

Peaceful Libyan protest turns into chaotic confrontation

by Kelsey Fleming
World Editor

On Nov. 15, Libyan militiamen fired on a crowd of 7,000 protesters in Martyrs Square, killing 47 and injuring 516, in what is now considered one of the bloodiest days of fighting in Libya since the fall of Tripoli in 2011. Shortly after protesters from the Tripoli Local Council assembled at the Tripoli headquarters of the Misrata militia forces in Garghour, militiamen opened fire in an effort to suppress the growing crowd. For hours, fighting between the protesters and militiamen raged on, leaving dozens dead. When the roar of artillery fire gradually faded away, people gathered at the scene, horrified by the devastation.

Following the brutal confrontation, fighting broke out in the Tajoura district after armed militiamen stormed Tripoli, killing one person and injuring eight others. In an effort to stop protester clashes, militiamen fortified particular areas of the capital and set up roadblocks.

After the violence at Martyrs Square, the Libyan government announced a nationwide period of mourning for all of those who were lost during the protest. Grief-stricken and heartbroken, families marched through the square with pictures and coffins of their loved ones. In order to ease the pain, locals held moments of silence for the dead.

Following the harrowing brutality and savagery of Nov. 15, US Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "Libyans did not risk their lives in their 2011 revolution for this violence to continue. If a free people are going to succeed in forging a peaceful, secure, and prosperous country with a government based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, then there can be no place for this kind of violence in the new Libya."

The United Nations and the European Union have condemned the violence in Libya, claiming that the government must take more proactive measures in liberating Tripoli from the militias. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) asserted, "The UNSMIL strongly condemns the violence which took place in Tripoli on Friday 15 November, resulting in the tragic loss of life among civilians, and calls for its immediate cessation as well as supporting the efforts by authorities to restore calm, stop the bloodshed, and ensure security and stability for all Libyans."

The international community has recently criticized Libya for their



PROTESTING MILITIA INJUSTICES AND VIOLENCE: Demonstrators rallied together in Tripoli, Libya, calling for an end to armed militia groups and a unified Libya, free of violence and brutality.

weak central government and inability to enforce military measures. After the fight for the capital in August of 2011 and the fall of dictator Moammar Gadhafi, militiamen from Misrata remained in the city, and formed their own vigilante groups. Despite some government intervention in the past two years, the Libyan government has been unsuccessful in removing the militias. The government attempted to enlist the militias in their own military forces but failed because of popular outrage. During the protest in Martyr's Square, some protesters carried signs that read: "We want an army and a police, we don't want militias." Prime Minister Ali Zaidan stated, "The government has decided to contact all armed groups in Tripoli and inform them about the General National Congress's decision for them to leave Tripoli, and it should be implemented as soon as possible."

The Libyan government must now take action to ensure the world that atrocities like this will not be tolerated in a country fighting for change. Al-Sadat al-Badri, the head of Tripoli's Local Council, exclaimed, "The general strike will continue, the civil disobedience movement will continue even it lasts for a year." Hanan Saleh, a researcher for Human Rights Watch in Libya, said, "As long as militias and armed groups are not held to account for the crimes they commit, innocent people will continue to die. The government has a responsibility here to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice and hold them accountable for their acts."

(Sources: CNN, ABC News, Fox News)

China reforms policies

by Rachel Salisbury
Opinion Editor

On Friday, Nov. 15, Chinese president Xi Jinping announced through the state-run news program Xinhua that the Chinese government is planning on abolishing their labor camp system and relaxing their one-child policy. This new reform package is the most comprehensive one that China has released in decades, according to the Washington Post, as it deals with economic, social, and legal policies in a way that aims to promote human rights.

The most impactful of these changes is the termination of the "re-education through labor" system, which imprisons thousands of Chinese in labor camps each year without due process. This program, which is called laodong jiaoyang or lao jiao, allows the Chinese government to hold any offenders—including thieves, prostitutes, and drug addicts—for up to four years without trial. Critics of the system, who are many in number, attest that these camps are often used to quell activists and political dissidents. The Chinese government has acknowledged a total of 190,000 prisoners held in 320 lao jiao facilities nationwide, but other estimates show that these numbers are actually much higher.



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PUBLIC GOVERNMENT SIGNS: A sign posted in Nanchang, reading, "Please for the sake of your country, use birth control."

Although the one-child policy is not being abolished, the requirements for having two children have been relaxed. Before the reform, most urban families were only permitted to have one child, but families in which both parents were only children were allowed to have two children. The new one-child policy allows a family to have two children if only one parent is an only child, allowing more families to have two children.

The one-child policy has received significant global attention, with support both for and against the law. Those who approve of these family planning regulations admire its ability to slow down China's population growth. Without the one-child policy, supporters of the law say that China's population would have grown to an unsustainable number, as the country's large population was already too great for the country's resources before the policy was instituted. Still, the population control does not come without its complications, as research has shown that the restrictions on family size has often led to illegal abortions.

Cheng Li of the Brookings Institution in Washington calls this set of reforms "concrete efforts to promote judicial independence" and "the most market-oriented and the most comprehensive package of reform in two decades." Many critics are still not sold on the reform package, as many believe that the abolished labor camps will actually just be re-named and the same injustices of lao jiao will continue. Skepticism on the new one-child policy stems from concern that China's already strained population cannot afford to relax a policy that has been proven to be effective.

(Sources: CNN, Foreign Affairs, Washington Post, Quartz)

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