

Book Launch: December 9, 2020

Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya

Distributed by Brookings Institution Press

TRANSATLANTIC
LEADERSHIP
NETWORK

WASHINGTON, DC - On December 9th, the Transatlantic Leadership Network hosted a virtual book launch for the new publication *Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya*, distributed by Brookings Institution Press. The volume is edited by **Dr. Sasha Toperich** and **Dr. Ali Abusedra**, with **Dr. Nezar Krikish** as project director.



L-R: Dr. Ali Abusedra, Dr. Nezar Krikish, Dr. Sasha Toperich

At the launch, the project leadership announced the creation of a new platform, “**Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya.**” This new platform will expand upon the ideals discussed in the book. Its purpose will be to shift the narrative in Libya as seen by Libya’s next generation of leaders: from individualism to teamwork; from tribalism to civil society; from state-controlled administration to empowerment of municipalities and local governance; and from corrupted practices to transparent audit business practices. The platform will support reforms in education, health, and the judiciary, to name a few.



Dr. Toperich: “Both the must-read articles in this book of Libyan next generation leaders and realities on the ground in Libya today strongly suggest that any imaginable efforts to bring again about military or autocratic rule is not possible. Those days belong to Libyan history. Democracy, power-sharing, and checks-and-balances will be the great and bright future of Libyan people, for which they have aspired too long.”

Dr. Sasha Toperich, co-founder and the Senior Executive Vice President, Transatlantic Leadership Network, Washington D.C.

Project Director **Dr. Krikish** contributed to the book with an in-depth analysis of the Gaddafi era. He contended that Gaddafi’s ideology explains the nature of current events in the country, demonstrating that it is an oversimplification to allege that Libya’s ongoing chaos is only the consequence of the Revolution, NATO intervention, and inexperience of politicians.



Dr. Krikish, Chairman, Al-bayan Study Center in Libya

“Gaddafi's political culture intended to confuse the national identity of the Libyan people. Some were defined as Arabis, others as internationalists, North Africans, or those with affiliations based on tribe or region - but none as Libyan. Perhaps Haftar's failure can reignite a sense of a Libyan identity, that of a free people determined to build their pluralistic future and find progress for all its members, no matter their tribal, creedal or ethnic belonging.” **Dr. Krikish** concluded.



L-R: Alaa AbouGhrara, Ghaith Alsanusi, Nizar Aswed, Fatma Hashad, Khairia Ali Salem Erkhise

Several contributors to *Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya* participated as panelists at the book launch, all young Libyans: **Alaa AbouGhrara**, a recent graduate of the American University in Cairo; **Ghaith Alsanusi**, founding director of the Libyan Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Justice; **Niswar Aswed**, a doctoral scholar at King’s College London; **Khairia Ali Salem Erkhise**, founder of the Libyan Initiative for Empowering Women in Leadership Positions; and **Fatma Hashad**, a recent graduate of the Graduate Institute in Geneva.

Nizar Aswed concluded that Libya’s future must encompass political union, national dialogue, cessation of violence, and recognition of the wants and needs of the Libyan people. He stressed the importance of looking inwards for the solution, asking what the Libyans themselves want, and to stop looking for external intervention or guidance as a magic wand.



Nizar Aswed, doctoral scholar, King's College
London Department of War Studies

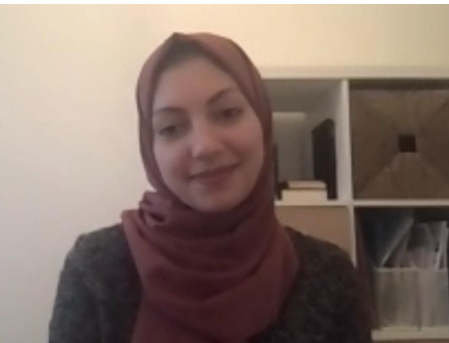
Aswed: The Libyan people have been overlooked for decades, it is time to provide them a voice and to provide them what a state (and those in charge) should legally provide their people. Fundamental protections, basic rights, freedoms, institutions, rule of law, basic access to opportunity and most of all security.

Alsanusi explains that the 2014 announcement of Operation Dignity by Haftar came at a time when tribal influence, especially in eastern Libya, was on the verge of collapse. Haftar realized that the only way to power was to revive the tribal identity and by doing so guarantee a stand. He ultimately concludes that preserving the uniqueness of Libya tribalism while abolishing policies that strengthen the tribal political system that was practiced by Gaddafi, is the only way to preserve democracy in Libya.



