

# Libya

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revolt taking place in Libya fuelled by a concern over economic issues such as poverty and unemployment as the media would have us believe? Let us examine the facts.

Under the revolutionary leadership of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya has attained the highest standard of living in Africa. In 2007, in an article which appeared in the *African Executive Magazine*, Norah Owaraga noted that Libya, "unlike other oil producing countries such as Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, utilized the revenue from its oil to develop its country. The standard of living of the people of Libya is one of the highest in Africa, falling in the category of countries with a GNP per capita of between USD 2,200 and 6,000."

This is all the more remarkable when we consider that in 1951 Libya was officially the poorest country in the world. According to the World Bank, the per capita income was less than \$50 a year - even lower than India. Today, all Libyans own their own homes and cars. Two Fleet Street journalists, David Blundy and Andrew Lycett, who are by no means supporters of the Libyan revolution, had this to say:

"The young people are well dressed, well fed and well educated. Libyans now earn more per capita than the British. The disparity in annual incomes... is smaller than in most countries. Libya's wealth has been



US President Barack Obama

fairly spread throughout society. Every Libyan gets free, and often excellent, education, medical and health services. New colleges and hospitals are impressive by any international standard. All Libyans have a house or a flat, a car and most have televisions, video recorders and telephones. Compared with most citizens of the Third World countries, and with many in the First World, Libyans have it very good indeed." (Source: Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution)

Large scale housing construction has taken place right across the country. Every citizen has been given a decent house or apartment to live in rent-free. In Qaddafi's Green Book it states: "The house is a basic need of both the individual and the family, therefore it should not be owned by others." This dictum has now become a reality for the Libyan people.

Large scale agricultural



French President Nicolas Sarkozy

projects have been implemented in an effort to 'make the desert bloom' and achieve self-sufficiency in food production. Any Libyan who wants to become a farmer is given free use of land, a house, farm equipment, some livestock and seed.

Today, Libya can boast one of the finest health care systems in the Arab and African World. All people have access to doctors, hospitals, clinics and medicines, completely free of all charges.

The fact is that the Libyan revolution has achieved such a high standard of living for its people that they import labor from other parts of the world to do the jobs that the unemployed Libyans refuse to do. Libya has been called by many observers inside and out, 'a nation of shop keepers'. It is part of the Libyan Arab psyche to own your own small business and this type of small scale private enterprise flourishes in Libya. We can draw on many examples of



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron

Libyans with young sons who expressed the idea that it would be shameful for the family if these same young men were to seek menial work and instead preferred for them to remain at home supported by the extended family.

No system is perfect, and Libya is no exception. They suffered nine years of economic sanctions and this caused huge problems for the Libyan economy. Also, there is nowhere on planet earth that has escaped the monumental crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. It has impacted everywhere - even on post revolutionary societies that have rejected 'free market' capitalism. However, severe economic injustice is not at the heart of this conflict. So then, what is?

### A Battle for Africa

The battle that is being waged in Libya is fundamentally a battle between Pan-African forces on the one hand, who are dedicated to the realization of Qaddafi's vision of a united Africa, and reactionary racist Libyan Arab forces who reject Qaddafi's vision of Libya as part of a united Africa and want to ally themselves instead with the EU and look toward Europe and the Arab World for Libya's future. One of Muammar Qaddafi's most controversial and difficult moves in the eyes of many Libyans was his championing of Africa and his determined drive to unite Africa with one currency, one army and a shared vision regarding the true independence and liberation of the entire continent. He has contributed large amounts of his time and energy and large sums of money to this project and like Kwame Nkrumah, he has paid a high price.

Many of the Libyan people did not approve of this move. They wanted their leader to look towards Europe. Of course, Libya has extensive investments and commercial ties with Europe but the Libyans know that Qaddafi's heart is in Africa.

Many years ago, Qaddafi told a large gathering, which included Libyans and revolutionaries from many parts of the world, that the Black Africans were the true owners of



Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi

Libya long before the Arab incursion into North Africa, and that Libyans need to acknowledge and pay tribute to their ancient African roots. He ended by saying, as is proclaimed in his Green Book, that "the Black race shall prevail throughout the world". This is not what many Libyans wanted to hear. As with all fair skinned Arabs, prejudice against Black Africans is endemic.

