

Facebook Versus Ghaddafi: Social Networking as a Tool for Democratic Change in Libya

Ezieddin Elmahjub¹

The reason behind the backwardness of Middle Eastern countries lies in political despotism, and the cure of such backwardness lies in constitutional democracy.²

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi
Tabai al-Istibdad wa-Masari al-Isti'bad
[*The Nature of Despotism*] 1849

The emergence of the Internet is one of the most significant leaps in the history of humanity. Information, knowledge and culture are exchanged among masses of people through interconnected information platforms. These platforms enable our culture to be analysed and rewritten, and fundamentally opens our perceptions to a wide variety of concepts and beliefs. The connected networks of the Internet have shaped a virtual — but communicative — space where people can cross borders freely within a realm characterised by the ability to go anywhere, see anything, learn, compare and understand.

Fundamental within that realm are social networking platforms that facilitate the building of social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities and backgrounds.³ These platforms enable information to be disseminated to an unlimited audience, and facilitate interactive

dialogue on issues of common interest. Hundreds of millions of people around the world use these platforms for a variety of purposes, such as getting updates on friends and relatives, tracking the latest on their favourite celebrity, or making new social connections.

The capability to disseminate information and reach a large audience has the potential to affect public opinion and thus influence directions within society. In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky recognised such capability of conventional media in favour of ‘the powerful societal interests that control and finance [it]’.⁴ What is unique about social networking platforms — as a form of ‘social media’ — is that it is not necessary to be a powerful stakeholder in society to be able to disseminate information, influence public opinion and affect society’s directions. Even individuals have the potential to do so. This is exactly what took place in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region in late 2010 and the beginning of 2011.

During this time, the youth of the MENA countries, standing up for a common cause — to break the shackles of tyranny and oppression — used modern communications technology as a tool for democratic change and thereby earned their freedom and dignity. The overwhelming majority of them were poor and uninfluential, but they had the opportunity to make change, and they did so through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.⁵

This chapter focuses on the Libyan experience with social networking platforms in actualising democratic change in the uprising of 17 February 2011. After briefly outlining the political and economic situation under the regime of Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi, the chapter discusses the role that social networking platforms played during the struggle of the Libyan people for democratic change. Finally, it points out the positive changes that resulted from the uprising and the potential role that social media might play in the ongoing democratisation and development of Libyan society.

Revolutionary situations

In 1969, Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi⁶ led a group of officers in a military coup d'état against the government of King Idris Alsanusi, who had been in power since Libya's independence on 24 December 1951. Ghaddafi declared Libya as a Socialist Republic and promised an era of prosperity, freedom and justice.⁷ However, by the last quarter of 1970, Ghaddafi had already started to isolate his partners in that coup, either through imprisonment or political assassination.⁸ In 1976 he established a radically unique idea, set out in his manifesto — *The Green Book* — which was based on Athenian Democracy, Marxist ideology and Ghaddafi's own interpretations of Islam.⁹ According to *The Green Book*, people would have the right to engage in political and economic affairs through direct democracy by means of general public conferences spread across all Libyan cities. The ideas in Ghaddafi's *Green Book* provided the theoretical framework for Libya's highest constitutional document, the so-called 'Declaration of People's Authority', adopted in 1977. However, direct democracy existed only in theory.

Martin Asser, writing for the BBC, described how Ghaddafi used the Green Book:

[A] text whose professed objective is to break the shackles imposed by the vested interests dominating political systems was used instead to subjugate an entire population.¹⁰

In reality, Ghaddafi directly opposed parliamentary democracy and described it as 'misrepresentation of the people'.¹¹ Political parties were banned¹² and those who broke the law were threatened with execution. It was common in the 1980s for Libyan television to broadcast trials and public hangings of Libyan citizens who were accused of opposing Ghaddafi. Despite Libya possessing the seventh largest oil reserves in the world, its infrastructure was highly deficient and some 20 per cent of Libyans were unemployed,¹³ mostly as a result of corruption among the political elite of the country.

