

# MEDIA VISION FOR LIBYA:

*A “Good Offices” Conference*

CONVENED BY:



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY  
IN QATAR



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Northwestern University in Qatar was founded in 2008 by parent organization Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA in partnership with the Qatar Foundation. NU-Q draws on Northwestern University's distinguished schools of communications, journalism, and liberal arts to educate students for leadership positions in the rapidly evolving global media industry. As part of its active role in the development of a 21st century knowledge-based economy in Qatar, NU-Q engages in research, thought leadership, and service relevant to Qatar, the Middle East, and the global community.

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# Introduction

*Imagining a “media vision” for a country wracked by civil war after decades of autocratic rule is a daunting task. But that is the challenge for several countries caught up in and redefined by the Arab Spring of 2011*

Nowhere is that more true than in Libya whose press has been mostly state owned and where the institutions and infrastructure that typically buttress freedom of expression and an independent media had virtually disintegrated under the 40-year rule of Moammar Gadhafi.

It was this condition that stimulated the interest of Northwestern University in Qatar and prompted an invitation to the Libyan government and media to consider joining a “good offices” conference to think strategically about the role, function and operations of a new media system that is emerging in their country. That conference, officially endorsed by Libya’s ruling National Transitional Council and convened in Doha, Qatar on December 10-11, 2011, brought together 17 conferees charged with responsibility for fashioning media policy and directing media operations.

This report captures the essence of those two days of the Media Vision for Libya “good offices” conference, in which Northwestern University in Qatar served as an impartial platform for and arbiter of a debate aimed at defining freedom of expression, the Libyan context, and the steps necessary to assure free and sustainable media.

It is a photograph in time recounting what happened between and among the participants rather than a comprehensive study of the state of Libyan media or a strategic plan for their future. That process involved an encounter with systematic knowledge about media governance,

the media economy, media technology policy as well as education and training - all informed by experience. What happened at the conference resulted in a statement of principles on media freedom and independent media, as well as a modest action plan to jump-start the process. While the conferees literally represented their country and its media, their experience in government or media was limited and in some cases nonexistent. And their longevity as the de facto voice of Libya was also uncertain. Indeed the chairman of the delegation and vice-chair of the NTC resigned in controversy three weeks after the conference, in response to critical demonstrations unrelated to this conference and its findings.

Each of the major conference sessions is captured here. You will hear the voices of the conferees themselves as they struggled with the complexities and nuances of media development in the wake of a cruel dictatorship and continuing strife in their country. For all Libya’s pain, the conference provided a rare opportunity for a nation to begin re-inventing its media system.

What follows is a report on the Media Vision for Libya deliberations and their outcome. The conference benefitted from the participation of Dr. Nabil El-Araby, Secretary General of the Arab League, who pointed out the importance of media freedom for a state that wants to function as a respected member of the global community.

We are indebted to media economist Robert Picard of the Reuters Institute at Oxford University, media training executive Joyce Bamathan of the International Center for Journalists and technology policy expert Robert Pepper of Cisco Systems for expert presentations that guided the discussion and helped shape options and choices.

Special thanks to Patrick Forbes of Forbes Associates, whose work in Libya and negotiations made the conference possible as well as others who helped at NU-Q and the NLC. ☺

Everette E Dennis, Dean and  
CEO, Northwestern University in Qatar



Developing a media system to match Libya’s ambitions will be a crucial step in the transition to democracy

## The need for the conference

With virtually no media industry, Libya had to find a way to step into the future

**F**ew countries in modern times have been in better position to assess and imagine the kind of media system they might encourage and create than Libya.

Wracked by civil war after four decades of autocratic rule and a virtual meltdown of institutions and infrastructure, Libya has the dubious distinction of what could be a clean slate in seriously addressing the kind of news media and journalistic environment its people need, want and deserve.

Unlike other transitional societies such as Eastern and Central Europe after the fall of Communism, which had rigid and fixed media institutions of the previous regime, many of which were simply transferred over to new rulers, Libya has no such analogue. While it is true that there has been a flurry of new newspapers, websites and other media outlets across the country, they live in

a society without consensus on the role and future of the news media, as well as other communications industries and outlets.

Virtually all independent outside observers will agree that the country has:

- ◆ No settled media law and regulation that define the relationship between government and media
- ◆ No agreement about the economic framework under which media can live and thrive
- ◆ No clear vision about the role of technology in providing platforms to support a viable media system
- ◆ No consensus on a philosophy and standards for professional journalism vis à vis social media messaging
- ◆ No clear model for journalism and media education and training



Delegates and guest experts at the conference table in Doha

“Libya can take ownership of its media and define its role in the country, thus avoiding the experience of other nations in transitional societies that have seen their media bought up by outside commercial interests or taken over by the government.”

In the face of these deficits, Libya could have the will and wherewithal to imagine, envision and design a media system appropriate to the needs of its citizens, evolving institutions and society. Libya, through its governmental and media representatives and stakeholders, including the public, can create a Media Vision that accounts for existing enterprises and encourages new ones. Libya can take ownership of its media and define its role in the country, thus avoiding the experience of other nations in transitional societies that have seen their media bought up by outside commercial interests or taken over by the government. It was to this purpose that this Media Vision conference was dedicated. ☺

## “Good Offices”

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) offered its “good offices” and commitment to impartiality to provide a neutral forum, assisted by world-class experts as advisers and resources that assisted Libyans in talking among themselves to reach tentative consensus on several topics. NU-Q convened and conducted the conference funded with its own resources as an independent, uninvolved party.

NU-Q sought to facilitate consensus from the conferees on several topics, noted in the program, but did not endorse any legal policies or positions, express preference for specific economic and business models, or recommend technological solutions or commercial products.

That we left to the Libyan conferees to discuss as they sought to find consensus and agree on solutions.

