

## Policy Paper on Stable Transition in Libya

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#### A. Introduction

Libya's trajectory down the path of transition remains a rocky one. In terms of security, cities such as Benghazi have been liberated for over two years and yet continue struggling under higher levels of insecurity and instability than ever before. In politics, initial calls for democracy have turned into political party infighting within the legislative bodies, particularly between supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis and the more liberal members of government. Meanwhile, the executive arm of government, led by Prime Minister Zeidan, has expended valuable effort addressing one crisis after another. Economically, Libya continues to underperform—investment is reappearing but cash flow is still a major concern for government. The average Libyan remains unconvinced that he or she is financially better off under the post-revolutionary government.



However, it is at the social level that some of the most worrying changes have taken place. Although initially unified and empowered in opposition towards the Gaddafi regime, the Libyan public has subsequently lost control of the transitional process. Power has moved from the masses to a plurality of groups, many of which operate without public consensus. This, along with government failure to fulfill mainstream expectations quickly, has frustrated Libyans. Key examples of this lack of responsiveness include delays in constitutional drafting and poor Security Sector Reform (SSR).

Within this dynamic, those who are most vulnerable have tended to suffer the most. Women have lost early ideological gains and promises of equality have been replaced with a re-imposition of conservative traditions that restrict their movement and limit their progress. For example, female representation in politics and across all decision-making bodies, remains extremely poor with little sign of immediate improvement. Likewise, ethnic minorities, from the Amazigh, Tuareg, Tebu to the Tawurgha, have faced a raft of problems ranging from poor political representation to ongoing rejection of attempts at reconciliation.

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There is no doubt that Libya is currently experiencing a low point in its transition. However, it would be unfair to highlight the negatives without also drawing attention to some of the positives. The majority of Libyans remain committed to peace and moderate Islam. The government has shown an appetite to improve the country despite the setbacks, and issues such as justice and reform are firmly on the table. In the short term, Libya may still stagger backwards several more steps, but overall the country is moving forwards. It is essential within this context more than ever, for the international community to demonstrate visible, targeted commitment and assistance.

### Problem Description

International policy makers must address and answer four important questions:

1. What mechanisms are available to pressure government bodies to move from recognition of women's rights to implementation and monitoring of such rights?
2. How can the Libyan government call for unity and public collaboration when there is a public perception of political party fighting?
3. To what degree is religious extremism a domestic problem or an imported problem?
4. How can non-governmental institutions that traditionally bolster transparency and progress (e.g. local media and civil society) be empowered to do their job better given the lack of experience, funding and inability to resist divisive agendas?



### Recommendations

What mechanisms are available to pressure government bodies to move from recognition of women's rights to implementation and monitoring of such rights?

**The first step for the international community is to provide greater support and publicity to women's rights groups.**

There are a number of groups within Libya that focus on improving women's rights. These remain locked in a cultural, and sometimes religio-political battle for survival. The international community must provide greater support to these groups, not just in word but also in action. Assistance can take the form of better access to impactful publicity as well as training, infrastructure, guidance etc. There is a risk that foreign assistance is seen as an attempt to undermine Libyan religious and cultural values. As such, the international community must not impose their own agenda, but empower and provide a platform for



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Libyans to help themselves. Libyan women must stand better equipped and supported, at the forefront of their initiatives.

**Creation of mirror organizations to those focusing on helping Libyan men**

The international community must encourage the emergence of mirror organizations that match those that focus heavily on men. For example, the Warriors Affairs Commission was established to help revolutionary fighters surrender their weapons and help reconstruct and develop the country. Although the WAC provides opportunities to women, these are far fewer in number than those for men. Instead of changing programs such as the WAC, there is a need to create programs that emulate the WAC but focus, for example, on how women can contribute to demobilization and demilitarization as part of peace building and security sector reform.



**The celebration of true champions for women's rights**

The international community has, on several occasions, failed to conduct adequate analysis in its bid to identify local women champions. Selecting the wrong figures and neglecting the right ones has resulted in: resentment from those who genuinely work hard to achieve women's rights, estrangement as female populations see foreign support going to the loudest, instead of the most appropriate female voices, and division caused by over-funding provided to the wrong individuals and groups. There is a strong need to conduct proper research and analysis so that true local women champions can be identified and celebrated.

How can the Libyan government call for unity and public collaboration when there is a public perception of political party fighting?