During his 41 years in power, Colonel Ghaddafi managed to skilfully rule the country with an iron fist. His regime caused an erosion of the national identity of the Libyan people by organising state institutions along tribal lines and appointing members of Ghaddafi's own tribe to leading positions in the armed forces and high-ranking government offices. Fundamental human rights and basic freedoms, such as free speech, freedom of religion, private property,¹⁴ and privacy were undermined.¹⁵ Students who spoke openly in the universities were subject to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. There was no official recognition of a right to assembly. It was common among Libyans to warn each other about speaking of Ghaddafi in a critical manner in public, and there were few civil society organisations. According to Freedom House, Libya ranked among the worst in the world in terms of basic human rights and freedoms. On a scale of 0 to 7 (with 0 representing weakest and 7 representing strongest performance), Libya ranked 1.17 in civil liberties; 0.56 in accountability and public voice; 1.12 in rule of law and 0.19 in anticorruption and transparency.¹⁶

The media was controlled by the state and was concerned mainly with broadcasting news or songs glorifying Ghaddafi and overstating his achievements. Azmi Bishara, the General Director of the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, accurately describes Ghaddafi and Libya under his regime:

Ghaddafi considered himself as suprahuman condition above the concept of state. That is why he remained in pre-state condition. Under the role of Ghaddafi, there existed no state in Libya. He governed Libya with pure tribal mechanisms and considered himself above the concept of morality and that is why he practically lived without morals.¹⁷

Necessity for change

Public dissatisfaction with the attitude and performance of Colonel Ghaddafi was apparent from as early as April 1976, when student protests occurred in Benghazi and Tripoli.¹⁸ The

regime responded by persecuting and executing the protesters. Until well into the 1980s, the Ghaddafi regime designated 7 April as the national day for the elimination of opposition leaders. Another sign of dissatisfaction was the attack on Ghaddafi's headquarters in Tripoli in 1984 by a group of Libyans from different cities. All were killed.

However, with the advent of satellites, Libyans started to have an eye on the outside world. They began to compare their situation in terms of human rights and freedom with other nations. It was common during the 1990s and early 2000s for Libyans to cynically criticise — in closed social circles — their living standards in terms of health, education, public facilities, and income.

The spread of the internet among the youth in early 2000s added more fuel to the already tense situation. The advent of platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, which do not recognise cultural and linguistic barriers, provided Libyans with a constantly open pathway to the outside world, and all attempts by the government to minimise the impact of social media were unsuccessful.

The desire for change was present in the Libyan people from the beginning of the Ghaddafi regime, but the strength of Ghaddafi's security services prevented change from occurring. Those who had believed in change realised that any attempt to make it a reality would be violently crushed. Accordingly, without efficient tools for organising and delivering the message to the outside world, change from within remained a dream. This situation continued from the 1980s until the 2000s. At the same time, having seen the negative consequences of the American intervention in Iraq in 2003, for the overwhelming majority of Libyans foreign intervention on the ground to change the Ghaddafi regime was out of the question.

Libyan youth hold, with the rest of the world, a set of what can be called universal values¹⁹ that do not recognise cultural differences, religious backgrounds, space or place:

freedom, dignity, independence, justice, equality and democracy. With their eyes on the rest of the world, through the Internet and social networking platforms, Libyan youth increasingly came to understand that these values were not shared by the Ghaddafi regime. Ghaddafi's sons and closed circles of tribal leaders and loyal individuals oppressed people and humiliated them: property could be seized without a proper cause, the judiciary system was highly influenced by Ghaddafi's men, and the state's institutions were in the hands of incompetent and corrupt individuals. With all this, Ghaddafi was publicly planning to appoint his son Saif al-Islam Gaddafi as his successor. He appointed his son, Mutassim, as head of the office of national security, and another son, Khamis, to the leadership of the elite brigades of the Libyan Army.²⁰

