



THE LIBYAN UPRISING – PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

BENGAZI, LIBYA SITE-VISIT
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
MAY 1 – 5, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Background.....	4
Key Findings.....	5
Recommendations.....	12
Appendix A: List of Meetings	14
Appendix B: NDI 2006 Libya Assessment Trip Report.....	16

NDI would like to acknowledge the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which funded this report as well as the Institute’s site visit and trainings in Libya.

This report was based on dispatches submitted by NDI site-visit team members. Questions about the content of the document should be directed to Les Campbell, NDI Senior Associate, 202-728-5695 or les@ndi.org.

INTRODUCTION

The National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute), with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), organized a four-member site visit to Benghazi, Libya holding meetings between May 1 and 5, 2011. The NDI team included Senior Associate and Director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Les Campbell; Senior Program Manager for the Maghreb, Nicole Rowsell; MENA advisor, David Rolfes; and NDI Cairo (former NDI Lebanon) Program Officer, Maroun Sfeir. The team met with Libyan civic and political activists, academics, officials from the Transitional National Council (TNC), representatives from the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development and international humanitarian aid organizations.

NDI found a welcoming of support for the struggle against Muammar Gaddafi's regime and a sense that this is a pivotal moment in Libya's history. NDI's preexisting relationships (established through Middle East Partnership Initiative- and NED-funded programs) in Libya allowed the team to reach a broad cross-section of leaders in Benghazi, engaging more than 100 political and civic activists during the visit. Two previous trips to the country, one in 2006 and the other in 2008, the inclusion of Libyans in NDI-organized regional events in Rabat, Istanbul and Washington, D.C., coordination meetings with Libyan exiles in Washington and on-going email and phone contact enabled instant access to the inner workings of the TNC, entrée into the Council's advisory system, introductions to nascent political parties and civil society groups and interaction with key leaders shaping the public debate and influencing the political process.

Interlocutors were consistently welcoming and very open to receiving support and advice, although there was also pride in accomplishments of the 'revolution' and insistence on the future transition being a Libyan-led endeavor. Based on requests received in Benghazi, NDI organized a gathering for civic associations on strategic planning and shared numerous copies of practical manuals and guides in Arabic from the Institute's Publications Center in Beirut, Lebanon.

To support an effective political transition which represents the will of Libyan citizens, NDI offers the following recommendations:

- Institute public information on political and electoral processes;
- Conduct strategic consultations on comparative political transitions;
- Facilitate youth-driven civic organizing;
- Regularize political process information flows;
- Effectively communicate political platforms; and,
- Deliberate on decentralization and public administration.

BACKGROUND

Inspired by uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, Libyan citizens took to the streets in what is popularly referred to as the February 17 Revolution, calling for an end to the regime of Muammar Gaddafi and the institution of a genuine democratic transition in Libya. Popular protests have been met by severe crackdowns by forces loyal to Gaddafi including foreign paid fighters, which prompted the international community to take action against widespread state-sponsored killing and terrorizing of Libyan citizens. The UN-mandated ‘no-fly zone’ demonstrated support for the Libyan opposition and has helped these groups ‘liberate’ some areas of the country, mainly in the eastern region which has historically opposed the regime and been isolated from decision-making in Tripoli.

While the armed struggle continues and may be drawn out into a prolonged stalemate, attempts to create institutions for democratic governance are emerging. Founded in March 2011, the Transitional National Council (TNC or “the Council”) was established as an interim representative body. The TNC’s 31 members were selected by nomination at the municipal level, with additional groups—youth, women and political prisoners—represented. Similarly civic associations, and political parties to a lesser extent, are blossoming throughout the opposition-held eastern region of the country.



Pro-unity banner near TNC headquarters in Benghazi

Politically, the liberation movement opposing Gaddafi’s rule is led by the TNC, effectively a legislative body comprised of a dense network of committees made up of skilled volunteers including doctors, lawyers, professors, activists and former government officials. While the transitional role played by the TNC is widely accepted, some worry about the Council hijacking the revolution and proceedings, and the exclusion of youth. On the battlefield, defectors from the military are leading

informal bands of volunteers, many of them youth with little military background. The international contact group for Libya recently authorized the creation of a fund for the Libyan opposition to pay salaries of government employees and support armed operations.

As with other Arab pro-democracy movements in 2011, a fierce sense of pride and accomplishment exists among residents of eastern Libya. The road from the Benghazi airport had two billboards that read, in English, “No Foreign Intervention. Libyans Can Do It Alone.” Once in the city, the billboards took on a more public-minded flavor, one reading, “These Public Properties Belong To All Of Us. Keep Them Safe,” and another, “We Have a Dream.” However

this sentiment did not translate into reticence about receiving outside support to develop democratic institutions.

In response to the perceived gradual openings to the international community by the Gaddafi regime in 2005 and 2006, NDI initiated a strategy to increase dialogue and debate among reform-minded Libyans on opportunities and steps for making the political system more democratic. The lack of a formal constitution served to reinforce the political status quo under Gaddafi, whose regime artfully limited the basic freedoms of speech and assembly. NDI focused on engaging Libyans to broaden the debate on the development of a constitution and pursued partnerships with the Center for Green Book Studies (the Green Book Center) and the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation—a prerequisite for conducting any activity within the country, including visas to facilitate travel to Libya.

Despite assessment/planning visits to Libya in 2006 and again in 2008, the Institute noted that the Libyan regime's rhetoric on political reform did not translate into genuine openings for Libyan reformers or international organizations to further political discourse. The Institute therefore pursued other avenues to promote dialogue on reform, including Libyans in regional gatherings that addressed such topics as advocacy for local issues, incorporating new media in communications strategies, and encouraging women to play a more active role in community activism. As in Tunisia and Egypt, in 2011 the Institute moved quickly to demonstrate solidarity with democratic activists, and organized a site visit to Benghazi to ascertain the extent to which there were immediate openings to support political development, despite armed conflict in parts of the country.