NU-Q also offered counsel on matters related to freedom of expression and modes for achieving media freedom; the role of independent journalism in a pluralistic or democratic society; factors involved in the production of quality journalism aimed at an informed populace; and methods and approaches proven effective in the education and training of journalists and other media professionals.

With the Arab Spring, this “Good Offices” approach has, if anything, become even more important. Several countries in the region have new governments and, as the problems facing Libyan media demonstrate, in many areas they are beginning anew. The solutions to many of these problems already exist in countries around the world, but the region’s new governments are wary of being accused of being influenced by outsiders.

Conferences like this provide the best of both worlds: the opportunity to draw on expert advice in an impartial environment.



# The state of Libyan media

The industry has blossomed since the revolution, but the growth has been uneven

Interview with a military commander during the revolution

**M**edia in Libya are undergoing the most fundamental changes in the history of the country. As it makes a transition from over four decades of dictatorial rule and a bloody yet inspiring revolution, it is no understatement to say that the development of traditional and new media will be one of the most critical steps needed in establishing a democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation.

The international media played a major role in the success of the 17 February revolution. They helped to win the support of NATO and Arab countries, a key factor in gaining international recognition for the NTC as well as military and economic support.

Under the Gaddafi regime, media were more highly centralized with most studios and bureaus located in Tripoli, depriving the revolutionaries of access to a state broadcaster. Al Jazeera was

“The immediate blossoming of a new Libyan media came with the press in Benghazi.”

the channel of choice for the NTC when it wanted to communicate with Libyans. The creation of Libya Ahrar, based out of Doha, was the first ‘free’ Libyan station to be carried on the important Nilesat satellite and, along with Libya Al Hurra, the first channel to be broadcast from free Libya (Benghazi), attracted viewers and made important contributions.

The immediate blossoming of a new Libyan media was in Benghazi, where over 100 newspapers and magazines sprung up during the revolution, staffed by eager young volunteers with little or no past experience and facilitated by a free printing press. Distribution channels were weak, and only a handful of publications built a clear brand and a loyal following, but the spirit of those embarking on this new career path was arguably as important as the output that they delivered. People were free to write what they liked, and they grasped the opportunity with both hands.

With the liberation of Tripoli and the killing of Gaddafi, the media in Libya has expanded in a number of directions, with little interference or support from the NTC. While the independence of the media should be applauded, there are a number of structural and policy decisions that will have to be taken to resolve a growing number of knotty issues.

First and foremost, media today are operating in a legal vacuum. Law No 76, with provisions for the creation of newspapers and magazines under the control of the government, is completely ignored. As a result, media is entirely free, with no rules or regulations setting out standards or licensing criteria, and no legal framework for those committing libel or slander. Media outlets have simply sprung up and have had no guidance from the NTC on what is expected or allowed of them.



Secondly, the legal vacuum has left the role of the government, and its relationship to state owned and privately held media, unclear.

Under the Gaddafi regime, an umbrella of various organizations controlled the media. These organizations handled the foreign media, as well as promoted the officially sanctioned press, culture and other functions.

State employees in the media sector number over 6,000, and many have either not returned to work or are simply sitting in their offices with nothing to do. The new government may need to study and evaluate the role of these employees and integrate them into a new system that will not see the same complete dominance of the state. Many may find themselves without their old jobs. In a similar vein, the state television channel, Libya TV, and the newspaper, February, are funded by government money, giving them an advantage over private stations.

The current dearth of both media laws and established institutions poses many challenges to Libya, but it also provides an opportunity: to develop a framework in which media can play an integral and productive role in a robust democratic society and a thriving 21st century economy. ☺



# Media in Libya

## December 2011

A Free Libya media center in Benghazi during the revolution

## Training

- ◆ No institute for training journalists
- ◆ Most journalists did not graduate from the media faculties at the two major universities

## TV

- ◆ The most influential
- ◆ New channels founded by wealthy businessmen providing competition to revolutionary channels
- ◆ Content primarily discussion shows
- ◆ Daily news limited compared to Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya

## Radio

- ◆ Most towns have several stations
- ◆ Foreign language stations appearing (previously banned)
- ◆ Content limited, but becoming more varied

## Online

- ◆ Popular with those under 30, but internet access is limited (estimates of six percent)
- ◆ All major organizations use Facebook, mostly in Arabic
- ◆ Facebook has played a role in spreading misinformation

## Cinema

- ◆ Only two screens in the country

## Print

- ◆ Initial excitement, dampened by commercial realities
- ◆ Many Benghazi papers have closed
- ◆ Tripoli has three or four clear frontrunners that appear likely to succeed
- ◆ No national newspaper
- ◆ None have licenses and may need them in future



## Facilitating consensus

– by *Everette E Dennis*

**W**e gather here today for a singular purpose: to discuss Libya's media in the aftermath of a courageous revolution that removed a tyrant and his regime from power and set your country on a new course. We who are not Libyans here in the room approach the task before us at this conference humbly and with awe, and admiration for what you Libyans here present – and your countrymen and women back home – have already achieved. You played a vital role in bringing the story of Libya to world attention as you gave voice to the Libyan people and communicated the values of the revolution.

One of those values brings us here today – and that is freedom of expression and a free and independent media.

We at Northwestern University in Qatar are honored to be your hosts for this “good offices” conference, in which we will offer a framework for discussion. We will consider the four great pillars of media freedom as a platform for you – your vision and views about what kind of media system Libya needs, deserves and wants. We are your hosts, but this is your conference.

Northwestern University in Qatar, in concert with our parent university in the United States and its two famed schools of journalism and communication, are pleased to be based here in the Middle East, where the awakening of the Arab spring has special resonance for us and our values in support of freedom of expression and

an independent media. That is what we are committed to doing in our instruction, research, and service. It is those values that bring you and us together today.

Our job is to facilitate consensus from you, the conferees, on the overall goals, shape and purposes of your media system and policies. We are impartial about any and all views you might express, the debates that will emerge or the decisions, if any, you ultimately take.

