids took place in the eastern Moroccan city of Al-Aiyoun Sidi Mellouk. Between the two raids, cocaine, ecstasy pills and alcohol were seized.

At this time, no arrests have been made as the two key suspects, who are known to the police for previous drug-related issues, remain at large.

France claims Tunisian trials were "not fair"

France has claimed that the recent trials which saw prison sentences ranging from 13-66 years handed out to leading Tunisian opposition figures were unfair, according to Saudi news agency Asharq Al-Awsat on April 24th.

The criticisms from France are the first to come from a foreign power although there has been internal dissent in Tunisia.

Rights group and political opponents have condemned the trials as being fabrications in order to silence opposing voices.

Gallipoli landings commemorated on 110th anniversary

Princess Anne, New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, and Australia's governor-general attended a dawn ceremony on the 25th of April at Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula to mark 110 years since the ill-fated 1915 campaign.

According to The New Arab, the solemn observance at Anzac Cove began with a Māori lament as the sun rose, followed by prayers and wreath-laying.

Luxon emphasised the tragic human cost of the eight-month conflict and the importance of preventing future wars.

The failed campaign, which claimed tens of thousands of lives on both sides, helped forge Australian and New Zealand national identities while creating lasting bonds with Turkey.

Trump to announce extensive Saudi arms package

The US is preparing to offer Saudi Arabia an arms deal worth over \$100 billion during President Trump's upcoming May visit to the kingdom.

According to Reuters, the package may potentially include Lockheed Martin C-130 aircraft, missiles, radars, and General Atomics



Rebel group reportedly kill 30 people in attack in Sudan

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The attacks were launched over a two day spell, with dozens more people being injured as well as fatalities.

El-fasher was the target of the attacks, a city located some 800km southwest of Khartoum.

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In spite of tensions between France and Juntas in Sahel, Malian citizens will be allowed to enter Europe under new travel documents with the logo of the newly formed Alliance of Sahel States, says le Monde on April 18th.

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Burkina Faso: Junta says it prevented a coup

The junta in power claimed on April 21st night, to have thwarted an "unfolding

conspiracy" to "sow total chaos" in the country, blaming Ivory Coast, says le Monde.

The affair was revealed on national television by Security Minister Mahamadou Sana.

"Thanks to the diligent work of the intelligence service, we discovered a conspiracy unfolding against our country whose ultimate goal was to sow total chaos," he said.

Benin government admits over 54 soldiers killed in terrorist attack

Benin has admitted that over 54 soldiers were killed by Islamic insurgents during an attack on two military outposts near the borders with the Sahel countries of Niger and Burkina Faso on April 17.

As reported by BBC News, responsibility for the devastating attack was claimed by the jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM)

The terrorist group, which is primarily based in Mali, has

in recent years expanded into neighbouring countries and regions, including Benin.

Rebel group must be sanctioned by UN security council say Sudan

Sudan has urged the United Nations Security Council to follow up their condemnation of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebel group with formal sanctions.

As reported by Saudi news agency Ahsarq Al-Awsat on April 20th, the Foreign Minister for Sudan welcomed a statement condemning the crimes committed against the civilian population in North Darfur however has now urged the council to go a step further and issue sanctions against the rebel group.

The minister went on to ask for an end to "foreign meddling" in the war and to ensure that the actions of the security council are able to be implemented against the RSF.

The UN released a statement on April 18th saying that: "The members of the Security Council strongly condemned the repeated attacks on El Fasher as well as on the Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps for internally displaced persons in recent days by the RSF."

In response to the statement, the RSF has escalated their attacks on refugee camps and has done their best to prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid to al-Fasher as part of its "genocide campaign" according to the Foreign Ministry.

The attacks come in the wake of the RSF formerly declaring a rival, paramilitary government in Sudan, something which they have been planning for months. The conflict has been described as the "world's worst humanitarian crisis" by the UN and the recent cuts to USAID by the Trump administration has only exacerbated the dire situation.



