

Why Did Tripoli Issue Arrest Warrants for Libya's Top Post-2011 Actors?

By [Al Arabiya](#)

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The Libyan Public Prosecutor has issued an arrest warrant of the Chairman of the Watan Party Abdelhakim Belhaj and the former commander of the Petroleum Facilities Guard Ibrahim Jadran, according to Libyan Express.

The warrants included four other Libyan personalities and 31 Chadian names from the Rebel Groups in Chad.

The papers issues by the investigation office of the Public Prosecutor in Tripoli headed by Siddiq Al-Sour were sent to the Intelligence Chief and General Investigation Bureau's Chairman.

The warrants say Belhaj and Jadran as well as the rest were involved in attacks, crimes and leading armed groups in Libya, including attacks on oil terminals, Timnahint air base in southern Libya and other crimes in south of the country.

Michel Cousins, the editor-in-chief of the Libya Herald, said in a piece that the move is a political bombshell, by issuing arrest warrants for one of Libya's top post-2011 actors and other key figures in the Libya crisis.

He added that a total of 31 Chadian and Sudanese militants in Libya were also charged. All are accused of involvement in attacks on oil terminals and on the airbase at Tamanhent, near Sabha in southern Libya.

Abdelhakim Belhaj, the most prominent figure named on the warrants, leads Libya's pro-Islamist Watan Party. A former fighter in Afghanistan against the Soviets and later the leader of [al Qaeda affiliated] Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which was allied to al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, he became head of Tripoli Military Council after the 2011 revolution.

Since then he has branched out into business, allegedly with the help of Qatar, although he is still seen as primarily a controversial political figure. He has been said to be involved with Tunisia's terrorist Ansar al-Sharia organisation, an accusation he denied.

In June 2017, Belhaj was included on a [list of suspected terrorists linked to Qatar](#) issued by Bahrain, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and subsequently endorsed by the House of Representatives, Libya's parliament in Tobruk.

It is not known what the consequences of the arrest warrant will be but Belhaj, who is in

Turkey, has supporters in Tripoli and there are fears there may be violence as a result. He was quoted by the pro-Islamist Naba TV saying that it was unlikely the arrest warrants will be implemented in Tripoli.

Michel Cousins believes that the warrant could be related to the January 1's operation when Libyan National Army (LNA) forces freed 22 hostages who had been seized weeks earlier by suspected Islamic State (ISIS) gunmen.

They were discovered after an attack December 27 on a military camp at Traghen, 125km from Sabha.

Cousins said that following the assault, in which one soldier was killed, several others injured and 24 army vehicles reportedly stolen, LNA units tracked the attackers, said to be Chadian irregulars.

He stressed that Chadian and Sudanese fighters have been active in southern Libya in recent years, hiring themselves out to the highest bidder or sometimes kidnapping local Libyans for ransom. The majority are Chadian, some being members of the Chadian opposition movement the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR). Others are freelance bandits, with no political attachment.

Cousins said that following the Traghen attack, LNA forces went to Ghudwa, believed to be the base for the bandits. The attackers were not there but hostages were found in two containers. The hostages were said to have been taken October 28 by ISIS during a particularly brutal attack on the southern village of Fugha and others captured during an attack November 23 on the police station in southern town of Tazerbo.

Authorities are now questioning whether ISIS was involved in the attacks or whether there are links between the Chadians and ISIS. So far there are no answers, although, in a potentially significant twist, the Attorney General's Office announced that a leading CCMSR member had been arrested in Tripoli, according to the piece published by Arab Weekly.

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