

# Celebrating Peace and Unity in Libya, but Feeling Tension Beneath the Surface

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS

**ZINTAN, Libya** — Few towns sacrificed as much to the Libyan insurrection as this dusty mountain town southwest of Tripoli. On Tuesday there was joy, poetry, exhibitions of masterful horsemanship, parachute jumps, speeches and symbols of national unity. Dozens of war prisoners were even quietly freed.

But between the lines in many of the speeches by political leaders from around the country, there were warnings, threats and subtle jabs that suggest the revolution has many challenges ahead.

A leader from Misurata, another rebel stronghold, warned the interim government not to include anyone aligned with the regime of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in the new administration. A national leader made several veiled warnings about the growing influence of the Persian Gulf state of Qatar. And there was no sign that any rebel militias would give up their arms.

"Libya should have no differences between north and south

nor between tribes," said Mahmud Jibril, who led the rebels' Transitional National Council through the revolt and served as interim prime minister before stepping down two weeks ago. "We should be united so we can prove to the world that the last 42 years were an exception to Libyan history."

There were many pitch-perfect calls for competing militias, towns and tribes to meld together as one nation, as were the cheers and responses of "God is great" from a crowd of 6,000 gathered on the hillsides above an equestrian field used for Zintan festivals. The city has a population of only 50,000, but its support is critical for the new government, because so many people here have weapons at a time when sporadic confrontations continue between militias around the country.

While government officials are negotiating in Tripoli and Benghazi over who will get which posts in a new cabinet, militia leaders in Zintan and Misurata are jockeying over who will command a new national army, which is scheduled to be formed over the next month. Zintan fighters

were ordered by the interim government to leave Tripoli four days ago, but they still have not departed from their checkpoints around the capital.

So it was not insignificant that Abdulrahman Souwei, a senior Misurata militia leader, told the crowd: "The people of Misurata and Zintan were together in victory. We have to remain united." But Mr. Souwei added, "there's no place for those who worked with Qaddafi in the new government. We won't allow that."

Sitting behind him under a canopy with national leaders and foreign ambassadors was Muktar al-Akhdar, a former Qaddafi army colonel who played a critical role in leading the Zintan forces to take control of Tripoli's airport at the end of the war.

Still a militia leader, Mr. Al-Akhdar did not address the crowd. But in an interview after the speeches, he made it clear that he intended to pursue a significant national role. He said his forces did not plan to surrender their weapons until they were satisfied that a good national army and police force had been



Zintan played a vital strategic role in the uprising in Libya.

formed to protect the country. "The people of Zintan will safeguard Libya's well-being and stability," he said, adding that even if his forces disarmed, "we know how to get weapons if anything happens to Libya."

The central message of the day was the one that officials in the interim government have been trying to project every day for weeks: One battle is over, but another is beginning — to rehabilitate the wounded, rebuild de-

stroyed cities and get the country moving again. Unity is paramount, government officials and even militia leaders say.

The day's festival was called in the name of freedom, which Zintan fighters said was their banner throughout the war as they created a vital southern front against the forces loyal to Colonel Qaddafi.

Zintan is a poor town, but one that celebrates horsemanship and poetry, and there was plenty of both on a sunny day. A young boy wearing a flowing white traditional robe recited a poem to the crowd, declaring, "Freedom is like a flower, like a bird flying over the sky."

During the festivities, according to Zintan security guards, as many as 80 people taken prisoner during the war — mostly those suspected of supporting the Qaddafi government — were released. It was done without being announced, so as not to anger the people celebrating their recent victory, the guards said.

But Mr. Jibril warned that there were threats to the nation's freedom, both internal and ex-

ternal. He did not mention a country by name, but it was clear he was making one more in a series of warnings about Qatar, which had offered crucial military, financial and political support to the rebels.

"If we don't say together I'm afraid another power will have an impact in Libya," he said during his speech. At another point he said, "If we don't unite, that could lead to foreign intervention in Libya."