KEY FINDINGS

Through a series of meetings with more than 100 civic and political activists, and one workshop with emerging civic associations, NDI came to the following initial conclusions:

DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS ABOUND DESPITE LIMITED EXPOSURE TO DEMOCRATIC MODELS

The demand in Benghazi for information about democracy is intense and revolves in particular around access to books and manuals about politics, training on creating and running citizens' organizations (capacity-building) and support to women's organizations and advocacy groups. The isolation of this part of Libya was profound and a genuine awakening is now taking place. Just as importantly, Libyans need information about what democracy really is and how it functions, access to various models of democratic governance, advice on constitution drafting and public communications assistance, particularly for the Council. To get their message out, the TNC has to compete with Gaddafi's daily propaganda broadcasts, penetrate the fog of war and overcome the pervasive power of rumor and gossip and lack of internet or effective television.

The long history of repression and lack of access to the rest of the world has meant that individuals are appreciative of the attention and eager to discuss their future. Despite, or maybe because of, long exposure to Gaddafi's perverted form of "direct democracy," meetings are somewhat unfocused and there is extended deference to people perceived to be of higher status. Discussions were surprisingly civil – even in the larger groups, people patiently waited for others to make their points. There is an understandable anxiety just below the surface – several interlocutors welled up with tears about people killed since February and were clearly moved by their newfound freedoms. This passion and sense of loss often translates into a positive driving force, however the collective trauma on communities which continue to face systemic violence by Gaddafi's regime will require delicate attention, especially during any transition period where the thorny issue of what to do about former regime members will need to be addressed. Several Libyans remarked about the novelty of meeting in public to discuss political reform.

In a meeting with a member of the TNC legal committee, a Benghazi Council member and others, NDI manuals were of great interest. One of the participants had printed and collated, at his own expense, six or seven of the NDI manuals (some of them are 120 or more pages). He offered several to the legal committee member tasked with writing a temporary constitution. The same man had also burned CDs and gave them to another meeting attendee.

In response to intense demand, NDI organized a half-day seminar for Libyans representing six newly established associations. The agenda was designed based on needs expressed by activists NDI met earlier in the week and covered the basics of strategic planning, including developing a mission and vision and outlining specific objectives to meet organizational goals over time. NDI noted limited familiarity with basic organizing practices



Demonstrators gather at Benghazi's Tahrir Square

- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was highly popular. One participant had heard of the technique but none had used it before in organizing, leading to a fruitful discussion about using analysis to achieve specific objectives and support longer term planning.

Younger participants were much more adept at grasping organizing tools and applying them to their current context. NDI detected little hesitation to challenge their elders in debate. The two young women were very keen to highlight the role they played in the revolution and their high

expectations for the future, seeing the impending transition as an opportunity to redefine their roles in public life.

YOUTH REVOLUTIONARIES ADEPTLY MAKE THE TRANSITION TO ACTIVISM

There is a sense that the youth own the Libyan revolution, but that they need support to ensure active participation in the transition and political process. Ten youth leaders went to meet with the TNC in late April and recounted how the TNC initially lectured them but then started listening; they left “impressed.” The TNC agreed to meet regularly with the youth groups but no other meetings have occurred.

In addition to direct input to the TNC, several organized youth groups are emerging, with five having been formed so far. NDI met with one group, the Youth Gathering of the February 17 Revolution, which has facilitated workshops on crisis management, the meaning of a civil state, and the role of civil society; and will be organizing similar festivals to appeal to families in the Benghazi area. One of the group’s leaders described the feeling of being “alive again” and said that the youth want constitutional, cultural and social guarantees. Eager to learn more, they have received some help from the Libyan diaspora, but want to emphasize the knowledge and contributions of Libyans who have remained here. There appears to be sensitivity among some youth about members of the old regime being involved in the TNC, with some intellectuals trying to play a moderating role.

One of the largest non-political organizing forces throughout Libya is the Scouts, with an estimated active membership of 18,000 and an additional 30,000 part-time volunteers. In eastern Libya, the Scouts have mobilized over 4,000 members to provide immediate services to communities, liaising with international humanitarian organizations to distribute food and medical aid. NDI met with Scouts’ Benghazi leadership to discuss a civic education and youth leadership program modeled along the lines of a similar NDI program conducted with the Algerian Scouts organization; the Libyan counterparts were intrigued.



Youth taking part in pro-NATO rally

TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT STRUGGLES TO DEFINE AND DEFEND ROLE

There are contradictory views of the interim TNC. Among what could be described as the Benghazi political elite – academics, lawyers, business consultants – the TNC is viewed as flawed but deserving of their loyalty and support. In fact, most interlocutors were quite protective of the Council and, while accepting that the Council would be better served by

communicating more with the population at large, they tended to defend its methods. Discussions about the Council provoked a uniform response among these well-connected people – unity and solidarity is a prerequisite for winning the struggle against Gaddafi and improvements to the TNC can wait until later. “At least the figures are accepted by all” was a common refrain.



TNC-sponsored billboard: “No to Vandalism – Everything in Benghazi belongs to the people”

Those that could be described as closer to the street and revolution, or that had been dissidents or jailed by the Gaddafi regime, had a less sanguine view. There was some suggestion that “their” revolution is being hijacked by elites who held privileged positions under Gaddafi and several wondered why the Council has only met once with youth representatives. Some praised the individuals on the Council but critiqued what they considered its secrecy and suggested more accountability to the organizers of

protests and the youth movement. Although one interlocutor enumerated the TNC’s public outreach efforts, some expressed the concern that the Council is insular and closed, and that not enough information is flowing from the TNC to citizens.

The Secretary to the TNC – the equivalent of cabinet secretary in a parliamentary system -- noted that it was difficult to compete against Gaddafi’s well-oiled propaganda machine. A new “crisis management committee” comprised of members of the TNC will soon be formed to act as the executive body while the TNC as a whole operates as a type of legislative branch. There is hope that this will help smooth decision making and enhance communications.

INTERIM INSTITUTIONS MIMIC GADDAFI ERA

The elaborate committee structure that surrounds the TNC is difficult to decode. While a few conspiracy theorists argue that the TNC is simply isolating itself from the public through this dense structure, others note that the TNC is unintentionally mimicking the old regime’s version of direct democracy. Under Gaddafi’s system, people’s committees labored for days, sometimes weeks, debating and discussing initiatives sent to them through government channels. These deliberations, often circular and unending, allowed Gaddafi and his closest cronies to make the real decisions. Simply put, when everyone is in charge, no one is in charge and the system can be easily manipulated.