The time has come

On 18 December 2010, Tunisians took to the streets in huge rallies and demonstrations to demand an end to the regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had held power for 24 years. Ben Ali officially resigned on 15 January 2011. Ten days later on 25 January 2011, millions of Egyptians marched in the streets and gathered in the famous Tahrir Square (Liberation Square) in Cairo to demand an end to the regime of President Hosni Mubarak, who had held power for 30 years. On 11 February 2011, President Mubarak left office. Libyans observed their neighbours, the Tunisians and the Egyptians, with a keen eye. Facebook pages of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions witnessed compassionate interactions from Libyan fans. Libyan youth were following through YouTube what was happening in the streets of Tunisian and Egyptian cities during the uprisings. Comments in support of both revolutions were common and practised daily by Libyan fans.

For many years Libyans had lived under an authoritarian regime that shared many of the characteristics of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in terms of oppression and the ruthlessness

of the security arms. The Libyans might even have extra reasons such as the fact that Ghaddafi had held power for 41 years, and that in terms of natural resources Libya is richer than Egypt and Tunisia, although this was not reflected on the living standards of Libyans.

Creating the revolution

Through witnessing and interacting with developments in Egypt and Tunisia, Libyans decided to start their own struggle towards democratic change. In late January 2011, a page appeared on Facebook under the name ‘The Uprising of the 17th of February, a Day for Rage in Libya’.²¹ This Facebook page called upon Libyans to learn from the Tunisian and Egyptian experiences. It pointed to calamities and tragedies that had occurred during Ghaddafi’s rule, such as the killing of 1,269 political prisoners in four hours in the notorious Abusalim prison in Tripoli in 1996.²² It also posted photos of Ghaddafi’s sons spending money in fancy hotels and yachts in Europe as a sign of corruption of the regime. The page administrators appointed 17th February 2011 as a day for protests around Libya.²³

On 15 February 2011, some young Libyans responded to the Facebook invitation and took to the streets in the city of Albyeda, 1,200 kilometres east of Tripoli. In response, Ghaddafi’s security forces killed two of them and arrested several others.

Sensing the potential danger of the social networking platforms, Colonel Ghaddafi called famous Libyan Internet activists and bloggers for a meeting in Tripoli at the beginning of February 2011, warning them that they would be held accountable if they contributed to actions against the state. However, Ghaddafi’s warning came too late. Within a short timespan, the Uprising of the 17th of February Facebook page had attracted 82,000 followers.²⁴ By 17 February 2011, tens of thousands of Libyans took to the streets of Benghazi, Libya’s

second largest city, to demand the change of the Ghaddafi regime. The following days witnessed bloody clashes in the city between the demonstrators and the security forces, resulting in the killing of hundreds of civilian protestors.²⁵ Meanwhile, videos and pictures — mostly taken by mobile phones — of the demonstrations and the security armed response were constantly being posted on YouTube and Facebook, and rebroadcasted by the media. As a result, unprecedented international coverage of the situation in Libya took place, associated with condemnation from the international community for the brutality of Ghaddafi's regime.²⁶ On 21 February 2011, Ghaddafi's security forces were driven out of the entire eastern coast of Libya.

On 19 February, in the city of Misrata, Libya's industrial capital and the third largest city, some 50,000 citizens took to the streets, and by the 22nd it was liberated from Ghaddafi brigades. Meanwhile, on 21 February, the demonstrations moved to the stronghold of Ghaddafi, the nation's capital, Tripoli. At that stage, Ghaddafi and his supporters decided to unleash their maximum military force.

What is unique in that phase of the Libyan revolution is the instant flow and dissemination of information. Young Internet users acted as journalists and reporters for the events on the ground. Stories, funerals, footage of injured persons, and waves of human masses chanting freedom slogans were constantly posted on social platforms right after the specific event would unfold. These stories would have remained unheard without the power of social networking platforms.

