

Saadi Gaddafi warns of uprising in Libya
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TRIPOLI, Feb 11 — Muammar Gaddafi's son Saadi warned yesterday of an imminent uprising in Libya, saying he was in regular contact with people in the country who were unhappy with the authorities put in place after the ousting and killing of his father.

Speaking to Al-Arabiya television by phone — the first time he has spoken publicly in months - Saadi said he wanted to return to Libya "at any minute" after escaping across the border to Niger when National Transitional Council forces captured the capital Tripoli in August.

He said he was in contact from Niger with the army, the militias, the NTC and other members of the Gaddafi family. It was impossible to verify where he was calling from as the station showed only an old still picture of Saadi as a backdrop to his words.

"First of all, it is not going to be an uprising limited to some areas. It will cover all the regions of the Jamahiriya and this uprising does exist and I am following and witnessing this as it grows bigger by the day," he said, referring to Libya.

"There will be a great uprising in the south, in the east, in the centre and in the west. All the regions of Libya will witness this new popular uprising."

A transitional government appointed in November is leading the country to elections in June but is struggling to restore services and impose order on myriad armed groups.

These groups fought hard in the campaign to topple Gaddafi but still refuse to hand in their weapons.

The government lost control of the former Gaddafi stronghold of Bani Walid last month after local people staged an armed revolt, posing the gravest challenge yet to the NTC's authority.

However elders in the desert city dismissed accusations they wanted to restore the late dictator's family to power or had any ambitions beyond their local area.

Saadi told Al-Arabiya: "The Libyan people should revolt against these militias and against this deteriorating situation. The NTC is not a legitimate body ... and is not in control of the militias," he added. "We call on all to be ready for the coming uprising."

"We have to exert pressure to change this situation and to remove this evil doing that exists in Libya. We do not know any such thing as elections. We are a Muslim nation," he said.

Anniversary

Government officials were not immediately available for comment. Mohammed al-Alagy, former interim justice minister and who now heads the human rights council, told Al-Arabiya Saadi's comments were "an attempt to drive a wedge between the Libyan people."

Saadi, a businessman and former professional footballer, said he was in contact with people in Libya. Interpol last year issued a "red notice" requesting member states to arrest Saadi with a view to extradition if they find him in their territory.

"I have daily communications with Libya from Niger and these contacts are not just to start the uprising but also to follow up the status of our tribes, our relatives and the people," he said.

"The situation of the people is deteriorating. I am in contact with the militias, the tribes, the NTC and the national army. I can confirm that more than 70 per cent of those who are in Libya now whether they support the February 17th (revolution) or not, all are not satisfied with the situation and are ready to cooperate to change this situation."

Libya is preparing for the first anniversary of the start of the February 17 uprising which began in the eastern city of Benghazi. Libyan armed forces chief Yousef al-Mangoush this week said there were concerns for potential sabotage of the anniversary by Gaddafi loyalists.

"A large number of February 17th members do regret this and we are now in full cooperation with the February 17th and our supporters to change this deteriorating situation," Saadi said. "As for my return, yes I must return to Libya and this will happen at any minute. If I do return I will prevent any revenge."

Saadi said he was also in contact with his family members. Gaddafi's wife Safiya, his daughter Aisha and his sons Mohammed and Hannibal fled to Algeria in August. Saadi's brother Saif al-Islam was captured in the Sahara desert in November and is now being held in the town of Zintan.

"I am in contact with my family inside and outside Libya and in the neighbouring countries and in Europe," Saadi said.

"I call on all the elders, the youth, the militias and the tribes to come and to sit with each other and to negotiate with each other and to come up with a true reconciliation."

Mexican authorities said in December they had uncovered and stopped an international plot to smuggle Saadi into the country using fake names and false papers. — Reuters

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