Nevertheless, while the process of TNC decision-making is a bit laborious, it seems to be working. Each functional area—security, foreign affairs, political, social, etc.—has an “official” committee associated with it. These committees produce decision papers which the TNC can accept, modify or send back for more work. In practice, it seems to be an iterative process aimed at achieving consensus. In addition to the official committees, there are informal “advisory committees” which provide general advice and research on a variety of issues and are growing in membership by the day. The advisory committees also function as an outreach mechanism as their membership seems elastic and their meetings are open to some public input. The committees are not formally linked to the TNC but are potential outreach mechanisms for the Council. In addition to these committees supporting the TNC’s deliberations, there are also committees at the local level advising city and municipality councils.

For example, the independent, voluntary political advisory committee to the TNC has 45 members, holds public meetings and is housed at the International Medical University. Its primary role is to generate policy papers for TNC leadership. While the committee has already produced a number of general draft papers on constitution writing, systems of governance and “democratic culture” for the TNC, the group requested expert advice on election systems, formation of a constituent assembly, political party development, civic education and a host of other issues. They would like to produce more advisory papers and also establish a training capacity for political and civic development.



“Wall of Martyrs” pays tribute to victims the of Ghaddafi’s regime.

The committee has sponsored a number of public lectures – the last one on tribalism attracted more than 500 attendees. They plan future lectures on separation of powers, rule of law, civil society, decentralization and civil rights. There is a great deal of interest in the debate over the future of Libya. One academic and committee organizer described standing-room only lectures on the future of Libya, and hundreds of Libyans participating in an event on the potential influence of tribalism.

While the TNC’s motives seem to be above board – it would appear that consultation and participation is the goal – the Libyan habit of public discussion while allowing a small group to make the real decisions is a challenge that has to be addressed in any political transition process. Representative democracy will require transparent structures, clearly delineated lines of authority and accountability mechanisms. The experience of such systems simply doesn’t

exist in Libya. Even those who have lived abroad have little actual government or public administration experience.

The TNC legal committee expects that a temporary constitution will be released by the end of May although they are taking pains to use words other than constitution lest citizens get the wrong idea. This “paper” or “document”, will contain some temporary principles to guide the transition process until Gaddafi is overthrown and a more formal process with a constituent assembly can be instituted.

EMERGING POLITICAL MOVEMENTS GRAPPLE WITH IDEOLOGICAL VOID

Because political parties were banned for the 42 years, Libyans are suspicious of their role in the political process. As a result, some of the groups that are starting to form what may become political parties are calling themselves movements, coalitions, unions or societies – a phenomenon not unlike Eastern Europe in the early days of the transitions there. Very few—less than four or five—are currently in the beginning stages of forming. Many Libyans argue that it is premature to start political movements. Parties started now, some argue, will by definition look like eastern Libya endeavors and could encourage a fracturing of the country. Still others argue that parties are inherently divisive and solidarity is needed during the fight against Gaddafi.

One academic, who feels it is important to start forming a political institution or party to prepare for the process ahead, is meeting with individuals from around the East to discuss forming the Gathering for Democratic Libya. So far, he is working with 15-20 youth and 10 intellectuals.

There is a Muslim Brotherhood in Libya that has begun to develop again, after it was banned and its members imprisoned under Gaddafi. It may be forming under a group called the Union of the Libyan Revolution. A young activist favorably described the Union of the Libyan Revolution which he characterized as moderate, concerned about the constitution, supportive of a democratic system, proud of Libyan society and favoring a civil state.

When discussing whether or not new political organizations and civil society associations will succeed in reaching out to the western part of the country everyone asserted that they have already established contacts in Tripoli and the expansion will certainly take place once the regime falls. “It is similar to 1951 when the East was liberated first and NGOs established in this part of the country successfully expanded their outreach to the West after its liberation” said the director of the National Committee for Voluntary Social Work.



Children on Benghazi's boardwalk wear “Free Libya” masks

Another key question regarding political organizing is the role that Libya's tribes will play. While Benghazi residents consistently downplayed the role of tribes – often noting that Benghazi is a 'small Libya' with representation of groups from throughout the country – there are indications that tribal affiliations play a stronger role beyond urban areas. For decades, Gaddafi relied on favoritism and incentives to secure the obedience and allegiance of tribal leaders, allowing him to control dissent in the country. The extent to which tribes will seek to insert themselves in the evolving political process, however, is not yet clear.

QUIET DEBATE ON GADDAFI SUPPORTERS' ROLE IN TRANSITION

"We should learn from other experiences; the Iraqi experience in transitional justice was not successful. It should not be based on revenge and eliminating everyone who was associated with the old regime. This will only raise the feeling of vengeance."

NDI heard several perspectives from Libyans about the expected fate of regime supporters should Gaddafi fall. Most argued against what they see as the excesses of de-Baathification in Iraq but they clearly expect justice for the many victims of the regime. One knowledgeable international observer noted that Libyans have a clear idea of who the most egregious offenders are. One possible solution discussed at NDI's TNC meeting was to organize a South African-style truth and reconciliation commission.



Anti-Gaddafi graffiti outside Benghazi's courthouse

On the surface, solidarity is the order of the day; most Libyans with whom NDI met declined to criticize others. There is no witch-hunt – at least for now – although many comment that they know who “was part of Gaddafi's regime.” There is a clear differentiation between those with “blood on their hands” versus the normal compromises that most had to make to survive daily life. That said, there are subtle signs of a hierarchy. Even in the inner circles of the interim government there are at least three distinct groups:

- Those who have bona fides gained by historically distancing themselves from Gaddafi or declining to participate in the various “reforms” of the past five years;
- Those who cooperated with Seif al-Islam in the short-lived reform initiatives since 2006 – most notably the activities of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation and the “Democracy Center” formed by Seif in Benghazi; and,
- Those who were full participants in the Gaddafi regime and held senior positions.

