

Libyan Leader Saif al-Islam Released After Six Years in Detention



Tripoli, June 12 (RHC)-- Former Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam has been released after six years of being in a militia group's custody. A statement issued by the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Battalion, an armed militia group that controls the town of Zintan in western Libya, said that Saif al-Islam had been freed under an amnesty law enacted by the parliament based in the country's east.

The statement said: "We have decided to liberate Saif al-Islam Muammar Gaddafi. He is now free and has left the city of Zintan." The 44-year-old son of the former Libyan leader had been captured in Zintan as he was fleeing to neighboring Niger in November 2011 following the takeover back then of the Libyan capital of Tripoli by opposition fighters.

In July 2015, Saif al-Islam was sentenced to death by a court in Tripoli for his alleged role in trying to put down the 2011 uprising that led to the overthrow and death of his father. He was also wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the crimes against humanity allegedly committed during the eight months of the 2011 revolt.

Libya has faced a power vacuum since a U.S.-led military intervention resulted in the overthrow of

Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Since then, the country has been grappling with chaos and the emergence of numerous militant groups, including Daesh.

The country now has two governments, the GNA, which is based in Tripoli and led by Fayez al-Sarraj, and the other centered in the far east, in the city of Tobruk, where the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) commanded by military strongman Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar runs the affairs.

The UN supervised a series of negotiations in 2015 that led to the establishment of the GNA late that year. However, both Haftar and the allied eastern-based parliament have refused to recognize the UN-backed unity government.

Saif al-Islam's release by the militia group and under the amnesty by the government in Tobruk may cause more friction with the internationally-recognized government of Libya, where discord hampers the effective running of the country's affairs and various militia groups openly confront one another in cities.

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