**Focus on national policies**

The GNC must improve the speed and efficiency with which it is handling the issue of constitutional law. This includes the creation and support of a nation-wide process that builds public awareness and generates a sense of inclusion in order to provide the process with the required legitimacy in the eyes of the Libyan majority. Failure to do this, by for example imposition of decisions seen as 'coming from the top' rather than from the grassroots, will lead to a plurality of groups complaining of marginalization and prioritization of regional and political agendas.

**Creation of pan-national civil society groups**

Currently, there are few pan-national groups outside of political parties, government bureaucratic structures and a small number of businesses and media channels. Members of the public tend to perceive society and social challenges at the community or city level rather than at the national level. While it is integral that civil society groups are deeply rooted in their local communities and representative of local priorities, they must strive to coordinate on these issues at the national level. Civil society in Libya often adopts issues that



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affect communities nationwide but fails to coordinate with each other in addressing these issues, from research to knowledge exchange to strategic communications, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

### **Identifying and motivating initiators - groups that get things changed**

Young men and women have some of the best opportunities to promote unity and collaboration within their environment. Some have the passion, energy and cultural freedom to challenge a street mentality that prioritizes the interests of the individual or group over the nation. Others have an equally important role to play, but within the home, bringing up their children to respect fair and equal values. Whether inside or outside the home, men and women must be supported and encouraged, through civic engagement programs, from building awareness on gender issues relevant to everyday life to offering the support, access and tools to help men and women advocate for their rights and the rights of the generations to come.



To what degree is religious extremism a domestic problem or an imported problem?

### **Concede that there is a problem**

The Libyan government must concede that there is a religious extremist issue that can manifest itself violently on domestic soil. Internationally, experts observe that the nature of groups like Al Qa'ida has evolved, where although the central ideology remains more or less the same, support is provided through a number of affiliates capable of expressing themselves and operating within the local context. The international community, along with the Libyan government and people of Libya, must work together towards understanding the degree to which violent religious extremism is a domestic or imported problem and how, in both cases, integrated strategies and programs can be developed and implemented at the grassroots level. As with other challenges facing Libya, this necessarily entails better communication and consultation with Libyan women in high-risk communities.

### **Provide real alternatives to susceptible groups**

Rather than condemn extremist groups, the international community in partnership with the Libyan government must work to create alternative opportunities for those individuals and groups most susceptible. Some of these programs already exist, such as those run by the Warriors Affairs Committee. However they tend to target fighters seen as most deserving of assistance as opposed to those individuals from areas most at risk of supporting violent extremism. Focus on the latter, for example, would result in a heavier weighting of assistance to groups in the South of the country.



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How can non-government institutions that traditionally bolster transparency and progress (e.g. local media and civil society) be empowered to do their job better given the lack of experience, funding and inability to resist divisive agendas?

### **Media bootcamps**

After 42 years of the Gaddafi regime, it is understandable that the Libyan media will take some time to reach adequate levels of professionalism—both in the quality of the output and in understanding its roles and responsibilities. In addition, young members of society are undertaking much of this work. They have the energy but often lack the necessary direction. The international community, rather than providing ad hoc training courses, should partner with the Libyan government to establish ongoing media bootcamps in everything from camera work to ethics. This requires sincere and financially-backed planning, and ownership of a sustained nature.



### **Civil society cross-fertilization**

Civil society, much like government, has not had the time to build its capacity. Instead, it has been engaged in a series of crises often rooted in highly local contexts. This has prevented civil society from having the ample opportunity to learn from others. Libyan civil society organizations must be empowered to meet each other to share and exchange ideas. In addition, they should be given the chance to meet civil society representatives from other societies. This process does not necessarily need to be formalized. However, it does require the support of the international community and the Libyan government. Furthermore, planning should be prioritized – for example, issues relating to inclusivity around the constitution, human rights and the empowerment of groups that can make a real difference within a short timeframe.

### **Selecting and building role models**

Generating a sense of inclusivity is essential, but so too is the process of identifying and supporting role models—individuals who can act as ambassadors and symbols of key causes. During the revolution, the national mentality preferred to highlight the power of the masses rather than the acts of a few (except in the case of those who gave up their lives for the revolution). During transition, however, Libyans have become more ready to identify and celebrate the actions of single individuals, particularly those who provide visible improvement to Libyans. Civil society must work on finding such people and giving them the tools and skills to generate greater all around support.

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