

Libya - Media Landscape

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Overview

Libya has a long history of curtailed freedom of speech and only after the Arab spring in 2011 the situation improved for the country's media, bringing a lot of optimism which was reflected in the media and in what was being discussed. But this didn't last for long, only until the elections of 2012. Late in 2012 challenges began to emerge and journalists and media organisations were targeted for their criticism of the government and the different rival political and ideological groups. Media and public figures were threatened and even attacked and kidnapped if not killed. As of today media still face similar dangers despite the political and economic changes in the country.

Libya has an unstable environment for free press. This was clearly indicated already by the 2008 IREX report on Sustainable Press in Libya. Many issues still stand today.

Press was first introduced in Libya through foreign consulates in 1827, as the French consulate issued a monthly newspaper in French language, aimed at French speakers and foreigners. Called *Al-Munaqqib Al-Afriqi* (The African Investigator), this was the first form of newspaper in North Africa. Decades later in 1865 the Ottoman governor in Tripoli ordered to issue a monthly newspaper *Tarablus Al-Gharb* (Tripoli of the West) which consisted of only two pages, one printed in Arabic and the other in Turkish, covering political and social news of the Ottoman rulers' affairs. In 1897 the first private newspaper was printed in Arabic and called *Al-Taraggi* (Progress), along with a number of privately owned newspapers. These newspapers were targeted to elites and had a very narrow niche audience due to the expensive costs and the high illiteracy rate among the general public in Libya during the Ottoman rule.

In 1911 when Italy colonised Libya, the colonists took over the press and began to issue newspapers in Italian and Arabic. Libyan-owned or -run newspapers and the press had many limitations until independence in 1951 and this heavily affected the development of the media market. After the independence, despite the population's impoverished living conditions, the media market had a short-lived boost with the introduction of many political groups and parties who have launched their own newspapers propagating their political and ideological views. More than 15 weekly newspapers, 13 monthly magazines and 11 newspapers were published in English and Italian, of which over 65 percent were independent and privately owned.

This was until the King banned political parties and ordered for the restriction of the private press, while the state-owned press under British management continued to spread in the two Libyan capitals Benghazi and Tripoli.

The TV and radio stations were predominately in English and Italian, as the majority were transmitted from British, American or Italian military bases. There was coverage in limited areas, and it was expensive to own a TV or a radio set. A new era was ushered with the 1969 military coup led by Gaddafi, as media were used to spread his ideologies. When the Gaddafi regime began to pay greater attention to mass media, an increasing number of Arabic TV and radio programmes were

broadcasted.

Media were mainly focused on enforcing the regime's ideologies. Gaddafi nationalised all press and theatres, seized possessions of all private properties and equipment. No privately owned press was allowed in the country, as Gaddafi stated in his Green Book: "The press is a means of expression for society: it is not a means of expression for private individuals or corporate bodies. Therefore, logically and democratically, it should not belong to either one of them."

Gaddafi's security apparatus rounded up many of the journalists and public figures, while many of them fled the country and lived in exile for over three decades, till the end of Libya's international isolation in 2004, when Colonel Gaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam emerged as a younger and more liberal leader. New satellite channels and newspapers were launched and, Internet access was increased.

The Internet introduced new variables, as it connected the people inside the country with all the exiled journalists, public figures and oppositions who had left the country after being targeted by the regime for their views and their demands of reforms. Saif Al-Islam reached out to many of these figures in an attempt to reconcile and bring them back to Libya. He made the promise of more liberties and a rule of law in the form of a constitution, which Libya lacked since the military coup in 1969. Saif Al-Islam launched a political program called *Libya Al-Ghad* (Libya of tomorrow), under which a number of TV and radio stations, as well as newspapers, were launched.

The *Oea* (Tripoli in Greek) and *Quryna* (Benghazi in Greek) newspapers were the flagship print media launched in 2007, along with more than 18 radio stations and satellite channels, including *Al Libiya TV* and *Al Shhabiya TV* (The Youth TV) which were independent from the government, but still under the *Libya Al-Ghad* program.

Under the Gaddafi rule there were four topics that were considered taboo, as described by Reporters Without Borders in 2011: Islamism and sharia laws (discussing the application of sharia law or involving religion in politics was not allowed and considered a threat to stability); political corruption (the issue was simply not up for debate, as it was viewed as a threat to the regime and a tool for discrediting Gaddafi and his government, but from time to time lower ranking officials were criticised); Libya's territorial unity and ethnic integrity (discussion on the different ethnic backgrounds of Libyans was not allowed, especially for minorities such as Tabu and Berber who even saw their rights denied. The regime viewed Libya as an all-Arab nation and it feared any relevant discussion would cause instability and disunity in the social fabric); the so called "brother leader of the Libyan Jamahiriya" Gaddafi and his associates (criticism of Gaddafi or his associates was not allowed). Those who touched on these issues faced severe punishments from jail to assassination such as in the cases of Razak Al-Mansouri, who was jailed for 18 months in 2005 after his criticism of Gaddafi's regimes policies, followed by the kidnapping, torture and killing of Libyan journalist Daif Al-Ghazal the same year. Many journalists simply vanished and others were imprisoned.

Other areas were opened for criticism and foreign press and publications were allowed back in the country after 25 years of ban. But this controlled freedom did not last for long before it relapsed. The government clamped down in 2009, nationalised and took over TV stations such as *Al-Libiya* re-launching it under the different name of *Al-Wasat*. *Oea* and *Quryena* were shut down in 2010 and this marked the end of the opening up.

Some critics viewed this as an attempt by the government of the time to reintroduce itself as a more liberal authority after the end of the international isolation. But the majority agree that the end result of the media liberalisation project was a new version of the old state media, including more repressive and oppressive measures as in 2010 a journalism police was founded under the name *Niyabat As-Sihafa*, its role to chase and arrest journalists and activists who spoke out against government corruption and the regime. Even online media platforms such as *Libya Al-Youm* and *Al-Manara*, *Jeel Libya*, *Libya Wattana*, *Libya Al-Mustakbal* were blocked, and social media sites were censored, and this continued until the uprising.

The development of journalistic professionalism had suffered greatly under the dictator's regime, as the regime seized all TV, radio and press institutions leading to a monopoly over the media in the country for over two decades. Only later when Saif Al-Islam rose to power a new appearance of state media was introduced. But everything was done to keep power within the Gaddafi family.

Libya's media had been isolated from the rest of the world, especially after the 1992 UN sanctions were imposed on Libya after the regime was accused of planning the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. The country was deprived of technologically advanced equipment and skills development and even the press and publishing houses halted their publishing due to shortage of paper and spare parts for the press machines.

The sanctions were lifted in 2003, but Libyan media were lagging behind, prompting an attempt from Saif Al-Islam to introduce a more modern and opened press. But the Gaddafi regime eventually felt threatened by this more open media scene and clamped down again after a couple of years. The closed environment continued till the uprising in 2011 that ousted the regime.

During the Arab Spring when protests were taking over the region, Libyans began to become restless and social media were flooded with calls for protests on the 17th of February which was called the Day of Rage. As a result many were arrested in the Eastern city of Benghazi. Many activists were able to report on the protests and send news from the Eastern part of the country by uploading videos online, videos which were filmed by citizens on their mobile phones. The regime cut down all communications on the 18th of February 2011, mobile phone networks and Internet were inaccessible, except for the loyalist, while the state-owned TV media were broadcasting rallies of the regime supporters.

Despite the regime's tight security measures and censorship, with the support from the Libyan Diaspora and Anonymous group (Operation Libya) many managed to get access to upload news and videos from the country, which were spread all over the international news.

During the uprising of 2011 an unprecedented number of news and media organisations have sprung across the country, as more than 170 media outlets have been created receiving generous donations and support from the local and international community.

Most of these organisations had to shut down after only one or two years, due to lack of funding and the security threats they have received by armed and radical groups.

The deteriorating security and political scene in Libya has negatively affected the media environment, as the country became unstable and plagued with violence, reflecting on the safety of journalists and causing media to become more polarised and entrenched in radicalised factions. Media started to divide into regional, ideological and even ethnically based alliances and rivalries.

Coverage of events in the country is now driven by the polarised narrative and view of the different camps. Each side blames their opponents for causing the instability of the economic instability and general insecurity of the nation. Media reports use

very polarised lenses, and these views reflect the increasingly polarised and radicalised political divisions in the country.

This is also reflected on social media as the various camps use similar tactics of spreading their narratives. In recent violent events in the capital Tripoli, social media were overflowing with fake news, hate speech and misleading information. The *New York Times* captured it vividly in an article titled *A Facebook War: Libyans Battle on the Streets and on Screens*

Today, the majority of the more than 5000 people who were employed as media staff by the state under Gaddafi continue to work for state media, with slight changes to the leadership of those media, while a number have left to join private media outlets that offered better pay and much more appealing incentives. Salaries in state media are very low, usually in the range of 1000-2000 Libyan Dinars and sometimes staff have to wait many months to receive their pay. On the other hand the privately owned channels and online platforms pay much higher, competitive salaries, ranging between US\$2000 and US\$10,000.

All these state media staff were faced with a new reality where there was competition. Quality was demanded and those who were not formally educated in media or citizen journalists who just received short practical training and nevertheless joined media outlets felt threatened by the newcomers.

Today the quality of media remains low, and content tends to be highly partisan.

Media

Print

Gaddafi's regime nationalised all publishing and press organisations, no private press was allowed to operate in the country for over 25 years. This had a major effect on the press and publishing industry, and the consequences of this are still very apparent.

