

THE NEXT GENERATION: EMERGENT LEADERS IN LIBYA

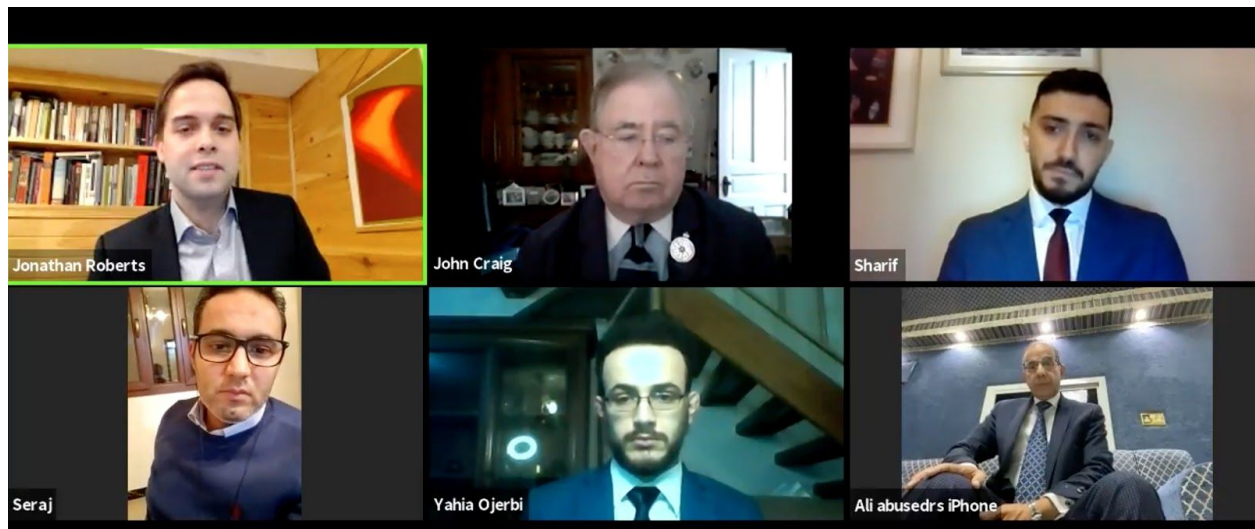
الجيل القادم: القادة الناشئون في ليبيا

Panel Session II
Tuesday, February 16, 2021
In English

WASHINGTON, DC - On February 16th, the Transatlantic Leadership Network hosted a virtual conversation as part of its new platform “The Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya.” The platform was launched following the success of TLN’s publication *Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya*, which features all young Libyan scholars and is distributed by Brookings Institution Press.

This event was the second in the panel series, and the first event in English. The first event, held in Arabic last month, will soon be subtitled in English for an international audience.

Three Libyan panelists participated: **Sharif El-Bigou**, **Yahia Aljirbi**, and **Siraj Hamad Alallam**. **Jonathan Roberts**, Assistant Director of TLN’s Mediterranean Basin, Middle East, and Gulf Initiative, gave an introduction. **Dr. Ali Abusedra** provided concluding remarks. TLN Senior Fellow **Ambassador John Craig** moderated the event.



Roberts: The Transatlantic Leadership Network is quite proud to have established an inclusive program on Libya. Libyans from all regions and backgrounds, both women and men, are participating in this new platform. Our goal is to empower Libya’s next generation of leaders and to help facilitate a narrative shift that leads to unity, dialogue, and openness.

Ambassador John Craig provided an overview of Libya's recent history.



Amb. Craig: “From the revolution in 1969 to the Arab awakening in 2011, Libya was dominated by extremist Arab nationalists under the enigmatic leader Mu’ammur Qadhafi. Libya’s politics were chaotic. Libya’s actions as an international state actor were also chaotic. The departure of Mu’ammur Qadhafi did little to change the nature of the political landscape in Libya. A weak successor government tried to get its footing, but was soon overcome by foreign intervention. Chaos deepened and so did the activities

of foreign actors in Libya’s continuing efforts to promote a more stable security and economic situation”.

Sharif El-Bigou is a strategy and investor relations analyst at the BAWAG Group, and a member of the Libyan diaspora abroad. **El-Bigou** addressed several key economic issues Libya needs to urgently address. He suggested to bring in foreign auditors and to form an anti-corruption committee to help fight the wide-spread corruption in Libya.

