

Before 2011, Libya was Africa's richest country - now a scene of horrifying atrocities

The Norwegian Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs has voted to conduct an independent investigation into Norway's involvement in the Libya War, 2011. In that connection, we would like to publish a few articles on this topic to assist the committee in its vital efforts.

By Hanne Nabintu Herland

The Libyan War led to al-Qaeda-affiliated groups taking power, and to this day, the country lies in complete ruins.

When the Gaddafi regime fell, it was then al-Qaeda-affiliated leaders such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (1) commander, Abdulhakim Belhadj—a man with a long history of ties to terrorist groups in Afghanistan, Libya and other places—who formed the nucleus of Western-backed Libyan leaders which follow the same ideology as al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Within a few years, Belhadj allegedly became one of Africa's richest men with a worth of more than USD 19 billion. And in 2015, Belhadj —John McCain's good friend—was reportedly the leader of ISIS in Libya.

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The Western and UN backed government in Tripoli is to this day controlled by the same driving forces.

This phenomenon may overall illustrate a fragment of one of the greatest scandals of our time: the Western media is synchronised with al-Qaeda-affiliates' and Sunni extremist groups' perception of who is “evil” and who is



Photo: Travel Time, Libya before 2011

“good” in the Middle East. Our media chronically reflect the Islamist world view on the driving forces in the region.

We are working against the moderate, secular ruling powers in the region and are working together with the Islamic extremists.

Western observers are fully aware that ISIS, al-Qaeda, Salafi's, takfiri's and other militant groups tyrannise the local population with assault, rape of both men and women, kidnapping of adults and children, extortions and murder, unstopped massacres by war lords, ethnic cleansing of dark-skinned Libyans such as the fate of many Tawareks, and a host of terrorist acts against the local population, all of which share the common theme that the Western media makes no mention of this appalling situation in Libya.

Western backed Warlords now rule Libya with extreme violence

and merciless assaults on the population.

Not to mention the massive theft of Libyan state assets and ongoing ICC corruption – the very International Criminal Court that seeks to bring mainly Africans and Serbians to its court, yet conveniently never indicting a single Western leader, regardless how many crimes against humanity they commit. It's remarkably dead quiet about this in the mainstream Western media.

Crimes against humanity

No one wants to talk about what our bombing in Libya led to. If we did, our political leaders would have to take responsibility for their crimes against humanity. This would put Norwegians in an uncomfortable position and the responsible Norwegian political leaders jailed by the ICC, whose members recently have been implicated in scandals of cor-

ruption and embezzlement, by the way. But in Norway, we simply do not want the discomfort, and hope that the consequences of the Libya war will quietly disappear, which seems not to be the case however how silent the mainstream media remains on the issue.

Whether wilfully evil or plain out incompetent, is hard to assess. The end result is, at any rate, the same. To illustrate the point, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Store even wrote an op-ed in The New York Times defending the Muslim Brotherhood, stating something like the Arab Spring being “neither controlled by Islamist groups nor based on Islamist trends, but a much more pragmatic movement than the West seems to fear.. it will not prepare the ground for Al Qaida.” One may wonder which dream world these politicians live in, yet whichever is the motive, they should be required to

be responsible for their own actions and decisions when holding political positions. Yet, this is not the case in Europe.

The beginning of the Libya war

In 2011, Libyans were massacred, tens of thousands of civilians were murdered and injustices were suffered by the dozen when the country's government lost control of Libya's public security as a result of the nation coming under attack. Norway was actively involved in the beginning of the assault and dropped a total of 588 bombs on the country, approximately 15% of all the bombs according to the Norwegian Defence Ministry.

Norwegian fighter pilots have since confirmed that 75% of the Norwegian bombings were what are known as Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance (SCAR) missions, meaning that it was up to the pilot to find and determine what he wanted to bomb or "hit what he thought looked like military targets".

They had to pick out targets on their own and drop bombs even on urban areas. The Norwegian pilots told NRK that they were aware that the rebels bombed and fired weapons inside of civilian-inhabited areas, but were not ordered to stop them from doing so.

