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Reuter

Talk of Gaddafi leaving "ridiculous" says son

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Muammar Gaddafi's most prominent son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, said in an interview broadcast on Monday that it was "ridiculous" to imagine the Libyan leader leaving and that allied air strikes were counter-productive.

The interview took place at the weekend in Tripoli. On Monday, rebels in the city of Misrata scorned reports Gaddafi had agreed to a ceasefire, after his forces fired rockets there and fought intense house-to-house battles.

"We want to bring forward a new elite of youths to govern the country and manage local affairs. We want new blood, that's what we want for Libya's future. But to talk of (Gaddafi) leaving, that's truly ridiculous," Saif told French news channel BFM TV.

"If the West wants democracy, a new constitution, elections, well we agree. We agree on this point but the West must help us to provide a propitious climate. But all these bombings, this support given to rebel groups, all that is counter-productive."

An African bid to halt the civil war collapsed on Monday and rebels said there could be no deal unless Gaddafi is toppled. Western leaders also rejected any deal that did not include his removal, and NATO refused to suspend its bombing of his forces unless there is a credible ceasefire.

London-educated Saif, who has tended to be Libya's most Western-friendly face, said that even if Gaddafi did leave, the unrest would not end in Libya, where scores have died in fighting between Gaddafi's troops and a ragtag rebel army.

"(Gaddafi's) departure would not change anything because the Libyan people would not allow these groups of terrorists to run Libya," he said. "The question is: how to get rid of these armed militias? Because these militias cannot govern."