

# *Libyan Plane Hijackers Surrender and Release All Hostages*

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Valletta, December 23 (RHC)-- The hijackers of an Afriqiyah Airways plane have surrendered and the final hostages have been released, according to Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat.

The Libyan state-owned Afriqiyah Airways plane was on a domestic flight with 118 passengers aboard when it was hijacked and diverted to Malta. On the tarmac of the airport, the hijackers agreed to lay down arms and release the passengers.

The Times of Malta reported that there were two hijackers, one of whom said to have a hand grenade. "The hijacker, claiming to be pro-Gaddafi, said he was willing to let all passengers go apart from the crew, if his demands were met. It is not known exactly what his demands were.

Reuters reported that the Airbus A320 plane had been flying from Sebha in south-western Libya to the capital Tripoli when it was diverted to Malta.

Malta, a small nation of less than half a million people, is a member of the European Union and lies south of Sicily, about 300 miles from the Libyan coast. Libya has been immersed in chaos following the 2011

U.S.-led NATO bombing campaign that helped topple former leader Muammar Gadhafi.

The oil-rich nation is now grappling with rising insecurity, and increasingly deadly clashes between government forces and rival militia groups who refuse to lay down their weapons.

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