Ghaddafi cracked down on the demonstrations in Tripoli, and it is estimated that the loss of human life was 600 on the first day alone. In addition, on 3 March 2011, the Ghaddafi regime blocked Internet networks in Tripoli and other cities in the western part of Libya.²⁷ He called on the Libyan people — via Libya's state media — to post videos on the Internet showing support for Colonel Ghaddafi!

The pictures and videos posted online from Libya were horrifying as Ghaddafi started to use heavy weaponry such as tanks and multi-rocket launchers to regain control of cities from the demonstrators. The United Nations (UN) Security Council issued a decision to impose a no-fly zone²⁸ as a result of Ghaddafi's use of the airforce. At the same time, demonstrators turned to freedom fighters in order to defend themselves against the assaults of Ghaddafi's forces.

Social networking channels — mainly YouTube and Facebook — played a very important role in delivering the news to the outside world after Ghaddafi's siege of Misrata. This city was of particular importance to Ghaddafi as it was 200 km from his stronghold of Tripoli. As a result, Ghaddafi sent some 12,000 soldiers to take over Misrata. Those soldiers laid siege to the city and started to bombard its neighbourhoods with rockets and live ammunition. Youth from the city had used digital cameras and mobile phones to record the resulting destruction and the plight of the residents, uploading these images through concealed Internet-satellite facilities. Some young Libyans also managed to provide daily audio reports on the events that took place in the city during the siege and uploaded them to YouTube.²⁹

The movement of conventional media was highly restricted, especially in the cities controlled by Ghaddafi. Therefore, Internet activists who were not dependent on government networks uploaded to YouTube and Facebook footages of queues for food and fuel in Tripoli, which lacked essential supplies as a result of the international embargo imposed by the UN.

Ghaddafi's response to the civil movement of the Libyan youth in February 2011 transformed it to an armed rebellion. This led to the overthrow of the Ghaddafi regime on 21 August 2011 when rebels overtook Tripoli and caused Ghaddafi to flee to his hometown, Sirt, where he was killed in street fighting with the rebels on 20 October 2011.

Ghaddafi's death marked the end of one of the longest dictatorships in the history of mankind; ironically, the first reports of his death to the world and instant pictures of it were posted on Facebook.

A tool of connection and change

As alluded to in the previous pages, the desire for change existed from the early days of Ghaddafi's rule as he revealed his authoritarian approach to governance. This desire united Libyans from different ideological and ethnic backgrounds behind a common cause — toppling the Ghaddafi regime and forming a democratic pluralist system. However, this desire remained dormant because of the brutality and the watchful eye of Ghaddafi's security and intelligence services.

The masses, which had long desired change in Libya, needed a tool for connection. Such a tool had to have certain features. It had to be inherently anti-authoritarian and with the ability to circumvent the intelligence agencies' monitoring eye. It had to provide a platform that connected people so they could safely coordinate, organise and share plans for change instead of the conventional way of coordinating and organising revolutions through secret meetings.

The tool required for connection was found in social networking platforms, mainly Facebook and YouTube. The announcement on Facebook to consider 17 February 2011 as a day of rage against the Ghaddafi regime was the catalyst of the Libyan revolution towards democratic change. Those who had long desired change needed a tool to connect them to set the date for action. Without Facebook's ability to spread the word across distances and borders, such a desire would have remained an unheard narrative. Accordingly, the blocking of the Internet by the Ghaddafi regime and restricting access to Facebook in the cities controlled by his regime did not change the fact that the revolution had already begun, and its flames were soon to reach his long-preserved seat of power.

Even after the Internet was blocked, social networking platforms continued to play an essential role in the Libyan revolution. For instance, Internet activists in Tripoli who had satellite-Internet access used Facebook and YouTube to disseminate information and footages to the outside world showing the wrongdoing of the Ghaddafi regime. The distribution of these images worldwide added to the international pressure on the regime and eroded its pillars.

