

---

## Media and Revolution in Lybia<sup>1</sup>

---

57

TRÍPODOS 2012 | 30

---

**Jacobo Quintanilla**

Director of Humanitarian Media for Internews Network

**Jamal Dajani**

Vice President of Middle East, North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean,  
Internews Network

---

*An exuberant proliferation of media outlets is emerging in areas controlled by Libya's rebels. The ability to talk openly, publish, and broadcast without fear is an unprecedented freedom for a society repressed and heavily censored for decades, and one that is being seized with energy and enthusiasm. This is a monumental — indeed revolutionary— shift in Libyan politics and society, and is one of the key channels for the extraordinary level of energy released by the uprising. New initiatives include print and satellite TV; terrestrial TV and radio; multiple online collaborations; as well as cartoons, music, graffiti, theatre, and other forms. Free speech and free media are central rebel demands, which makes these new media efforts core to the uprising's very image and identity, key to its mobilisation, and an early embodiment of some of its main goals. A free rights-based media that is able to make positive contributions to the transition needs an increase in skills, an appropriate clear institutional and regulatory frameworks, and a public debate about just what Libya's free media should and could look like.*

*Una incessant proliferació de mitjans de comunicació està emergent en àrees sota control dels rebels libis. La capacitat de parlar obertament, i de publicar i transmetre sense cap tipus de por, significa una llibertat desconeguda per a una societat reprimida i durament censurada durant dècades i que ara avança amb energia i entusiasme. Això representa un canvi extraordinari —autènticament revolucionari— en la política i la societat líbies i és un dels canals clau per l'extraordinari nivell d'energia alliberat per la revolta. Noves iniciatives inclouen publicacions, televisió per satèl·lit, televisió i ràdio terrestres, múltiples col·laboracions online, així com tires còmiques, graffitti, teatre i altres formes de comunicació. Llibertat d'expressió i mitjans de comunicació lliures són reivindicacions centrals dels rebels, cosa que fa d'aquests mitjans renovats el nucli de la imatge i la identitat de la revolta, peça clau per a la mobilització i jove representació dels seus objectius principals. Perquè uns mitjans basats en el dret a la llibertat puguin contribuir positivament a les necessitats de la transició, cal un increment de recursos, un marc institucional regulador i un debat públic sobre com haurien i podrien ser a*

*While current expressions of agreement for rights-based media are strong, such a debate is still essential for future development —such media never simply emerge ‘automatically’. The higher the quality of the debate, the broader the discussion, the more effective the training and technical support, the better Libya’s media will become— with crucial implications for the country’s political, social, and economic development. Libya has many challenges in its future; with the right support, new media outlets will be able to make the strongest contribution possible to the transition’s political stability, its democracy, and its social cohesion. But preparation for these challenges needs to begin now.*

**Key words:** Arab Spring, democratic transition, media reform.

*Líbia aquests mitjans lliures. Mentre les mostres de suport a uns mitjans amb tots els drets són prou fortes, cal un debat sobre el seu desenvolupament, ja que no poden emergir “automàticament”. Com més alta sigui la qualitat del debat, més àmplia la discussió i més efectiu tot el suport tècnic, millors seran els mitjans a Líbia —amb clares repercussions en el desenvolupament polític, social i econòmic del país—. Líbia té molts reptes de futur; amb el suport necessari, els mitjans de comunicació seran capaços de contribuir amb força a l’estabilitat política de la transició, a la democràcia i a la cohesió social. Amb tot, la preparació per fer front a aquests reptes cal que comenci des d’ara.*

**Paraules clau:** Primavera Àrab, transició democràtica, reforma dels mitjans.

**T**he demand for freedom of speech and free media is universally stated in heartfelt terms at all levels of the uprising. The revolution has opened up space for media freedom that has never been experienced in Libya before. The energy and enthusiasm present in the emerging media sector is impressive and positive.

Yet one issue that needs consideration is the current imperative for media to adhere to or share the explicit identity of the overall revolution itself. While the uprising has an extraordinary level of popular participation and is mobilised by demands for a range of human rights, on the ground *any* revolution is first and foremost a political and military objective. Yet, perhaps almost inevitably, ideas of free speech and free media were frequently conflated by several interviewees with support for the revolution’s political and military objectives. The revolution may *support* a rights-based media system, but it is not the *same thing* as such a system. This distinction may not be crucial now, but if a clear debate on Libya’s media is to take place and frame its future development, it is a distinction that needs to be made.

Beyond free speech and free media issues themselves, demands for other civil and political rights are also high. Yet the issues and obligations contained within a

system of rights are only now being explored: Gaddafi-era repression means civil society is a new concept, and many of these questions simply couldn't become part of public debate in previous years. The will is there—but a developed understanding of the differences between humanitarian principles, human rights, and political objectives is not well developed and may hold potential pitfalls for the future—.

This means the possibility for misinterpretation and misunderstandings on rights generally also needs to be acknowledged in discussing the role of emerging media. Libya's new media outlets represent an opportunity and asset that can play a great role in developing public understanding of these issues. Conversely, if media outlets themselves are not clear on the issues and distinctions involved, they will almost inevitably spread misunderstandings that can only complicate the political process, including human rights and humanitarian objectives.

Members of the transitional administration at all levels have expressed great commitment to free media and free speech, and in several cases taken early initiatives to ensure its development. But there is some jockeying for influence or resources in the media, and some political topics that are considered taboo and stated as such by figures in authority (see 'Note on Censorship', below). Political positions are still emerging; many potential difficulties can be generated simply by lack of skills, experience, and / or strong institutions, and a lack of general familiarity with relevant debates on the roles free media is obliged to take.

These observations shouldn't be interpreted as broad generalisations across the whole emerging media sector. It is true that several national leaders and media practitioners are clear about the distinction between supporting the revolution itself, and supporting free rights-based media. Nevertheless, there are others for whom the distinction is less clear. The current atmosphere does not yet exhibit a tension between free-speech principles and revolutionary goals, and there are many examples of initiatives that aim to use the new space to promote positive social change. But to repeat, commitment to the political cause of overthrowing Gaddafi's regime, and commitment to a rightsbased framework of free speech and free media, are not necessarily the same, even though there is great overlap between them at this point in time.

As the situation becomes more complex, the media's role will become more challenging. Support in this context is crucial; however in such a fluid situation, it is impossible to predict which outlets will continue and develop and which will fold; or what different editorial stances or possible political positions they will take. It is also difficult to predict what the final regulatory and political environment will look like.

This means media support needs to be targeted but flexible, meeting current needs but without becoming locked into a limited number of relationships or assuming events will take one particular course. Media support activities, including training, provision of equipment, facilitation of international links, and support for debate on the media's roles, must aim to meet several immediate and short-term goals, but also to facilitate broad relationships and input that allow Libyan media practitioners to engage in their own discussions and set their own future directions.

In this context it is worthwhile noting that at a Round-Table meeting organized by the UN<sup>2</sup> in Cairo in June 6 the UN stressed "the key role that local media

and other communication channels —civil society, religious community leaders— could play in creating crucial links with local communities”.<sup>3</sup> The participants, including Internews, also agreed that efforts to engage civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the early recovery activities should be maintained.

In any of the potential scenarios in Libya, at present and in the future, the role of the media will be crucial in framing popular understanding and responses. This in turn will influence the possible activities of those in authority, including political and military decisions, and efforts in support of human rights and any humanitarian relief responses.

The most effective and principled roles media can take will require a high level understanding of professional ethics, increased journalistic and editorial skills, clear editorial mandates, and stable institutions. Libya’s emerging media is asking for support now, to give it the best chance possible to fulfil its crucial roles and future potential in a time of extraordinary change.