Brother Leader, Guide of the Revolution and King of Kings are some of the titles that have been bestowed on Qaddafi by Africans. Only last month Qaddafi called for the creation of a Secretariat of traditional African Chiefs and Kings, with whom he has excellent ties, to co-ordinate efforts to build African unity at the grassroots level throughout the continent, a bottom up approach, as opposed to trying to build unity at the government/state level, an approach which has failed the African unification project since the days of Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure. This bottom up approach is widely supported by many Pan Africanists worldwide.

### African Mercenaries or Freedom Fighters?

In the past week, the phrase 'African mercenaries' has been repeated over and over by the media and the selected Libyan citizens they choose to speak to have, as one commentator put it, "spat the word 'African' with a venomous hatred".

The media has assumed, without any research or understanding of the situation because they are refusing to give any air time to pro-Qaddafi forces, that the many Africans in military uniform fighting alongside the pro-Qaddafi Libyan forces are mercenaries. However, it is a myth that the Africans fighting to defend the Jamahiriya and Muammar Qaddafi are mercenaries being paid a few dollars and this assumption is based solely on the usual racist and contemptuous view of Black Africans.

Actually, in truth, there are people all over Africa and the African Diaspora who support and respect Muammar Qaddafi as a result of his invaluable contribution to the worldwide struggle for African emancipation.

Over the past two decades,

thousands of Africans from all over the continent were provided with education, work and military training - many of them coming from liberation movements. As a result of Libya's support for liberation movements throughout Africa and the world, international battalions were formed. These battalions saw themselves as a part of the Libyan revolution, and took it upon themselves to defend the revolution against attacks from within its borders or outside.

These are the Africans who are fighting to defend Qaddafi and the gains of the Libyan revolution to their death if need be. It is not unlike what happened when internationalist battalions came to the aid of the revolutionary forces against Franco's fascist forces in Spain.

Malian political analyst, Adam Thiam, notes that "thousands of Tuaregs who were enrolled in the Islamic Legion established by the Libyan revolution remained in Libya and they are enrolled in the Libyan security forces."

### African Migrants under Attack

As African fighters from Chad, Niger, Mali, Ghana, Kenya, Guinea and Southern Sudan (it should be noted that Libya supported the Sudanese People's Liberation Army under John Garang in their war of liberation against Arab hegemonists in Khartoum, while all other Arab leaders backed the Khartoum regime) fight to defend this African revolution, a million African refugees and thousands of African migrant workers stand the risk of being murdered as a result of their perceived support for Qaddafi.

One Turkish construction worker described a massacre: "We had 70-80 people from Chad working for our company. They were cut dead with pruning shears and axes, attackers saying: 'You are providing troops for Qaddafi. The Sudanese were also massacred. We saw it for ourselves.'"

This is a far cry from what is being portrayed in the media as 'peaceful protesters' being set upon by pro-Qaddafi forces. In fact, footage of the Benghazi revolt shows men with machetes, AK 47s and RPGs. In the Green Book, Qaddafi argues for the transfer of all power, wealth and arms directly into the hands of the people themselves. No one can deny that the Libyan populace is heavily armed. This is part of Qaddafi's philosophy of arms not being monopolised by any section of the society, including the armed forces. It must be said that it is not usual practice for tyrants and dictators to arm their population.

Qaddafi has also been very vocal regarding the plight of Africans who migrate to Eu-



Republic of Namibia

## Ministry of Trade and Industry

### A CALL FOR SUBMISSION OF INVESTMENT PROJECT PROPOSALS

The Ministry of Trade and Industry hereby invites all interested persons to submit their investment project proposals to be catalogued and promoted locally, regionally and internationally through the Ministry investment promotion initiatives.

The project proposals should fall within one of the following sectors or industry categories:

- \* Agri - business
- \* Aquaculture
- \* Energy
- \* Infrastructure
- \* Manufacturing
- \* Mining
- \* Tourism
- \* Services

A detailed description of the project information document is obtainable at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Namibia Investment Centre, 6<sup>th</sup> floor Room 619 or 626.

The project proposals should be addressed for the attention of Ms. Bernadette Artivor and should be submitted in hard copy or e-mail to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Block B, Brendan Simbwaye Square, Private Bag 13340, Windhoek, Namibia. E-mail: [diaz@mti.gov.na](mailto:diaz@mti.gov.na) or [ramakhutla@mti.gov.na](mailto:ramakhutla@mti.gov.na) • The closing date for submissions is 31 March 2011 at 17h00.

For further details please contact Mr. Wilbard Nashandi at 061 283 7348.

**Confidentiality:** The information submitted will be used by the Ministry of Trade and Industry for the purposes of investment promotion only and will not be used for any other purpose or shared with any third party.

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