Some commentators on the Arab spring in general refer to the social networking platforms as mere facilitators for the historical and radical changes that took place in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.³⁰ It is true that these tools do not have the ability to actualise change by themselves; however, at the same time, change would not have taken place without them. It was the social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that sparked the flames of change, made them grow and led to the desired end, which was to make the dreams of democracy, dignity and freedom come true. They were the thread which had been sought for so long, to connect people so they could share their thoughts and aspirations for a better future. They were also the mechanism required to disseminate effective plans to as many people as possible. For those who question the vital role of the social media platforms, it is sufficient to ask one question: Why did it take the people so long to rise up against tyranny and humiliation? And how did people miraculously rise up immediately after the flourishing of social media?

Manifestations of democracy in post-revolution Libya

The leadership of the Libyan revolution embodied in the National Transitional Council (NTC)³¹ committed itself through the Constitutional Declaration adapted on the 3 August 2011 — two months before the official collapse of Ghaddafi regime — to building a democratic, multi-party state based on

respect for fundamental human rights³² and freedom.³³ It also recognised the right to assembly and free speech as well as the importance of free media.³⁴

The practical results of the Libyan revolution include:

1. For the first time in five decades, Libyans participated in free elections to elect 200 men and women for the National Conference, the body responsible for forming a government and preparing a permanent constitution for the country.³⁵ According to the High National Election Committee, 2.7 million Libyans — out of 3 million eligible Libyan voters — registered to elect 200 representatives from the 2,639 candidates.³⁶ In the first national elections held in July 2012, 1.7 million people cast a vote.³⁷ Among the representatives elected were 32 women, accounting for 17% of the total seats.³⁸
2. From being a country with a state-controlled media in which government would censor what goes public,³⁹ Libya is experiencing a surge in the freedom of press, only a year after the revolution started. ‘Hundreds of newspapers, countless websites, television and radio stations have sprung up from nothing.’⁴⁰ The BBC reported that ‘journalists are experiencing unprecedented free conditions of working, with no clear red lines for reporting.’⁴¹ One of the unique phenomena brought by democratic change in Libya is that even the television station founded by the new government⁴² can criticise the performance of the government and host opposition leaders on weekly political shows.
3. Another aspect of democratic change in Libya is the mushrooming of civil society organisations. Libya used to have highly restrictive legislation for civil society.⁴³ The process for registering a civil society organisation could take up to two years and there was no guarantee that registration would be granted.⁴⁴ In less than one year after

the revolution, some 861 organisations have been registered in Tripoli and Benghazi alone.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, the democratisation of Libya is by no means a completed task. Those who started up as ‘Facebook revolutionaries’ had to carry weapons to defend themselves at some point during the revolution. After the Ghaddafi regime collapsed, they still carry their weapons and represent one of the most acute obstacles for the democratisation of Libya. At this point in time, they are weakening the government’s authority and degrading the achievements of the revolution as they attract the criticism of human rights organisations for human rights abuses against the supporters of the deposed regime.⁴⁶ However, such an obstacle is by no means insurmountable because the government has introduced programs to integrate the rebels into the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and to provide external training for them.

Future prospects

After the revolution, and during the process of state formation which is now taking place in Libya, social networking platforms are expected to play an essential role in the process of democratisation of the country.

The NTC and several Libyan Ministries have official pages on Facebook which they use to post decisions, declarations and responses to issues of public concern. High-ranking Libyan officials also have personal pages on Facebook and Twitter, which enable them to interact with citizens on public policy issues. The adaptation of the social networking platforms by government ministries and agencies in Libya is expected to grow substantially. The interactive nature of these platforms will allow wider public engagement in the process of policy-making, as well as in enhancing the transparency and accountability of public sector institutions⁴⁷ — including the government and its different branches. The flourishing of

civil society organisations that Libya is witnessing now will make such engagement even more efficient.