Being associated with one group or another does not preclude participation in the TNC or its committees but appears to have a subtle influence on seniority. The most influential members seem to be associated with the first group, although not exclusively. Interestingly, Gaddafi's limited reforms since 2006 seem to have had the unintended consequence of creating a ready-made transitional government of technocrats. The Benghazi City Council members with whom the NDI group met as well as most members of TNC committees played a role in the artificial reforms of the past few years. It turns out that many were fully aware the reforms were fake and were biding their time until an opportunity for real change presented itself. The limited role played by youth in the TNC represents a shortcoming that has to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Institute's visit to Benghazi was brief, the team was able to meet with a broad range of emerging leaders to discuss the political situation and Libyan sentiments about potential roles the international community could play to support the democratic transition beyond the armed struggle against the Gaddafi regime. Below are priority areas the Institute identified to support and encourage the efforts of the people in Benghazi and eastern Libya to shed both the Gaddafi regime and the psychological effects of 42 years of his pernicious rule. Modest efforts would have a significant impact, if sequenced well. Large scale programs would be inadvisable in any case because of absorptive capacity issues. Priorities are listed in order of urgency, and if there is a protracted military stalemate, all of the suggestions would remain relevant.

INSTITUTE PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ON POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES – Public access to credible information will be of paramount importance in supporting the political transition. Starting with **dissemination of basic information about democracy** (books, manuals, pamphlets, lectures, radio and TV material, civic education curriculum) would lay the foundation for **informed deliberation through public meetings and lectures**. While already being organized on a daily basis in Benghazi, such opportunities for public participation are less obvious in rural areas. A more structured effort to organize **democracy education should be initiated through civil society organizations including the Muslim Scouts** who have an effective nation-wide infrastructure.

CONDUCT STRATEGIC CONSULTATIONS ON COMPARATIVE POLITICAL TRANSITIONS – While Libya's political system under Gaddafi and the legacy of this regime are unique, there is value in **exposing Libyan democrats to transition leadership from other countries** to highlight key components of inclusive processes, including the importance of public consultations, forms of reconciliation processes, as well as constitutional drafting and party law development. Appropriate electoral frameworks should also feature prominently, focusing on national and local electoral models. Exchanges should focus on countries which have experience organizing constituent assemblies and constitutional drafting processes. Examples such as **Poland, South Africa, Chile and Indonesia** were specifically referenced during NDI's visit. **Building relationships among Arabs** – especially Tunisian and Egyptian activists – was also highlighted as an important component of Libya's transition.

FACILITATE YOUTH-DRIVEN CIVIC ORGANIZING – To leverage young people’s activism in opposing the Gaddafi regime, and provide positive political outlets for this key demographic, **immediate support should be directed to emerging youth civic associations and coalitions.** Focus should include both organizational development through an **“CSO incubator”** which would provide access to “hardware and software,” as well as **strategic planning, community organizing,** civic and voter education, political process monitoring and issue advocacy.

REGULARIZE POLITICAL PROCESS INFORMATION FLOWS – As part of the opposition to the Gaddafi regime and call for a democratic transition, Libya’s newly appointed transitional government members and commissions are subject to increased public pressure to conduct **deliberation on the framework for a credible political transition and elections** through a participatory and transparent process. Support to commissions looking to shape policy should be complemented by **public opinion research, particularly focus groups, to help the TNC better communicate** with the public. At the same time, a focus on **professionalizing the media sector** will be required to move beyond the current propaganda-driven environment.

EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE POLITICAL PLATFORMS – While there is some hesitance to proceed quickly with the establishment of political parties, these representative bodies will certainly emerge and have a role to play in negotiating key political milestones on behalf of constituents. In the immediate, parties will require **support to build effective “brands” which resonate on the national level,** while also building integrated internal and external communication approaches that are transparent and responsive to citizen concerns. Competitive parties will also need to **develop policy foundations** (rather than taking an opposition stance only), based on thoughtful policy analysis that represents the concerns of citizens.

DELIBERATE ON DECENTRALIZATION AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – While the Gaddafi regime claimed that “direct democracy” was a means for intensive citizen input, in practice the system vested power in the hands of a limited few. As Libyans consider models for national and local government, **advice and models on decentralization and local administration,** potentially drawing on the historic provincial divisions of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, could promote local decision-making and genuine outlets for citizen engagement. Regardless of the degree to which the state decentralizes power, support for an **ombudsman function** to support rule of law and freedom of information should be encouraged. A **nationwide civics program for primary and secondary school** would be required to ensure successive generations of Libyan citizens have access to democracy education in a systematic manner.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF MEETINGS

Name	Organization	Position
Zouheir Al Barassi	Media committee advising TNC	Member
Dr. Abeer Imneina	National Association for Consulting	Director
Najiba Steita		
Lamia Abusedra	Benghazi NGO Consortium	Founding Member
Dr. Omelez Elfarsi		
Ezzedine Buisier	National Democratic Gathering	Founding member
Galal AlTawahi	National Democratic Gathering	Founding member
Ibrahim Al Sheibany		
Mohamed Abdel Rahima	Benghazi Scouts	Director
Ahmad Alzouhi	Benghazi Scouts	Training Director
Mawada Kilani		
Dr. Mohamad Saad Ambarek	Libyan International Medical University	President
Ramadan Jarbou	Transition Committee	Chairperson
Zahi Moghrabi	Garyounes University	Dean, Political Science Dept
Dr. Amal Obeidi	Garyounes University	Chair, Political Science Dept
Muhamed Abu Naja	Youth Gathering of 17th of February Revolution	Founding member
Mohamad Achour Al Orfi	Youth Gathering of 17th of February Revolution	Founding member
Dr. Ali Saeed	Transitional National Council	Secretary
Fathi Terbil	Transitional National Council	Youth representative
Dr. Iman Bugaighis		Former Spokesperson for TNC
Unis Fanoush	Gathering for Democratic Libya	founding member
Fahmi Al Zayani	National association for Social Voluntary Work	Director
Mohamad Abed Al Maghreb	National Association for Social Voluntary Work	Founding member
Anas Al Faytoury	Athal	founding member
Abdel Rahman Abed Al Majid AIRibani	Athal	founding member
Abdel Al Nasser Al Tbouli	National Libyan Gathering	Founding member
Anwar Adam	National Libyan Gathering	Founding member
Nuri Massaud	National Libyan Gathering	Founding member
Mohannad Ferjany	National Libyan Gathering	Founding member
Belgasem Buisier		Former political prisoner
Ibrahim Mohamad Alawjli	Nahnou Hona (We're here association)	volunteer