The regime had a number of daily and weekly newspapers, including the three major national newspapers available: *Al Jamahiriya* (The People's Republic), *Al Fajr Al Jadid* (New Dawn), *Al Zahf Al Akhdar* (Green March), and *Al Shames* (The Sun). They were published and circulated with an estimate of around 10,000 copies a day. Also there were a few very popular local and regional dailies, such as *Akhbar Benghazi* (Benghazi News) in Benghazi, *Akhbar Tobrouk* (Tobrouk News) and many others.

Newspapers were mostly sold in major cities such as Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata, Bayda and Tobruk. These newspapers had very little difference in headlines and content as they focused only on government activities. Content was controlled and formulated to become a propaganda tool delivering the official line for imposing certain ideologies, controlling the public opinion and for public mobilisation to gain popular support for the regime's political views.

There were no monthly subscription fees, but the newspapers were sold at newsstands and at traffic lights for very small fee of around LYD0.25 each (approx US\$0.10), which was less than the printing costs, as staff were employed by the government and the printing costs were subsidised. In fact, Libyans bought the paper not so much for the front page or the political news (which revolved around the regime and its achievements) but for the sports section or mainly for the obituaries page, as it was customary to go pay condolences for acquaintances at funerals. Locals preferred local dailies over the national newspapers.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2015 the overall literacy rate in Libya was 91 percent, with a literacy rate of approx 97 percent for men and around 86 percent for women. Despite the high starting point, the readership levels dropped due to poor quality of press and books, which were only published by the state. The regime had restrictive censorship policies regarding content of books and newspapers, especially imported ones. The authorities viewed books on capitalism and other political systems as clashing with Gaddafi's Green Book, and branded such material as *Alghzw Althqafy* (cultural invasion).

Publishing was fully dependent on state subsidies and the advertisement and sales didn't amount to much. Journalists and editors were appointed by the government, ensuring their loyalty. Content was heavily monitored by the security apparatus. Some journalists had close ties with the security institutions, and often reported on fellow journalists. This led to self-censorship and directly affected the quality, which led to lack of interest and lack of trust from the general public as these journalists were viewed unfavourably. This in turn made the press dependent on the state. Many of these patterns are repeated today, because journalists and the general public still don't understand the important role and responsibilities of independent media.

Following the uprising and the ousting of the Gaddafi regime, numerous publications emerged across the country, but very few managed to survive past the first year of transition. Many other shut down after the 2014 civil war. These publications were faced with many challenges, from sustainable financing models to viable distribution networks.

In the years following the 2011 uprising, print became the most diverse of Libya's media in terms of content and audience. Prior to the 2014 civil war, however, the penetration rate of the print press had become very limited and a small percentage of the population (less than 11 percent) had access to daily newspapers. Less than 5 percent of Libyans read newspapers on a daily basis, despite the fact that more than 80 percent of the population lives in urban areas mostly towards the northern coastlines on the Mediterranean Sea which make up less than 20 percent of the country's territory (UN DESA, 2018). This is due to the decline in the security situation which has led to hazards of distribution. Other citizens prefer online news platforms and television as their content is more tailored to their political views and inclination. There is obviously a great emphasis on the national political development process, which is top priority for citizens as they are directly affected by the political and security developments in the country. But people from ethnic groups based in rural areas perceive publications as a medium for promoting their own local cultures, for example in Sabha and Zwarah 25 percent of newspaper readers expressed a preference for cultural articles on poetry, history and so on, compared with 18 percent at a national level. This is because Zwarah has a unique heritage as the population of the city is predominately Amazigh Berber and speaks a local dialect which differs greatly from other Berber languages in Libya and other parts of North Africa. Similarly, in parts of the South including Sabha, there is a large concentration of Taurga and Tabu people who have their own unique languages and heritage. These minorities were largely neglected and purposely oppressed by the former regime, who never publicly recognised their languages and forbade them from officially being taught. After the ousting of the regime, these minorities are back in the light and they practice their heritage and teach and speak their language freely.

The majority of Libyans across the country wish to receive less politicised, more localised and unbiased news. Objective

political analysis articles were also highly desired according to survey conducted in 2013 by Altai Consultancy, which shows the interest for the public to understand the current issues and affairs affecting their lives. The newspapers circulated in Tripoli (mainly *Febrayr*) and Benghazi (mainly *Qureyna Al Jadeedah*) are consumed by readers of both genders above the age of 40. Another newspaper in Misrata, *Wifaq*, which has a more modern style and praises the city's armed groups that fought both the Gaddafi regime and later against Islamic State (IS), targets younger male readers in their 20s and 30s. Interestingly, and in contrast to the prevailing national trend, the weekly newspaper *Wifaq*, which describes itself as 'youth-focused, national and informational' started as a Facebook page and now prints more than 3000 copies per week in Misrata. The Facebook page still exists.

Febrayr was published daily by the Libyan Press Board. But just like all Libya Press Board newspapers and other media, it stopped publishing for lack of funding and due to bad management and corruption as well as internal struggles. The newspaper was sold at LYD0.5 per copy and was the most popular governmental newspaper in Libya. It has not evolved much in terms of editorial content since 2011, and mainly consists of national news (the first two pages), with some international news related to Libya, followed by cultural, social and sports pages and occasionally, an arts and entertainment section. As for advertising, the newspaper displays eight full pages of ads (government and private) which tripled since 2012, when there were only three.

Private newspapers *Qureyna Al Jadeedah* is a former government-funded paper created in 2007 by Al Ghad Media Group, a group created by Saif Al-Islam Ghaddafi before 2011. The newspaper was privatised and re-launched in 2012, now under the leadership of journalist Fathi Youni Alkhashmi and based in Benghazi. *Qureyna Al Jadeedah* was one of the leading newspapers published in Libya for coverage and number of readers. The newspaper, which is now available only online, covers political news, entertainment, jobs, travel, sports, economy, culture, business and foreign press.

The independent newspaper *AlWasat* is a very influential, modern and professional media outlet, founded by former Minister of Information Mahmoud Shammam after he left the *Libya Alahrar* TV channel in Doha. It covers a wide range of news topics and it even publishes in English, with correspondents spread across the country, providing one of the best coverage of Libya's news today. It had started as a radio station but was later taken off air. It was also censored online and is currently banned from distributing hard copies.

In addition, Benghazi-based newspaper *Burniq*, was published three times a week until its editor in-chief Miftah Bouzeid was assassinated in 2014, apparently due to his criticism of extremist groups including Ansar al-Sharia. Several media personnel in Benghazi were targeted by such groups.

Radio

Radio is the second highest consumed media in Libya but the country does not have a national radio network, due to infrastructure and the current political division between the two warring governments in the East and West of Libya. Cities have several public and private local radio stations. For example *Libyana Hits* in Benghazi offers more tailored and localised programs. Some discuss local events and upcoming events around the city, others discuss traffic jams and update passengers on the best routes to take.

Tripoli has more than 20 local radio stations, some already struggling financially due to lack of government subsidies. The majority are privately owned stations that rely on advertisement. According to Altai Consultancy (2013) as many as 77 percent of Libyans say they only listen to Libyan radio, while just 2 percent have expressed a preference for international radio stations broadcasting on AM or FM. The stations on FM were taken off air in many parts of the country. There are also others who tune to international radio only from time to time, in order to get more reliable news when sceptical of what they

hear on Libyan radio stations.

The Libyan authority that owns and operates the state media, Libyan Radio and Television Corporation (LRTC) has three main stations that air in Tripoli: *Al-Wataniya*, *Radio Libya FM* and the youth oriented *Al-Shababiya*.

The most popular radio station in Tripoli is *Tripoli FM* while in Benghazi it's *Libyana Hits*, both stations broadcast international music and entertainment programmes. Instead other radio stations owned by local authorities and municipalities offers a wide variety of social, religious and political programmes, which are particularly popular with older Libyans. Local stations such as *Benghazi FM* or *Tripoli FM* have talk shows on health, religion and even social issues like marriage and cooking. These are popular among older generations who own radio sets at home and tune in to listen to shows from time to time.

Although most stations broadcast in Arabic, *Lebda FM* is known for having programmes in Amazigh language, which is the native language of the indigenous inhabitants living in some western parts of the country. There are also a dozen of stations across the country that focus on religious programmes and air Quran, which appeal more to religious and conservative people. But these channels differ from one part of the country to another: the radio stations in the East are dominated mostly by Salafists and the West and Central parts of the country are dominated by Jihadist groups who use them to deliver their sermons and their views.

Television

Television is the cheapest, most accessible and consumed media in Libya. It is also the most frequently consumed, the Altai Consultancy survey of 2013 showed that 76 percent of Libyans use TV for their daily consumption of news, as almost every household owns a TV set and a satellite TV system. Libya received a lot of international media attention during the uprising in 2011, and satellite TV became the main source of reliable news for the population, since local media were controlled by the regime. But news consumption patterns have changed. As international media coverage of Libya dropped after 2011, Libyans started searching for alternatives to UAE-based and Saudi-owned *Alarabyia* and Qatari-owned *Al Jazeera*, which were each pushing one of the two clashing narratives in the struggle internal to the Arab nations, which sees the axis of Qatar versus Saudi Arabia and UAE. This contributed to the political strife at the time. Libya still suffers from the heat of that regional power struggle which comes in the form of a proxy war, with Qatar and *Al Jazeera* supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and revolutionaries especially from western parts of the country, while Saudi Arabia and UAE support the oppositions including liberal, Salafists and even tribes in eastern parts of the country.