Rival Syrian Kurdish groups in Syria set for unity talks

In a potentially game-changing development, rival Syrian Kurdish factions, including the Autonomous Administration-linked PYD and the opposition-aligned Kurdish National Council (KCK), will convene on April 26th for a unified conference aimed at crafting a shared political vision.

According to The New Arab, the meeting, pushed forward by SDF commander Mazloum Abdi and backed by US diplomatic pressure, could pave the way for a long-elusive Kurdish delegation to enter talks with Damascus. While hailed as a milestone by Kurdish leaders, the conference follows years of mistrust and internal fragmentation between the rival Syrian Kurdish groups, particularly accusations from the KCK of marginalisation within the current Kurdish governance structure.

French FM travels to Iraq to gather support for two-state solution

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The visit follows recent suggestions by French President Emmanuel Macron that France would be willing to recognise a legitimate Palestinian state.

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continues to isolate itself from the European left.

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This is not the first time Israel has banned parliamentary members from entering the country as earlier this month two British MPs were also refused entry.

Spy Chief Disputes Netanyahu Dismissal

Israeli Shin Bet Chief Ronen Bar has submitted a scathing affidavit to the Supreme Court. He claims Netanyahu tried to dismiss him after he refused to spy on protesters.

According to The Guardian, Bar refused to disrupt Netanyahu's corruption trial. He cited Shin Bet's investigations into links between Netanyahu aides and Qatar as another reason for his dismissal. The Prime Minister's office denied these allegations. They called the

affidavit “full of lies.” Netanyahu insists Bar's dismissal was due to security failures related to the October 7 attack.



Tensions between Israel and Egypt rise

Tensions between Israel and Egypt have raised fears over a military confrontation between the two, fuelled by proposals to resettle Palestinians in the Sinai.

Reported by The National on April 21st, Egypt's recent arms purchases have contributed to the rising tensions whilst, in Egypt, anger and frustration are prominent after Israel embraced Trump's plan to resettle Gazans in Egypt and Jordan.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi has been a prominent critic of Israel's military actions in Gaza.

Qatar “frustrated” by lack of progress in Gaza peace talks

Qatar has become increasingly frustrated with Israel over the apparent lack of progress in its efforts to broker a peace deal in Gaza.

According to major newswires Qatar's chief negotiator, Mohammed Al-Khulaifi, speaking about the ongoing negotiations on April 18, said, “We're definitely frustrated by the slowness, sometimes, of the process in the negotiation.”

The current peace talks follow the collapse of the initially brokered truce between Hamas

and Israel in May, after which the two sides resumed fighting.

Jordan outlaws Muslim Brotherhood, accuses group of plotting attacks

Jordan declared on April 23rd that it was prohibiting the operations of the Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, alleging it has manufactured and accumulated a large amount of weapons and intends to bring instability to the country.

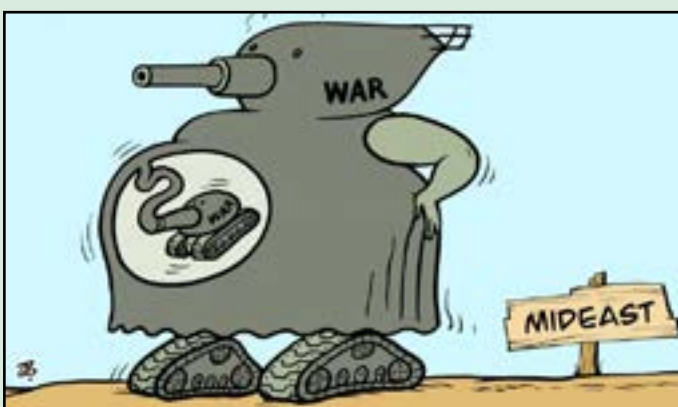
This follows the authorities saying they apprehended 16 people, such as members of the movement, concerning a purported sabotage plan, France 24 via Reuters and AFP reported.