Mr. Jibril is not the only leader who has warned that Qatar has gone around the rebel authorities to arm militias on their own to influence the course of the war and to promote an Islamist agenda.

His remarks came a day after the vice chairman of the Transitional National Council, Abdel-Hafid Ghoga, criticized other leaders for distancing themselves from Qatar.

"These statements are personal statements and do not represent the ideas of the Transitional National Council," he said. The Transitional National Council articulates the role of Qatar in supporting Libya.

## Israeli Army May Need To Hit Gaza, General Says

By ISABEL KERSHNER

**JERUSALEM** — Israel's military chief of staff warned Tuesday that the repeated rounds of escalated violence in the south would eventually require Israel to carry out another large-scale military operation in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

"We cannot continue with one round after another," the official, Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, told a closed meeting of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. He said the point at which a military operation would become necessary was "drawing close."

General Gantz's assessment came during a routine security briefing to the parliamentary committee. The military later released a summary of his remarks.

Any such operation would have to be ordered by the political leadership, not the military. Nevertheless, the comments raised the prospect of another armed conflict in Gaza, where a fierce, three-week Israeli military campaign in the winter of 2008-2009 drew international opprobrium.

At that time, Israel, prompted by years of persistent rocket fire on its southern communities, launched a devastating air and ground offensive that left as many as 1,400 Palestinians dead and many homes and parts of Gaza's infrastructure destroyed. Thirteen Israelis were also killed during the war.

Since then, Israeli security officials, while an intense military cease-fire has largely prevented Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza from managing to rebuild their weapons stocks and to acquire more advanced arms.

In late October, Israel killed nine Palestinians belonging to Islamic militant groups in a strike on Gaza as the militants were preparing to fire rockets into Israel, according to the military. Islamic militant groups in southern Israel were closed, and the daily routine of hundreds of thousands of Israelis was severely disrupted.

The relative calm since has been punctuated by a trickle of rocket fire and occasional Israeli air strikes in several areas of Israeli territory on Tuesday. No injuries were reported.

In his comments on Gaza, General Gantz said Israel would not be "dragged into an operation there, but would rather initiate an orderly one."

His remarks came against the background of a brewing argument between the country's defense minister and finance minister over proposed cuts to the defense budget. The defense minister, Ehud Barak, strongly opposes any cut, as does the military.

General Gantz told the parliamentary committee that Israel is facing a "more complex strategic reality" than before, and uncertainty on many fronts. That, he said, does not allow Israel "to take risks" through budget cuts.

Surveying an environment altered by the revolutions and the Arab Spring, General Gantz said Israel's border with Egypt had now become susceptible to terrorist activity emanating from the Egyptian Sinai. He added that Palestinian frustration could still lead to an outbreak of violence in the West Bank, referring to concerns stirred up by the Palestinians bid for the facta state recognition by the United Nations Security Council.



## Youth in the Arab Spring

Through a car window, a girl watched a demonstration in Sana, the capital of Yemen, on Monday. Yemen has been in turmoil for months, as protesters have filled the streets demanding the ouster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled for 33 years, and rival political factions have fought for a share of power.

## Huddled in a Tent, a Turkish Family Braces for Jolts and Uncertainty

By MIMI WELLS

**VAN, Turkey** — The once busy sidewalks of this city in eastern Turkey have morphed into a desolate maze of partly collapsed buildings, broken glass and windows hanging dangerously askew.

It is here that the 16 members of the Yesilova family have made their home in a tent since Oct. 23, when a 7.2-magnitude earthquake hit this mostly Kurdish area, just about 60 miles from the border with Iran.

"It was a long shake, it seemed to get stronger and stronger," recalled Estin Unal, 33, an old friend of the Yesilovas, who has found refuge with the family. The earthquake rattled the nerves of the residents of the city as well as its infrastructure. The Yesilova family remains deeply unsettled weeks later.

The quake collapsed six buildings and killed more than 600 people — but many of the structures around the city remained intact, or at least they appeared so.