With the increasing interest of the public in politics and state transition, the demand increased for more political analysis, therefore dozens of private and public satellite TV stations emerged. Yet very few were able to continue past the 2014 crisis, due to financial or security reasons as some were targeted in several ways, including having their offices stormed by armed groups.

Audiences have been shifting from one channel to another as political polarisation began to surface and a more aggressive tone became common after 2014, when the mandate of the first democratically elected parliament (the GNC) ended.

Currently there are dozens of Libyan channels, targeting the wide spectrum of viewers and ideologies. These channels usually offer a similar package of programmes comprised of social chat shows, political dialogues, cultural documentaries, religious shows and news bulletins. But the narrative varies significantly. State-run channels such as *Al Wataniyah* and *Libya Al Rasmiyah* (Libya Official) are less attractive as compared with 2012, when optimism was high and they were the most trusted and followed by the audiences who considered them their main official source of information. Yet the government ended up twisting facts and ignoring the main issues and this gave the private channels enough room to move in and become more popular. Due to the challenges of working amid deteriorating security, the public channels are now

providing no fresh content and depend on the archived material from previous regime days. Also they are less active and turn a blind eye to all the important events, which leads to the audiences switching to other channels to stay informed. For example during the clashes in Tripoli in September 2018, when over 100 people died, the state run channels were airing documentaries on culture and historic events in Libya from their archive. They only aired press conferences held by the government or prepared press statements. Otherwise very little information was presented. These channels receive very little attention and they are only on air because the government is still paying for the salaries. This led the general public to seek other private channels, but it also caused further confusion, as each channel added its own spin on the news stories. This pattern is happening both in urban and rural areas, who on top receive very little to no news coverage a fact which sometimes is brought up by representatives of these smaller villages and towns. It is very hard to access any reliable information and have credible sources in times of tension in Libya as all sides use media as a tool to gain further leverage and rally public support.

Libya Al Ahrar (Libya For the Free) is a private channel that started broadcasting from Doha on 30 March, 2011 and recently relocated to Turkey, fuelling allegations that it is still funded by the Qatari government. *Libya Al Ahrar* was created by Mahmoud Shammam, the former Minister of Information, and was considered as one of the most influential television channels during the first two years of its creation. It broadcasted mainly news, debate and political programmes in Arabic, although one program and one news bulletin were provided in Amazigh language. When Mahmoud Shammam, who is viewed as a liberal, left the channel, many of the staff began to leave to other TV stations, as the channel's editorial direction was perceived to be sympathetic to revolutionary/Islamist currents in the General National Congress (GNC). The channel began to focus its programming to oppose Marshal Khalifa Haftar's "Dignity Operation", launched in 2015 to fight radical groups in the eastern city of Benghazi and ending in his victory and control over the whole eastern parts of the country. Due to the increasing popularity of the Marshal and the distrust in his opposition a large bulk of the audience began searching for an alternative which later seemed to be offered by a new channel taking in many of the *Libya Al Ahrar* staff who left in search of a more 'impartial' media platform: the Jordan-based *Libya HD*, which was considered the most professional media in the years after the civil war in 2014 as it offered much more impartial news and take on the issues. *Libya HD* is owned by Aref al-Nayed Libya's former ambassador to UAE.

Reports and surveys compiled by Altai Consultancy in 2013 indicate that men tend to prefer sports and political analysis shows, while women appear notably more interested in drama and soap operas, with a strong appetite for movies. Women are also more interested in religious shows than men, while more educated and younger Libyans express interest in international TV channels.

Among the main TV stations owned by the state is *Al-Wataniya*, which was established in 2012 by the new government and repossessed all of Gaddafi's *Al-Jamahiriyah*, as well as the media staff. It aired talk shows and news programmes and was very popular across the board as there were very few options in the first few years of its broadcasting, but it became less relevant and went back to using the same old content which was pre-recorded and archived. These were due to number of reason mainly the infighting and inner struggle between the different staff and management. Corruption was also a major reason for the current crisis in state institutions.

After an alliance of militias known as Libya Dawn launched an offensive in Tripoli in summer 2014 and later took control of the city, many offices belonging to private TV channels and other media outlets were targeted.

Al Aseemah (The Capital) was founded in 2011 and initially began to broadcast from Tunisia, before moving to Tripoli where its facilities were stormed by militias for their criticism of Islamist groups and militias. The channel owner Jomaa Al-Osta along with four of his staff were kidnapped by the armed group and they were told to leave the country or be killed. This was especially for their enmity with the Muslim Brotherhood and their criticism of the armed militias. This occurred several times in

different parts of the country, as media figures were targeted, kidnapped and assassinated.

Recently, a new channel, *218 TV*, has become highly popular and much followed on social media. It attracts well-educated urban youths and provides its audience with entertaining and professional content such as talk show *Al Ashia* (Tea-Time Show) where issues such as social media trends and anime, US box office movies and even K-pop music are discussed.

Libya Awalan is a Cairo-based channel which was founded in 2011 by the businessman Hassan Tatanaki, who is also known for his outspoken enmity of the Muslim Brotherhood. The channel was very popular among the liberal and non-conservative people who make up the bulk of the population. Especially after its Tripoli-based competition *Al Dawalya* and *Alassema* closed down after armed groups stormed their buildings and threaten their staff. *Libya Awalan* channel showed support to the Eastern government and to Marshal Haftar, but it closed in late 2015 for financial reasons as the channel itself reported. But there are other claims that the Egyptian authorities closed it down for lack of licenses.

A number of pro-Islamist and pro-revolutionary groups in Western parts of the country support *Al-Nabaa TV* which was established in 2013 and is allegedly owned by Abdul Hakim Belhaj, leader of the currently inactive Jihadist Libya Fighting Group. The channel is the most popular among the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies, who oppose Marshal Haftar. The channel facilities were also stormed a number of times by armed groups but *Al-Nabaa* still airs today.

Libya Al Hadath is a channel based in eastern Libya founded in 2016, during the Dignity Operation launched by Marshal Haftar in 2014. In a conversation with the author the Chairman of the channel claimed they are the most watched channel in the East and South of Libya, and that they have a large number of viewers in western parts of the country. But the channel is clearly favoured by an older audience, and it has less appeal to the younger audience. The channel shows clear bias towards Marshal Haftar as it glorifies its personality and achievements. Tribute songs are played most of the day along with politically focused talk shows that emphasise how the Marshal's goal is to eliminate terrorists and how those who oppose him are terrorist sympathisers. But this is similar yet opposite to the tactics followed by the oppositions who brand the Marshal as a new dictator and an image of the former leader Gaddafi, and who call his military operation the Counter Revolution, as opposed to their 2011 February Revolution. These two views sum most of the conflict and the main axis of the current narrative on media.

Gaddafi loyalists and media personalities who fled the country after Tripoli fell to rebels in 2011 went to different countries, mainly Egypt. They launched a number of channels that are aimed at all of the Gaddafi loyalists and sympathisers inside and outside the country. These channels found wide acceptance as the country is plunged into chaos and violence, as they blame the majority of the Libyan population who for supporting the uprising in 2011, also fault those who sat on the fence, the narrative is that those who supported the uprising are traitors who supported the Western-planned and NATO-executed coup that eliminated their brother leader Gaddafi.

Digital Media

Libya had only 10,000 Internet users back in 2000. Internet became more accessible in 2008 and by December 2017 the number skyrocketed to 3,800,000 (approx. 60 percent of the population). According to International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Internet is the third most accessible media in the country, mostly used to access social media (Altai Consultancy, 2013). Yet access rates vary with location. Daily Internet usage in Misrata, Zuwarah and Sabha stands at 25 percent of the local population, which is notably lower than the daily usage in major cities Tripoli and Benghazi (over 50 percent). The Internet is predominantly used by educated young males as indicated by the content dominating the Libyan digital media sphere. Most followed Facebook pages include *EIKul*, a BBC-Action-funded online media project, and also the youth-focused *TV channel 218* which has the biggest number of followers on social media. But lately many of the older and

less educated Libyans seem to be interested in staying connected and informed and are intrigued by the technology as it provides a faster way to connect and have access to news. The youths tend to be more distrusting with only 5 percent trusting the political information they read on the social network. Youths understand the technology better and tend to be wary of the strangers who are Facebook page admins or editors. Unless they know them personally they tend to not trust or distrust the information received. But this is clearly different with less educated youths or older users who are less savvy and just digest the news as facts. Some even say "I read it on Facebook" as a way to confirm news.

Notably, *Alwasat* is considered the most widely respected and followed independent news outlet in recent years. The outlet faced many challenges including being banned from publishing and distributing inside the country; its website was censored for nearly a year in 2015, and its radio station was knocked off the air. But it still is one of the most visited sites in Libya (according to Alexa.com top 50 most visited sites in Libya).

Libya Herald was established by a British journalist, Michel Cousnis, and it's the most popular and followed news source by expats as it publishes news in English only. It was based in Tripoli but the staff had to relocate to Malta and London. For fear of kidnapping or assassination.

Classified ads website *Opensooq* is very popular and people use it to advertise and look for used cars, real estate and even used phones. But the transactions always take place physically as there is no trusted supporting online procurement services in Libya.

The privately owned *Libyan Address Journal* started in December 2017 and is chaired by Mahmud Elforjani, a journalist who worked for Reuters and Alarabiya in his early days and later chaired the Libyan News Agency back in 2014. It is the only Libyan digital media based in the country and with an all-local staff. It publishes in both English and Arabic languages and is mainly a news platform with no political views or bias.