Western forces entered into alliances with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and—later it would prove—with al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in their pursuit to replace the head of Africa's richest state. The war was hailed in the newspapers and the al-Qaeda flag soon was seen waving over Libya's tribunals and courts. Even as late as three years later, in 2014, the Norwegian political leadership were very satisfied with Norway's active military involvement. It simply was unbelievable to read. Next to no one protested.

Profound gratitude goes out to the Norwegian outlet of critical journalism, NRK Brennpunkt, and professor Terje Tvedt, one of the very few who dared to criticize the NATO war with their programme "The Good Bombs".



Photo: Travel Time, Libya before 2011

bombing of Libya" was a cynical and evil euphemism and violation of the human rights of civilians in Libya, who were killed by the tens of thousands. The programme pointed out that: "we went from profound peace in Norway to strategic bombing in Africa in a matter of days".

At the time, I also addressed the issue in Norway's then largest newspaper, as well as an array of other Scandinavian outlets. Note that the stupid title "Tyrant removed tyrant" was not mine, but the choice of the ignorant editor in the newspaper.

NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, a war criminal?

Let's take a closer look at how the Libyan welfare state was organised and what kind of society Norway and NATO's bombing and military coup in Libya effectively destroyed.

With the current leader of the Labour Party leading the Norwegian assaults on Libya, Jonas Gahr Støre and NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, Norway contributed very actively to destroying Africa's richest state.

Neither of them have since been indicted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes against humanity, which I for years have sharply criticized, nor have they in any other way had to take responsibility for their war crimes.

When the actual conditions are laid bare, they have hoped that no one found out about the pain and

atrocities committed against the civilian population.

The Labour Party in Norway, however, did the unimaginable by actually electing Jonas Gahr Støre as their leader—the man responsible for the grave Libya tragedy and who should have been incarcerated in The Hague a long time ago. Libyan lives obviously are of no value to the Norwegian Labour Party's leadership and its voters who view the assault on Libya as hardly an issue. I find it utterly incomprehensible that people can vote for a party such as the Labour Party while they have a war criminal as their leader.

Libya under Gaddafi: Africa's richest welfare state

Most people now realise that Libya became Africa's richest state under President Muammar Gaddafi, with social welfare evenly distributed across the Libyan population. The list of benefits is long. Free health services for everyone and free education for both women and men, with the right to apply for education abroad—also paid for by the state of Libya. This applied to women too.

As most people know, Libya enjoyed peace for more than 40 years. Gaddafi was a liberal supporter of women's rights, and women participated in the military forces and were encouraged to pursue an education, among other things. Many Libyans now reminisce this period.

The Gaddafi liberal view on women was strongly disfavoured by groups affiliated with the Salafi ideology, as well as the later al-Qaeda factions that NATO later relied on in order to control Gaddafi. As another example, when starting out as newlyweds, the average Libyan would receive what equates to around 50,000 U.S. dollars in support from the state to help start up a family; loans were given to citizens at 0% interest.

Further, buying a car was heavily subsidised; car prices were far lower than in Europe and practically every family could afford a car. Bread, petrol and other essentials were also heavily subsidised. There was no such thing as an electricity bill in Libya; electricity was subsidised by the state and free for citizens. The state subsidised the price of cars purchased by private parties by 50%.

The central bank was completely and entirely independent, with no loans from the IMF, the World Bank or other Western institutions. Peter Hoekstra gives a good account of this in his book titled *Architects of Disaster: The Destruction of Libya*.

Libya had Africa's longest average life expectancy at 78 years of age, and an infant mortality rate as low as 20 in 1000 births.

The country had zero foreign debt as of 2011, while Egypt's foreign debt-to-GDP ratio was as high as 72%. 7% of the population lived below the poverty line as of 2011, in contrast to Algeria with 22% and Egypt with 20%.

One survey said that as many as 82% of Libyans could read and write, compared with 52% literacy in Morocco and 69% in Algeria. According to the CIA World Factbook, the national literacy rate was as high as 94%.

