

## TRANSITIONAL LIBYAN MEDIA: FREE AT LAST?

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Muammar Qaddafi kept a firm grip on Libya's media sector and used it as a propaganda tool for his regime. After the dictator's fall in 2011, the media sector was opened up, but reconstruction efforts lacked vision and have fallen prey to the tumultuous situation on the ground. A completely unbiased and free media industry remains an illusion. The rebirth of Libya's media sector requires a comprehensive approach that involves regulatory reform and builds up the skills of journalists.

### The State of the Libyan Media

- Transitional bodies established after the revolution to reorganize the media sector took radical measures to break with the past, disbanding many of the former media outlets with the aim of creating a freer system. This was interpreted by former state journalists as punishment for their complicity.
- With Qaddafi gone, Libyan journalists face new forms of control exerted by militias, armed factions, and Islamic extremist groups. Journalists now engage in new forms of self-censorship.
- The poor professional skills of Libyan journalists continue to undermine efforts to build a new media sector.
- Libya's tribes have not tolerated open debate well, which is hampering the development of investigative journalism.
- There is a divide between journalists from the Qaddafi era and the new wave of "revolutionary journalists."
- The battle for the assets of former state-owned media has hampered the liberalization and modernization of the media sector.
- Private media outlets are flourishing, but they suffer from weak structures, opaque funding, and a lack of regulatory frameworks.

### How Libyans Can Nurture a Freer Media Sector

**Lobby for the rights and security of journalists.** It is the responsibility of the Libyan government to provide security for journalists in the face of sustained abuses, intimidation, and attacks. It is crucial for the media community to press the government to guarantee its rights and safety.

**Establish a specialized expert body to spearhead the liberalization and reconstruction of Libyan media.** The body should be granted executive power so that it can reorganize the former state media and draft laws for the private media. It should incorporate the lessons learned in other transitional countries.

**Reintegrate journalists employed during the Qaddafi era into the new media sector.** Staff from the former state media can bring experience and leadership to the national media community.

**Adopt tailored, long-term training programs.** Training should not just include short-format schemes based on Western models. Instead, long-term mentoring programs customized for the specific problems and challenges of Libyan media are necessary.

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