## BACKGROUND

Libya’s anti-Gaddafi uprising in February 2011 has marked differences from the popular protests that overthrew leaders in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt. This is largely due to particular features of the Gaddafi regime, and sets the context for both the progress of the uprising itself, and the dynamics affecting media within it.

### GADDAFI REGIME<sup>4</sup>

Colonel Gaddafi claimed power by military coup in 1969, overthrowing King Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi Sanussi in 1969. At the time of Gaddafi’s coup, the Libyan state was extremely young, formed only in 1951. The country’s institutional heritage was weak, and Gaddafi dismantled what had existed as he sought to impose his own system and institute an authoritarian personality cult. The key feature of his rule has been to attempt to reshape the state according to his own personal concepts, and to suppress any dissent or debate. This has rested on a self-proclaimed ideology, the ‘Third Universal Theory’, ostensibly placed between capitalism and communism. This propagated through his ‘Green Book’, initially published in 1975, which expressly denounced all forms of political representation, including Parliaments, as a sham. Instead a system of local ‘Basic Peoples Congresses’, feeding up to a national ‘General Peoples Congress’, was established across the country. While the regime stated these were more truly democratic than representative parliaments, and would gather people’s opinions and recommendations from the grass roots to feed them into national decision-making, they were instead politically controlled by regime loyalists, and often linked to the security apparatus.

Commentators and analysts repeatedly note that, as a result of these processes, Gaddafi as leader is bound up with the very shape of the Libyan state more thoroughly than is the case for any of its Arab neighbours. With significant na-

tional oil money, he distributed patronage and cultivated loyalty among selected tribal groups and personal networks; power and prestige flowed to those who were personally close to his leadership. Under his regime, the state and its institutions barely have an identity separate from his individual rule.

To oppose Gaddafi in effect means to oppose the structure and institutions of the regime itself. To a large extent, this context is what has driven Libya's uprising to quickly emerge as a civil war; it simply was not possible to replace the head of the state, as happened in Egypt and Tunisia, and leave the rest of the apparatus and leadership intact. This has set the terms for the uprising and the scale of the current military conflict, and is a major factor that drives the identity of the revolution itself—including the current roles and practices of media within it—.

### *Gaddafi Media*

Ideology (especially the ideas outlined in the Green Book) and propaganda have been central to the Gaddafi regime's methods. His own image was everywhere, on billboards and in public buildings; praise of his leadership was required in public documents including newspaper articles. Common stories from his rule relate how members of government were only referred to by their title, not their name, and football players were referred to only by their numbers. This aimed to prevent any figures from competing with his own, or his children's, public prominence. He also changed the country's national symbols, replacing the previous national flag, adopted at the time of the independence struggle from Italy, with an all-green banner; changing the national anthem, and in 1977 changing the country's name to the 'Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya'.

A physically expansive but tightly controlled media was part and parcel of this system. In its 2006 report 'Libya: Words to Deeds', Human Rights Watch confirmed once again what had been long-said: "[A] review of the main newspapers, the state-run television and the state-run press agency JANA... reveals a largely subservient and uncritical press that glorifies the government and Muammar al-Qaddafi. The media addresses sensitive topics like police abuse or improved relations with the United States only after they have been identified as acceptable for debate, often by al-Qaddafi himself. Criticism of the Jamahiriya system is unknown". Journalists were also imprisoned for critical views.<sup>5</sup>

Various state representatives described the media as 'free' because, they said, the revolution is of the people and the revolution owns the media, with assertions that opinion can be freely expressed in People's Congresses—a practical impossibility—. Space for free speech was closed. However recent satellite TV stations and to a lesser degree the spread of internet connectivity in the late 1990s gave many Libyans access to a wide spectrum of uncensored news.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years there were moves to gradually reform aspects of the state, as part of Libya's attempts to rehabilitate its international relations. Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam was the public face of much of this process, with efforts that included some moves towards political reform and some reconciliation with opposition figures and release of prisoners;<sup>7</sup> his Qaddafi Foundation for International Charities was active in several areas. He also established two semi-

private papers, *Oea* and *Al-Qurnya* through the Al-Ghad media group, which allowed some limited space for comment.<sup>8</sup> However these relative steps towards openness also ran into resistance at the top; Al-Ghad was nationalised in 2009,<sup>9</sup> and Saif al-Islam relatively sidelined. In 2010, Freedom House rated Libya in the lowest group of countries not free, together with the likes of Burma, Somalia, and North Korea.<sup>10</sup>

## THE LIBYA UPRISING

The Libya uprising began in earnest in February, 2011, with many saying protests in Benghazi were initially sparked by the arrest of prominent lawyer and human rights activist Fathi Terbil on February 15. They quickly escalated; calls for a large-scale 'Day of Rage' on February 17 circulated via online social media networks<sup>11</sup> and protests took place in the eastern centre Benghazi, other eastern towns, and to a more limited extent in the country's west, where security measures were much tighter. Reports flowed of government crackdowns and increasing resistance response, including the defection of several local army personnel. Protests and security reprisals were also reported in Tripoli.<sup>12</sup> By February 20, Human Rights Watch estimated 233 people had been killed, a number which quickly rose. By early March, the uprising was claiming control of towns up to the eastern city of Brega, a short distance from Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte.

Saif Al-Islam called for dialogue in the early days of the uprising<sup>13</sup> but also vowed to fight "to the last man standing,"<sup>14</sup> warning of civil war. Crackdowns continued; pro-Gaddafi forces, according to numerous reports bolstered by mercenaries, organised and began to attack rebel-held townships. Communications to the east, with infrastructure centralised in Tripoli, were cut, including internet, landline, and mobile phones; during the conflict Misrata in the west also became similarly isolated.<sup>15</sup> International journalists were harassed by the regime and its supporters, a number of them arrested; by late May five journalists were confirmed killed in the conflict.<sup>16</sup>

In his first speech after the uprising began, on February 22, Gaddafi described the rebels as 'cockroaches' and 'rats' who deserved to be executed.<sup>17</sup> His forces began to re-take rebel-held cities including Brega and Ajdabya; on March 19 they arrived at Benghazi with heavy weapons and began entering the city.

The advance by Gaddafi forces was only halted by air-strikes by NATO, carried out extremely rapidly after United Nations Resolution 1973, authorising this action, was passed on March 17. At the time of Internews' assessment, the front-line on the east was set between Brega and Ajdabya. In the west, after extremely heavy fighting that destroyed the centre of town, rebels gained control of Misrata in late May; fighting for towns and transport routes through the Nafusa mountains has continued, with reports that rebels had gained control of the Tunisian border crossing of Dehiba in late April.

The rebels centred in Benghazi established the NTC, which first met on March 5.<sup>18</sup> This was initially set up not as an interim government, but to explicitly 'provide an international face for the uprising'; it aims to oversee a transition to liberal democracy. In May an Executive Board was established, which acts as a kind of

government to the Council's ostensible legislative role. However these roles sometimes overlap, as some NTC members have taken on somewhat executive-style decisions, while the Executive Board establishes its own structures and capacities. In the current phase, the goal of a clear separation between the legislative and executive roles is 'aspirational' more than operational.<sup>19</sup> On March 29 the NTC issued a 'Vision Statement', which serves as a general 'road-map' for the establishment of a liberal democracy in the country.<sup>20</sup>

The humanitarian effects of the conflict have been immense. As of June 19, OCHA records over 100,000 Libyans have left the country and not returned; over 260,000 nationals from neighbouring countries; and over 280,000 Third Country Nationals. The UNHCR estimates there are 243,000 internally displaced within Libya; however this number is difficult to confirm. The death toll can only be estimated; however by late May the NTC estimated at least fifteen thousand had been killed.<sup>21</sup>

## GENESIS OF MEDIA IN REBEL AREAS: A SUMMARY

Just a few months after the beginning of the uprising, media in rebel-held areas have moved forward at a rapid rate and quickly outgrown the initiatives from the first days of the protests. Yet the genesis of much of the current media lies in those early efforts. A detailed history of each initiative is beyond the scope of this report; given the rapid pace of events and the high level of informal participation, such a history—while fascinating—would also be challenging to compile. However a general summary of the major dynamics at play is still necessary, in order to gain an understanding of the early trajectory of media efforts in Libya's rebel-controlled locations.