Social Networks

Facebook is the preferred social media platform. More than 90 percent of the total Internet users subscribe to Facebook. It is followed by Youtube, even though Libya does not have that many Youtubers and users consume international and regional content instead. Internet is mainly used in Libya for socialising, secondly for news and thirdly for entertainment. Libyan youths from both genders spend most of their time online on Facebook, following news, browsing through videos on Youtube or using other instant messaging apps such as NimBuzz and Whatsapp. Males are more likely to have a Facebook account (63 percent) than women (52 percent). Those who are not likely to have Facebook accounts are usually those who are disconnected from the Internet in general. They can be summarised in two main groups: Those of older age, who make up the majority of the offline community but are also beginning to learn how to use the technology thanks to the spread of smartphones, and those of low income and low education, below secondary school, who represent a very small percentage of the overall population (Altai Consulting, 2013).

Facebook and YouTube are the two preferred international websites in Libya. There were 3,500,000 Facebook users in December 2017, with a penetration rate of 54.1 percent. Slightly more than half of the overall population is registered on Facebook, with males and youths having a slightly higher access rate to the social network. Once browsing Facebook, Libyans interact with each other, look to inform themselves on news and events. Socially, Facebook is a place where social barriers tend to vanish and where men and women can interact freely and learn to know each other. Politically, Facebook is a place where ideas are discussed very freely and without taboos, contrarily to other media. But the lack of restrictions causes further polarisation and increases the grievances. Some Facebook pages amplify the rise of distinct regional, ideological, ethnic and political identities. Content and narratives on social media pages differ greatly in the various parts of the country,

and they address issues from different angles and points of view, sometime opposite, creating a lot of tension and aggravating grievances. For example an armed group led by Ibrahim Jedran shut down the oil production in 2013 and was driven out after 3 years by Marshal Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). When the armed group returned a year later and attacked the oil field, a large number of social media pages especially in the eastern parts of Libya called them terrorists and invaders, while others in Misrata and other parts of the country far from LNA influence, addressed them as avengers wishing to go back to their hometown. Fake Facebook pages and identity theft are two major issues, creating further division to the point that officials in Libya wonder if it's beneficial or detrimental to have Facebook censored during these sensitive times. Yet again, it's the government's and politicians' main platform to rally their supporters. Interestingly, social media activists receive a lot of attention from the government, at times being offered jobs as media advisors and spokespeople of different departments.

Twitter is viewed differently in Libya, being more an elite gathering of academics, journalists and activists who usually tweet in English. This shows that Twitter is mainly used by well-educated youths as opposed to the more diverse and widely used Facebook, making it easier to debunk fake news on Twitter. Furthermore qualitative research by Altai Consulting (2013) shows that 26 percent of the Libyan population declared having one or more Facebook accounts. Among internet users, 58 percent of youth users have multiple Facebook accounts for different purposes, eg work, study, or pursuing relationships.

Social media activists are viewed as popular and very influential but this comes with its burdens, as social media are constantly monitored by the security authority and activists are often reported to authorities by other social media activists who are allied with armed groups of security bodies. Many activists were assassinated, like 18 year-old activist Tawfik Bensaud and his 17 year-old friend Sami Al-Kwafi who were killed in an attack by an armed men in Benghazi in 2014, and others were kidnapped. Some were detained and then released but forced to leave the country for posting controversial comments or sharing news in criticism of any of the factions.

Opinion Makers

Since social media became widely spread, everyone in Libya migrated to Facebook, including those who were active on Yahoo's *Maktoob* chat rooms, those who were popular on PalTalk or other media, as well as the many online forums discussing a range of topics such as culture, politics, sports, technology and society, which have been abandoned as the majority of interactions take place on Facebook and other new social media platforms.

Libyan politics and economic issues are very complex, additionally the number of factions are ever changing as new alliances are formed and old ones collapse. There has been a power shift over different parts of the country and the situation is still dynamic and unpredictable as each day can always bring new surprises and a new shift in the power dynamics. But over the years there have been few personalities who managed to stay influential and relevant despite the changes of many variables, and this list includes the London-based political analyst Noman Benotman, who frequently appears on TV to analyse the Libyan conflict and always makes fiery comments and expresses very controversial views without restrictions. He has 306,739 followers on Twitter alone, and these tend to be mostly from Gaddafi regime supporters and those who sympathise with them, including a wide range of groups which expanded after the aspiration of the 2011 uprising did not come to fruition. Similarly, Fuad Gritli is a Tripoli radio host, singer and v-logger, who posts videos summarising the news in a comedic way. He also composes songs and while playing his guitar he sheds light on everyday struggles of Libyan citizens and youth. One of the most followed Youtube channels with a very active fan base is *Keta3channel*, owned by Seraj Alalem and his wife Amani Alqatrani. On the entertainment and travel sphere one must quote the famous *Rahalista* channel by Mohamed Alselini.

One of Gaddafi's closest relatives who took refuge in Egypt, Ahmed Gaddaf Addam, has 1,393,723 likes to his Facebook page, followed by the oil tycoon Hassan Tatanaki, owner of the abovementioned *Libya Awalan TV*, with 1,177,092 likes. Dar

Al Ifta, the Islamic and Religious Affairs authority in the country, chaired by the Grand Mufti Sadiq Al-Ghariani despite becoming a controversial figure in Libya after his decision to point all his supporters towards fighting Marshal Haftar, still has 876,220 Facebook likes. This is the highest number of likes for a governmental body, twice as much of the UN-backed government which stands at 419,000, even less than the US Embassy in Libya which has 451,711 Facebook likes.

Sources

Newspapers owned by Libyan Press Board

- [Al-Nas](#)
- [Alsa3a](#)
- [Al-Waqt](#)
- [Fasanea](#) (Based in Sabha)
- [Febrayr](#)

Independent Newspapers

- [Alayam](#)
- [Al-Wasat](#)
- [Ar-rai](#)
- [Burniq](#)

Radio

- [Al-Wasat FM](#)
- [Al-Wataniya FM](#)
- [LeBDa FM](#)
- [Libyana Hits](#)
- [Tanasuh FM](#)
- [Tripoli FM](#)

Television

- [218 TV](#) (Based in Jordan)
- [Al-Jamahiriyah](#) (Based in Jordan)
- [Al-Nabaa](#)
- [Al-Rasmia Channel](#)
- [Al-Wataniya TV](#)
- [Arraed](#)
- [Libya 24](#) (Based in UK)
- [Libya Al-Ahrar](#) (Based in Turkey)
- [Libya Al-Hadath](#) (No website only Facebook page)
- [Libya Channel](#) (Based in Jordan)
- [Libya El-Watan](#) (Based in Tunisia)
- [Libya One](#)
- [Libya Panorama Channel](#) (LPC)
- [Libya TV](#)

- [Tanasuh](#)

Digital Media

- [Afrigate News](#)
- [Akhbar Libya 24](#)
- [Al-Marsad](#)
- [Al-Wasat](#)
- [Al-Watan Libya](#)
- [Ean libya](#) (UK based)
- [El-Kul](#) (BBC Media Action project)
- [Ewan Libya](#)
- [Libya Al-Mostakbal](#)
- [Libya Herald](#)
- [Libyan Observer](#)
- [The Libyan Address](#)

Opinion Makers

- [Ahmed Gaddafi Addam](#)
- [Fuad Gritli](#)
- [Hassan Tatanaki](#)
- [Mohamed Alselini](#)
- [Noman Benotman](#)

Organisations

Trade Unions

Prior to the 2011 uprising, freedom of assembly was restricted, including demonstrations and formation of independent trade unions. The only exception was the possibility to join one of the quasi-governmental national trade unions. After the uprising a constitutional declaration stated in Article 15: "The state shall ensure freedom of establishing political parties, associations and other civil society organisations, and shall adopt a statute for their regulation. Secret or armed associations or societies in conflict with public order or public morals or threatening in other ways the State or the integrity of the national territory shall be prohibited."

But that is all that can be said about it, and as of today, due to the legal gaps left behind after the collapse of the regime, there are still no laws to govern or regulate the formation of trade unions or even political parties. The legality of any independent union or party is questioned when they attempt to push for change or demand reforms from the government. There are dozens of political parties which have formed after the uprising, but they are struggling to be viewed as legitimate political parties because it is so new to the Libyan public. The general public is not accustomed to these political groups, making it easy to slander and libel them in media. This is actually what took place and it led these political parties and unions to seize their operations out of fear of defamation and public antagonism.

A similar pattern is seen in civil society and trade unions. The people view them with scrutiny as many of them were funded by foreign governments and were introduced in a very sudden way: Over 1,400 organisations were formed in Benghazi alone in just three years, which led to a chaotic scene. Many of these groups had political agendas, others were viewed as tools for businessmen to gain public recognition, as political campaigns were dominated by these civil society and trade union personalities who rallied support from their community. The main reason to question the purpose of these unions or non-government organisations was that politicians who were supported by the local communities neglected their role and their responsibilities towards their communities, who felt cheated by representatives who have turned their backs on them and disengaged after winning a seat in the parliament. This caused less participation in the next elections and a lower number of voters. Many of the parliament members have campaigned under certain banners but after winning they neglected their campaign promises and this caused the parliament to weaken and be discredited. Members who vowed to support their communities such as members from the South and East and who promised better public services and much more, never followed through. One parliamentarian promised that every Libyan will earn at least US\$4000 a month and others made even bigger claims.

Journalist Associations

Discussions about reorganising the media sector were and still are happening within government offices, and are still focused on establishing a high authority to govern and oversee the sector in lieu of a Ministry of Information with executive powers. Supporters of this idea believe that nominating a Minister for Information will lead to the return of a hegemonic government with strong implications for independent media. This would create a situation favourable to officials who want to tightly control media just like the old days.