Oussama Abdel Al Amid Ben Khayal	Tawassol	Editor in chief of Tawassol newspaper
Mariam Habil	Tawassol	volunteer
Wael Al Gheriani	Tawassol	volunteer
Samia Salaheddin Abunajja	La'ale' Libya	volunteer
Mohamad Moftah Al Chibani	Youth for Change	Public relations officer
Fathi Baja	Transitional National Council	Member
Dr. Khalid Zew	Benghazi Municipal Transitional Council	Member
Mohamed Fanush	Benghazi Municipal Transitional Council	De-facto Minister of Information
Omar Abu-Ajailaali	Independent Legal Committee	Member
Jumma Zedani	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Ala Ben Dardaf	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Talal Ali	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Dr. Fawzi Abdelwahid	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Dr. Maree Agela	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Idrees Busafita	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Salem El Soussi	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Naema Elgihani	Independent Transition Committee	Member
Hakim Bonkheila	Businessman	Former political prisoner
Mansur El Essawi		Former political prisoner
Khalid M Elshomani		Former political prisoner
Khalid El-Sahli	Garyounes University	Former political prisoner



LIBYA ASSESSMENT REPORT

From April 17-25, 2006 a four member delegation from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) visited Libya for the purposes of conducting an assessment of the country’s political system, as well as to gather impressions of the state of Libyan civil society, its media, judiciary system, and economy. The members of the delegation were: Gérard Latulippe, NDI Senior Advisor for the Maghreb; Michele Dunne, Georgetown University Professor and Editor of the Carnegie Endowment’s Arab Reform Bulletin; Robert Peri, NDI Senior Program Officer; and Yasmina Sarhrouny, NDI Morocco Program Officer. The following report outlines the impressions, findings, and recommendations of the delegation.

BACKGROUND

From the time of his 1969 *coup d’état*, Libya has lived under the dictatorship of Colonel Muammar Al Qaddafi. In the period following the coup, Qaddafi organized the Revolution Command Council, a body focused on consolidating power and transforming the corrupt, oligarchic political system. Initially, the regime carried a great deal of popular legitimacy. After a time, however, entrenched interests, in particular those of bureaucrats, tribal leaders and the Westernized elite, resisted many of the early efforts by the regime to consolidate power and spread its political vision.

Concerned that large sections of the Libyan population were failing to mobilize behind his vision for a “revolutionary community,” Qaddafi launched the Cultural Revolution in April 1973. The Cultural Revolution was characterized by the regime as an attempt to combat the inactivity and passivity in local political arenas that had stalled the revolutionary fervor following the coup. Moreover, the Cultural Revolution served to marginalize those groups in Libyan society not deemed appropriately “revolutionary.” The Cultural Revolution allowed Qaddafi to purge or drive underground nearly all of his political opponents, and thus by 1975 Qaddafi had firmly established his personal political leadership.

In 1977, Qaddafi declared Libya the “Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya,” and instituted a system of government based on his “Third Universal Theory” that he outlined in a series of essays compiled in his so-called “Green Book.” With the publication of the Green Book – his treatises on politics, society, economics, history and religion – Qaddafi established himself as the country’s single ideological authority. As the basis of the Libyan political structure, the theory is

presented as an alternative to the materialism of Western capitalism and the atheism of communism. The outcome is a political system that is essentially a reconciliation of socialist and Islamic principles called Jamahiriya, or “state of the masses.” The Jamahiriya system has led to dramatic changes in political representation, property rights, judicial proceedings and commercial transactions in Libya.

Around the same time, Qaddafi’s regime began to train and provide support to terrorist organizations. In response, the US imposed sanctions on Libya in 1982. As an isolated, rogue leader, Qaddafi increased his support to terrorist networks, culminating in Libya’s involvement in the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland as well as the bombing of the La Belle Discothèque in Berlin, Germany. In more recent times, Qaddafi had focused his efforts on the development of weapons of mass destruction.

Over the past several years, Libya has taken steps to mend its international image. The country renounced terrorism in a letter to the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) in August 2003. UN sanctions were lifted on September 12, 2003 following Libyan compliance with its remaining UNSCR requirements on Pan Am 103, including the handover of suspects, acceptance of responsibility for the actions of its officials, and payment of appropriate compensation. Later that same year, the country agreed to give up its development of weapons of mass destruction and opened its weapons facilities to international inspectors. Though Libya appears to have curtailed its support for international terrorism, it may have retained residual contacts with some of its former terrorist clients. In August 2004, the Department of Justice entered into a plea agreement with Abdulrahman Alamoudi, in which he stated that he had been part of a 2003 plot to assassinate Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at the behest of Libyan government officials. Nonetheless, in May 2006, the US Department of State removed Libya from its list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

During the country’s long period of international isolation the Libyan people had virtually no contact with the outside world. Information was strictly controlled by the regime, and citizens frequently received little information about conditions in other countries. Until recently, it was even illegal to teach English in Libya. Libya’s security apparatus prevented many contacts between Libyans and citizens from other countries. Few authorizations were given to Libyans to travel abroad and, outside of the oil sector, few non-Africans were allowed to visit Libya.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Over the course of NDI’s mission, an outline of the way in which the Libya system of government functions gradually emerged. It should be noted, however, that the delegation’s various interlocutors frequently provided conflicting information, and that precise questions were frequently met with vague answers or uncertainty, even at the highest levels of government. Most Libyans within the government describe the Jamahiriya system as one of “direct democracy,” and are quick to point out that they find the system to be much more democratic than the representative systems practiced in much of the rest of the world. The system, however, appears to suffer from low levels of citizen participation.

In 1977, Qaddafi, these days referred to simply as “The Leader,” published his famous Green Book in which he outlined a political system based on his “Third Universal Theory,” a philosophy of government that he presents as an alternative to communism and to representative democracy. The system is based on a hierarchy of People’s Congresses and People’s Committees that extend from the local to the central level. Qaddafi calls this a system of direct democracy because, in theory, the people are not only the source of power but also the instrument of governing themselves, without intermediaries, representation or deputation.

The basic unit of government in the Jamahiriya system is the Basic People’s Congress (BPC). There are some 480 Basic People’s Congresses that are organized locally, according to place of residence, such that every Libyan over the age of 18 is a member of a Congress. The BPCs meet a number of times each year. Interestingly, while the voice of each BPC is given equal weight at the national level, BPCs have no defined membership requirement. As a result some Congresses have only a few hundred members, while others may have several thousand.