Media activities have played a high-profile role in all stages of the uprising. As in other countries' Arab Spring movements, protagonists repeatedly refer to the importance of online social media networks to share information on protests, crackdowns, and responses; to foster debate; and to mobilise broad participation in the rebellion, including circulation of the call for the 'Day of Rage' protests.

This use of online forums got around the censorship and restrictions of state-controlled media outlets.<sup>22</sup> Also as elsewhere however, online wasn't the only major media factor; over the past decade satellite TV has become increasingly prominent, with the rise of Al Jazeera especially marking an enormous change. Coverage of neighbouring uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia on these channels is commonly cited as having a galvanising effect on protestors. As the regime's crackdown intensified and access to internet was cut, material gathered by domestic citizen journalists was smuggled out of Libya as well as posting online, much was also re-broadcast back into the country via these channels,<sup>23</sup> informing a broad national audience; this again is credited with boosting popular mobilisation. Ongoing coverage by international satellite TV, most of all Al Jazeera, continues to have enormous domestic significance for Libyan audiences. This is also recognised by Gaddafi himself; in his first televised appearance after the protests began, he urged audiences 'do not believe the channels owned by stray dogs'.<sup>24</sup>



Rebellion participants quickly recognised the need to build on this somewhat organic interaction between different media platforms, and to connect with international media outlets. A celebrated early initiative was pioneered by Mohammed Nabbous, who led the set up of a series of webcams on top of the Benghazi courthouse to stream protests and events online as they took place, and who also uploaded footage gathered from around the city.<sup>25</sup>

Around this and other efforts a Media Centre quickly emerged near the Benghazi courthouse, which had been taken over as a centre for the rebellion. The Media Centre developed and operated somewhat organically, and combined a variety of activities and services including online production, aggregation, and dissemination; newspaper and newsletter production; graffiti, posters and caricatures; music, and more. Crucially the Centre also aimed to provide support for international journalists as they arrived, including a translator / interpreter service, internet connections, and formal press registration to facilitate journalists' travel and access. Many current initiatives have expanded from these early efforts; for example, Nabbous' online video streaming was the genesis of the rebels' new satellite TV, Libya al Hurra, which has since expanded, and changed location.

State media facilities were an early target as protests first began escalating; according to Agence France Press, cited by the International Crisis Group (ICG), Tripoli broadcast facilities and government offices were attacked and burned as early as February 18.<sup>26</sup> In other cases local media facilities were also either quickly targeted for takeover by those participating in the rebellion, or their existing staff publicly changed allegiance: staff from radio and TV stations in Benghazi, Al Bayda and Derna for example, pledged their commitment to the revolution and changed their programming accordingly, while state broadcast facilities and equipment were claimed by a mix of young, inexperienced broadcasters, sometimes together with experienced broadcast engineers in Misrata, Benghazi, and Tobruk, to name just a few.<sup>27</sup> This mix of groups, all using previously state-owned infrastructure, now forms the basis of much of the terrestrial broadcast efforts in rebel-held areas.<sup>28</sup>

## NOTE ON CENSORSHIP

Internews discussed the possibility of censorship with many interlocutors during the assessment, including media practitioners, university lecturers, students, and officials. The strong response was that official censorship doesn't currently play a role. However there were several who acknowledged that they practise some form of self-censorship in the interests of the revolution. For example, while individual leaders on the NTC were the subject of criticism, the NTC as an institution itself was deliberately not. Some practitioners clearly said that they were "going easy" on the NTC because "now is not the time" —there was a "bigger enemy" in the form of Gaddafi and his regime. Another practitioner explained that he would not publish some information from an NTC source about improvements in telecommunications infrastructure— in case that information turned out to be wrong, or unforeseen problems occurred in the infrastructure's roll-out, and resulted in rumours and resentment at failures to fulfil perceived 'promises'. Some in authority advocated directly for self-censorship, precisely in the interests



of stability (see notes under 'Governance' in the Media Mapping section, below).

In all cases, these were framed as an expression of caution in support of the uprising, including support for the free-speech space that exists.

However all respondents said that if the authorities tried to control them more, especially later in the transition, they would resist. Indeed the transitional institutions are so fragile that it is doubtful they could push for any restrictions or 'caution' on media content *unless* it came with public support; the institutions on their own are not strong enough to enforce an edict autonomously. Censorship from authorities is not currently a concern;<sup>29</sup> however the use of public pressure on minority opinions in future debates—especially if for one reason or another such opinions are attacked for being 'against the revolution'—could become one, if a clear framework of rights for free speech, and how that would be implemented, is not clearly developed and articulated.

## NOTE ON PROPAGANDA

### *Regime Propaganda*

Propaganda efforts were part of the Gaddafi regime's response to the uprising and held true to previous methods of control, noted in more detail above. Accusations of foreign involvement led the way, as did charges that those involved in the fighting were being supplied with drugs. The spectre of Islamic extremism, including statements that Derna in the east included a base for Al Qaeda, gained public airing; as did predictions of an all-out tribal civil war. Intimidation was a major part of this propaganda effort, with one of the most direct of these being Gaddafi's February 22 speech in which he declared he would hunt down the rebels in Benghazi 'house by house' and 'alleyway by alleyway'.<sup>30</sup>

Much of this propaganda was clumsy; perhaps the most obtuse was an effort to convince rebel and loyalist audiences alike that Gen. Abdel Fatah Younis al-Obeidi, a prominent military figure who had announced his defection from the regime a few days before, had in fact defected back in the opposite direction. Footage was shown of Gen. Al-Obeidi meeting Gaddafi, apparently to back this up—but the footage was outdated, and quickly refuted by al-Obeidi himself.<sup>31</sup> Several rebels said that the regime's media efforts quickly deteriorated as the conflict became more intense, although this would need detailed content analysis to chart more accurately.

Current regime propaganda emphasises the role of NATO, and frames the Alliance's role as an imperialist attack; claims of many civilians killed dominate the narrative. Confirmation of this is close to impossible; however international journalists in Tripoli have queried the level of official manipulation of the evidence they are shown.<sup>32</sup>

### *Rebel Response*

Rebels quickly appreciated that they also needed to win the battle for media representation and narrative. Many video and online efforts emphasise the attacks and

brutality of the regime, and then finally the stand of defiance of the rebellion itself; they are proclamations that define the revolution purely in terms of its opposition to the regime, and used this as a motivational technique, to a greater proportion than they express the rebellion's future goals. These goals also existed within the narratives of the online and video material seen by the assessment team, but they were far less prominent than portrayals of regime abuses themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Insistence that this was a revolution for liberal values of human rights and democracy were true to the spirit of those participating; they were also clearly a means of countering the regime's accusations of religious extremism and tribal divisions. The common refrain, 'We are one Libya', was a simple message emphasising unity across the country. However as noted by other analysts there are several streams in Libyan society in the east, including small, extremist religious groups; and tribal divisions have been thoroughly leveraged by the regime itself for decades, as a means to maintain power.<sup>34</sup> The revolution does publicly call unequivocally for democracy and human rights, and its initial transitional structures aim in this direction. However it is a simplification to state that this is the only stream and the only political goal in Libyan society.<sup>35</sup>

Significant parts of the revolution's identity, then, appear to also be formed specifically in response to Gaddafi's accusations.<sup>36</sup> This is by no means a surprise in a conflict—but it should not be confused with being itself a representation of all opinions and groups who are taking part—. Those debates and differences will most likely emerge when the regime falls and the transition matures.