A group of 1,000 journalists gathered in the western mountains in the town of Jado in June 2012 in an attempt to form a body that would protect journalists and defend their rights. They agreed to form the Journalist Syndicate, but they spent the whole time arguing about fundamental issues like defining the Libyan journalist and debating questions like "Who is a journalist and who isn't?" They missed an opportunity to bring together all journalists under one umbrella that could act as a representative body and draft a Code of Ethics for journalists to follow, which was never finally approved or widely accepted. Due to the lack of leadership and management skills from the steering committee the discussion did not produce anything concrete. The group has attempted to bring journalists together since and has submitted their suggestions to the parliament and governments but with no result. The government claims that it does not have the legal framework and legislation to form any associations which should be the parliament's role.

Similar pacts and codes of ethics were drafted but never were enforced or respected. One famous pact was the Madrid Declaration in 2015, when 20 Libyan media managers and journalists vowed to abide by a set of rules that were agreed upon in a meeting in the Spanish capital. Just like all other agreements, it did not hold for long nor did it have any impact on the overall issue.

In May 2018 the Journalist Syndicate had their second gathering after six years to crystallise their vision, and they were surprised by the UN-backed government's decision of forming its own Journalist Association chaired by one of the government's media officials, which mimics how Gaddafi used power-controlling measures.

There are also other attempts from independent groups of journalist to get together to fight for their rights, with the mutual understanding of avoiding the use of hate speech and putting their fellow journalists lives at risk. A clear example is the Libyan Journalists Independent Syndicate chaired by Reda Fhelboom, which has brought various issues facing journalists in Libya today back to light. Even though it is an independent, almost individual effort of enthusiastic journalists, it has issued statements condemning all violations against media organisations or personnel, also criticising the government for its recent restrictive policies on foreign media entering and working in the country. These are policies that put the lives of freelancers and foreign and national journalists working for international media at risk, as they deny them credentials, press IDs and entry visas. The Government of National Accord (GNA) took such harsh measure after the CNN report on the slave trade in Libya.

Also the Libyan Center for Freedom of Press issued a joint statement with Reporters Without Borders demanding the UN-backed government to reconsider these new policies and regulations.

Having such institutions could possibly bring journalists closer and allow them to find a common ground and to agree on a set of rules, besides helping them to stand up for their rights. Libya has many issues, and media are playing a large role, but as the UN peace process is focused on political factions and security issues, journalists have no option but to create their own instruments.

News Agencies

Libya's first news agency was launched in 1964, initially named Libyan News Agency (LNA), and renamed as Jamahiriya Arab News Agency (JANA) after the Gaddafi military coup in 1969. It was very close to the regime and was used as the main tool for the regime to control news out of the country. After the uprising in 2011 the agency was relaunched by the new authority with the same staff, but under a different name: Libyan Arab News Agency (LANA).

In 2014, after the Libya Dawn operations in Tripoli, the newly elected parliament moved to the east of the country, many of the government institutions moved to the eastern city of Beyda, and an opposition government was formed in Tripoli and named the Salvation Government. Like many of the state institutions that were split, each government started its own news agency. Following the political agreement, the new UN-backed government moved into the capital and later took over the agency that was established in Tripoli. As of today there are still two news agencies under the same name LANA, with two different websites. The comparison of news content is interesting, as it shows how both news agencies strive to glorify their respective government and discredit the opposition at every turn.

There are also a number of private news agencies, such as Al-Tadamun, a Switzerland-based agency that was established by the Muslim Brotherhood in 2011, but they are not very well known and lack in professionalism. They do not use proper and official sources and use a very narrow angle to approach issues in the country, pushing only certain narratives. These outlets contribute to enforcing particular views, those of conservatives who tend to focus on discrediting liberals and viewing them as Western tools to control the country. They also use other narratives such as branding their oppositions as anti-religious or former regime supporters and enemies of the revolution. The same is being done by other groups, for instance, the former regime supporters who brand everyone else as pro-West and pro-NATO occupation, while liberals tend to brand conservatives such as Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists as extremists, terrorist sympathisers or even terrorists.

The EU and Deutsche Welle Akademic were conducting trainings for local media institutions and professionals, but due to the

security crisis in the country they decided to launch a cloud-based news agency in 2015, which is called Libyan Cloud News Agency and is based in Tunisia. This helped to overcome some of the barriers of regional censorship, but has generated criticism from media officials and security groups who believe it's a spy tool, funded by foreigners.

Audience measurement organisations

There are a number of statistics and research centres in Libya, including public and private ones with very high capacity and staffing, but the governments have been too busy to order for any research to be carried out.

These researches are only conducted with international funding for the purpose of helping the Libyan authority to understand or to better plan better future campaigns. Such research projects are conducted through international tenders and organisations such as Altai Consultancy and USIP. However, competing pressures and an emergency mindset have made the use of statistics for long-term policy making a difficult affair.

This applies to private research companies that usually receive funding or have been established by any interest group. Among the most known research centres is the Libya Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS) founded and chaired by Dr Aref Ali Nayed, former Libyan Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, and presidential candidate in the general elections of December 2018. There is also the Libyan Organization Of Policies & Strategies (LOOPS) which is led by Muslim Brotherhood member and former minister of economy Dr Abdullah Shamia.

The University of Benghazi, the University of Misrata, the University of Tripoli and others have research centres that conduct surveys and various types of studies on a regular basis, but the authenticity of these reports requires further validation, as academics are considered part of the elites and major players in the political circles, where they drive the public opinion by putting out stats and research outcomes to prove a certain political viewpoint. For example Dr Fathi Majbari who headed the Research Center at the University of Benghazi after the 2011 uprising, has presented a number of surveys and polls which were favourable to the incumbent government. One controversial poll was on whether Libyans favour a federal system of governance or a centralised one. This came after a group from East Libya demanded autonomous rule, but the stats in question stated the general public opposes a federal system and deems it as division. Dr Fathi Majbri moved up the ranks to become Minister of Higher Education and is currently a member of Presidential Council of the UN-backed GNA.

Similarly the Parliament in Tobrouk formed a Strategic Studies Center, but its publications tend to reaffirm the official parliamentary position on the various issues. Not to discredit all academic institutions in Libya, but most of these academics are employed during the Gaddafi era and they are age in their 50's. Which makes them somewhat disconnected from the current *status quo*. Also they are burdened by the lack of credibility which was inherent from the previous regime.

Sources

Trade Unions

- [Libya Center for Freedom of Press](#)
- [Libyan journalists Independent Syndicate](#)
- [Violations Monitoring and Defending Journalists Office](#) (No website, only Facebook page)

Journalist Associations

- [Libyan Centre for Freedom of Press](#)
- [The Libyan OrganInternet against Violence and Hate Speech](#)

News Agencies

- [Libya News Agency](#) (LANA), (Tripoli based - UN backed government)
- [Libyan Cloud News Agency](#) (LCNA)
- [Libyan News Agency](#) (LANA), (Based in East Libya, Interim Government)

Audience measurement organisations

- [Altai Consulting](#)
- [LIAS](#)
- [LOOPS](#)

Policies

Media legislation

In 1972 the Gaddafi regime drafted a Press Law which has been amended several times, but for some very controversial clauses which remain in place till today, such as Article 178 of the penal code which provides for life imprisonment for anyone putting out news that could “tarnish the country’s reputation or undermine confidence in it abroad.” The penal code under Article 207 also stipulates the death penalty for “anyone who advocates inside Libya, by whatever means, theories or principles aiming to change the basic tenets of the national constitution or the basic structures of the social system, or aiming to overthrow the state’s political, social or economic structures.” These clauses are opened to interpretation and they were usually used to repress political opposition. Many journalists were faced with charges in the past few years in application of the same laws from the Gaddafi era. A journalist can still be charged when speaking against officials as the penal code stands as it was and has not been amended to allow freedom of speech. Article 195 of the Penal Code (Law No 5) states that: “Anyone who insults the leader of the Great September Revolution or People’s authority, a judicial body or the armed forces, or publicly humiliates the Libyan Arab people, or the emblem of the state or its flag, shall be punished with imprisonment.”

This law was amended in 2014 as follows: “Without prejudice to any harsher penalty, whoever commits an act that prejudices the 17 February Revolution shall be punished by imprisonment. The same penalty shall be imposed on any person who publicly insults the legislative, executive, or judicial branches or any member thereof during or due to the performance of duties, or who insults the state emblem or flag.”

A journalist was once detained for using a GoPro drone during a demonstration at the Martyrs’ Square in Tripoli, after being charged with illegally driving an unlicensed flying vehicle.

Understanding the current state of the legal framework affecting Libya’s media landscape is challenging given the multiple governments contesting legitimacy. In addition, the country is still in a state of transition with many laws from the Gaddafi era that still need to be replaced or amended properly.

It is almost impossible to access up-to-date legislation or verified versions of the laws, if they exist. The governments are not used to sharing decrees online, especially the controversial ones, unless they see political gains from publicising these

decision. Also the legislating body in East Libya has not had a proper session with full quorum for over two years. There has not been any new law enforcement due to the absence of the rule of law and courts. This has been the case for a long time and has caused a legal vacuum.

The current Constitutional Declaration which was drafted in 2011 by the NTC states in articles 14 that "the State shall guarantee freedom of opinion, individual and collective expression, research, communication, press, media, printing and editing". But while some believe that this has put an end to all of the Gaddafi regime laws and legislation, which is considered a positive move as these laws were considered as restrictive and oppressive, others believe that the same laws had still reason to be in force due to the absence of detailed regulations and policies at a time of lacking references and uncertainty. This will last until the legislators draft new laws, or the newly proposed constitution draft is put up for referendum and approved to replace the former regime laws.

