

Libya interim leader's car comes under fire

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The car of Libya's interim leader has come under fire in Tripoli as he left a chaotic session of the national assembly disrupted by protesters, without causing casualties.

The interior minister said on Wednesday that gunmen in a crowd of Libyans demanding that legislators pass a bill barring former associates of ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi from power shot at the car of the General National Congress (GNC) speaker.

"The car of the General National Congress speaker (Mohammed Magarief) came under fire as assembly members left in a state of total confusion" on Tuesday night, Ashur Shwayel told a press conference.

Mohammed Magarief, a former ambassador to India who had survived a gun attack at his home in January, was unharmed and no one else was hurt in the shooting late on Tuesday, he said.

The demonstrators who disrupted the session of the General National Congress, the highest authority in Libya, in effect making Magarief the country's interim leader, were armed and some carried explosives, said the minister.

Chaotic scenes

Dozens of protesters insisting the national assembly adopt a bill banning from politics associates of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi blocked MPs from leaving the meeting room in a southern suburb of Tripoli.

Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said about 300 protesters had gathered "to put pressure on members to vote on this bill".

The official news agency LANA, quoting an assembly official, said Magarief's car came under heavy gunfire. It was unclear if the attack was "an assassination bid or a collateral incident," the official said.

The bill is controversial because it could put more than 30 members of the General National Congress out of office, including Magarief and even Prime Minister Ali Zeidan.

Proposed in December, the bill would ban from politics all officials of the Gaddafi regime and their associates.

Only earlier on Tuesday, the national assembly building was returned to its members after a month-long occupation by former rebels demanding compensation for injuries in the 2011 revolution that ousted Gaddafi, a security official said.

Insecurity persists in Libya after a popular uprising in 2011, and politicians, state buildings and oil installations have become a focal point of protests as the government struggles to impose order on a vast and divided country awash with weapons.

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