We will frame a discussion and debate about matters of governance, the media economy and technological solutions, as well as education and training. We are aided in that task by three distinguished experts to whom we are grateful for their presence and involvement.

They are among the world's most eminent experts in their respective fields and they have traveled far to be here to join in this conversation.

There is an old saying that posits that life is a conversation that begins before we arrive, continues while we are present and goes on for years after we have left the circle and passed from this earth. In convening this conference we acknowledge that we are already late to the table. You began the conversation we join today years ago, even before the revolution, but even more passionately and intensely since then. We are privileged to sit with you in this deliberation knowing that what is said here will continue well into the future as you and only you fashion a Media Vision for Libya. ☺

## The search for wise rule

The Arab Spring shows that the region's people want clear rules backed by an independent media

– by *Nabil El Araby*

**I**t gives me great pleasure to be with you today discussing a free, independent media for the new Libya. The Libyan revolution was the third revolution in the Arab Spring, but in my view it is the most important one. In Tunisia or Egypt, matters were easier. In those countries rulers had been in power for a long time, did not want to leave power, and maybe considered passing on the throne to their heirs, as if the people of these countries were not human and can be inherited like cattle. But thanks to the youth of these nations, the people stood firm in their squares, demanding freedom, democracy and social justice. In Egypt it all ended in 18 days with limited casualties, although they are all martyrs to a great cause. However, Libya was the only country in this Arab Spring to witness hundreds of deaths and a real war on the ground.

I visited Libya many times with Arab foreign secretaries in the 1970s, but I did not visit again until three years ago. I went at the call of the Libyan Lawyer's Union, and during my free time I wandered the streets and tried to find a newspaper, in any language, whether Arabic, English or French. I did not find anything except for pamphlets issued by Gaddafi praising his own regime.

I was amazed at how a country in the 21st century could not provide its people with the means to find out what was happening in their world. I was amazed by the billboards in the streets saying: “41 is Not a Number, it is a Life,” or “The Green Book is a Lighthouse for the World.” This was all indiscernible to me and caused me great sadness. It was a shame to see that Libyans had lived like this for four decades.

But when we look ahead and ask, “What do the people of the Arab world want?”, the answer is very simple. Arabs in the 21st century only want one thing: wise rule. Rule that defines



Nabil El Araby, Secretary General of the Arab League

estates clearly, be they executive, legislative or independent judiciary, and the fourth estate, the media. A fourth estate with independence that can criticize and hold accountable, but not be restricted in its presentation of the facts.

I hope that we will soon see free elections in Libya that can be the beginning of a democratic process. Unfortunately, we could not say that Arab media has seen an awakening until only recently. Of course, we have had long-standing outlets since the 19th century, but media in its modern sense, and especially electronic and broadcast media, which reach its audiences faster than print media, has been slow to progress. This media is important for democracy because it is an unofficial monitor of government performance.

If we look at the Western world, we can see that the most effective criticism has come from the media, followed by government bodies that are driven by this criticism to investigate and make improvements. Because of this, independent media is more than crucial, and we have to learn from past lessons to avoid making the same mistakes. ☺

# Freedom to be proud of

Libya must now seize the opportunity to build on the freedoms its people have won

– by *Abdulhafeedh Ghoga*

**W**e are here together to assess the Libyan media system, and provide support to the council’s Media Committee, in order to envision a media strategy for Libya during the transitional phase.

On behalf of the National Transitional Council in Libya, I would like to thank Northwestern University in Qatar and its dean for hosting this historical conference that aims to support the NTC’s media committee in drafting the media strategy. We would also like to thank Qatar, who stood by the Libyan people since the beginning; especially the media sector who made so much effort to support the Libyan revolution, showing it to the world and exposing it on an international level through Al Jazeera, the free media platform.

Last, I hope that the young members of our delegation will benefit from this good initiative in preparing programs and drafting policies that they see as suitable for the Libyan media vision. We didn’t hesitate to accept the university’s invitation, for it has a deep understanding of the challenges we are facing and offers prospective solutions, as well as founding principles that may help build a free Libya, a country that is aware of its responsibility towards its great people. We hope to benefit from the media specialists in order to offer the best to our people and country.

As the president of the NTC Media Committee, I am proud of the free Libyan delegation; this young generation of media personnel represent a sample of the experience and potential that Libya can offer in the media sector. The delegation includes people from different Libyan regions and walks of life, so that everyone can benefit from the experience exchange and from the specialist opinion in the media sector.

Libyan media has suffered under the burden of dictatorship; there was a total absence of free institutions, no training and not one opportunity for freedom of speech nor freedom of media.



Abdulhafeedh Ghoga, Vice Chairman of Libya’s National Transitional Council

Today we are proud of the freedom that Libya has, and the democratic system that ensures freedom of journalists, of media, and the freedom to voice one’s opinion and hear the opposite one. The NTC in Libya is seriously willing to activate freedom of speech practices and we have with us today the elite of Libyan media personnel to discuss with the finest media people in the world. They are aware of the challenges that we are facing in the long term and the challenges of the transitional phase in the short term.

We will be soon organizing important and historical elections. The organizational structure of our media committee is simple in regard of the little means we had at the beginning. Nevertheless, our youth, and some of them are participating with us today, were able to bring out the message of the Libyan revolution to the world. They had little means at the Liberty Square in Benghazi, but managed to turn the main court hall into a revolution’s voice that reached the whole world.

Our revolution was peaceful but turned into an armed one because of Gaddafi’s hostility and dictatorship. We knew all along that we were going to make it, thanks to God and to the young generation and media. ●

# 4 pillars for progress

Media governance

The media economy

Technology

Training

**I**n most democracies, the legal framework for the media has evolved over hundreds of years. To start fresh, as Libya must do, is a daunting prospect. In order to guide those initial discussions, the Media Vision for Libya conference was divided into four session based on the four pillars that are essential to the media: governance, media economy, technological change, and education and training.