Libyans have expressed a strong demand for the government to regulate this overly liberalised media landscape, through many journalists including civil society organisations and media outlets who demanded to take part in the peace process and come to a national-level legal framework. But this has not been a priority for any of the governments or the parliaments that followed Gaddafi's fall, leaving the legal system in chaos, especially because the 2011 constitutional declaration and Gaddafi-era laws often greatly contradict one another.

There are those who argue that Gaddafi laws still stand by referring to article 35 of the constitutional declaration that states: "All provisions established in the existing legislation shall remain in force in so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Declaration until they are amended or repealed."

While those opposing this view claim that when Gaddafi's Green Book states that "Democratically, private individuals should not be permitted to own any public means of publication or information", this shows that licensing was not possible for private media, which stands in contradiction with the constitutional deceleration and human rights.

Due to the absence of any clear and concise overall media law, the legal environment for media in Libya remains ambiguous. This creates a situation where media outlets and social media are used in a very negative way, with hate speech and incitement commonplace. In 2015 UNESCO started the process of policy reform and with the help of Spain and the USA, a series of workshops was held in Madrid and attended by some media figures. Yet their number was limited and they were not the main players on the ground, and had very little influence on the overall situation.

Accountability systems

In a previous survey on the accountability of Libyan media, more than 82 percent of Libyans demanded that private media declare their sources of funding. This shows that the population is aware of the lack of transparency and accountability in the media and shows lack of trust and scepticism towards the nature and the sources of these funds.

Many of the media outlets present today were created in a legal vacuum and in an environment of uncertainty. These outlets were not monitored and this led to political corruption and to most of the media becoming extremely biased. The absence of an accountability system caused the media to be deeply involved in creating the chaos and inciting violence, which turned against media as well, as many outlets and individuals were targeted by armed militias. Assassinations and kidnappings are commonplace in Libya, particularly for activists and media personnel.

This led many of the media outlets to establish their offices outside Libya, which was a common characteristic of media during the Gaddafi regime times where opposition media was established in exile. At present the country is divided in different military and ideological camps, and militias are the dominant power that decides which media can operate in their

area of influence and those allowed are usually allied and biased towards these armed groups.

Each of the two warring governments in the East and West of the country has their own Ministry of Culture and Media and Foreign Media Bureau. But their role as well as their real influence are limited, since these channels are either outside their sphere of influence (being based in Jordan, Egypt, UK or under the opposition area of control) or allied with an armed faction which the government is unable to control or hold accountable. The government in East Libya formed a Ministry of Information, Culture and Civil society before it disbanded the ministry and formed authorities, including the Libyan Radio and Television Authority, which is chaired by the interim government spokesperson Hatem Alaraibi. Similar steps were taken in the Western parts of the country. Public and state-run media are actually still operating in a similar fashion as they did in the Gaddafi regime days, as the leadership and editorial management remains the same, and this can be said for both factions.

Most channels are based outside Libya so it would be hard to keep them in check. But channels take their own legal actions against individuals and politicians and vice versa.

Regulatory authorities

Amidst the armed and political division in Libya, institutions are also divided, some were relocated while new ones are established to rival the opposition and take over the governmental functions in both areas in the East and West of the country. This environment made it hard for any regulation to take place, as each of the authorities in the different parts of the country have their own set of rules and interests which they protect and pursue. The Ministry of Information has no strong registration or licensing process in place and also there are no adequate policies or laws to regulate media. And Libya is in dire need for a fund to source a monitoring process.

In Libyan media there is no self-regulating system, nor an accepted Code of Ethics, despite the many attempts among media officials and experts to draft some sort of core guidelines for journalists and institutions to follow. There is no protection for journalists or media institutions, even though the main Press Board has an office that monitors and records violations against journalists, namely the Bureau of Monitoring of Violations and Defending Journalists. The bureau issued a full report for 2017 showing vague statistics of numbers of violations and threats targeting media outlets and personnel, but they have no interest in pursuing the perpetrators, and there are no laws in place to provide the legal coverage and protection.

This includes the foreign media authorities that act as security apparatus rather than a managing and facilitating body for foreign press to come to Libya to cover news. The process to obtain journalistic visa has been made much harder, to deter journalists and researchers from coming, and this has led freelancers and may journalists to risk their lives by coming on business or other kinds of visa obtained through the black-market. Sometimes this leads to being under threat of attack from militias and security groups allied with the governments, and in many cases the journalists were reported by the foreign media office to these militias.

Sources

- [Law No 5 Penal Code](#)
- [Libya Center for Freedom of Press](#)
- [Libyan journalists Independent Syndicate](#)
- [Libyan Press Board](#)
- [Violations Monitoring and Defending Journalists Office](#) (No website, only Facebook page)

Education

Universities and schools

There are twelve major public universities with Media departments or faculties. These include: the University of Benghazi, Tripoli University, the Open University of Libya, Misrata University, the University of Zawia, Azzaytuna University, the Omar Mukhtar University in Bayda, Elmergib University, Sirte University, Tobrouk University, Ajdabia University and Sabha University.

According to a 2014 survey Omar Mukhtar University had the largest number of students enrolled with 100 students per year, followed by Tripoli University which had 60 students enrolled. Other faculties varied between 20-30 students. Apart from the main university departments there are also several newly founded colleges and also a number of private universities, but these are not as populated or considered for media and journalism studies.

The media curriculum was devised by the Gaddafi regime back in 2008 and it still used to these day omitting certain subjects and topics such as Jamahyria social studies and so on. Media schools face the challenge of providing relevant training and especially hands-on training, as most of the curriculum is theory oriented, with very little practical experience. A major factor is that it's obligatory for the teaching staff to hold media degrees and most of those hired are academics who have not practiced media professionally themselves.

A number of international organisations such as the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) and others, established media labs in few of these schools. Yet graduates still lack the opportunity to refine their skills, due to various reasons which include the way the educational experience was designed. For instance, students do not need to show their skills to pass exams or graduate, it is only mandatory to sit written exams. There is also the issue of the very little time each student gets to have hands-on practical training in the labs. Finally, in conservative areas such as Misrata, female students shy away from sharing facilities with male students.

There are a number of international and European NGOs who provide short and long term training, but the majority of these trainings take place in the neighbouring country of Tunisia due to poor security inside Libya. This also proves to be challenging for female students because it is considered taboo to travel alone.

The undergraduate courses are four years long, and there are graduate courses offered in limited schools including the Media and Art Faculty of the University of Benghazi, which has four departments including Journalism, TV and Radio, Arts and Theater and Public Relations, with 43 staff members and 2,500 students as of 2018 as it became increasingly popular in East Libya. The University of Benghazi had 80 Graduates in 2018.

Media is still viewed as a male-dominated field in Libya as the conservative community looks down on female media professionals and views them as socially unacceptable. Despite this fact most of the media schools are either gender balanced or slightly female dominated in the number of students. Nevertheless challenges begin once the female media students graduate and they are faced with pressure from families and the community to go out and join the media profession.

Professional development

The Gaddafi regime heavily monitored the media, and after the uprising in 2011 a new era of openness ensued, but it was disorganised and chaotic, causing confusion in journalists and media professionals. They began debating what it means to be

a journalist and searched for guidelines to lead the way, but they went astray as the state was in disarray and lacked any strategy to deal with the issue. Having no boundaries made media professionals more lost rather than liberated, especially after the many years of restricted environment.

After many years of pre-packaged media content which focused on praising the regime, the majority of the media professionals are still trying to use a similar mentality and formulas in the current state of events, by focusing on individuals and praising them, while slanting the oppositions and branding them as traitors of the nation and enemies of the people. This still receives a wide attention from the older generation who are used to such narratives and are programmed to reject new ideas, while the younger audience demands more from the media managers and professionals, requiring media with more transparency, neutrality and professionalism.

Most channels are actually funded by one group of interest or another, and they demand loyalty and use a more aggressive narrative to rally support for their political agendas, aimed at discrediting oppositions using rumours and fake news. Hence the audience shifts from one media outlet to the other when there is a drop in quality or an outlet is no longer able to provide the audience with sensible answers to the most relevant and burning questions and the conversation drifts away from the reality. These media outlets are often stuck battling irrelevant issues or downplaying much more important issues, such as elections, spread of weapons, corruption, etc.

But this applies to private media outlets and not to the state-owned ones who face bigger issues, as the staff is hired by a public procedure requiring specific qualifications, which results in the majority of employees being the same from the Gaddafi era. This makes it hard to modernise and keep up with the demand, producing non-newsy reports and redundant content which seems to follow the old regime formula of having no proper sourcing, only relying on the government's statements and glorifying public figures.

Media Development Organisations

Currently there are no structured media development organisations in Libya, while there are much needed efforts in different aspects. Firstly, developing management skills to promote sustainability is a need for both government and private outlets, as it could help them to survive in the medium term. Such skills include strategic planning, developing commercialisation and advertising strategies, providing time management and human resources training programmes.

Al Wataniyah TV is a prime example, as its management structure is directly inherited from the previous regime and relies on the former staff and managerial structures. Similarly, the GNA Media Office has expressed a keen interest in receiving support to improve its internal communication in order to increase its efficiency and communicate more systematically to the Libyan people.

There is also a need for further journalistic training programmes. Journalists and presenters need to improve their reporting, editing and presenting skills as well as their overall professionalism if they want to gain the trust of their audiences. The lack of trained personnel is hampering the development of existing outlets (like *Libya Al Hadath TV* and *Havana Radio*), and is also a barrier for new media outlets to enter the sector.