According to most reliable sources, BPCs generally meet three times per year, though some officials said that they met twice while others claimed that the Congresses met “constantly.” The first of these meetings is devoted to determining the detailed agenda of the other two sessions. At the second meeting, BPCs debate and take decisions on issues pertaining to the domestic agenda. At the third meeting, BPCs debate and take decisions on issues pertaining to both the domestic and international agendas. On an annual basis the BPCs also select a Basic People’s Committee, a group of 5-8 members of the BPC, that acts in an executive capacity. Attendance of the Basic People’s Congresses is, in theory, obligatory, and the government has attempted to create incentives to attendance as well as deterrents to those who might be inclined to skip the sessions. Nonetheless, even the most orthodox figures in the regime recognize that attendance is an issue. Several government officials placed attendance at “around 50 percent” of the adult population on the high end, while others told the delegation that, in fact, attendance languishes at “below 10 percent.”

Within the BPC, issues that are put on the agenda in the first session are then discussed, and BPC members draft and vote on resolutions. Voting is conducted publicly, either by voice or show of hands. BPC members also select a delegate to represent their Congress at the national level in the General People’s Congress (GPC). The GPC is supposed to represent all social groups within the country. Its membership includes the secretariat from the BPC and the People’s Committee as well as from Vocational Popular Congresses. It is both a unicameral legislature and an executive body. In theory, GPC delegates merely present the resolutions of their BPC at the General People’s Congress. According to the system, delegates to the GPC are not empowered to “represent” their BPC, that is, they cannot take a decision in the name of their local congress, nor can they claim to speak for the BPC other than to present the resolutions taken at the local level. The role of the GPC is to take the many decisions made by BPCs and work them into coherent laws and statements of policy. The inherent difficulty in taking disparate policy statements issued by hundreds of BPCs and melding them into a single law – especially as delegates are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the BPC – was acknowledged by several officials, though all of them insisted that the GPC was not a dysfunctional institution: “Delegates must work very hard,” was the typical explanation offered to the NDI delegation.

The General People's Congress chooses a secretariat to preside over its sessions, sign laws by order of the Congress and accept the credentials of the representatives of foreign countries. It is organized into people's committees (which are similar to ministries), and each committee is run by a secretary (which is the equivalent of a minister). Leadership is vested in a five-member General Secretariat, comprising: a secretary general (prime minister); a secretary for women's affairs; a secretary for affairs of the People's Congresses; a secretary for affairs of the trade unions, syndicates and professional associations; and a secretary for foreign affairs. When the GPC is not in session, the functions of government are carried out by the General People's Committee.

Although the Basic People's Congresses and the General People's Congress make up the basic units of government in the Libyan system, a third element, one that theoretically exists outside the structures of government, also plays a crucial role in the way that the country is governed: the Revolutionary Committees (RCs). Instituted in 1977 (at the same time as the Green Book) to "promote the values of the revolution," the Revolutionary Committees began to spring up throughout the country in offices, schools, businesses, and in the armed forces. Composed of the most zealous believers in the Jamahiri system (generally young people of limited education), the main roles of the Revolutionary Committees are to act as the watchdog of the regime and to protect the orthodoxy of the political system. Although the Committees do not have any official governmental function, they monitor the Basic People's Congresses and Committees and report directly to Qaddafi. There is a Revolutionary Committee apparatus in each district where there is a BPC. The Revolutionary Committees claim to educate the people on the process of direct democracy and the values of the Jamahiri system. The RCs also used to work to insure attendance at the Basic People Congresses through various measures used to intimidate citizens, however, sharp declines in attendance at the BPCs would suggest that this is no longer the case. The Revolutionary Committees continue to support candidacies for the various secretariats at all level of government. It was very clear to NDI's delegation that the RCs constitute a major inroad to power in the Libyan system. The RCs have been known to intimidate members of the GPC, and they are closely tied to Qaddafi's security services.

The participants in NDI's mission did not attend meetings of the BPCs as they are in sessions only a few weeks per year. However, they were able to meet with many Secretaries General of various Basic People's Committees. While many of these officials seemed to believe in the merits of the Libyan system, the impression of the delegation was that the system outlined by Qaddafi is overly-complex difficult to manage. In theory, the decisions of all BPC are supposed to become laws or policies through the GPC playing the role of a drafting committee. In fact, this process has the effect of giving power to a small group of elites who manipulate the decisions coming from the BPC on the pretext of consensus building.

Indeed, it should be clear that the Libyan system is so unwieldy as to allow for influence and manipulation at all levels of government. At the level of the Basic People's Congresses, the process can be controlled in a variety of manners. For example, when voting takes place in a BPC it is by voice or show of hands, thus voters can be easily intimidated by the presence of security forces, Revolutionary Committee members, and others known to represent the views of the regime. In addition, many issues, especially in areas such as foreign policy, are so complex

that it is exceedingly difficult for average citizens to understand and debate them. As a result, BPCs frequently call on “experts” to explain complex issues and to make policy “recommendations” to the Congress. In reality, these so-called experts are carefully selected by the regime, and when they present their “recommendations” it is understood by all that they must be ratified. These rubber-stamped proposals are then presented at the national level to the General People’s Congress as local initiatives of “the people.” This makes the job of harmonizing the various resolutions much easier than it might appear, and thus legislation is conceived by the power center, submitted for popular approval, and returns largely unchanged to be adopted by the GPC.

NDI’s delegates were left with the impression that the BPCs may have some real power at the local level where decisions taken on issues such as roads and garbage recollection are also implemented locally. In this way BPCs, at their best, may function similarly to the town hall meetings that take place in many developed democracies. However, it seems apparent that on issues of national or international importance the BPCs are powerless to influence policy, and act largely as a rubber stamp to policies conceived by Qaddafi and his inner circle of advisors.