The revolution is a relatively informal, non-hierarchical effort; it has neither the ethos nor the means to centrally-control propaganda efforts. However it does have a strong group identity and solidarity—and this can mean that narratives and anecdotes that affirm this identity and the revolution's objectives can be deliberately generated by small groups and take hold; or that unconfirmed stories can gain acceptance and become broadly-propagated if they match popular perceptions or expectations—. These stories may be related simply because they are believed; or as part of a deliberate effort to gain an advantage in the battle for media representation. For media covering the conflict, this runs the risk of becoming propaganda by another, small-group-based dynamic.<sup>37</sup>

Some common stories circulating on the rebel side have these features. The accusation that Gaddafi troops have been supplied with Viagra and are using rape as a weapon of war<sup>38</sup> has been extremely difficult to confirm; some are questioning its veracity. The high presence of mercenaries among Gaddafi forces has been highlighted again and again, and invokes the regime's historical involvement in other conflicts in Africa. However some commentary states that this, too, has been harder to confirm than anticipated and merits further questioning.<sup>39</sup> At least some of these stories may be true, and they are certainly believed by many on the rebels' side—but the point is they have been widely disseminated as truth without rigorous confirmation—. Even without a cynical centrally controlled system as the regime operates, this risks being propaganda generated by another means. Driven by the rebellion's own identity, this dynamic highlights some of the potential risks if the principles of free media were to conflict with the political and military imperatives of the revolution itself.

## GENERAL TRENDS AND ISSUES

### MEDIA AND TRANSITIONAL GOVERNANCE

The NTC and related municipal councils, as explicitly transitional arrangements, have avoided any attempts to promulgate laws and regulations or set up ongoing institutions until the conflict is resolved: while a large part of the country, particularly those in Tripoli, are unable to take part in the decision-making process, any moves to establish apparently-permanent institutions may risk accusations of the east attempting to 'take the lead' in the revolution at the expense of those who are still living in areas under the regime's control. However the longer the transition continues, the greater the need for institutional frameworks and systems to sustain and give direction to current efforts. This is a core dilemma affecting many areas in current transitional arrangements, whether that it is health, finance, or education; it is also pertinent for media.

Transitional structures are already taking shape and framing media efforts, in general positively, but not without ambiguity generated by this uncertain context. The 'Media Mapping' section below outlines these structures in more detail; briefly, they are:

- The Media and Communications Committee (related to the NTC as the incipient national 'legislative branch' of the transitional administration)
- The Media Ministry (part of the incipient 'executive branch' of the transitional administration)
- The Benghazi Municipal Council's Media and Culture Department (other municipal councils also have structures or individuals that deal with media issues, though many are not as formalised or consolidated as they are in Benghazi).

Both within and beyond Benghazi different and even contradictory opinions can be found on what approach should be taken with media now, including by those with significant authority. For example, the need for a media ministry is dismissed outright by some, and highlighted as a requirement by others. The need for directly stateowned media (as distinct from an 'arms' length' national broadcaster model) while dismissed by most, is still advocated as a necessary measure by some others in authority to ensure 'the government perspective is heard'. Completely open and unregulated media is championed by some; others espouse the need for some liaison, or indeed coordination, exercised by local government bodies, which can include authorities 'clarifying government expectations' for local media, issuing and managing licenses for both broadcast and print, and so on.<sup>40</sup>

Within a given institutional structure, whether at national or local level, it is difficult to define a single tendency amongst these divergent trends; different individuals with significant roles in the same transitional administrative body have express different opinions. It may also be too early to highlight any given individual's opinion as a committed agenda or position; many people are just now discussing what steps and models are most appropriate. Reflecting this, the statements of some key individuals changed during the period of the assessment itself, at least in part as a result of ongoing debates.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless it is important to note that *all of these opinions and tendencies are present, and all are informing current efforts* to build up media production and transitional institutions with a media role. Given the fluidity of the transition, it may be that the most important features of the current situation are not contained in formal decisions, but rather in what informal arrangements are set up, including temporary administrative structures and lines of authority; the mandates for use of former stateowned broadcast equipment; transitional administration-linked support for independent media, and so on. Most of all, the nature of discussion, debates, and public forums on the role of media and the nature of media laws, ethics, and mandates is perhaps the most important indicator of which direction media development is likely to take in the coming period.

There are positive signs here; for example, the NTC recently issued a press release announcing the intention to establish Libya al Hurra TV as a public service broadcaster along the lines of the BBC.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, a media exhibition and series of workshops was recently announced on for June 19 as part of efforts to strengthen the capacity and skills of local media.<sup>43</sup> But by and large significant debates and clarifications on future directions are yet to take place.

## NTC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Efforts to communicate the activities and roles of the NTC have evolved rapidly and are crucial for citizens to be able to understand what is taking place. How effective this communication is has implications both for the broader political process, and for the development of the media sector itself.

The NTC's Media and Communications Committee (MCC) is the main body carrying out this work. Its efforts include organising press conferences and providing press releases to international and local media, maintaining online updates, providing initial local media training sessions, and convening public outreach forums. MCC initiatives to date have been positive and effective; however while they have made several achievements, the expansion of their work is hampered by a lack of resources. Several journalists, while able to communicate with relevant MCC figures, also cite somewhat unclear or ineffective lines of media access to NTC representatives themselves.

The Committee is headed by Mr. Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, the NTC's official spokesperson and its Vice-Chairman. In a strict sense his spokesperson role implies some degree of separation or difference from the Media Ministry, which is part of the Executive Board. However there is clearly an overlap in this area of work; the Media Minister, Mr. Shammam, arrived in Libya only towards the end of the assessment, and was immediately a part of liaison with international journalists, not an unusual dynamic given the fluidity of the transitional period.

Institutional fluidity also has implications for other aspects of the NTC's communications approaches. For example, some of the national-level functions that would appear appropriate for the MCC also overlap with the Benghazi Municipal Council's Media and Culture Department, which despite being a local-level body also supports the nascent national broadcaster Libya al-Hurra TV, as well as hosting many other media initiatives. Several members of the MCC have linked

or overlapping roles in the Department's media efforts, once more reflecting the fluidity of current transitional structures. (See the section 'Media Mapping' below for more details on institutional governance structures.)

In addition, the lack of local media capacity means that those resources the MCC does provide are not always sufficiently exploited by media targeting local audiences, because outlets lack the personnel, skills, or equipment to use what is provided. It is clear that far greater information and coverage for local audiences could be generated if these current capacity issues were tackled (see *Production Capacity and Gaps* below for more detail).

While some efforts are moving in the right direction, there is —as with all elements of the transition— a need for urgency. This is because information gaps on the activities of the NTC and local Municipal Councils can potentially lead to a vacuum in citizens' understanding of what is taking place. Particularly in areas isolated from Benghazi —whether that be in Misrata in the west, Tobruk further east, or other areas still contested— this holds risks: a sense of isolation and slow progress in meeting needs on the ground, even if fully justified due to physical or resource limitations, can lead to local perceptions of being neglected if the reasons are not effectively explained and citizens' own views heard. Any communications limitations on the part of the NTC or, locally, Municipal Councils, can therefore hold significant implications for the political transition as a whole.

The role of NTC public communication also has a crucial, though often subtle, effect on the development of free media. Firstly, ready access to official positions is one element that can support fact-based reporting by removing one possible reason for inexperienced journalists' resorting to rumour or unsubstantiated commentary. Beyond that consideration, the NTC's Media and Communications Committee also has a chance to demonstrate a new model of government public communication, which does not rely on state ownership and control of media outlets themselves.