Ways in which social media is expected to enhance democracy in post-revolution Libya include:

- *Improving government performance:* Social networking platforms allow citizens to report to government bodies on the efficiency of any of the governmental programs, which would allow these bodies to respond and adapt such programs to the reality and needs of the society in a prompt and effective manner. Additionally, the public reporting function of these platforms will enhance the accountability of the government officials as they will feel that they are closely monitored by citizens.
- *Enhancing transparency in the allocation of financial resources:* Government bodies, for instance, could easily post on social media platforms their budgets and the expenditures of officials to allow people to be informed, as well as to express their opinions. The possibility of creating interactive dialogue within social networking platforms, between governmental bodies and citizens, could make the allocation of the state budget more responsive to the priorities of Libyan citizens.

Despite the richness in natural resources which Libya enjoys, the country suffers from a severe lack of development. The deficiencies in public facilities in terms of roads, hospitals, schools, public parks and so on are readily apparent on the streets of the national capital, Tripoli, and even more so in other Libyan cities. The main cause of these woes is the authoritarianism of the previous regime, in which corruption and the suppression of political rights were the dominant features that characterised its operation over a period of 41 years. The process of development requires a creative population, the existence of which is dependent on the availability of freedom, justice and democracy. These three pillars explain, in most cases, why certain nations are more developed than others.

Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998, asserts that democracy ‘is an essential component of the process of development’⁴⁸; it gives

the people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs, and demand appropriate public action. Governmental response to acute suffering of people often depends on the pressure that is put on the government, and this is where the exercise of political rights (voting, criticising ..., and protesting ...) can make a real difference.⁴⁹

Social networking platforms provide a very effective venue for such democratic engagement to take place. Accordingly, these platforms can play a role in promoting development.

Conclusion

The MENA region has for decades been a hotspot characterised by war, instability and dictatorship. Modern technology embodied in social networking platforms has contributed to news of a different kind from that troubled area — news of people who share values with the rest of humanity, and aspire to build democratic and developed societies in which human rights and freedom are respected. By 2015, the number of Internet users in the MENA region is expected to exceed 100 million.⁵⁰ As a result, the share of social networking platforms is expected to increase. Accordingly, even after the collapse of the dictatorships, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and other social networking platforms will continue to play an important role in exercising the political rights brought about by the recent changes in the region and in enhancing government transparency and accountability.

Endnotes

- 1 Lecturer at Law School, Tripoli University, Libya, and PhD candidate, QUT Law School. I would like to thank Professor Anne Fitzgerald for motivating me to write this chapter and also for her valuable comments.
- 2 A al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, *Tabai al-Istibdad wa-Masari al-Isti'bad* [*The nature of despotism*], 3rd ed., Dar Elnafaess, 2006, p. 30.