Interior Minister Mazen al-Faraya said: “It has been decided to ban all activities of the so-called Muslim Brotherhood and to consider any activity (carried out by it) a violation of the provisions of the law.”

Qatar and Egypt push for new Gaza ceasefire plan

Mediators from Egypt and Qatar have proposed a new plan for an Israel-Gaza ceasefire, according to a senior Palestinian official, the BBC reported on April 21st.

The official said that the proposal would see a truce which would go on for a five to seven-year period, the liberation of all Israeli captives in return for Palestinian prisoners kept in Israel's prisons, an official end of the conflict, and Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza. The previous ceasefire fell apart in March when Israel restarted its attacks on Gaza, but both sides pointed fingers at each other over the ceasefire falling apart.





Dan Jones

Libya's conflict isn't just fought with guns, it's a covert struggle between competing intelligence services. This covert power struggle is shaping its future and is far from over

Libya is a battleground, just not in the way most people think. The country is a chessboard for intelligence services, each vying for influence, information, and strategic advantage. The war here isn't just about who controls the oil fields or the capital, it's about who controls the narrative and therefore the alliances. After 25 years in the industry, nearly a decade of this time in Libya, I've seen firsthand how intelligence failures, shifting alliances, and hidden agendas have shaped the country's trajectory. Many believe they understand Libya, but the intelligence world sees a version of this country that rarely makes the news.

The Strategic Significance of Libya Libya is no sideshow. It sits at the nexus of Europe, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa. Its vast energy reserves, its position as a gateway to Europe, and its role as a buffer between the Mediterranean and the Sahel with porous southern borders make it an irresistible magnet for every major power.

Western intelligence agencies remain focused on counterterrorism, energy secu-

The Intelligence War in Libya: Competing Interests and Hidden Agendas

urity, and migration flows. Russia uses Libya as a strategic foothold for operations in Africa through its intelligence services and proxy forces, while Turkey and Qatar continue to exert influence in Tripoli, though Ankara has recently begun engaging with the East as well. Egypt and the UAE, backers of Field Marshal Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), view Libya as a critical component of their broader regional strategy. Turkey, once firmly aligned with the Tripoli-based government, is now striking deals with eastern factions too—extending its influence across both sides of the divide in a pragmatic bid to secure long-term interests. But beneath these headlines lies a quieter, more calculated war; one fought not with tanks and drones, but with agents, informants, surveillance, and proxy narratives.

Take Libya's ceasefires. On paper, they look like steps toward peace. In practice, they're usually just tactical pauses, timed to reposition, recruit, and recalibrate. They are the direct product of intelligence manoeuvring: back-channel talks, misdirection, influence campaigns. Behind every declaration of peace, there's usually a quiet deal being struck in the quiet corners of the conflict. Each truce carries with it the fingerprints of a dozen different services playing a long game most Libyans never see.

The Players and Their Playbooks

Every intelligence service in Libya has its own playbook. What's remarkable is how openly these players operate, often embedded within embassies, NGOs, corporate advisory boards, and even media outlets. Some pretend to support democratic reform, others fight extremism, but most are playing for something else entirely: leverage.

Western intelligence agencies (US, UK, France and Italy): Focused on counterterrorism, energy security, and migra-

tion control, often relying on proxy forces and intelligence-sharing agreements. Relationships shift as often as the actors do, with short-term interests too often overriding long-term strategy.

Russia (GRU, Wagner now Africa Corps) operations): Expanding influence, securing military and economic footholds, and projecting power into the Mediterranean and the Sahel. Africa Corps isn't just a paramilitary force; it's an extension of Russian intelligence operations, disguised as boots on the ground.

Turkey and Qatar: Propping up Tripoli-based factions, embedding intelligence officers within ministries and security agencies, and using economic partnerships and in Turkey's case, drone diplomacy, to secure influence.