While no one the assessment team spoke to is in favour of anything resembling the Gaddafi regime's oppressive methods of control, the view that government needs to own its own media in order to communicate effectively was frequently a residual perception; in some cases there were localised efforts to set up early structures along these lines. This is by no means a consolidated position, but it is one identifiable trend that could hold future risks. One of the most effective ways of demonstrating that a state-controlled broadcaster tied to governing incumbents is not necessary is to demonstrate that other models also work. In these early days, the MCC's role is crucial in this regard.

## MEDIA FOR THE REVOLUTION

All media outlets met during this assessment identified themselves as 'supporting the revolution'. This incorporated a broad range of self-defined roles and types of production, noted here for purposes of quick reference. They included:

- Explicitly countering Gaddafi regime propaganda
- Urging regime soldiers to desert
- Informing the outside world about events taking place in Libya

- Representing the voice of Libya's youth
- Providing a voice for the people's opinions
- Motivating the public to continue to support the revolution
- Informing the public about the decisions of the NTC and local councils
- Educating audiences about political processes, for example the role of a constitution
- Criticising individual members of transitional governing structures (but not those transitional institutions themselves)
- Recognising and honouring those killed in the fighting, and their families
- Religious material
- Urging former Gaddafi supporters to join the revolution
- Promoting the voice of particular groups in society, including women
- Telling stories of the human impact of the conflict, and human interest stories (typically described as 'humanitarian' coverage)
- Promoting and informing the public about new civil society initiatives

## MEDIA PRODUCTION CAPACITY: GAPS AND NEEDS

Media in rebel-held areas have made extraordinary gains in a very limited period of time. Nevertheless many interlocutors spoke of the need to increase capacity with training and institutional assistance, whether through workshops and classes, mentorships, assistance in institutional development, or via relationships with broadcast and journalism institutions internationally.

Limitations in media capacity take many forms. At the simplest level Gaddafi-regime suppression seriously restricted the chances for journalists, editors, and students to develop critical and in some areas practical skills. While senior or experienced former media workers do have important skills, a number stated the need for further support and training, and the great majority of young journalists have received little to no training at all.

Resources are another limitation on capacity. Libya differs from many other transitional contexts in that in many areas there is a good level of basic resources, including production equipment, studios, broadcast infrastructure, some printers in Benghazi, and so on. However in some areas this infrastructure has been destroyed; in others, although resources exist, they are not sufficient for the level of production required. Part of this is due to the general economic situation—financial liquidity is limited and imports restricted, creating blockages in procurement of needed equipment—. The destruction of infrastructure and the lack of resources are greatest outside of Benghazi. For example all large and medium-scale printers were reportedly destroyed in Misrata, while they never existed in smaller eastern towns; in both cases printed material can only either be produced on small, personal printers, or sent to Benghazi for production.

Damage to or restrictions on internet and telephone infrastructure itself is another major issue. Libya's internet access was routed through Tripoli and cut off when the conflict started in earnest; key mobile phone infrastructure was also based in the capital. While efforts to re-establish internet services are continuing apace, currently isolated VSAT connections are the only option; some

towns have only a couple of connections. Mobile phone telephony has been re-established in the east but with restrictions, including no text messaging or international calls, all of which impacts on journalists' ability to work.

The lack of a normal, functioning economy is also limiting capacity in other ways: all participants in media, from journalists to editors and producers to administrators, define themselves as 'volunteers'; they draw no direct salary for their efforts. While in general the commitment and effort displayed is admirable, in at least some important cases this means that attendance can be haphazard, negatively affecting production schedules and consistency of programming. The need for funds to pay staff was often cited as a concern; it is unlikely that this can be solved on any significant scale before the economy itself becomes operational, which means the longer the current situation continues, the greater this challenge will become.

Production systems are another limitation. A notable example is coverage of the NTC itself: while many media outlet staff have personal links with administration figures, systematic production methods to ensure fast, comprehensive coverage is often lacking. This can range from outlets simply lacking telephones with which to call NTC figures, or internet through which they can receive press releases. However it also often includes a lack of strategy in coverage, for example few daily broadcast slots to give updates on administration decisions, or only one or no journalists assigned to regularly cover transitional administration issues. (In some cases this is countered by close direct involvement of administration representatives in direct production, itself a potential issue for the separation of state and media.) This lack of a systematic approach to production can only result in information gaps for audiences.

A final limitation in capacity is reach. The bulk of media production takes place in Benghazi, although all other locations visited had local radio production (with the exception of Ajdabya). While there is a surfeit of newspapers in the city, few if any are distributed further afield. Other towns in the east have only a handful of new publications—not necessarily a limitation of information access for audiences of itself, as two well-run, widely-circulated newspapers can provide coverage for a large population; but it is a demonstration of the different dynamics and scales at work across locations. There are some positive efforts to counter limitations in reach (for example material is shared between radio stations in different eastern towns), but limitations on media access outside of Benghazi is striking.

More concerning is that there are few outlets that can cover the whole country, including conflict areas and areas under Gaddafi control. AM stations in Benghazi and Misrata have national coverage—but they have many serious limitations in their own production capacity—. Two satellite TV channels can theoretically cover the country; one, however, is on a satellite not generally accessed by Libyan audiences, and the other is currently limited to two hours of program production. This means that there is little opportunity for Libyans outside rebel-held areas to get information about what is happening, particularly regarding the transitional administration itself. External satellite channels such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya are the only available source for such audiences; however while



the coverage on these channels is extensive, it is targeted to regional, not national, audiences and so is aiming to fulfil different information needs.

### *Media Across Generations*

The statement that ‘youth made this revolution’ is a frequent one; and media by and for youth is very prominent. This is far more notable in Benghazi, which as of mid-June had around 60 registered newspapers and magazines, a large proportion of those run by young people. Several other efforts—including online production, graffiti, and others—also feature a high proportion of young participants. However while there is still meaningful youth participation outside of Benghazi, including several youth groups in Misrata, it is far less predominant, with apparently a higher proportion of more senior figures involved in and driving media production.

Electronic broadcast media, which relies on greater infrastructure including studios, transmitters, and recording equipment, has proportionally much greater participation by the older generation. Many are former staff of state institutions where the necessary equipment was located, and who have now joined the uprising’s effort. This is not an exclusive division—there are at least two radio initiatives in Benghazi run by youth, and young people participate alongside senior staff in several efforts—. Nevertheless the character of different media efforts run ‘by’ or ‘for’ youth, and others in which young people are part of the staff, is distinctive.

### *Media and Business Investment*

Future trends in media are certain to have large involvement of Libyan business interests, both at home and throughout the Diaspora, and from other donors and supporters. Already one private satellite TV station, *Libya Lekon Alahrar*, has been established with assistance from Qatar,<sup>44</sup> and *Libya al-Hurra* in Benghazi. At the time of the assessment another had begun broadcasting a test-signal, with rumours of a fourth starting soon.

Previous transitions, ranging from the former Soviet Union to Indonesia to Pakistan and others, have been accompanied by large-scale investment and a proliferation of well-funded, but initially under-skilled, media outlets. The wealth, in Libya itself, throughout the Libyan Diaspora, and among other supporters of the rebels, means that it is likely that similar dynamics will emerge. This is perhaps most likely to take place in satellite TV, which is already well established among Libyan audiences. The skilllevels among Libyan journalists are currently under-prepared for such a change.

### *Media and Civil Society Debates*

New civil society organisations—focusing on relief efforts, on youth, and several other issues—are emerging at a rapid rate in especially Benghazi. Yet this nascent civil society sector is at a very early stage and participants are just beginning to define their areas of focus, mandates, and key issues.