- 3 Wikipedia, Social networking service, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_networking
- 4 ES Herman & N Chomsky, *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media*, Pantheon Books, New York, 2002.
- 5 For the purpose of this article, social networking platforms will be used to mean these three websites as they were the most influential during the Arab spring; two of particular importance in the Libyan case are Facebook and YouTube.
- 6 At the time of leading the coup, Ghaddafi was a lieutenant. He promoted himself to a Colonel right after he seized power.
- 7 Libyan Constitutional Declaration of 1969.
- 8 For instance, the imprisonment of Omer Alhariri and the assassination of Mohamed Almagaryaf in 1971.
- 9 The Green Book (Libya), Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Green_Book_\(Libya\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Green_Book_(Libya))
- 10 M Asser, 'The Muammar Gaddafi story', 21 October 2011, retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12688033>
- 11 M Al Gaddafi, The Green Book, Part One — The Instrument Of Government, at 2.
- 12 Law no. 71 issued in 1972.
- 13 This is according to the official records which were declared in 2009 by the Libyan Government; see the report on Reuters at <http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJJOE52106820090302>
- 14 In 1978 Ghaddafi regime issued Law no. 4, which authorised the government to take the property of Libyans who had more than one house or more than one piece of land.
- 15 See, for instance, the Annual Report of Amnesty International for the year, 2008, at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/libya/report-2008>
- 16 Retrieved from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-cross-roads-2005/libya>
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- 18 Tripoli is Libya's capital and the country's biggest city, while Benghazi is the second largest city.
- 19 The former CEO of Aljazeera channel, Wadah Khanfar, spoke passionately about how those values impacted the youth in the Arabian revolutions; 'Wadah Khanfar: A historic moment in the Arab world'. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/wadah_khanfar_a_historic_moment_in_the_arab_world.html
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- 22 Human Rights Watch, Libya: June 1996 Killings at Abu Salim Prison. Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/libya_2003.pdf
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- 24 H Rane & S Salem, 'Social media, social movements and the diffusion of ideas in the Arab uprisings', *Journal of International Communication*, 2012, 106.
- 25 Aljazeera, 'Many killed in Libya's Benghazi'. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/02/20111219232320644801.html>
- 26 UN Security Council's decision no. 1970, 26 February 2011.
- 27 Google Transparency Report. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/transparencereport/traffic/>
- 28 Decision no. 1973, 2011.
- 29 The main two Facebook pages that were active included Wefaq Libya, <https://www.facebook.com/WefaqLibyaAr?filter=2>, and Ashahed Libya, <https://www.facebook.com/libya.ashahed> (02/06/2012)
- 30 H Rane & S Salem, above n 24, 97. George Lawson refers to its importance as mechanism for connection; 'After the Arab Spring: power shift in the Middle East?: the Arab uprisings: revolution or protests?', IDEAS reports — special reports, Kitchen, Nicholas (ed.) SR011.LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, at 15.
- 31 The NTC is a semi-presidential council and was founded in March 2011 to represent the Libyan rebels.
- 32 Art 4 of the Constitutional Declaration of 2011.
- 33 Art 6.
- 34 Art 14.
- 35 These elections took place on 7 July 2012.
- 36 Statistics in Arabic, High National Election Committee, retrieved from <http://hnec.ly/>
- 37 *ibid*.
- 38 *Tripoli Post*, 'Women with almost 17% representation in Libya 200-Member Transitional Authority'. Retrieved from <http://www.tripoli-post.com/articledetail.asp?c=1&i=8854>
- 39 Aljazeera, 'Building Libya's new media from a void', 12 May 2012.
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- 41 BBC, 'Libya's media environment has undergone a rapid and total transformation', 7 March 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13754900>.
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- 43 Law no. 19/2001, issued under Ghaddafi rule.

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- 45 *ibid.*
- 46 In a recent report by Human Rights Watch, several criticisms have been voiced against the NTC for not controlling the rebels who still detain near 5,000 out of the 8,000 detainees who were part of the Ghaddafi regime. Human Rights Watch states that '[n]umerous cases of torture and even deaths in custody have been documented'. SL Whitson, 'Libya's human rights problem', 15 May 2012, retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/15/libyas-human-rights-problem>
- 47 Compare B Simone Noveck, 'Wiki-Government: How open-source technology can make government decision-making more expert and more democratic', *Democracy Journal*, 32, retrieved from <http://www.democracyjournal.org/pdf/7/031-043.noveck.final.pdf>
- 48 A Sen, *Development as freedom*, Anchor Books, 2000, 157.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 50 H Rane & Sa Salem, above n 24, 102.



Ezieddin Elmahjub is a lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Tripoli University in Libya. He has worked as a legal consultant in a leading Tripoli law firm, advising multinationals on various areas of Libyan law. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Law School at Queensland University of Technology, researching the development of Libyan intellectual property system from an Islamic cultural perspective.