The country had washed its hands clean of the Lockerbie scandal and opened up the once closed-off country to the West. It was Saif al-Islam, Gaddafi's son, who was instrumental in resolving the Lockerbie case where considerable compensation was paid out to the victims' families. It was also under Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's leadership

that the military was scaled back, the nuclear weapons programme was eliminated in cooperation with the Americans and the economy was privatised in order to warm up to the West and put an end to their hostile relations. Several Western Oil Companies invested in Libya

Gaddafi was Al Qaida's worst enemy

Long before 2011, Libya worked closely with the CIA and Western intelligence to take control over Sunni Muslim terrorist groups in the region such as al-Qaeda. Lawrence Wright gives a good account of this in *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*.

Gaddafi was known for being al-Qaeda's arch enemy; they had attempted to take his life on multiple occasions. (1) Through their cooperation, the United States and Libya created stability in the region and controlled the flow of refugees to Europe, which was a major issue at that time. Gaddafi had an agreement with Italy to take control of the illegal activities that to a great extent were led by gangs of human smugglers.

Muammar Gaddafi, however, led a state with a strong centralised organisation. He was known for imprisoning people without charge or trial, supporting guerrilla movements and leading a complex country with diverse African ethnic minorities that had historically been at each other's throats.

Despite cracking down on militant oppositionists, Gaddafi was also able to keep the peace and maintain order for over forty years

in the socialist state. He was for instance the guardian of dark-skinned Libyans. As is known, the multi-ethnic state of Libya is made up of a number of ethnic groups in the south with dark skin, and Gaddafi was openly critical when speaking out against the strong racist tendencies towards dark-skinned individuals in Arab countries.

In the years leading up to 2011, Libya had been characterised by a marked willingness to commit to growth and reform. Some claim that the changes came in the wake of Gaddafi witnessing the attack on Iraq and how Saddam Hussein was brutally murdered. They say he understood that the time had come to change tactics with the West.

Gaddafi was a strong opponent of what is known as Western imperialist policy. Like Abdel Nasser in Egypt, he had little appreciation of political parties and in many ways ruled Libya together with the military administration, leaving the national assembly in many respects without any real power.

Hillary Clinton's War

In 2007 Muammar Gaddafi received praise from President George Bush for his willingness to commit to reforms. The two heads of state were on good terms. Condoleezza Rice praised Libya for the country's active strides to combat al-Qaeda terrorism and its strong cooperation with the United States. Libya warmed up to the West and began to weed out a number of challenges that had created problems in Libya's relations with the United States and other nations. Gaddafi had also distinguished himself as a

strong Arab voice that worked actively against Sunni Islamic al-Qaeda and its affiliates as ISIS or IS.

The morale was, in other words, better than it had been for some time. A number of human rights reports from that time also cite the significant progress Libya had made, among them a UN analysis that was in preparation in February of 2011 where Libya received considerable praise for the way the country was led, something I will return to later.

Then came what Julian Assange termed "The Hillary Clinton's war" on Libya, where Clinton and France pursued a vendetta against Libya that had catastrophic consequences. The French philosopher who played a key role in the run-up to the war in Libya, Bernard Henri-Lévy, says himself that it was President Sarkozy's personal ambition and goal to oust Gaddafi and install a new government in Libya.

This phenomenon may, as stated, overall illustrate a fragment of one of the greatest scandals of our time: the Western media is synchronised with al-Qaeda-affiliates' and Sunni extremist groups' perception of who is "evil" and who is "good" in the Middle East. Our media chronically reflect the Islamist world view on the driving forces in the region.

We are working against the moderate, secular ruling powers in the region and are working together with the Islamic extremists. This is one of the reasons why the Libyan civil war is not yet resolved, as the Islamists are unable to broker peace in Libya.

Note (1): The Free Dictionary defines the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah bi-Libya, as a Libyan terrorist group organised in 1995 and aligned with al-Qaeda which seeks to radicalise Libya and has attempted to liquidate Gaddafi.

Author:

Hanne Nabintu Herland

Hanne Nabintu Herland is a historian of religions, author and founder of *The Herland Report* which reaches millions yearly, featuring leading intellectuals, writers and activists on foreign policy, Western decay, religion and the need for international justice. Herland is known from the media for fearless speech and stern criticism of political correctness, stating that our democracies have been taken over by an extreme-liberal elite that no longer listens to the voice of the people.



www.theherlandreport.com



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