There are as yet no civil society organisations with a particular focus on media freedom and freedom of expression; no key advocates or ‘media champions’ have so far emerged. There are a number of civil society organisations who combine media production with relief or social development activities, but none who are explicitly positioned to focus on raising media advocacy issues or promoting discussion of media freedoms and appropriate laws. At least one journalist union is on the way to becoming established, but still has a long way to go to consolidate and develop its program (see the ‘Media Mapping’ section below).

Again, this is understandable given the early stage of developments; and the fact that enthusiasm for the values of free speech is universally proclaimed may create the impression that this is not a crucial priority precisely because at this point it appears to be uncontested. Yet as the observations above make clear, even at this early stage debate would benefit from a greater variety of input and expertise. The MCC is taking some initiatives in this direction, for example organising an exhibition and workshops for local media on June 19; the Executive Board’s recently established Ministry for Culture and Community<sup>45</sup> is also working on an extensive training and support program for emerging civil society groups.

While the affirmation of the values of free expression and free media are heartening, the potential for some patterns to be established early, and for possible misunderstandings or mis-steps to take place, means that greater informed debate on this key element of the revolution is itself a definite need.

## NATIONAL POLITICAL AND MILITARY ISSUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA

Many core issues that affect the nascent media sector also have impact on the conflict and transition as a whole. While these concerns are extremely broad, it is nevertheless important to note how they may affect the media sector specifically; and in the opposite direction, how the media may well affect the dynamic of the conflict and transition’s overall development in turn.

### TRIPOLI AND THE CONFLICT END-GAME

When and how Tripoli falls will have far-reaching implications for all elements of the transition. Although Benghazi is the second-largest city in Libya, the east as a whole comprises only about one-third of the country’s population. It is not the centre of political power, infrastructure, or business. The rebels unanimously state that Tripoli will be their capital, yet Tripoli remains under the Gaddafi regime’s control and its citizens, including likely opposition leaders, have not been able to play any significant role in the transitional process to date, and will need to be incorporated into future decisions and directions. The NTC is highly aware of the need to remain open to this process. Yet at this stage whatever dynamic that may emerge is an unknown factor.

This is not to question the purpose or of current transitional arrangements; current leaders are highly cognisant of the need to maintain an open process and

not attempt to excessively lock in policy directions or structures while leading figures from much of the country are unable to take part. But it would be a mistake to simply assume that the understandings and trajectories currently set will remain unchanged, given the large-scale transformations that are still to come.

### *Media Implications*

Media in rebel-held areas have a potentially powerful role to inform citizens in Tripoli and elsewhere about what is taking place across the country, and communicating the nature of the transitional process. This can be as simple as stating the facts on the ground, which in large part would counter Gaddafi-controlled media propaganda; if done well, it can potentially serve as a strong grass-roots ‘confidence-building’ measure, not just in the transition itself, but in the media values that it supports. However if the response is with overt propaganda of their own—ignoring the nuances and unknowns of the current situation—that may have an impact on the level of confidence citizens, particularly any grass-roots Gaddafi supporters, have in the transitional process. In either case, the current lack of resources and capacity of media with national reach is a big obstacle to either of these approaches.

At the level of governance and policy, whether a transitional administration that incorporates representatives from all of Libya will agree with every initiative undertaken so far is an unanswered question. For example, the already-stated model for turning Libya al-Hurra into a national broadcaster, while a positive step itself, may be up for dispute; others may want a stronger role in running that broadcaster. Other models and ideas of media-related laws and regulation currently not present or may also be placed on the table. Positive debates and examples of practice, rather than set institutions and pre-defined positions within them, is potentially the best preparation at this stage for what could be a significantly altered transitional process.

## **TRANSITION VS. STASIS**

As noted above, transitional leaders may be very aware of the political imperative to keep the current process as flexible and adaptable as they can. Yet it is also impossible to keep all decisions on-hold. Communities in rebel-held areas understand that the war is still being fought; nevertheless they will expect to see some progress—and at the very least, are unlikely to welcome any deterioration in basic services and goods. This means that institutional frameworks, previously centralised in Tripoli, will need to be established and consolidated to maintain current stability. The uprising to date has been remarkable, perhaps unprecedented, in the degree to which it has been spontaneous and unstructured. Yet in order to maintain clarity of vision and purpose, levels of security, and common services, an increasingly explicit political leadership with the binding decisions that this entails will become more urgent.

These are steps that international supporters of the NTC are pressing for; however the conflicting demands between transitional openness and institutional consolidation that they require constitutes a real challenge for the NTC. How the Council negotiates its way through and achieves balance between these di-

fferent imperatives, and especially how long the conflict continues and requires them to do this, will be a significant factor in the political process.

### *Media Implications*

If the transition and its attendant pressures do stretch out and frustrations build, this will be an early test of new media outlets' coverage: how much will this coverage investigate and explain the underlying causes of the issues at hand, and explore solutions; and how much will it potentially amplify—or ignore—the frustrations of specific groups?

Whether outlets have the skills, equipment, or even funds to do this would be tested. Governance issues will also become more challenging, as temporary administrative arrangements almost inevitably become more consolidated, including the positions of those in authority, and the practices that have so far emerged on an ad-hoc basis.

## **HUMANITARIAN NEEDS: TRANSITION VS. CRISIS**

There is a major humanitarian crisis in areas where the conflict is taking place; and several crises where citizens and migrant workers have fled across Libya's borders. However international and national humanitarian organisations say rebel-held areas where conflict has ceased are themselves not undergoing a large-scale humanitarian crisis. The high organisational capacity and available resources in these areas mean that as soon as the firing stops, the significant crises in places of conflict rapidly become situations of recovery and political transition. (This is notwithstanding some pressing requirements, such as ongoing medical needs for the wounded and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) risk awareness and clearance, and protection issues, to name some of the most prominent.)

However this will not necessarily remain the case. Awareness of what is taking place in the country's south is low—those leading the NTC's own relief efforts described it as a 'black box' about which they have little to no information. An extended siege or long, bloody conflict for Tripoli could result in significant degradation and / or damage to infrastructure and supplies in the capital as well as immense suffering. How quickly Gaddafi falls could very likely result in much larger-scale, longer-term urgent humanitarian needs.

Little planning has gone into communications preparation for these scenarios on the part of national and international humanitarian organisations. Preparedness is needed for this possibility; communication capacity to current and potentially affected populations is an essential part of this.

### *Media Implications*

There is no comprehensive humanitarian communication strategy on the part of national or international organisations that targets audiences both within and beyond rebel-held areas. While some media currently have a humanitarian focus, this is usually limited to covering human-interest stories; awareness of the nature and rationale of humanitarian mandates is low. A communication strategy that includes training of media personnel in these issues can potentially enhance

understanding of the issues involved. If such programming is carried on outlets with national reach, it can also serve as another form of confidence-building and awareness-raising at the grass-roots level in Gaddafi-held areas of how to access support to meet humanitarian needs over the short or longer-term.

## SECURITY

The rebellion has been a spontaneous, popular uprising; there was no process of slowly developing and arming established rebel groups. This means there are only relatively limited structures or lines of communication or command for those bearing arms; both the rebel armed forces and its internal security, like everything else, depends to a large degree on informal co-operation.