Each began with a presentation from an expert in the field, after which the floor was opened up for debate. The discussions were lively at times but, over the course of two days, progress was made toward shaping a vision for Libya’s future media landscape. ●

# Media governance

**F**reedom of the press is frequently trumpeted by revolutions when dictators fall, but what does that mean? And how can it be guaranteed? Those were the issues tackled by Northwestern University in Qatar CEO and Dean Everette Dennis, as he opened the first session with a presentation on the topic, 'A Framework for Media Freedom – Governance Models to Assure an Independent Media System'.

Perhaps the most important point to understand is that, even in the most advanced democratic states, freedom of the media is a fluid concept.

Writing freedom of the press into law is not the end of the process. "Any system of free expression and free media will have lofty goals and practical problems associated with its implementation," Dennis said. "Creating a new media freedom regime for Libya must begin with an affirmation for why this is necessary in the first place."

He gave four key roles that media play in governance:

- ◆ Provide a source of accurate news and information essential to an informed public and democratic rule.
- ◆ Facilitate public discussion and the formation of public opinion.
- ◆ Focus and set the agenda for public debate.



- ◆ Serve individuals, institutions and society itself.

Freedom of the press is a lofty goal, but even its most ardent champion can be tempted to apply the brakes when they become the target of criticism themselves. The dean explained that that happened in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism, and there are signs it is happening in the wake of the Arab Spring.

So what route should Libya follow? Examples drawn from *Four Theories of the Press* were discussed:

## Media can be unruly, but should governments regulate them?

- ◆ Authoritarian, involving a mix of state media and closely controlled private ownership
- ◆ Soviet-totalitarian, where the media serve the state and are mostly owned by the state
- ◆ Libertarian, which allows unfettered freedom to write and publish on the theory advanced by John Milton that where truth and falsehood grapple... the truth always prevails
- ◆ Social responsibility, wherein rights are enumerated and duties are defined either in codified law or litigation; rights in conflict are adjudicated.

In any of these systems there will be conflict, such as the right of privacy vs. right to publish. Libya must decide what role the government and other institutions will play in settling disputes.

How then does a government decide? In keeping with the "good offices" concept, no prescriptions were offered, except that whatever system Libya opts for should encourage the growth of robust and diverse media and be constantly evaluated. The dean, however, cautioned against over-legislating, quoting Alexander Bickel who said that "the more we define freedom, the less freedom we have".

## THE DEBATE

**FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER** of Information, Khaled Najm, provided a presentation on the structure of a potential organization under the NTC: that was broadly rejected as fears were raised that giving one person or body control could restrict freedom.

Several participants went on to call for the private sector to be supported, either through privatizing public media

or by offering public funds.

In answer to questions, Abdulhafeedh Ghoga confirmed that freedom of the press and of speech will be enshrined in the new constitution and talked about the necessity of organizing the current media scene. However, he also stressed the need for the NTC to have its own channel to communicate its work.

That led on to a long debate on

possible regulation, with a strong focus on how best to ensure a variety of ownership to allow multiple voices. An independent judiciary was trumpeted as the main guarantee to press freedom.

Robert Pepper was asked to outline the role of the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC), where he held a senior position. He explained that the FCC does not

regulate content, but rather creates a structure in which organizations and voices compete, with an independent judiciary system listening to appeals against FCC decisions. Strong efforts are made to keep the FCC independent.

There was a consensus on the view of businessman Ramadan Mottawa that customers will be the ultimate regulator,

as only outlets with high standards will survive.

The Chair summarized the debate, noting that there was general agreement on enshrining freedom of expression in the constitution, but some disagreement on how to ensure both freedom and accountability, and whether the aim should be diversity or uniformity in this post-conflict era.



# Media economy

**R**evolutions are historically great creators of media, as people seek to understand what is happening and express their views on the way forward. But most outlets are not set up with commercial ends in mind. As stability returns, wealthy benefactors often withdraw their funding, commercial considerations force others outlets to close, and the field narrows.

A free media plays a key role in a democracy, so how can Libya ensure a vibrant, commercially successful sector? These were the issues tackled by Professor Robert G. Picard of the Reuters Institute, University of Oxford, in his talk 'Issues in Media Structure, Ownership, Governance and Finance in Transitional Countries'.

Libya has a relatively small population of around five million people spread over a large area, which creates distribution problems. In addition, high unemployment (particularly in rural areas) and a lack of private capital mean that domestic funding is limited.

The most pressing issue, said Picard, was to provide a short-term legal basis for media by recognizing existing broadcasters and issuing some simple, temporary rules to provide initial stability. Longer-term decisions could then be deferred to the new government, but he did suggest that the government provide incentives to investors in media.

He then tackled the issue of what to do with the existing state-controlled media, listing the



advantages and disadvantages of allowing it to continue as is, reorganizing it as public service media, or opting outright privatization. The latter option may seem simplest as it generates income and removes most government control, but Picard pointed out that it then raises questions of ownership and the motives of those in control. Foreign ownership in particular may bring in much needed expertise and capital, but profits are exported and ownership becomes more diffused.

**6%**  
Internet penetration in Libya

It may be, he said, that different rules would be applied to different sectors of the media.

Should media remain fully or partially state owned, Picard looked at a number of models around the world for ensuring proper regulation without interference, such as governing boards.

He summarized with a brief overview of the differing economics of different forms of media, explaining that content creation costs are higher in TV, whereas in print the biggest costs are distribution. He emphasized that advertising

income for broadcasters is linked to the size of the audience, which in Libya is very small. Hence major fragmentation of the broadcasting industry would impact on the sustainability of each outlet.

These are important considerations as government policy will steer the direction of the media sector, so the government must decide whether it wants a nationalized or provincial system. Each brings advantages and disadvantages, but it is up to the Libyans to decide. ●

## THE DEBATE

**CURRENTLY A SINGLE** license gives access to print, radio and TV, which it was agreed gives a licensee too much dominance.

