

Italy Closes Embassy in Libya Amid Growing Insecurity



Rome, February 16 (RHC)-- Italy has shut down its embassy in Libya temporarily following the escalation of conflict in the North African country, Italy's Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni says. "The deteriorating situation in Libya made it necessary to close [the embassy]," Gentiloni said in a statement on Sunday.

According to Italian Foreign Ministry sources, a group of 100 Italian nationals who work at the embassy in Tripoli was being evacuated from Libya. The residence of the Italian ambassador to Libya was one of the last active European missions in the country.

Italy's Foreign Ministry on Sunday advised citizens to temporarily leave Libya "in light of growing instability." Rome has also warned Italian nationals against traveling to Libya and called on those who are already there to leave the country.

In an interview published on Sunday, Italy's Defense Minister Roberta Pinotti said Rome was ready to lead a coalition from European and North African states to battle the ISIL Takfiri militants in Libya.

Libya plunged into chaos following the 2011 overthrow of Col. Muammar Gaddafi by U.S.-NATO led forces. The ouster of Gaddafi gave rise to a patchwork of heavily-armed militias and deep political divisions. The ISIL militants took advantage of the insecure situation in Libya and claimed a string of bloody attacks.

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