There are reportedly somewhere between 11 to 40 volunteer armed groups in Benghazi alone, with some accused of abuses and carrying out arbitrary detentions,<sup>46</sup> and a significant amount of weaponry visible on the streets, including automatic rifles, machine guns mounted on pickup trucks, rocket-propelled grenades and more, seized from regime stockpiles or sourced from elsewhere. Initial efforts are underway to consolidate these groups into a more formalised structure, but this is an unavoidably complex area. Despite these concerns, this situation has not drastically affected Benghazi's safety so far, but the use of weapons to resolve personal disputes is frequently mentioned by residents as a key concern. If divisions between political or social groups, or armed groups themselves, emerge in the future this has the potential to become a serious and destabilising challenge.<sup>47</sup>

Several commentators also point to perceived divisions amongst the transitional leadership, and say this could also become a cause for future instability with potentially serious consequences.<sup>48</sup> (The assassination of military leader General Abdel Fattah Younes and the speculation surrounding his death is a demonstration of the possibility of violent incidents affecting internal security in rebel areas.)<sup>49</sup>

### *Media Implications*

In any deterioration of security environments, journalists and media outlets are often among the first to feel the increased physical threat and pressure to change coverage; if conditions were to become worse in rebel-held areas, a similar dynamic would emerge. Engaged, accurate, and quality coverage by media of this issue, on the other hand, can be one influence promoting public pressure to resolve these difficulties, including engaging audiences in armed groups themselves.

## TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

The Gaddafi regime from the beginning warned of dire consequences flowing from the rebellion, including tribal civil war, and the rise of religious extremism. Prominent figures in the rebellion dismissed this, insisting that they aimed for a liberal rights based democracy.

There is currently little indication of tribal or religious extremist agendas holding strong influence in the direction of the uprising. However as outlined earlier, analysts familiar with Libya note that Gaddafi himself relied on tribal di-

visions as one of his strategies for maintaining power; and efforts by rebel leadership to win over significant tribal groups—and other meetings held by Gaddafi in Tripoli—indicate that this is an important factor.<sup>50</sup>

Islam is extremely important to the identity of Libyan communities, and tends to be more conservative in the east of the country. While much of this is moderate, analysts also point to a history of small-scale extremist Islamic resistance to the regime in the east, with some generated from Libyan participants in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup>

In the face of this background, an exclusive insistence on a liberal, individualist, democratic identity for the revolution, while not false, appears an oversimplification of the groups involved in the conflict who may not yet have developed or articulated their positions.

### *Media Implications*

There are clearly a number of debates and discussions that need to take place, bringing in different tribal and religious perspectives; this is more challenging and nuanced than voicing demands for rights and providing a platform for the voices of youth, for example; or including significant space for religion in production, which a number of outlets do. Some insist it is too early, and potentially destabilising to do this now.

Arguably they may have a point, depending on *how* it is carried out. The question is, at what moment could it become too late, with its own destabilising potential? This can't be answered yet. However, if media outlets are able to reflect and encompass these issues, they could strengthen the quality of debate; if they are unable to do so, there is a possibility of greater fragmentation along the lines of different interest groups down the track.

**Jacobo Quintanilla** was part of the Internews Emergency Response Team following the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti where he helped to establish and deliver a daily humanitarian information program that remains one of the most trusted and popular news programs in the country. Quintanilla also worked as the first

Coordinator of CDAC, Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities, a global working group of humanitarian and media development agencies that deployed for the first time ever in Haiti. He holds a BA in Journalism and a Masters in International Relations and Communications from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid.

**Jamal Dajani** is an award winning producer and Vice President of Middle East, North Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean at Internews Network. His duties include developing and managing the overall MENA/LAC portfolio and regional offices; establishing the strategic

vision for Internews projects and presence in the MENA/LAC region, and working with local teams in identifying MENA and LAC strategies to be presented to the donor community. Dajani graduated from Columbia University in New York City with a B.A. in Political Science.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is part of the Report commissioned by Internews on the assessment of the media situation in Libya and originally elaborated in May-June 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The Humanitarian Coordinator for Li-by-a, Panos Moutztis, the Humanitarian Forum, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hosted a Round-table Meeting in Cairo, bringing together more than 35 Arab, Islamic and Western organizations involved in providing relief in Libya. Conducted in Arabic, the meeting was designed to strengthen partnerships (*Sharaka*), better coordinate the provision of aid and come up with results-orientated action plans.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Humanitarian Partnership Forum "Shakara", Cairo, June 6, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> For more detail, refer to International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> "Libya: Words to Deeds", *Human Rights Watch*, January 24 2006, at <<http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11480/section/1>>.

<sup>6</sup> For more detail, see "Libya: Words to Deeds", *Human Rights Watch*, January 24 2006, at <<http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11480/section/1>>.

<sup>7</sup> International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> "Tripoli Spring", *Foreign Policy*, May 27, 2009 at <[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/05/26/tripoli\\_spring](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/05/26/tripoli_spring)>.

<sup>9</sup> See Country Report, Libya, at <<http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2010&country=7862>>.

<sup>10</sup> See Combined Average Ratings, Independent Countries, at <<http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=546&year=2010>>.

<sup>11</sup> According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), these calls were circulating at least by February 14, three days after Mubarak stepped down, and originated in Europe, not Libya. International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> According to the ICG, "much Western media coverage has from the outset presented a very one-sided view of the logic of events, portraying the protest movement as entirely

peaceful and repeatedly suggesting that the regime's security forces were unaccountably massacring unarmed demonstrators who presented no real security challenge. This version would appear to ignore evidence that the protest movement exhibited a violent aspect from very early on", although that doesn't diminish the brutality of the regime's repression. International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> "Profile: Libya's Saif al-Islam, *Al Jazeera*, 21 February 2011, at <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/02/20112212175256990.html>>.

<sup>14</sup> International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Satellite phone provider, Thuraya, also accused the Libyan regime of deliberately jamming its signals; see "Thuraya Accuses Libya of Jamming Satellite Signals", *Space News*, 25 February 2011, at <[http://www.spacenews.com/satellite\\_telecom/110225-thuraya-accuses-libya-jamming.html](http://www.spacenews.com/satellite_telecom/110225-thuraya-accuses-libya-jamming.html)>.

<sup>16</sup> See "Libya: the propaganda war", *Al Jazeera*, 12 March 2011, at <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/listeningpost/2011/03/20113121012263363.html>>, and "Missing Photographer Was Killed Six Weeks Ago in Attack by Gaddafi Forces on Brega", *Reporters Without Borders*, 20 May 2011, at <<http://en.rsf.org/libya-missing-photographer-was-killed-20-05-2011,40322.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> "Raging Gaddafi orders forces to 'capture the rats'", *ABC Online*, 23 February 2011, at <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/02/23/3146123.html>>.

<sup>18</sup> See the NTC website, <<http://www.ntcibya.com>>, for more detail on points mentioned here>.

<sup>19</sup> Internews Interview, NTC Media and Communications Committee representatives.

<sup>20</sup> See NTC website for this statement, at <<http://www.ntcibya.com/InnerPage.aspx?SSID=4&ParentID=3&LangID=1>>.

<sup>21</sup> "Libyan Rebel Official Says Death Toll After Revolt Reaches at Least 15,000, *Bloomberg*, 20 May



2011, at <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-19/libyan-rebel-official-says-death-toll-after-revolt-reaches-at-least-15-000.html>>.

<sup>22</sup> In 2009 the International Telecommunications Union estimated 5.51% of Libya's population accessed the internet; mobile phone users were estimated at over 9 million. See links, 'Estimated Internet users' and 'Mobile cellular subscriptions' at <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/index.html>>. Cellular subscription numbers may be distorted with reference to population figures because of a high number of migrant workers in the country; however the ITU also named Libya as the first country in Africa to exceed a mobile phone subscription rate of 100% (number of phone subscriptions per population); see <<http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/newslog/Libya+Be+comes+First+frican+Nation+To+Pass+100+Penetration+Level.aspx>>.

<sup>23</sup> "Telling Libya's Story over the Internet", *Los Angeles Times*, 27 February 2011, at <<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/27/world/la-fg-libya-information-20110227>>; "Libya: A Media Black Hole," *Al Jazeera*, 26 February 2011, at <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/listeningpost/2011/02/2011226111327860400.html>>; "Covering Protest and Revolution: Lessons from Al Jazeera's Mobile and Citizen Media", *MobileActive.org*, 02 March 2011, at <<http://www.mobileactive.org/covering-protest-and-revolution-lessons-al-jazeera-innovation-and-mobile-citizen-media>>.