There was general agreement that licenses for print and broadcast should be separated, and that existing print

outlets should be required to undergo a simple registration process to recognize them. Broadcasting requires more legislation as the spectrum is a limited public resource; therefore it was agreed that no long-term decisions should be taken by the interim government.

Short-term licenses would, however, be issued to make broadcasters accountable for their content. There was again debate over the role state media should play in the forthcoming election, with suggestions that a guiding body should be formed to ensure all parties

are given access. There was emphasis on radio's important role in providing a plurality of views, while training for young journalists was suggested so that they are equipped with the skills they need to make the most of this crucial period.

The Chair summarized the session by pointing out that the main issue appeared to be the legitimization of the existing actors, and then to move forward in setting the basis for future development through appropriate regulation.

# Media technology

**A**ccording to the World Bank, ICT networks are now considered the fourth vital enabling infrastructure, after water, transport and power. There is also a close correlation between investment in technology and rising productivity: for every 10 percent increase in broadband there is an incremental four percent of GDP growth.

At the same time, telecoms and media are converging, with the traditional divide between TV, phones and computers becoming increasingly blurred.

How do governments use this to their advantage? That was the subject of the third presentation, by Robert Pepper, Head of Government Affairs at Cisco Systems, entitled 'ICT infrastructure for economic, social and media development in Libya'.

Any public policy must include both social and economic goals: ensuring both diversity and social



cohesion in the first case, and promoting jobs and growth in the latter.

Pepper introduced the Global Information Technology Report, which maps 100 countries according to their ICT infrastructure and GDP. Libya ranked consistently low over the last four years when compared to countries with a similar per capita income, such as Chile, Latvia and Poland. Libya also scored poorly on the general business, regulatory and infrastructure environment for ICT; the readiness of individuals, businesses and government to use and benefit from ICT; and their actual usage of available ICT.

Libya may be starting from a low base, but Pepper predicted rapid growth, with internet traffic in the Middle East and Africa as a whole set to increase from 0.8Gb per internet household per month in 2010 to 7.3Gb in 2015.

This has potential benefits for the economy, but the government must provide the right environment for this to take place. Pepper outlined some solutions, such as providing clear rules and building the necessary infrastructure. With the increase in use of social media seen in the revolution – not all of which was accurate – he also stressed the need for a proper regulatory framework.

Finally, he expressed his hope that Libya could begin making up for lost time even during this transitional period. Libya currently enjoys worldwide interest and support, so the government can capitalize on this to make rapid advancement in as little as six months. ●



Communications technology was central to the revolution. Building a modern technology infrastructure will be central to Libya's economic and social development.

## THE DEBATE

**LIBYA'S LIMITED** infrastructure has been damaged by the war, with many microwave transmitters bombed by NATO, and there are many remote areas that have never had internet access. That means that any plans to reach the entire country will likely be expensive.

Telecoms engineer Mohammad Bala pointed out that some Libyans had little interest in the internet in any case due

to the limited amount of Arabic content. He added that while most major cities do have fibre optic cables, they often do not connect to houses, meaning that further investment will be required even in urban areas.

Asked how he would tackle the problem in the interim period, Pepper suggested a national plan that includes all the provinces and tackles the full range of infrastructure, including

water, power and transport.

He also pointed to the rapid pace of technological change, meaning that any investment must be future proof. He suggested that mobile operators share some infrastructure, such as towers, to cut costs. That would allow competition but reduce the necessary investment.

He suggested existing infrastructure be repaired, and that at the same time

operators be given temporary licenses so they can be regulated.

There was widespread interest in the possibilities of wireless internet access, particularly over mobile phone networks, as well as debate on whether or not, and how, to regulate the use of citizen journalism and social media. Patrick Forbes of Forbes Associates raised the model of GCC countries, which block access to

certain websites, but warned against using that technology to block sites that the government finds uncomfortable.

There was widespread agreement that although Libya is starting from scratch, it has the opportunity to build a modern system. That requires both allocating sufficient resources and choosing the right approach to ensure that whatever solution Libya decides on proves to be an investment in the future.



## Media training

**J**oyce Barnathan, president of the International Center for Journalists, began her presentation with an anecdote describing when, at a press conference in Moscow, Colonel Gaddafi was asked a tough question on terrorism by an Italian journalist.

“Gaddafi took a few seconds to think this over and then mumbled something. The translation: ‘What is your name? Who do you work for? And where do you live now?’”

Now, journalists have the opportunity to ask those kinds of questions in Libya without fear of the repercussions. But in order to do their jobs effectively, some form of training is required, something that was lacking under the previous regime. How best to achieve this was the subject of Barnathan’s presentation, entitled ‘Human Capital: Professional Education and Training’.

The first issue she tackled was sustainability:

there is no point in investing in media organizations that cannot survive on their own, or in teaching skills for which there is no demand.

Training centers can be important, but their funding is a crucial consideration. The same is true of foreign donors setting up media outlets – when the funding inevitably dries up, it must be sustainable.

It may be tempting then to support existing media organizations, but most of these sprung up in the revolution and some are tied to particular interest groups. How to choose who to support? In post-revolution Tunisia, organizations had to apply for help and prove their commitment to certain things such as training, she said.

The Philippines has a non-profit center for investigative reporting, but that does mean that other outlets tend to underinvest in this vital area. Journalists can also be sent abroad for training, but this is expensive and reaches a very limited

“There is no point in investing in media organizations that cannot survive on their own, or in teaching skills for which there is no demand.”

number of people, whereas a university program has more widespread benefits, though it does take time for these to take effect.

Other ideas worth investigating, she said, are distance learning, citizen journalism (possibly with professional editing), and websites that target the outside world.