Ghaith Alsanusi, founding director of the Libyan
Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Justice

Alsanusi: “Gaddafi suppressed the Amazigh population for decades, denying them their rights to learn their language in order to Arabize and assimilate the Berber population...Libya did not have a military under the former regime, but militias and battalions entrusted to Gaddafi's sons and powerful tribe members. This is what Haftar also tried to revive. He failed, to the relief of the Libyan people.”



Fatma Hashad, recent master's graduate,
The Graduate Institute, Geneva

Hashad: “Libya needs different people from different demographic groups--be it gender, age, occupation, or ethnic background--to be involved in the peace-building process. We need to build our country as we see fit, and not according to some personal and foreign agendas. Reconciliation is more than agreeing to sit in the same room and set our problems and differences aside; reparations is a huge part of transitional justice. If those that have been wronged are not satisfied, we cannot move forward in a peace-building process in Libya.”

AbouGhrara, whose chapter was a testimony about overcoming adversity, expressed her hope that all women and girls who read her story will be inspired that nothing is impossible, and to chase their dreams no matter the obstacles in their lives, particularly where education is concerned.



Alaa AbouGhrara, recent graduate, The American University in Cairo

AbouGhrara: “If we want any peace-building process to succeed, and to ensure its sustainability, then we must invest in enhancing the quality of education, as well as provide better resources to accessibility to internal and external education opportunities for all young Libyans at all levels.”



Khairia Ali Salem Erkhise, Libyan Initiative for Empowering Women in Leadership Positions

Khairia Ali Salem Erkhise also spoke to the importance of education: “I am convinced that youth will make a positive change for the future of my country. That is why I chose the path of training them and to provide them with a good education early in their lives. This will help them to combat ignorance and influences that could lead to violence or terrorism. That is my philosophy now, to demonstrate through action to Libyan women and mothers what can be done to achieve peace, security and stability in Libya, and to achieve sustainable development.”

11 Libyan scholars contributed articles to *Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya*: Alaa AbouGhrara, Dr. Ali Abusedra, Ghaith Alsanusi, Niswar Aswed, Amro Azouz, Muna Diaf, Mohamed Eldarsi, Fatimah Elfeitori, Dr. Nezar Krikish, Khirya Erkhise, Fatma Hashad, Rima Kalush.



Dr. Ali Abusedra, Research Fellow, University of Hull, United Kingdom; Co-founder of the London Foundation for International Law

Dr. Abusedra: Specialized Economic Zones will be an important step to diversify the economy in Libya. SEZs will create jobs and growth in export levels, as well as improve foreign exchange earnings, enhance the know-how, and create revenue for Libya’s treasury. A general legal framework for existing SEZs will be needed as an important step to develop an environment that is efficient and attractive to foreign direct investment. This will help with stabilization and rebuilding efforts in the country as a crucial and integral part of the peace process

Dr. Abusedra concluded that, simultaneously, “Libya needs to reform the judiciary system. Full independence of the Supreme Judiciary Council is needed to reinforce the separation of powers and safeguard the institutions. Libyan Constitution should adopt an objective set of criteria and procedures to appoint, promote, suspend, and dismiss members of its judiciary. It should also regulate the disciplinary actions taken against them in accordance with the established judiciary conduct. The executive branch should have no saying what-so-ever in the appointment of the Supreme Judiciary Council members and we should all monitor very carefully that there is no political influence on the judiciary.”

Michael Barbero, Vice President of the Transatlantic Leadership Network and a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General, provided opening remarks. **LTG Barbero** visited Tripoli last year as part of a servicemember delegation from Jones Group International, where he met with GNA officials to discuss how to repel Haftar’s attacks on the capital.



LTG Barbero (ret.), Vice President,
Transatlantic Leadership Network

At the launch, **LTG Barbero** stated that he believes in a democratic Libya, praising the work of the UNSMIL and U.S. Embassy in fostering the newly renewed peace talks, which should bring about general elections in the country, scheduled for December 24, 2021.

Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya is distributed by the Brookings Institution Press in Washington D.C. More information on the Transatlantic Leadership Network’s new platform “**Voices of the Next Generation in Libya**” will be available shortly at www.transatlantic.org.

<https://www.brookings.edu/book/unheard-voices-of-the-next-generation/>

