



The Sabra Report

Libya's Foreign Minister Flees Country Amid Uproar Over Meeting with Israeli

New York Times, August 28th, 2023

The Context:

- ✧ On Sunday, Israel's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen announced that he met with his Libyan counterpart in Italy. Cohen termed it a "historic" initial meeting between the two countries however, Libya's foreign ministry downplayed the meeting as "informal and unplanned," with el-Mangoush reiterating Libyan support for Palestinians. Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Libya, and it is illegal to normalize ties with Israel under Libyan law [1].
- ✧ To distance himself from the diplomatic debacle, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has staked his legacy on expanding ties with the Arab world, ordered his government to pre-approve nascent diplomatic exchanges in the future [2]. Former Mossad official Haim Tomer suggested that potential peace negotiations should be handled exclusively by the Mossad to prevent political grandstanding [3].
- ✧ Libya has been in turmoil since the 2011 overthrow of its dictator during the Arab Spring uprising. The nation remains divided between rival governments in the east and west [4] with the meeting only deepening Libya's internal political crisis, bolstering Prime Minister Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah's critics [5].
- ✧ Libya was once home to a thriving Jewish community for thousands of years, but it emptied out over the last century as a result of anti-Jewish pogroms and hostile governments. No Libyan Jews are known to remain in the country.

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Does Netanyahu's coalition play a role in the lack of progress towards normalization with additional Arab countries?
- ✧ If Israel's diplomatic service can't be trusted to keep discussions confidential, will Arab leaders hesitate when it comes to building closer ties with Israel?
- ✧ Does the Arab street remain hostile to Israel?

Notes:

1. [Seeking distance from Libya debacle, Netanyahu says he must approve any secret talks](#), LAZAR BERMAN, Times of Israel, August 29th, 2023.
2. [Libyan foreign minister flees country amid outcry over meeting with Israeli counterpart](#), The Guardian, August 30th, 2023.
3. [Israel-Libya diplomatic debacle could slow Saudi peace - ex-top Mossad official](#), YONAH JEREMY BOB, Jerusalem Post, AUGUST 29th, 2023.
4. [Seeking distance from Libya debacle, Netanyahu says he must approve any secret talks](#), LAZAR BERMAN, Times of Israel, August 29th, 2023.
5. [Libyan PM sacks foreign minister as row over Israel meeting grows](#), Reuters, August 28th, 2023.

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