She ended with another anecdote: a man visits a tailor and tries on a badly fitting suit. The tailor convinces him that if he raises one shoulder, twists a leg and leans forwards it will look much better. As he walks away two men see him. One takes pity on him for his apparent deformities.

“Yes, a pity,” replied the other. “But what a heck of a good tailor he has. His suit fits him perfectly!”

This, she said, provides a warning for Libya: other models may look good, but they must fit Libya. ☺

## THE DEBATE

**BARNATHAN** emphasized the importance of sustainability, both in terms of the way education is financed and the kind of media environment the government creates. Robert Picard

described the four possible sources of media income: readers, advertising, sponsors or subsidy.

The idea was raised of creating a media training fund into which each mainstream outlet would contribute a week’s wages per journalist.

The discussion then moved on to the current training available in Libya, with questions raised by some over the ability of universities to provide journalism training. While some

international organizations are already helping, it was suggested that the NTC coordinate their efforts to avoid duplication.

The idea of short-term training ahead of the elections was again raised.

The Chair concluded by pointing out that training is essential if Libya is to develop the media it deserves, but it is up to Libya to decide what model best suits its needs.



Delegation and guest experts shortly after the announcement of the consensus principles

# Coming to consensus

## Delegation agrees on guiding principles for media freedom

**A**ny statement of principles about media freedom will seem at first glance to be predictable and perfunctory. After all, isn't media freedom a linchpin in democracy and universally agreed upon?

The answer is a resounding “no,” as annual inventories of media freedom around the world indicate. Some countries on the “not free” list of the respected Freedom House, for example, have constitutions that guarantee media freedom and will proclaim that they have it.

For the Libyans at the NU-Q conference in Doha, media freedom was agreed upon in the abstract, but not in its specific formulations. This delegation was not a panel of media experts with long experiences either in enunciating principles of media freedom or in finding failsafe ways to protect it. They were instead the very kind of representative group of passionate and concerned citizens who are rarely engaged in such an exercise. Among their numbers were three attorneys, an agricultural engineer, a telecommunications engineer, business leaders, an actor and director, a radio journalist, aviation and energy specialist, two university lecturers, and several media coordinators, among others. All

had played a role in the revolution, some running guns and directing missile strikes, while others coordinated international media and engaged in relief work.

They all agreed that, as one conferee put it: “We must be true to the young people who led the revolution and died in it.”

If they died, in part, to overthrow a regime and replace it with good governance, it was said they wanted press freedom – and independent media, as did the conferees themselves. Coming out of 40 years of repression and with few examples of local, independent media until after the revolution the group openly admitted that they “did not know much about media and were here to learn”.

Thus for two days, with the help of outside experts, the group grappled with each of the concepts contained in the statement of principles. The arguments were passionate – and it took hours, in some instances, to reach consensus, even though the ultimate result might seem apparent to anyone not part of these deliberations.

Some of that debate that led to the principles to guide the transnational period and inform future discussions that Libya should have:

– **“A free, open and independent media and communications system.”**

This principle would move Libya away from its state-owned media and empower independent media, even though the new de facto government could be tempted to maintain total media control. This was a problem that took years to resolve in other countries in transition between autocratic control and freedom.

– **“Private media should be permitted and encouraged.”** A revolutionary result given some sentiments at the outset of the conference. Some wanted quasi-government trust arrangements or only public service media; some preferred that the new state hold on to key media holdings.

– Moving the **“state regulator to an independent regulator”** will prevent chaos in the present system and assign the independent regulatory authority for technical matters, which are essential to any telecommunication system. And importantly, the regulator would no longer deal with content.

– **“Control of content should be limited”** means an acceptance of the principle of no prior restraint, opting for a system of media laws much like those of other countries for post hoc review of libel and other concerns.

– **“State media should be transformed into independent media”.** This

principle calls for a limited role for a state broadcaster, likely one or two stations and operated as a public service trust a la the BBC or privatized. A very important recommendation by this group, achieved after hours of debate and understandings of the role and scope of state media for which this group is now responsible.

– **“A robust system for media literacy and journalism education and training”** recognizes that media literacy is vital to the functioning of democratic media, a principle virtually nonexistent in the rest of the world, and that journalism education and training should be inventoried and developed on a systematic model. Again vital in a state where media training is haphazard and reliant mostly on outside groups with their own agendas, and where journalism education in the universities needs complete revamping after 40 years of government influence.

The context for the enunciation of these principles was like “cleaning out your father’s attic”, said one who attended the sessions. “First you have to inventory what’s there, and then decide what to do with it.” This is a formidable challenge for this delegation, which is part of the government and media Libya charged with handling the assets of state media (TV, radio, magazines and newspapers, as well as some 6,000

employees on the payroll to sort out).

One of the outside experts, Oxford’s Robert Picard, put it succinctly in response to a question about what Libya can do. Well, he said, there are three possibilities. “You can leave things as they are, you can create some kind of public service media, or you can privatize.” Or, he added later, find a pathway that is a combination of all three. Doing this concurrently while thinking more broadly about the future and its framework, Libya’s Media Vision was one of the unexpected and important outcomes of the conference. As one conferee put it, “We came here with little knowledge and got master classes that

gave us a basis for sorting out our own views.”

The Statement of Principles greatly exceeded the conference organizers’ expectations. We had hoped that there might be some sense of consensus about big ideas going forward, but this goes much farther by explicitly opting for clear solutions and conveying values that have worked to advance freedom of the media in other places.

The delegation left with enthusiasm about their work at the conference, but fully aware that any outcome long term will depend on the kind of government Libya elects and the parliament that is empowered to advance a Media Vision. ●

## The Principles

*Participants at the Media Vision for Libya: A ‘Good Offices’ Conference, sponsored by Northwestern University in Qatar and the National Transitional Council, suggest these principles to guide the transitional period and inform future decisions about media policy for Libya:*

1. Libya should have a free, open, and independent media and communications system.
2. Private media should be permitted and encouraged.
3. The state regulator should become an independent regulator to direct technical, structural, and spectrum regulation, as well as to promote development of broadcasting and telecommunication services.
4. Control of content should be limited. Any limitations should be enacted by the parliament and adjudicated by an independent judiciary.
5. State media should be transformed into independent media operated as a public service trust and/or privatized.
6. There should be a robust system for media literacy and journalism education and training.