Egypt and UAE: Backing Haftar as a bulwark against Islamism and regional rivals, while inserting their own security advisors deep into Libya's eastern political apparatus. Their strategies divert on Sudan however with Egypt supporting the Sudanese Armed Forces and the LNA and UAE, the Rapid Support Forces.

Local actors: Tribal networks, militias, and local business elites are often underestimated, but should never be taken as just pawns in this game. They're power brokers who manipulate external intelligence players, sell access, and regularly double deal.

Private intelligence firms: Filling the gaps left by overstretched state agencies. These firms provide threat assessments, vetting services, HUMINT collection, and "grey" capabilities, often acting as unofficial liaisons between governments and local actors. Some acting ethically. Others definitely not.



Missteps, Miscalculations, and Mayhem

During the battle for Benghazi (2014–2017), multiple foreign agencies were operating in the city, some propping up Haftar, others tracking jihadists, and a few simply watching the chaos unfold. One French team supporting Haftar was exposed when their helicopter was downed in 2016. The loss of three DGSE agents forced France to admit they were boots-on-ground.

A few years earlier, a UK special forces team parachuted into Libya to make contact with rebels, only to be captured by the very people they were trying to help. They were released, red-faced and humbled, but the damage to local trust lingered. Intelligence is a game of precision, but Libya has a way of turning neat plans into diplomatic farce.

Libya is littered with the remains of flawed intelligence assumptions.

In 2011, NATO's intervention succeeded militarily, but the intelligence assessments of what would come next were laughably optimistic. The vacuum left behind wasn't filled with democracy, but with militias, warlords, and extremists. Western services, bluntly put, were caught unprepared. Fast forward to 2019: Haftar's march on Tripoli was expected by some to be swift and decisive. It wasn't. Turkish intervention turned the tide, deploying drones that decimated Haftar's armoured convoys. The "sure thing" unravelled, and backers like the UAE and Egypt had to scramble for alternatives.

Even Russia learned the hard way. Wagner's deployment was meant to deliver quick gains, but it became a resource sink. After Turkish-backed forces pushed them back, Wagner fortified central Libya and dug in. Their presence gave Russia leverage, sure; but also headaches. Turkey's MİT also has had its own trouble. Building a coalition of western Libyan militias was one thing, controlling them was quite another. The post-war infighting among these groups turned Tripoli into a mess of turf wars. That's the irony of backing multiple factions: sometimes they fight each other, not your enemies.

Tripoli remains the biggest minefield. Multiple foreign actors have backed rival factions within the capital; often at the same time. The result is a capital city so riddled with intelligence agencies that no one really knows who controls what. Misinformation is king. And the truth is rarely clear.

The Information Industry: Private Intelligence and Corporate Influence

There's another layer to Libya's intelligence war, one rarely discussed publicly. It's the role of private intelligence actors. In the absence of clear government policy or the limits of formal diplomatic engagement, private firms have filled the vacuum. They advise oil companies, secure diplomatic outposts, track militia allegiances, and sometimes, quietly broker deals. Some of these firms are staffed by former state intelligence officers. Others operate in murkier waters, offering capabilities governments can't, or won't deploy officially.

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They're also cheaper, more agile, and when needed; deniable. This isn't always a bad thing. Private intelligence can offer clarity, insight, and ground-truth reporting that state services lack. But it also blurs the line between intelligence and influence-peddling. In a fractured state like Libya, this can make or break entire regions.

A Game with Regional Ripples

Libya's intelligence war spills across borders. In 2021, Chadian rebels trained in southern Libya crossed the border and killed President Idriss Déby on the battlefield. Sudanese militias have fought as guns-for-hire in Libya's wars, then returned home with cash, weapons, and dangerous experience. Libya's ungoverned south is a haven for smuggling, training, and transit, and its destabilisation echoes across the Sahel.

