



## **Presidential Candidate Aref Nayed:**

### ***Postponing the Upcoming Elections Could Plunge the Country Into War***

Dr. Aref Nayed, Chairman of the Ihya Libya Movement (Reviving Libya Movement), stressed the need to hold the Presidential and Parliamentary elections on schedule, and believed that the next President, directly elected by the people through the ballot boxes, along with the new Parliament, will work together to end the division and build the security structure of the country.

In an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat, Dr. Aref Nayed talked about the issue of the mercenaries and foreign forces on the Libyan territory, and the best way to evict them out of the country, in addition to the dilemma of armed militias in Libya, and how to disarm these formations. The Presidential candidate said that there are “detailed technical plans to resolve the problems of this difficult file.”

The Libyan diplomat, who renewed his intention to run in the elections as a candidate for the position of Libya’s Head of State, touched on the outputs of the Berlin Conference II on Libya, and the guarantees of their implementation. However, he expressed his fear of the outbreak of a “massive popular uprising, which could lead to several wars”, if the elections were postponed beyond their scheduled date on December 24, 2021.

### **Here is an English translation of the Interview transcript:**

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** At the beginning of this interview, let us know your assessment of the results of the Berlin Conference II on Libya?



**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** The outcomes of the Conference are excellent because they reconfirmed everything that is important and positive in the Berlin Conference (I) on Libya. This Conference witnessed an international consensus on holding direct elections on schedule, and stressed the exit of all foreign forces and mercenaries; these aspects are now unanimously agreed upon on national, regional and international levels, and they specifically reflect the demands of the Libyan people, expressed clearly through opinion polls, forums and gatherings of Libyan political movements and parties, as well as civil society organizations and social councils.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** Some believe that the Conference produced a set of outputs, but without real guarantees on how to implement them on the ground?

**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** The real guarantees for holding the elections, and for the exit of all foreign forces and mercenaries, are represented in the unified, clear and earnest collective will of the entire Libyan people. The strong momentum of popular support for these outputs is the most important guarantee of their implementation on the ground. In comparison, the complete popular rejection of the attempts to stall and postpone the holding of elections under the pretext of the presence of foreign forces on Libyan soil, is the most important guarantee for rejecting such dodging attempts. The bottom line is that the United States and the rest of the Security Council member-states have conspicuously expressed this time their intention to implement the decisions of the Berlin Conference II. The Security Council, based on its latest Resolutions {issued under Chapter VII}, can enforce the Libyan and international will to hold elections and expel foreign forces immediately.



**Asharq Al-Awsat:** In your capacity as a potential candidate for the Presidency of Libya, would you kindly tell us about your perspective to get the mercenaries and foreign fighters out of Libya?

**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** The most viable approach to handle pull-out operations to remove all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libyan lands is through a methodology negotiated by the Joint Military Commission (5+5) (JMC). The JMC has gained further momentum at the Berlin Conference II. There are also very important American and French technical proposals that can accomplish this objective in a professional, simultaneous; in sequentially phased and efficient manner.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** Do you think that the elections will be held on time?

**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** The elections must be held on their scheduled date without procrastination or postponement. The Libyan people, after a decade of exclusion and marginalization, have the right to choose their representatives. This will end “Minority Tyranny” that made Libya a failed state, and an ATM for extremist groups across the region. We are encouraged by the international consensus, which we are witnessing for the first time, that the elections must be conducted on time, as are the recent two Security Council Resolutions that make the holding of elections binding under Chapter VII of the Charter of the UN.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** And how will these elections take place in light of the continuation of division and the absence of security?



**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** The next President, directly elected by the people through the ballot boxes, along with the new Parliament, are capable of putting an end to the state of division, and they will build the security infrastructure for Libya. It is very important not to stipulate an end to the division and security concerns as a precondition to hold elections; we need the elections to unite, and to establish security, not the other way around.

Let me say that the current situation is no worse than what happened between 2012 and 2014, when the elections took place successfully. The chances of the elections' success can be enhanced by activating a joint security plan, supervised by the JMC, with international presence and monitoring, as well as a request for assistance from the African Union. There are successful electoral precedents in Africa where the African Union supported elections in a number of African countries that were going through much worse conditions than the current situation in Libya.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** There are those who believe that postponing the elections will ignite another war in the country again. Do you agree with these concerns?

**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** Yes, I am afraid that any attempt to procrastinate or postpone the elections could lead to a massive popular uprising, or perhaps war, or plunge the country into a vicious circle of wars. We must not forget that there are thousands of Libyans who feel oppressed and excluded over the past ten years. These people will not be patient if they are deprived of their inherent right to choose their new leaders, and to renew the legitimacy and restore sovereignty of their country.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** What is your vision for disbanding militias throughout the country, and for collecting weapons if you become President of Libya?



**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** There are detailed technical plans to resolve the problems of this difficult file, and they are part of the detailed plans of our vision (Ihya {Reviving} Libya Vision 2030). One of the features of this Vision is that there will be one unified Libyan Army, unified Police forces, in addition to anti-terrorism and rapid deployment forces; all of which are the basis for any security infrastructure in Libya.

Those who wish to be retained in the security domain must formally enlist in the military, police force or other security services, on an individual rather than collective basis, and after they have passed rigorous professional examinations and vocational training programs according to the best standards.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** After the first hundred days since the Government of National Unity (GNU) assumed its duties. What is your assessment of this period?

**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** This government has disappointed many positive expectations for several reasons, including acting beyond its mandate by reaffirming and signing treaties and agreements with foreign countries, and making absolutely unacceptable remarks regarding the city of Benghazi, as well as holding military parades that included known terrorists. Such serious violations deeply disappointed many Libyans, and make the demands for abiding by the date of direct Presidential and Parliamentary Elections even more urgent. Hence, This government must not be allowed to procrastinate a single day beyond the expiry of its legitimacy on 24 December 2021.

**Asharq Al-Awsat:** On a final note, what do you aspire to achieve for Libya after announcing your candidacy for the Presidential elections?



**Dr. Aref Ali Nayed:** My ambitions are the embodiment of the aspirations of the Libyan people, through a comprehensive vision formulated by a team comprised of seventy Libyan experts and technocrats, young men and women, who gathered at the Libya Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS) and formulated Ihya (Reviving) Libya Vision 2030 to achieve transformational change in the country.