## A path forward

### Delegates recommend first steps

**W**hile the media freedom principles are a mix of idealism and practicality, the action plan is much more explicit since the work laid out must be done over a few months as Libya prepares for free elections. First and foremost, the delegates pledged to promote the principles and action plan at forums and debates across the country. The document must “be made a living thing”, one person said. The NTC has regional councils and it is those venues where the discussion will ensue.

Creating “a vehicle to ensure that the principles are embodied in the constitution” was the expressed desire of the conferees, as they pledged to support candidates who would enshrine media freedom in the constitution. There was great interest in establishing a consultative council of experts to help

work through many of the complexities of a media system mentioned at the conference. Several suggestions for funding such a venture were discussed.

The need to inventory state media is

something that the NTC and its committees can do likely with outside help to evaluate properties and determine which are likely to be viable enterprises. Temporary licensing authority for existing broadcasters prevents the chaos mentioned above. This would be a short-term solution that would need to be followed by a longer term fix and set of policies and practices.

Getting journalists trained to cover the elections seems within reach if some of the more than 11 NGOs involved in on-site training ventures can help. The creation of a code of ethics is a longer term matter but would be a step toward alleviating the worries of some conferees that the country badly needs a professional media, dedicated to quality journalism. Again, small steps to some, perhaps, but big steps for a media system coming out of a sort of dark ages for independent media in Gaddafi’s Libya. The action steps are hopeful, practical and movement in the direction of media freedom. ☺

## The action plan

*Recognizing the need for action in the interim period and realities on the ground, this group makes the following recommendations. The NTC should:*

1. Promote and discuss these principles through a series of public forums and debates.
2. Create a vehicle to ensure the principles are embodied in the constitution and future legislation.
3. Establish and convene a consultative council of experts to advise on the advancing these principles.
4. Inventory and assess existing state media and communications infrastructure.
5. Grant temporary operating authority to existing broadcasters and electronic media, until an independent regulator is established.
6. Train journalists and people in civil society to professionally cover elections.
7. Journalism organizations should create a code of ethics for Libyan media.

## List of Conferees

### ABDULHAFEEDH GHOGA

Abdulhafeedh Ghoga is the Vice Chairman of the National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya. He is also the official spokesman of the NTC and chairs the council’s media committee. During the revolution, Ghoga became recognized as the face of the NTC. He also oversaw the Media and Communications Committee, an organization comprising more than 100 Libyans tasked with the role of communicating the NTC’s messages to audiences inside Libya and abroad. Prior to the revolution, Ghoga was head of the Benghazi Lawyers Syndicate.

### SALEM GNAN

Salem Gnan is the NTC member for Nalut. A lawyer, he is also a member of the NTC’s media committee. Gnan spent much of his adult life in opposition. He was a member of the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), the most active and prominent opposition group committed to removing Gaddafi from power, and in 1984 took part in the failed mission to kill him at Bab Azzaziya. Following this mission, he was exiled abroad.

### MOHAMMED BALA

Mohammed Bala is a telecommunications engineer. Throughout the revolution, Bala played a vital role leading the Social Media Unit, part of the NTC Media and Communication Committee, which waged virtual war against the Gaddafi regime. Bala is from Benghazi and, before the revolution, was manager of projects for Libyan telecoms firm Madar.

### RAMADAN MUTTAWA

Ramadan Muttawa is one of Libya’s most prominent businessmen. During

the final stages of the revolution, Muttawa was responsible for food and medical provisions on the Libya Stabilization Group. Muttawa also led an extensive campaign to lobby UK parliament members and media organizations to win support for the revolution

### ADEL ISSA AL ZINTANI

Adel Issa Al Zintani is the media co-ordinator for the Zintan Local Council and the organizer of several exhibitions in Tripoli. Al Zintani became well-known during the revolution with his regular interviews on Al Jazeera. Returning to Libya from Canada, at first he facilitated the transport of doctors across the Tunisian border. His efforts extended to media after smuggling videos of the fighting out of the country.

### AMEL JERARY

Amel Jerary is a member of the NTC’s Media and Communications Committee, where she is responsible for translation and international media co-ordination. Since 2000, Amel Jerary has worked as a lecturer in the German and English Departments at the University of Tripoli. She has also managed Atlas Language and Cultural Services in Tripoli, which provides cultural training to foreign institutions and organizations in Tripoli.

### FATIMA GHANDOUR

Fatima Ghandour is an academic, journalist and historian with a special interest in Libyan folklore. Ghandour currently teaches in the media department of Tripoli University. She hosts a daily radio program, is a freelance contributor to local newspapers and magazines and the author of her own blog.

### KHALED NAJM

Khaled Najm is a theatre director and actor, writer and journalist. During Mahmoud Jibril’s leadership of the Executive Office, he served as deputy minister of information. Najm’s journalistic experience includes time spent as a correspondent for pan-Arab satellite channel Al Arabiya as well as having held several administrative positions responsible for media in the Benghazi municipality.

### SHAMSIDDIN BEN ALI

Shamsiddin Ben Ali is currently the Director of the Media and Communications Committee (MCC) for the NTC. He is responsible for a team of over 100 volunteers that serviced the communication needs of the NTC. Ben Ali’s critical role also extended to liaison with the NTC and Executive Office, bridging the activities of the MCC with the needs of the Libyan government. Ben Ali is a respected businessman with interests in the construction sector.