<sup>24</sup> Gaddafi was refuting rumours, mentioned by UK Foreign Secretary William Hague and reported upon by several outlets, that he had fled Libya for Venezuela.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammed Nabbous was killed in a fire-fight on March 19. "Libya: Mourning Mohammed Nabbous," *Global Voices*, 19 March 2011, at <<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/03/19/libya-mourning-mohammed-nabbous>>; "Libyan Journalist Killed in Benghazi". *ABC*, 21 March 2011, at <<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2011/s3169699.html>>.

<sup>26</sup> International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> See for example: "Radio Free Tobruk is

on the air – but what's the frequency?", *Media Network*, 26 February 2011, at <<http://blogs.rnw.nl/medianetwork/radio-free-to-bruk-is-on-the-air-but-whats-the-frequency>>; "Radio Free Libya shakes up Gaddafi regime from Misrata," *The Guardian*, 29 April 2011, at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/29/radio-free-libya-gaddafimisrata>>; "Rebels Hope for Qaddafi's Fall but Remain Fearful", *The New York Times*, 23 February 2011, at <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/world/africa/24rebels.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/world/africa/24rebels.html?_r=1)>; "Libya: 675/1125 kHz now in the hands of protestors", *Media Network*, 21 February 2011, at <<http://blogs.rnw.nl/medianetwork/libya-1125-khz-now-in-the-hands-of-protestors>>.

<sup>28</sup> An inventory of Gaddafi-regime broadcast assets and their location is reportedly kept in Tripoli, but similar records were not available during the assessment period in the east. Internews interviews, Benghazi.

<sup>29</sup> Reporters Without Borders, in earlier research in April, did identify some examples of censorship. This may indicate that public opinion has become 'more consensual' since then, or it may show that issues of censorship, while relatively mild, can still ebb-and-flow at this early stage of the transition. The birth of "free media" in eastern Libya', *Reporters Without Borders (RSF)*, 20 June 2011 at <<http://en.rsf.org/libya-birth-of-free-media-in-eastern-20-06-2011,40487.html>>.

<sup>30</sup> This is the famous 'zenga zenga' speech later remixed as a mocking dance tune that spread virally throughout the region and beyond (and which is now sold on CD on the streets of Benghazi). See "Qaddafi YouTube Spoof by Israeli Gets Arab Fans", *The New York Times*, 27 February 2011, at <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/world/middleeast/28youtube.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/world/middleeast/28youtube.html?_r=1)>.

<sup>31</sup> "Libya Crisis: Gaddafi loyalists warn of tribal conflict", *The Telegraph*, 19 March 2011, at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocan/libya/8392872/Libya-crisis-Gaddafi-loyalists-warn-of-tribalconflict.html>>.

<sup>32</sup> “Libyan officials try to control coverage”, *NewsOk*, 07 June 2011, at <<http://newsok.com/libyan-officials-try-to-controlcoverage/article/3574852>>; “Libya: Gaddafi regime’s absurd attempts to trick the media”, *International Business Times*, 06 June 2011, at <<http://uk.ibtimes.com/articles/158108/20110606/libya-gaddafi-regime-s-absurd-attempts-to-trick-the-media.htm>>.

<sup>33</sup> Caution is needed here, as this was not part of an overall content analysis exercise and was purely impressionistic. That said, the impression was consistent.

<sup>34</sup> See International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*; “Special Report: Libya’s Tribal Dynamics”, *Stratfor*, 25 February 2011, at <<http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20110225-libyas-tribal-dynamics>>.

<sup>35</sup> For an example of coverage examining potential divisions among the opposition, see <<http://english.aljazeera.net/video/africa/2011/08/2011814154513313837.html>>.

<sup>36</sup> For example in Derna, graffiti around the town refutes accusations that Al Qaeda has a presence there and demands democracy and rights instead – written in English, for any international journalists who arrived to cover this issue.

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of the difficulties involved in confirming this story, see <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/peopleandpower/2011/06/201162964345738600.html>>. See also “WhoWhatWhy Factchecks the Media: More Questions About the Libyan Sex Atrocity Reporting”, *Business Insider*, 15 June 2011, at <<http://www.businessinsider.com/whowhatwhy-factchecks-the-media-more-questions-about-the-libyan-sex-atrocity-reporting2011-6>>, for some details on the possible —unconfirmed— nature of the dynamic that may generate or spread such stories.

<sup>38</sup> Gaddafi forces accused of rape, *Al Jazeera*, may 3, 2011 <<http://english.aljazeera.net/video/africa/2011/05/20115381016787271.html>>.

<sup>39</sup> “Patrick Cockburn: Lies, damn lies, and reports of battlefield atrocities”, *The Independent*, 19 June 2011, at <<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/patrick-cockburn-lies-damn-lies-and-reports-of-battlefield-atrocities-2299701.html>>.

<sup>40</sup> Many independent media efforts currently rely on or are linked to some form of official support, even if this is limited to a providing building from which to work, or internet and power connections; some other media efforts are more actively driven by transitional administration bodies. Yet the question of who gains final ownership of Gaddafi-state media assets, including transmitters and other equipment, or even which media efforts have permanent occupation rights of former government buildings, has not yet begun to be resolved and could well be a source of future conflict; some initial tensions and standoffs have already reportedly occurred.

<sup>41</sup> The line between current individual ‘administrators’ and ‘citizens’ is of course a recent one: almost all of those involved in the transitional administration were in fact only recently ‘citizens’ themselves, and are operating in a voluntary capacity. Several of those who have become involved in media-related issues have done so out of a genuine commitment to or interest in the area; in the current fluid and atmosphere a media-related role is not necessarily the result of an appointment by a higher authority, but is sometimes a reflection or recognition of an individual’s voluntary application to the tasks involved.

<sup>42</sup> Press Statement No. 32; while welcome this also demonstrates the dilemmas of the transitional administration itself, as it clearly implies decisions regarding the role and shape of a national institution, prior to the formation of a government, and so can most likely be practically taken as a statement of intent by those currently involved in its operations, rather than a final plan.

<sup>43</sup> This announcement was circulated on email lists but at the time of writing was not posted on the NTC website.

<sup>44</sup> Internews interview, Mohammed Shem-bish, Head, *Libya Lekol Alahrar* Benghazi bureau.

<sup>45</sup> This has been described also as the Ministry for Culture and Civil Society; however the term 'Culture and Community' is the one used on the official website. (The term 'Ministry' is not found anywhere on the website position descriptions but is the term invariably used to describe the Executive Board's different sections.)

<sup>46</sup> "Libya: Opposition Arbitrarily Detaining Suspected Gaddafi Loyalists", *Human Rights Watch*, 05 June 2011, at <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/06/05/libya-opposition-arbitrarily-detaining-suspected-gaddafi-loyalists>>.

<sup>47</sup> See "To Ease Allies' Fears, Rebels Attempt to Rein In Militia", *Wall Street Journal*, 13 June 2011, at <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1000142405270230456310457636282098116119>

8.html?mod=googlenews\_wsj for more detail on this issue>.

<sup>48</sup> See for example <<http://english.aljazeera.net/video/africa/2011/07/2011719113014299678.html>>, <<http://english.aljazeera.net/video/africa/2011/08/2011814154513313837.html>>.

<sup>49</sup> See <<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/07/201173012294885563.html>>.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, <<http://www.mail.com/int/news/europe/494402-italy-to-host-meeting-libyan-tribal-leaders.html>> and <[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110505/ap\\_on\\_re\\_mi\\_ea/ml\\_libya](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110505/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_libya)>.

<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*