It remains clear that executive power is vested *de facto* in Colonel Qaddafi, the Revolutionary Leader. Although he holds no formal position in the government, he remains the country’s highest authority and retains the title commander in chief of the armed forces. Along with a group of close associates, he continues to control all aspects political life. Qaddafi likes to portray himself as a spiritual leader and advisor who, after imparting his system of direct democracy to the people, remains outside of politics. However, even Qaddafi’s most loyal followers admit that his role is more significant. In reality, Qaddafi has created a system with a highly opaque decision making process, in which it is difficult if not impossible to identify how and by whom a decision is taken. In this way, Qaddafi is able to control the country from behind the scenes while blurring the lines on issues of authority and accountability.

RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Outside of Libya’s peculiar political system, there is little freedom of expression or association. The Constitutional Proclamation and the Great Green Charter of Human Rights limit freedom of expression. The Charter only guarantees freedom of expression within the system of People’s Congresses and “within the limits of public interest and the principles of the revolution.” There are no privately owned newspapers or media outlets in the country, as the Green Book argues that privately owned information sources would speak only for their owners, and would privilege certain points of view to the detriment of the people. The government is currently considering allowing the country’s first privately owned media outlets in both print and television. As the licenses for these media outlets, however, will be issued by the regime to supporters of the regime, in the short term, this is unlikely to create a significant change in the status quo. There have been numerous cases in which individuals attempting to speak out against the regime through the national or international media have been censored, intimidated, imprisoned, tortured, and in some cases killed. The law does not guarantee freedom of assembly and the government restricts this right. Public assembly is permitted only with the government’s approval. The Libyan security apparatus strictly enforces the laws restricting freedom of speech

and assembly.

There are no independent civil society organizations in Libya. In addition to the legal restrictions on freedom of assembly, the Green Book prohibits all political activity that takes place outside of the system of Basic People's Congresses. As a result, the only civic organizations that exist are concerned primarily with cultural issues or act as charities, and are heavily co-opted by the regime. The organization the most closely resembles a political non-governmental organization is the Qaddafi Foundation (described in detail in the "Developments" section), but the Foundation clearly supports the current regime, even while pushing for limited reforms to the economic and legal systems.

There are professional associations in Libya that have recently attempted to assert a measure of independence from the government, most notably the Lawyers' Association and the Journalists' Union. Both organizations have defended their right to elect their own leadership without government interference. In both cases, despite relatively vocal opposition, the Libyan regime has restructured the associations in order to place government supporters at the highest ranks of leadership. Nonetheless, these professional associations represent an important potential source of political reform in the country.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

The movements and communications of the delegation were very closely monitored throughout the mission. NDI's delegates were often not informed of meetings until moments before they were to take place, and they were requested to use the transportation provided by the government for all of their travel requirements within the country. It was clear to the delegates that, despite numerous meetings with Libyan officials prior to traveling to the country, most Libyan officials knew little of NDI and had difficulty grasping the role of an independent, non-governmental organization.

NDI's delegates also came to the conclusion that there is very little coordination between various arms of the Libyan regime. The Libyan officials who accompanied the delegation, at times, seemed as uninformed as the delegates themselves as to meeting schedules and the availability of certain government representatives. On numerous occasions NDI's delegates were told that a meeting had been scheduled only to be told shortly thereafter that the person in question was unavailable. By the end of the visit, NDI's delegates had also concluded that, even within the same agency, government officials did not always brief each other on their meetings with NDI. While much of this is due to a lack of organization, it may also be due in part to the fractionalization occurring within the Libyan regime (discussed further in the "Developments" section).

In most encounters, both official and unofficial, the delegation remarked on the palpable impression left by Libya's long period of isolation. There is a feeling amongst both government officials and private citizens that Libya was abandoned by the international community. Many representatives of the government felt it important to defend Libya's actions under the Qaddafi regime, whether or not they were questioned on the topic, and one of the most common methods

of describing the government was in opposition to other systems. Officials frequently made comments such as: “We are not a capitalist, parliamentary system nor are we a socialist state,” or “We have the world’s only true democracy,” but when pressed for details on the Libyan system answers were often less forthcoming.

In economic terms Libya has created a welfare/patronage state based on oil revenues, in which well over half of the working population is employed by the state. The oil sector is the one area that does not obey the economic restrictions imposed by the Third Universal theory. The oil sector was described by several outside observers as one of relative transparency, in which international economic rules are applied. Outside of the oil sector, large-scale private enterprise is practically non-existent, and citizens remain dependent on the government for any income they receive. The delegation noted an absence of the high-levels of poverty that afflict some other states in North Africa, while at the same time, there were very few signs of prosperity or economic dynamism. Despite the fact that relations with the West have improved in recent years, and despite the clear potential for investment in industries such as tourism and construction, there has been little foreign investment outside of the oil sector. Observers of the economic situation told NDI that this is an area where the regime would like to make changes, but as the political system is based on a state-run economy, the way forward is not clear.

NDI’s delegation noted that nearly all Libyan people seemed genuinely interested in ending the country’s isolation. While not all of NDI’s interlocutors agreed on what can be achieved by the rehabilitation of Libya’s international image, all of them agreed that recent developments have been very positive for the country, and all expressed hope that Libya’s relations with the international community would continue to improve. Government representatives were especially interested in seeing Libya removed from the US Department of State’s list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.¹

DEVELOPMENTS

In recent times a debate has begun to develop between two groups within the Libyan system: the conservatives and the reformers. NDI’s delegation detected strong divisions between the two groups over policy, though neither group openly discussed removing nor dramatically changing the system put in place by Qaddafi.

The conservatives tend to be closely linked to the security apparatus and the Revolutionary Committees. There are many conservatives in government institutions such as the People Congresses, as well as organizations such as the Green Book Center. The conservatives generally support maintenance of the status quo, oppose liberalizing the economy, and continue to take an antagonistic stance towards the West.

While the reform movement in Libya is gaining strength, it must be understood that most reformists come from within the system. The reform movement argues in favor of liberalizing the Libyan economy, improving relations with the West, and some reformers go as far as to call for an improved human rights situation, greater legal transparency, and improvement of current

¹ As previously noted, Libya was in fact removed from the list in May 2006.

democratic practices including the drafting of a constitution. Most reformers, however, do not openly support major change in the political system, their arguments tend to be made within the framework of the Green Book and the Jamahiriya system, and none call into question Qaddafi's role as the country's leader. It is not clear how many reformers truly support a limited agenda and how many secretly support more extensive reforms but find it impossible to speak out in the current climate. It seems likely that the movement is divided between these two groups. Reformers tend to be found in professional associations (especially the lawyers association and the journalists union), the universities (especially Benghazi and Tripoli universities), and in the Qaddafi Foundation.