### ABOBAKER EMGAWER

Abobaker Emgawer is a TV and radio journalist from the city of Tobruk. During the revolution he was a news presenter for the satellite channel Libya Ahrar as well as the Tobruk local TV channel. He has worked for Radio Tobruk and was the host of the popular morning program *Sabah Al Kheir*.

### MOHAMMED TRESH

Mohammed Tresh is head of the NTC’s media registration center. The center is responsible for the issuing of visas to journalists, managing media lists, announcing press conferences and distributing press releases. Prior to the revolution, Tresh worked in the energy and aviation sectors.

### HUSSEIN ABDELGADER

Hussein Abdelgader is a leading Libyan expert on media law. He is currently the head of the Legal Office of the General Authority for Foreign Media, a position he has held since 2006. He has served as the director of legal affairs for the minister of culture (2004 to 2005) and also as the legal advisor to the Central Authority for Administrative Oversight.

### JALAL ELGALLAL

Jalal Elgallal is currently the civilian spokesman for the NTC. From Benghazi, Elgallal runs a successful family business that is one of Libya’s biggest importers and installer of elevators.

### AHMED SAWALEM

Ahmed Sawalem is the head of PR and international relations for the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. He reports directly to the minister, and handled announcements on repairs to the infrastructure damaged during the revolution. Prior to the revolution, Sawalem worked in the investment banking division of HSBC.

### OMAR BOSHAH

Omar Boshah is a journalist from the eastern city of Beyda.

### OSAMA MUTTAWA

Osama Muttawa sits on the Media and Communications Committee of the National Transitional Council and played an instrumental role in the command and coordination of revolutionary forces. Prior to the revolution he helped run the family business.

### HUSSAM ZAGAAR

Hussam is currently Director of the Free Media Centre (FMC), an NGO that serves as Tripoli’s first center dedicated to media training. Zagaar has a marketing background and was Accounts Manager for JWT Marketing & Communication Co. for five years.

# List of Presenters

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### NABIL AL ARABY

*Secretary General—Arab League*  
Al Araby was elected as secretary general of the Arab League in May 2011. He was one of a group of about 30 high-profile Egyptians acting as liaison between the protesters and the government and pressing for the removal of President Hosni Mubarak. Al Araby was appointed foreign minister of Egypt in Essam Sharaf's post-revolution cabinet from March to June 2011. In that time, he opened the Rafah border crossing with Gaza and brokered the reconciliation of Hamas with Fatah. He was appointed by the Egyptian minister of justice on the list of arbitrations in civil and commercial affairs in Egypt in 1995. Previously, he was legal adviser to the Egyptian delegation to the Camp David Middle East peace conference in 1978, head of the Egyptian delegation to the Taba negotiations from 1985 to 1989, and agent of the Egyptian government to the Egyptian-Israeli arbitration tribunal from 1986 to 1988. Al Araby was legal adviser and director in the Legal and Treaties Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1976 to 1978 and then ambassador to India from 1981 to 1983; he then returned to his previous post at the foreign ministry from 1983 to 1987.

### ROBERT PICARD

*Leading Specialist in Media Economics*  
Professor Robert G Picard is one of the world's leading experts on media economics and management and

government communications policies. He is director of research at the Reuters Institute, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, and a research fellow at Green Templeton College, Oxford. He is also on the faculties of the Media Management and Transformation Centre, Jönköping International Business School, Sweden; the Institute of Media and Entertainment, IESE Business School, in New York; the Center for Media Management and Economics at Tsinghua University in China; and University of Tampere, Finland. He is editor of the *Journal of Media Business Studies* and was editor of *The Journal of Media Economics* for a decade. He serves on the editorial boards of numerous other journals. Along with such publications, he is the author and editor of 25 books on media economics.

### ROBERT PEPPER

*Head of Government Affairs at Cisco Systems*  
Having joined the company in 2005, Pepper is responsible for the international aspects of the company's advanced technology policy, working in areas such as broadband, IP-enabled services, wireless, security and privacy, and ICT development. He serves on the board of directors of the US Telecommunications Training Institute (USTTI) and the advisory boards for Columbia University and Michigan State

University, and is a Communications Program Fellow at the Aspen Institute. He is a member of the US Department of Commerce's Spectrum Management Advisory Committee, the UK's Ofcom Spectrum Advisory Board and the US Department of State's Advisory Committee on International Communications and Information Policy.

### JOYCE BARNATHAN

*President of International Center for Journalists*  
Created in 1984, ICFJ is the premier trainer of global journalists and media organizations, and has offered programs, workshops, fellowships and exchanges to more than 40,000 journalists around the world. Barnathan is responsible for running the organization, long-range planning, and institutional development. She also serves as chair of the Global Forum for Media Development. Previously, she was executive editor for Global Franchise at BusinessWeek, where she helped create new editorial extensions and alliances. She oversaw editorial quality for existing line extensions, managed editorial product launches, and ensured the integration of BusinessWeek offerings across all delivery channels. As assistant managing editor, she supervised nearly every department of the magazine, including Finance, Economics, Investing and Lifestyle. Prior to that, she completed a seven-year assignment as Asia regional

editor and Hong Kong bureau manager, helping to launch the Asia edition, which earned three Overseas Press Club Awards for coverage of China's growth, Asia's financial crisis and the turmoil in Indonesia.

### EVERETTE E DENNIS

*Dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar*  
Dr Everette E Dennis is dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar. He is a well-known institutional leader and builder, educator, foundation executive and author. Dennis has extensive international experience with media in Eastern Europe, Latin America and East Asia and had assignments in Africa, Russia and Western Europe. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has served as a trustee of the International Institute of Communications. Prior to his appointment at Northwestern, he led the Center for Communications and was an endowed professor at Fordham Graduate School of Business in New York City; was founding director of the Media Studies Center at Columbia University; founding president of the American Academy in Berlin and dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Oregon. He has held professorships at four US universities and is the author of some 45 books on media industries, media law, freedom of expression, journalistic practice and related topics.