With almost 2000 km of coastline, Libya should also focus on renewable energy and build wind farms to diversify its energy sources, as the value and use of fossil fuels is already losing value due to the fast paced development of cleaner energies. Water desalination is another key issue Libya should focus on, along with providing more support for the agricultural sector, using and developing cutting-edge technology to secure basic self-sustainability for its citizens. Finally, **El-Bigou** underlined the importance of ensuring a modernized education system that equips students with the necessary tools to flourish in this globalised 21st century economy, with a focus on computer science, learning english and improving teaching standards.



El-Bigou: Decentralization is the key. Shifting some of the key governmental institutions to other parts of the country would help foster unity.

Yahia Aljirbi, a political analyst, suggested that corruption in Libya does not mean that the Libyan people are unethical; rather, **Aljirbi** believes that corruption is primarily connected to tribalism, in which everyone views positions of power as a means to benefit themselves, enrich their tribes, and to maintain the political status quo.

According to **Aljirbi**, the first task to eliminate corruption in Libya is to restructure education and promote the Libyan national identity over tribalism. He posits that the problem is that loyalty in Libya comes to the tribes, not to the country. Individuals elected to certain government posts are voted in only by his or her own tribe, and must answer to that tribe rather than all Libyans at the end of the mandate.

Finally, **Aljirbi** argues that, as a country dependent on oil Libya should restructure its strategy to embrace women empowerment. This key sector has been predominantly male; without including women as an integral part of this industry, overall progress in Libya cannot move forward.



Aljirbi: Corruption in Libya is a mentality problem. They go to the state treasury and steal, and then go to the mosque to pray. This is now part of the culture. Every man on the street now wants to be a part of the corruption, and not fight against corruption.

Siraj Hamad Alallam, a political activist based in Tripoli, questioned the strength of the political agreement reached in Geneva. He expressed concern that Libya will repeat what happened with the previous agreement reached in Skhirat. **Alallam** asserted that, for Libya to move forward, the situation must be called for what it is: a conflict between three regions in Libya and sixteen big tribes. There are political, economic, and security issues to resolve; **Alallam** is unsure that the newly elected government can do much without first tackling the big picture issues faced by Libya since the February 17 Revolution.

Alallam argued that Libya must address Khalifa Haftar, who still has his LNA army that arrested many people. He underlined that there are over 200,000 displaced people from Benghazi that moved to Tripoli, living in a dire situation as the government in the East stopped paying their salaries and the government in Tripoli has provided minimal assistance.



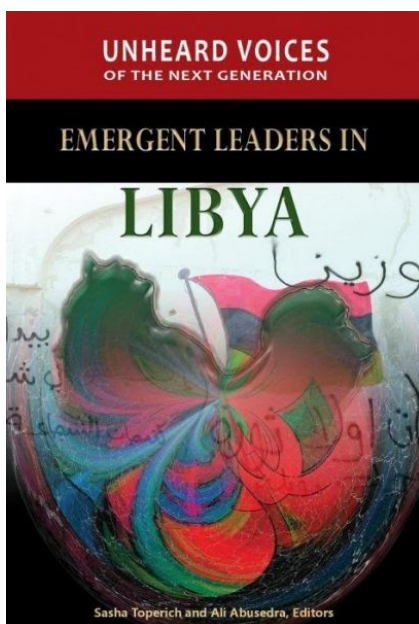
Alallam: “The good news is that the new interim government has been accepted in Libya, for now. Will it remain so in a few months’ time? If this government works hand in hand with the people and the electoral commission, I think we can make it. We will need to solve the problem of Libyans abroad, for example in Egypt, that have right to vote, or the problem of people from the South who escaped to Tripoli, but can vote in their hometowns rather than Tripoli, with 200,000 displaced people. I am from Tobruk and now live in Tripoli. I think the only solution is to find a technical way for all of us living in different cities to remotely vote for their constituency.

Dr. Ali Abusedra delivered closing remarks, summarizing key points made by all participants and further reflecting on the ideas presented. He restated the issue of tribalism and women empowerment as a subject that deserves an entire focused and dedicated discussion, as the issue is deeply rooted in Libyan culture and society. The fact that the new interim government has support in the country, at the moment, should be taken advantage of in order to gain momentum in their work.



Abusedra: “First and foremost, I want to congratulate my fellow Libyans for a dynamic and constructive discussion. Libya’s bright future is safely secured with our next generation of leaders, including you. Older people should speak less, and have young people speak more. I learned a lot from you tonight.”

ANNOUNCEMENT



Unheard Voices of the Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya will soon be available in Arabic in print and digital copies.

The Arabic edition will be published and distributed by the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies.

For more information on the new platform “The Next Generation: Emergent Leaders in Libya,” visit www.transatlantic.org/next-generation-libya/.