Technical skills also need to be developed concurrently with journalist training so that Libyan media outlets can survive autonomously, without having to rely on international support. For instance, the private Benghazi-based radio station *Radio Shabaab Libya* commented that they received a lot of journalistic training but not enough technical training, such as how to use mixing tables and other studio equipment.

The EU and multiple other international organisations funded numerous development projects, but they were short lived and irrelevant to the Libyan case. The main reason is that these organisations are not based in the country and they have very little access to Libyan journalists, except for those who are capable of travelling back and forth to Tunisia for training. Attending the training is extremely expensive and attending them makes very little difference. These courses may best be provided in the longer term by supporting University Media Departments.

It is noteworthy that governmental media development centres existed in the past, and like most of the government bodies they have been struggling or ceased to exist. In 2015, the New Media Development Center which was based in Tripoli and had many branches across Libya, relocated to East Libya after the civil war broke out in Tripoli. Identically most government entities split up between East and West, and new ones were formed. The main branch of the New Media Development Center was reopened in Tripoli after the new UN-backed government came to office, but due to bad management and lack of resources, its activities are limited to posting news on its Facebook page, as even its website was closed down after the initial relocation to the East. The Interim government decided in August 2018 that it was too costly to keep the centre opened in Benghazi and decided to shut all offices.

Sources

Universities

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- [Azzaytuna University](#)
- [Benghazi University](#)
- [Elmergib University](#)
- [Misrata University](#)
- [Omar Mukhtar University](#)
- [Sabha University](#)
- [Sirte University](#)
- [The Open University of Libya](#)
- [Tobrouk University](#)
- [Tripoli University](#)
- [Zawia University](#)

Media development organisations

- [DW Akademie in Libya](#)
- [Media in Libya – Stability through Reconciliation](#)
- [New Media Development Center](#) - East Libya Interim Government (No website, only Facebook)
- [New Media Development Center](#) - Tripoli-based, UN-backed Government (No website, only Facebook)

Telecommunications

Mobile network ecosystem

There are three main mobile operators in Libya: Libyana, LibyaPhone and Almadar. The market share is dominated by Libyana (over 55 percent) and Almadar Aljadeed (44 percent), and all of the three companies are owned and run by the state.

Mobile network coverage is available on less than 20 percent of the 1,777,060 square km of the country's total area, but this is to be expected as more than 80 percent of the population lives in urban areas which make up nearly 20 percent of the country's territory. But this also proves to be a challenge for those travelling around the country as there is no phone reception once they are outside of these populated areas. This is particularly true for southern parts of the country, so if one is to travel on the road to Kufra or Sabha there is hardly any phone coverage for most of the journey. This is different for those travelling along the coastal line strip, as most urban concentration falls there.

Almadar focuses on providing premium services and recently introduced H+ services, which was widely appreciated and viewed as a step forward for all the telecom industry. It is still relatively more expensive compared with other options, but it offers the most stable and flexible connection on the market.

Its competition Libyana offers LTE/4G services but has been struggling with its overly subscribed network and its Internet is considered the worst out of all available services in Libya, but it has the cheapest tariffs and costs, as well as the most widely spread network coverage across the country.

Company profiles

Libya Post, Telecommunication and Information Company (LPTIC) was established in 2005 by the Prime Minister decree number 63 to become the holding company and owner of all communication companies in Libya. It was headed and partially owned by Colonel Gaddafi's eldest son Mohammed Gaddafi. LPTIC has been established for the purpose of investment in telecommunications infrastructure in the country and abroad, and the company owns a group of investments inside and outside the country, including investment portfolios in Argentina, UAE, Canada, Mauritius, Cote D'Ivoire, Italy, UK and Saudi Arabia.

LPTIC subsidiaries include the following:

Al-Bunya Investment & Services Company which focuses on investing, constructing, operating and maintaining the infrastructure facilities of the telecommunication services network in Libya.

Hatif Libya Company which is the main national telephony company, and is the owner and in charge of developing the national and local phone lines, including local systems in cities. It had 1,374,408 subscribers in 2016.

The Libyan International Telecom Company (LITC), manages all of the ports and international contacts in Libya meeting the need for international communication from other LPTIC subsidiaries from telephony to data services.

Aljeel Aljadeed is a more modernised and diversified services company. It provides fixed lines, mobile and Internet service and TV broadcasting.

Libyana Mobile Phone Company has the biggest market share for mobile phone operators in Libya. It was established in 2004 and began offering GSM mobile services in September 2004 and GPRS services in 2006. It has the largest market share in Libya but it does not provide the best services and has issues coping with the large number of customers. It has 6,988,218 mobile phone subscribers and 2,086,237 mobile data/Internet subscribers.

Almadar Aljadeed Company was founded in 1996 and it began offering services to the public in 1997. It's the most popular and respected mobile operator in Libya, with a very good network coverage and Internet services, as well as premium

services for businessmen and clients. In 2013 it was recorded that Almadar had 4.841.749 subscribers.

Libya Telecom and Technology (LTT) was founded in 1997, and it dominates the ISP sector. Also it's the most used Internet service provider for Libyans through its DSL, WiMax and recently introduced 4G services. It has nearly 400,000 subscribers and is also the owner of the LibyaPhone mobile service with around 80,000 subscribers.

Other subsidiaries are Libya Post which is the country's main postal service and the investment arm LAP Green Networks which oversees the investments outside the country.

Following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, a number of ISP licenses were issued, and the number continued to rise and today there are more than 25 ISP connections and more than 23 VSAT connection. A number of these private companies managed to find footing on the Libyan market providing local services, while the state is encouraging competition but still in control of the Internet. The main players in these companies are Ion Telecom and Technology (mainly in the eastern parts of the country), RAWAFED LIBYA (mainly in the western parts of the country) and Trans-Sahara IT and Communication (a VSAT company with focus on providing ICT solutions and services to oil companies where mobile and Internet services are not available).

Main trends

Libya has a liquidity crisis and this drove many banks, entrepreneurs and communication companies to innovate to provide solutions. The most popular and widely used option is the mobile money option, as Libya's biggest private bank Commerce and Development Bank which was the first mover it introduced its Edfaly (Pay me) mobile payment service, followed by Almadar mobile company introduced its SADAD Mobile Payment service which has not spread across the country as of 2018.

There are not many software companies in the country, the main one is dependent on the government for its projects as it's relatively costly to develop an app, as the online payment market is not functional and there is no e-money legal framework to regulate the online payments. But this still did not slow down software company Sadeem Tech from launching their online shopping platform Spiza. The most used apps are still the free classified ads Open Sooq and Essale, which is a live feed for the black market exchange rates.

Mobile coverage

The East and West were rejoined after the collapse of the regime and new plans for investments and improvements were maturing, but these were faced with the 2014 civil war that led to splitting the government, and the East government took control over half of the country's Internet and mobile network. This continued until a solution was reached between the eastern and western authorities to rejoin both branches in December 2015.

Telecom and Internet services have been regularly disrupted for number of reason including the regular blackouts across the country, other times the cuts are caused by the government or militias to keep news from spreading, while the infrastructure is subject to sabotage from copper thieves who cut the cabling and batteries to sell the material as scrap metal, with engineers and staff facing security threats when attempting to fix isolated sites or remote facilities.

In September 2018 disputes and tensions arose between the eastern and western authorities because of alleged corruption reports and this might lead to tearing the network once more, slowing down the Internet and dropping the mobile coverage across the country, especially in the southern parts of the country, also stopping all running projects and future investments.

Mobile ownership

Mobile phones are the most used form of telecommunication in Libya with 201 percent penetration rate, as opposed to the fixed line that has only 19 percent penetration rate, and the Internet with less than 20 percent penetration rate.

Libya has 11,660,068 mobile phone subscribers with an average of 201 subscriptions per 100 people. It's very common to see people carrying two or more phones as the two main companies Libyana and Almadar have varying signal strength in different parts of the cities and also offer different services and rates. All companies provide PAYG (pay as you go) services, but proof of ID and other documentation are required to acquire a SIM card. In 2017 the mobile companies deactivated all foreigners' mobile sim cards claiming that "it's a step intending to maintain national security" and demanding they show a valid visa and a photocopy of their passports.

Notably Libya has the lowest prices for mobile in the region. The LTT company introduced three new pay-as-you-go packages for the 4G subscribers, which are considered expensive as to subscribe to a 30 GB package it's necessary to top up LYD (approx US\$50), 20 GB come at LYD60 (approx US\$40) and 10 GB at LYD35 (approx US\$25). While these prices are expensive they are still much cheaper than the premium services provided by Almadar which charges LYD8 (approx US\$5) for every 1 GB of data.

Libyana charges LYD0.05 (approx US\$0.03) for SMS text messages with 70 Arabic characters, or 160 English characters to any network, and LYD0.25 to international numbers, while it charges calls at LYD0.06 per minute (approx US\$0.04) on the same network and LYD0.09 (approx US\$0.06) on other networks. International calls range from LYD0.70 (approx US\$0.5) a minute to the UK and Saudi Arabia and LYD1 (approx US\$0.65) a minute to Tunisia.

Almadar charges LYD0.05 (approx US\$0.03) to send SMS messages to any network and LYD0.25 for international recipients, while it charges LYD0.06 (approx US\$0.04) for calls on the same network and LYD0.09 (approx US\$0.06) a minute on other networks. International calls range from LYD0.20 (approx US\$0.13) a minute to the UK, LYD0.5 (approx US\$0.35) a minute to Saudi Arabia and LYD1 (approx US\$0.65) a minute to Tunisia.

