Press Conference: Libya Ceasefire Violations - UNSMIL

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Shotlist


2. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Stephanie Turco Williams, Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL): "There have been two truces, ceasefires, which both parties to the conflict have putatively signed-up to. One of them of course was the January 12th truce that was called for by the Presidents of Russia and Turkey. Since January 12th and to this day, we've had over 850 violations of that truce. And we have a number of violations of the truce that was subsequently agreed to by the parties in responding to the calls for a truce - a humanitarian truce - for the COVID. There have been two truces, ceasefires, which both parties to the conflict have putatively signed-up to," Ms. Williams told reporters in Geneva by videoconference, speaking from Germany. "One of them of course was the January 12th truce that was called for by the Presidents of Russia and Turkey. Since January 12th and to this day, we've had over 850 violations of that truce. And we have a number of violations of the truce that was subsequently agreed to by the parties in responding to the calls for a truce - a humanitarian truce - for the COVID. "So, you know, it's a truce in name only," Ms. Williams added. "You can't really call it a truce, you can't really call it a ceasefire. We've had 70 violations just in the last week"

3. Medium shot: from outside UN Geneva with flag alley beyond fence.
4. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Stephanie Turco Williams, Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL): "We have concerning reports coming out of Surman and Subratha about retribution: acts of revenge, burning of houses, And we also have obviously the reports on the prison break, and the release of potentially some very alarming figures, people who have been involved in human trafficking, fuel smuggling and other violent crimes."

5. Medium Shot: UN Geneva flag alley, flags and UN building in background, with UN logo and lettering visible.

6. SOUNDBITE (EN) - Stephanie Turco Williams, Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL): "Libya is a signatory to the OPCW, they can certainly go that way in terms of seeking assistance. We've also referred this to the Panel of Experts, who will be looking into it. It's a very, very concerning report."

7. Wide shot: UN Geneva, main entrance
Concern for Libya's civilians mounts as fighting continues even in face of pandemic and calls for global ceasefire

As many of the world’s conflict areas have developed ceasefires in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Libya is standing out as an exception, with ongoing heavy fighting across the country in the last week.

Concerns for the civilian population -- both those displaced by fighting and those in confinement -- are being raised by the United Nations, as a renewed military push by the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) took place last week to take six key coastal towns and push back the forces of the opposition Libyan National Army (LNA). At the same time the LNA have been shelling the capital, Tripoli, home to the country’s main institutions, including the oil company and central bank.

"There have been two truces, ceasefires, which both parties to the conflict have putatively signed-up to," Ms. Williams told reporters in Geneva by videoconference, speaking from Germany. "One go them of course was the January 12th truce that was called for by the Presidents of Russia and Turkey. Since January 12th and to this day, we've had over 850 violations of that truce. And we have a number of violations of the truce that was subsequently agreed to by the parties in responding to the calls for a truce - a humanitarian truce - for the COVID."

"So, you know, it's a truce in name only," Ms. Williams added. "You can't really call it a truce, you can't really call it a ceasefire. We've had 70 violations just in the last week."

Some areas of the conflict are causing particular worry, according to the UN representative. "We have concerning reports coming out of Surman and Subratha about retribution: acts of revenge, burning of houses," Ms. Williams said in reference to two of the coastal towns. And we also have obviously the reports on the prison break, and the release of potentially some very alarming figures, people who have been involved in human trafficking, fuel smuggling and other violent crimes."

Ms. Williams told journalists that the situation for people who are impacted by the fighting while under coronavirus lockdown is getting worse; some of the worst shelling is in the southern suburbs of Tripoli, but it is also being felt downtown, she said.
Although the new coronavirus has interrupted UN-led talks between the warring sides, Ms Williams insisted that there was “ongoing contact” with all those engaged in all discussions.

Ms. Williams said that she herself also been “in direct contact” with both LNA leader General Haftar and Libya's Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj to “urge them to substantively respond” to the draft ceasefire proposal tabled by the UN Support Mission in Libya at the close of the second round of recent military talks in Geneva.

Asked about recent reports from Libya's Minister of the Interior, who said that mercenaries fighting on the side of the LNA had carried out a chemical attack Government forces in Tripoli's southern suburbs, Ms. Williams said that matter may be referred to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

"Libya is a signatory to the OPCW, they can certainly go that way in terms of seeking assistance," Ms. Williams said. "We've also referred this to the Panel of Experts, who will be looking into it," she added, in reference to the UN panel of experts set up by the Security Council to monitor sanctions against Libya. "It's a very, very concerning report," she said.