Underneath their facades, many recently spruced up in an attempt to beautify the city, was a deadly flaw: outdated, decrepit foundations and walls that were slowly cracking beneath the surface.

No structure, it seemed, could be trusted. Though the initial damage left no visible damage to the Yesilovas' home — a new four-story building in an area called Sabaniye, less than two miles from the city center — they decided to move out and put up a small tent in their backyard, away from other buildings and the danger of aftershocks and falling debris.

"All my children and their babies were in there," said Yusuf Yesilova, 77. "I thought, if some-

thing collapses, that will be the end of my entire family."

Like many of the people here, some members of the Yesilova family thought that the tent would be a temporary solution to a temporary problem. But now there is no end in sight to their new life of living in a tent.

Yusuf Yesilova put his life's savings into the building, which he bought just last summer. If he and his family cannot return to it eventually, they have no idea where they will go.

Emin Demirci, secretary general of the Eastern Anatolian Development Agency, said the government planned to hire 400 engineers to check the estimated 90,000 structures in Van. He said it would take three months.

In the meantime, he said, half of Van's 400,000 residents have fled the city. Most of those who have remained are, like the Yesilovas, living in tents that have been set up throughout the city. Most of those tents — more than 70,000 of them — have been supplied by the government or relief agencies.

Cetin Yesilova, 35, one of Yusuf's five sons, bought their tent at a supermarket. It was the only kind he could find — a summer tent, the kind used by families here on vacations to nearby Lake Van. All 16 of the Yesilovas could not fit inside, so 10 of them, mostly the children, slept inside the rest sleep in their cars.

With winter approaching, icy winds blasted through the thin walls of the tent. After two nights they had had enough.

"It was not safe to go home," said Cetin Yesilova, who is a geologist at a nearby university. "but we had no choice; tent life is very difficult. It was so cold and rainwater was coming in from the roof."

For a week they lived at home and tried to get settled back into their routines. But Cetin and his

brothers worried day and night that their home could fall apart.

Someone donated a much larger, insulated tent, and the youngest Yesilova boy, Emre, 16, volunteered to put it up.

"I did it for my family," he said simply.

Then on Nov. 9 the ground shook again, as they had feared, with a powerful aftershock. Though the subsequent quake claimed far fewer lives — seven so far — many of the damaged buildings collapsed. 25 in all and the city was paralyzed psychologically.

"I died inside," said Mine Yesilova, 32, as she squatted in the muddy garden outside the tent and washed dishes in near-freezing water. "The walls and windows and doors were bending in toward me. I grabbed my children, one under each arm, and ran outside."

This time, the family agreed, there was no going back home.

A few of the Yesilova women made one last dash into their home to get carpets, cushions, cups — anything to make the stark white dome-like tent more comfortable. Heat poured out from a portable oven that Emre had rigged with wires and tubing.

The night after the second quake, the family sat around the tent in little groups, some of the women wearing traditional headscarves, as they ate chocolates and looked at photographs on their laptops.

"I had to work a long time to get that woman," said Yusuf, pointing at his wife, Guner, 67. He is a retired businessman, and he wore a smart suit jacket and had combed back his thick gray hair. "She is a Turk. I am a Kurd."

Twice, two of the women thought they felt small quakes and shouted. Cetin pulled out his iPhone to check if there was any news.

"No, it's nothing," he said, but the women shook their heads.

A few minutes later the ground shook with three strong jolts — yet another aftershock of the kind that scientists predict will be occurring often over the next few months. (Early Tuesday, Van was shaken by a 5.2-magnitude aftershock.)

Zeynep Yesilova, a thin 17-year-old who had been playing quietly with her cellphone, burst into tears and clutched her aunt.

For a moment no one spoke.

"Only God knows when it will end," muttered Guner, breaking her silence, her arthritic legs tucked beneath her, as she watched her family.

A stadium in Van, Turkey, has become a camp for people displaced by the Oct. 23 earthquake.