Everyone has access to mobile phones. Yet ultra-conservative families view consider them as a taboo for young girls as they can be used for dating and talking to boys, which is frowned upon in conservative communities. Some of these girls own phones behind their families back.

Sources

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- [Almadar Aljadeed Company](#)
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- [Libya Telecom & Technology](#)
- [Libyana Mobile Phone Company](#)
- [Ministry of Communications and Informatics](#)
- [Post Libya Company](#)
- [Sadeem Tech](#)
- [Spiza app](#)
- [The Libyan International Telecom Company](#)

Innovation

Landscape analysis

Private business was not encouraged during the Gaddafi era, this was apparent as the legislation and policies were not welcoming for investments. Also Libya is a heavily oil dependent economy and the majority of the population are employed by the state. But these circumstances began to change slowly when Saif Al-Islam introduced new legislation between 2006 and 2009 to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. But the infrastructure and culture were not accommodating enough and it was not until the uprising that the private sector began to show some signs of growth. But the growth slowed down and was completely halted by the 2014 violence.

When the situation calmed down, private businesses had few opportunities to operate in a hostile and very difficult economic climate.

Islamists pushed for adapting Sharia laws in 2013 and they imposed that the country should apply Islamic banking, which led to the suspension of all loans and grants that had been offered by banks for a very low interest rate. This caused lack of funding and, together with the absence of rule of law and security, this scared away investors who did not want to take the risk.

In the absence of any state organisations to regulate the market, a shadow economy controlled the flow of goods and services, prices began to hike and inflation rates were unprecedented. But this didn't stop young people from coming up with solutions to launch news businesses and bring new products to the market. Even though it's impossible to raise venture capital there are a number of startup competitions that are funded by Western NGOs and governments. Recently with the increase of Internet speed more and more apps are now available, and online business are developing. But there is no economy of scale to match the efforts put into these new ideas and there is no legal framework to protect ideas from being copied.

Profiles of main tech parks, accelerators, hackathons

Saif Al-Islam had projects to open up accelerators and has managed to establish a number of incubators in universities and research institutes. But these are state run and they follow government policies including hiring people with degrees and academics, with trainers usually lacking the necessary skills as well as credible experience. Libya is ranked 140 out of 144

countries for ICT readiness and last (144th) on innovation on the World Economic Forum 2015 Global Competitiveness Index. In the same report Libya was ranked the worst country in three categories out of the total ten in the 2015 Networked Readiness Index (NRI). These were Government Usage, Economic Impacts and Social Impacts.

Libya has a number of organisations that are responsible of fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, but they are mostly part of the government: the ministry of Industry has an entity called Industrial Research Center (IRC), which has a number of laboratories and an office that hands out patents, but it lacks funding and proper management; the Ministry of Higher Education and Research runs the Libya Authority for Research, Science and Technology (LARST), which has 33 research centres across the country.

There is also a number of business incubators, four of which are based in the major universities and are therefore very student-centred.

The private sector, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) seem to be doing much better and have more impact.

Established in 2010, Tatweer Research is based in Benghazi and is one of the most vibrant and active Hi-Tech R&D companies in Libya. It recently launched its Tatweer Entrepreneurship Campus (TEC) in Benghazi, with plans to open more branches in Tripoli and other cities in the coming years.

She codes is a women-led and -focused startup that teaches coding to Libyan women and children.

Fablab Libya is a non-profit organisation based in Benghazi, which focuses on delivering training to young children and women on various aspects of technology.

BYTE is a social enterprise based in Benghazi, and it recently launched its co-working space.

Abhath is a newly established social enterprise that designs and manufactures prosthetics.

There is no innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem to link all of these organisations and thus they work independently, without any clear impact. Despite the effort from international organisations and international donors, there are a number of programs that focus on economic diversification and innovation such as the EU-funded Support to Libya for Economic Integration, Diversification and Sustainable Employment (SLEIDSE) which is managed by Experise France.

Sources

- [Abhath](#)
- [BYTE](#)
- [Fablab Libya](#)
- [Industrial Research Center](#)
- [She codes](#)
- [SLEIDSE](#)
- [Tatweer Research](#)

Traditional forms of communication

Summary

Internet and telecommunications are relatively new to Libya, and were widely introduced only in the past ten years. Traditional forms of communication are still widely used by people, as there is a tradition of having huge gatherings at funerals and solace, which take place over three days of mourning and are held in large tents. Relatives, friends and acquaintances offer condolences, and engage in general discussion while drinking tea and Turkish coffee; sometimes speeches and poetry are delivered. This also happens in weddings and other ceremonies, as relatives and acquaintances are invited for a ceremonial meal, with hundreds and sometimes thousands turning up at these events. Also there are poetry sessions which are popular but these are male-only like most social events in Libya.

Other common social events are gatherings of tribesmen to discuss tribes' affairs and sometimes different tribal elders meet to solve their tribesmen issues as customary law acts in the place of the courts and judicial authorities. The mediation takes place over accidents, disputes and even homicide, including negotiating reparations and punishment.

Theatre is very popular but its limited to comedy and drama, it is mainly seasonal as the bulk of the theatres open in the holy month of Ramadan, during the rest of the year it's mostly free admission for trainees and public groups to present their plays. There are hardly any musicals or other forms of art that are open to the public, except for the occasional events held by individuals or organisations for various celebrations when they hire traditional musicians and ensembles. But musicians are harassed by conservative groups since the Gaddafi days and many of the popular musicians had to retire after being threatened or sometimes even faced jail time for different accusations and charges such as indecency or corrupting the public taste and culture or going against religious teaching.

In a phone interview with the author Mohamed Bin Omran, the head of culture in Benghazi Municipality during the Gaddafi regime, confirmed that there were a number of theatre plays back in 2006 which indirectly addressed social and political issues. For example *Al Mostashfa* (The Hospital) was a play that criticised how a hospital is badly managed and how corruption is widely spread among all levels of government. Another play, *Kawchi Ya Kosha* (Bake, Oh Bakery), shed light on the everyday life of a poor neglected neighbourhood, with very bad public services, from bad electricity to sewer systems, where a visit from an official is expected. The play was very critical of how corrupt the government was, and how oppressive the regime was. Many of the play actors including Mohamed Bin Omran were interrogated numerous of times and have been imprisoned for extended period of times.

While religious figures enjoy a heightened social position as they deliver speeches at public events and recite verses of the Quran, especially on Friday, as people gather to listen to the weekly Islamic Khutbah. The two warring governments and their General Authority of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) actually dictate these sermons. The speeches vary from one mosque to another, or from one city to another depending on which political or ideological group has influence over the area. For example some of these sermons are used to deliver certain political views discrediting opposition and enemies. This led a large part of the population, especially youths, to distrust religious institutions, even viewing them as a part of the crisis, and the number of people attending these sermons has declined significantly.

Libya Post is the main postal service and it has only 214 offices across the country, but it is uncommon for the public to use it, as informal methods are preferred and the government, which is heavily dependent on paper-based communication, uses its own internal capacity, where a staff member is appointed to deliver all of the organisation's posts, a task which at times requires travelling by plane or car.

Many reports indicate that media are affected by the overall security and social situation in Libya. Many of the challenges are inherited from the previous regime, but are also caused by the current turmoil. This makes it rather difficult to differentiate

fake news from real news, increasing the distrust in media by the general public and the virality of rumours.

Sources

Government of National Accord (UN-backed Government) bodies

- [Dar Al Ifta](#) (House of Fatwa). Grand Mufti
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- [General Authority of Endowments and Islamic Affairs](#) (Awqaf). Tripoli-based
- [General Authority for Media and Culture](#) (No website, only Facebook page)
- [General Authority of Endowments and Islamic Affairs](#) (Awqaf)
- [Supreme Committee for Ifta](#)

Interim Government (Based in East Libya)

- [General Authority for Media and Culture](#) (No website, only Facebook page)
- [General Authority of Endowments and Islamic Affairs](#) (Awqaf)
- [Supreme Committee for Ifta](#)

Conclusions

Conclusion

TV, Radio and social media are the main three sources of information consumption, but hate speech and lack of professionalism are harming the peace process. There is a need for a unified press message, or at least a common ground, to bring everyone together instead of inciting further violence and spread grievances. Pluralism must be encouraged and totalitarian views must be rejected from the media landscape, which needs less focus on personalities and more promotion for discussion on various topics.

Legislation and up-to-date policies are much needed, to address the issues of freedom of press and regulate the media environment. Licensing and accountability processes are a must to keep watch over the sources of funding and eliminating any possibility of political corruption and defamation of public figures, as media are used as a tool of war and as a means to sort enmities among clashing factions.

The press needs a lot of work and support, a publication and reading culture needs to be encouraged and funded at this stage. Security is required for the newspapers and magazines to operate and to establish a secure distribution network in every city of the country.

Journalism associations and trade unions must be formed to end the impunity and the imposing threats facing journalists, also a code of ethics must be agreed and the general public needs to be educated and made aware of the importance of media, especially independent media. Also cooperation between educational institutions and media outlets must increase to provide internships and more hands-on training, and universities need to bring more experts to their staff and be more flexible, also encouraging student-led media outlets.

Libya needs to draft and implement a proper strategy and a National Innovation System, to encourage a more systemic growth in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. But this also requires financial resources for startups and better legislation to foster the entrepreneurial environment as well as private-sector-friendly legislation.

Civil society needs to fight more to create social awareness on the importance of freedom of speech, freedom of expression and the right to information, through campaigns and also on social media platforms. A call for more gender equity and acceptance for women in the media workplace is also necessary.

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