The Qaddafi Foundation is headed by Seif El-Islam Qaddafi, son of Muammar. The Foundation is active in providing improved social services to Libyans and extending foreign assistance to impoverished countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The Foundation also frequently acts as the soft face of the Libyan regime. The Foundation has a human rights division that supposedly watches over the rights of the accused, prisoners, and migrants and ethnic minorities in Libya. The Foundation has provided defense lawyers in several prominent political cases in Libya, and has been outspoken about the protection of the Bulgarian nurses accused of infecting Libyan children with the HIV virus. While Seif El-Islam is often seen as the leading figure in the reform movement, most observers agree that his reform agenda is limited. Seif speaks about democracy, but, based on the programs he has supported to date, his interests seem to focus mainly on the economic modernization of Libya and in certain reforms to the country's penal code. In addition to prominent reformers of the Qaddafi Foundation, the delegation also met many younger members of Basic People Congresses who recognized the necessity of making some changes to the political system, but most of these envision very limited reforms.

While there is an open debate between conservatives and reformers in Libya, it must be noted that Qaddafi is very skilled at co-opting both tendencies to his own advantage. Neither side speaks of regime change or major overhauls to the political system. The delegation, along with many other observers, noted that Qaddafi supports one side or the other at various times, often times on the same issue. As Qaddafi ages he has become increasingly concerned with his legacy and his place in Libyan history, and most observers agree that "The Leader" would like to gain legitimacy with the international community and credibility for his system of "direct democracy." In order to achieve this objective while maintaining his position as leader, Qaddafi uses both sides to his advantage, lending his support to reformers when he finds it necessary to make changes, and siding with conservatives when he wants to slow or halt reforms to the system. The fact that the current debate does not call into question the overall system, nor does it question Qaddafi's position atop the political pyramid, is an indicator of the restrictive nature of political discussion in Libya.

As noted, some of the most independent thinkers and outspoken reformers in Libya today are found in an elite circle of educated professionals. NDI met with several high profile lawyers who said that they were free to defend human rights cases in the courts without political intervention. It is well-known that many of Libya's high profile lawyers are also amongst the most vocal supporters of reform to the political system. At the current time the universities are the only forum where freedom of expression is tolerated. Prominent professors are generally

free to teach as they wish, even in sensitive matters of political science. While the universities are not free of political intervention, those professors who support change and are bold enough to speak or write about it are generally tolerated by the regime. NDI's delegation met several academics who spoke critically of Libya's political system and criticized the role of Qaddafi and of the security services. Debate is allowed to flourish relatively openly on the condition that it remains in academic circles and does not lead to an organized movement to change the system on the ground. NDI found that this was especially true at the country's two major universities in Benghazi and Tripoli, however, even the Green Book Center, representing the heart of Libyan political orthodoxy, holds conferences and debates in which it is possible to hear people expressing views that are critical of the system, though many of the voices of opposition come from visiting academics.

Despite this relatively small political opening, there have already been several positive, unexpected ramifications. In recent times, human rights NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International were authorized to visit Libya, and have been pressing for greater respect for human rights and legal reforms. These organizations are having a certain level of success. Libya's infamous People's Courts that prosecuted "political crimes" were recently abolished, and the entire Libyan penal code is currently being revised. It was not clear to the delegation exactly to what extent the revisions to the penal code will affect human rights conditions, and none of the delegation's Libyan interlocutors was able to say with any certainty when a draft of the revised penal code will be ready. Nonetheless, this is considered a positive development.

Many in the reform movement in Libya are also calling for a formal constitution. A "Constitutional Proclamation" was approved and promulgated on December 11, 1969. The proclamation was intended as a provisional measure until a permanent constitution could be adopted. It was amended with the Declaration on the Establishment of the Authority of the People on March 2, 1977 (seven articles) which declared the Quran to be the constitution and made the Green Book the foundation of government. To this day, Libya is governed on the basis of the 1969 proclamation and a series of fundamental laws deemed to have constitutional weight. Many laws are contradictory, and it is often not apparent which set of laws takes precedence. The establishment of a formal constitution could go a long way to fighting corruption and increasing transparency. Several of NDI's high level interlocutors indicated that a constitution could soon be proposed, perhaps motivated by concerns about regime stability once Qaddafi leaves the political scene.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the debate about the political future of Libya is ongoing in the country, it was clear to NDI's delegation that the possibility of widespread democratic reform in the near future is limited. Nonetheless, NDI's delegation did identify opportunities for cooperation. Despite the limited prospects for democracy, NDI feels that it is important to engage Libyan academics and activists in exchanges with international political experts. NDI would like to raise the issue of democratic reform in much the same way as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have done on the human rights side. By raising the international profile of human rights issues in Libya these NGOs have successfully pushed for changes to the Libyan penal code as well as

other improvements in human rights conditions in the country. NDI can help to highlight some of the recent political changes that have taken place in Libya, while simultaneously opening a dialogue on the prospects for continued reform and the expansion of democratic principles in the country.

NDI's delegation recommends conducting a forum within Libya on comparative constitutional reforms. Rumors abound about the possibility of a forthcoming draft constitution, and NDI would like to encourage genuine discussion of the issue. The Institute has considerable experience on the issue of constitution drafting, at both the regional level (most notably in Southern Sudan and Iraq) and worldwide. A forum of this nature would also be an opportunity to create links between international experts and academic institutions in the United States and those working on similar issues in Libya. A successful forum could open the way to further discussions both in Libya and at institutions in the United States. Such an event in Libya would aim to involve political activists from across the political spectrum, from both outside as well as from within the government. NDI would hold the event at a Libyan university where freedom of expression is accepted.

NDI would adopt a two step approach to conducting this activity. First, a delegation would be sent to Libya to identify a credible partner, agree on an agenda for the forum and insure the presence of valuable participants inside the country. If NDI is able to achieve these objectives, the Institute would then identify international experts and invite Libyan participants to the event. NDI would like set a target date for the first step in the process to be completed by October - November 2006. If successful, NDI would aim to hold the forum in February 2007, to coincide with Libya's national celebrations.