Militant groups, human traffickers, and arms dealers treat Libya's borders like suggestions. Fighters can vanish into Niger or Chad and pop up again weeks later with a new sponsor and new cause. It's a regional feedback loop of chaos, enabled by the absence of meaningful intelligence coordination.

Libya has also been a testing ground for modern hybrid warfare: drones, disinformation, cyber ops, and HUMINT from contractors. The tactics refined here have been exported to conflicts from Nagorno-Karabakh to Mali.

What Next?

The intelligence war in Libya isn't ending – it's evolving. There are hints of maturity in some areas. Intelligence-sharing on counterterrorism, oil infrastructure, and migration has improved. Even rivals like Turkey and Egypt have quietly swapped notes on threats they both want neutralized. The U.S. has re-engaged through intelligence diplomacy; CIA Director William Burns made a rare visit to both Tripoli and Haftar in early 2023,



signalling a potential shift in strategy. But don't mistake that for détente. The pieces are still on the board. The rivalries are still alive. And every time elections are proposed or power shifts, foreign services re-enter the game, backing their preferred horses and hedging their bets.

If you're doing business, diplomacy, or security work in Libya, you're already part of this intelligence war. You may not be a player, but you're definitely a piece on the board.

Final Thoughts

Libya's intelligence war isn't just a subplot to the wider conflict—it is the conflict, in many ways. Intelligence isn't just being used to observe events; it's being used to create them. And in doing so, it has blurred the line between peacebuilding and puppeteering.

For those of us who've worked in this space, it's a sobering reminder of just how much influence is wielded behind the scenes, and how quickly it can unravel. If there's a lesson here, it's that Libya isn't just a failed state, it's an active theatre. And the curtain has definitely not come down yet.

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. Dan Jones is an intelligence specialist with over 25 years of experience, including the last 10 operating in Libya. He is the co-founder of Raedan Group, a UK-based private intelligence firm helping clients stay three steps ahead in some of the world's high risk environments



Martin Jay

Trump's China plan is like fishing with hand grenades

Trump seems determined to destroy the US economy with his idea about how tariffs can correct America's standing in the world.

Can Iran save him?

Trump's got a lot on his plate at the moment as he wakes up to the reality that you can't give a radical boost to the U.S. domestic economy at the flick of a switch. The dream of tariffs being able to do this might have been somewhat realistic in the mid 80s when the U.S. imposed a similar radical measures against Japan on electrical goods. Reagan's thinking at that time was more rational and level-headed and, given that the move to hike up Japanese goods by 100 percent was expected to not even affect the prices of electrical goods in U.S. stores (as there were many U.S. products competing, which were manufactured locally), the move seemed far from radical.

But today's China is not Japan of the 80s.

Trump's overarching agenda is pretty clear to most economists. He sees Germany, Japan, and China as exploiting their economic relationships with the U.S. He criticizes their trade practices, alleging that currency manipulation and withholding of dollar reserves contribute to an inflated dollar exchange rate, which of course harms the U.S. economy.

The currency manipulation accusation is of course particularly relevant to China whose government barely denies it. But there would appear to be more about this stunt based on geopolitics than meat-n-gravy economics. Even Trump, who doesn't appear to understand international trade at all, can't be this stupid. He must have known that hitting China so hard would impact the U.S. economy as the tariffs themselves are imposed on U.S. firms who actually import the goods from China – and so the prices will be hiked in Walmart and other huge retailers. Americans have nowhere else to go for their cheap goods as, in many cases, the items themselves are not produced by U.S. firms. The other consequence of the childish spat with China is that there is an argument that China's goods may be heading towards the EU on a scale never seen before as compensation.

There are two theories which are emerging from this extraordinary move by Trump and neither of them are particularly edifying for the simple blue collar

worker who voted for Trump and took the whole MAGA hook, line and sinker when they voted for him.

The more obvious one is that Trump is just being Trump and that there will be a climb down from this stunt shortly. He is a child. He is drawn to ideas which make him the centre of attention and the most important player on the world's stage. It is rather like fishing with hand grenades. You drop one in the water and wait for the bang. Three observations are made which help you draw conclusions to the state of play. Some fish die and float to the surface; some make a dash and hide under the rocks or mooring; a few stay even closer to you.

Some analysts now are pointing out that the tariffs move worldwide was a stunt to see who were his real allies – to him personally, as to Trump, everything is personal. To see which of these fish came closer, would then position him to take on China. But even this stunt has failed as mainstream media in the U.S. is at pains to point out that not even ONE single country has come forward to strike a new deal. This must be worrying for Trump and making him do a lot of these late night telephone calls to his cronies. Trump believed that with a group of supporters, ideally a good number from EU countries, he could force China to

succumb but this simply isn't going to happen. China is simply too strong and too dominant and has too many measures up its sleeve to play – all of which are harmful to the U.S. economy, like dumping the dollar altogether or selling off their U.S. treasury bonds at half price and buying gold with them, which would be devastating to the U.S. economy.

The truth is that they are still waiting for the Donald to climb down and lick his wounds, in his normal style when his crackpot ideas don't come off. Until now they have only cancelled Boeing orders and ditched the dollar, apparently, as a reserve currency. The more ironic part of the China story is that it is now EU governments – not China – which are selling their U.S. treasury bonds which economists are pointing out is responsible for almost a 10 percent rise in the euro.

The theme which is constantly recurring is not as it is reported. Mainstream media, whose journalists are not very well versed in economics – even business journalists – are reporting that there will be "some pain" in the short term for the U.S. economy while the world adjusts to a new world order. But this is an understatement on a grand scale. In reality, we are waking up to a new world order but it is one which will punish the U.S. severely and drive down its over all clout





around the world, not to mention its own domestic economy. Many economists are warning that if unemployment gets close to 5% before the midterms in 2026, Trump's popularity will plummet to an all-time low, along with the economy. America is heading towards an abyss which it has never seen before and a new all time low of poverty is coming its way. What U.S. journalists are not reporting is the reason why not one single country – or indeed China, for that matter – has worked out a new trade deal. Some journalists and commentators are speculating that the entire world seems to have lost confidence in the U.S. – which is true and an alarming new paradigm for the Trump administration to embrace. But the real story is that western economies, as well as China, simply don't *understand* what the theory is behind the tariffs play. They don't even believe Trump has a plan and so this makes negotiating anything nigh

"In reality, we are waking up to a new world order but it is one which will punish the U.S. severely and drive down its over all clout around the world, not to mention its own domestic economy".

on impossible.

And so while Trump plays a juvenile and erroneous strategy to create merely a perception that the U.S. economy is stronger than what it really is, China leads the rest of the world's big economies with a ruse of 'wait-n-see' for the realities to sink in for Trump and how he will wriggle out of the mess he has created himself.

One way he might do this is through the Iran deal which pundits are saying now has a real chance of getting signed off. Although, of course, it's too early to say as anything can happen – and the Iranians have already signalled concerns that the requirements of Trump's negotiators seem to be inconsistent with one another – but if a deal can be struck it would be good for both Iran and the U.S. It might even give a new impetus to the Ukraine peace talks. But there's so much which is vague and illogical about the mercurial logic of Trump.

The second theory which is being bandied

about by Trump's Republican 'rats' is that he is deliberately planning on crashing the economy and he wants the perfect scapegoat – China – to take the rap while his cabal of billionaires buy up all the assets in America for a song and finally do what Trump has never succeeded in doing his entire life. Make Trump truly rich.

But surely this is too degenerate and Machiavellian, even for Trump, right? Could the Donald be so depraved just to fill his own pockets?

The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Maghrebi.org. The author is an award winning journalist based in Morocco, working for a number of international titles while also the editor in chief of both Maghrebi.org and Levantis.me. He can be followed on twitter at @MartinRJay. This article was originally published by Strategic Culture Foundation.

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