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Libya and the Big Lie: Using Human Rights Organizations to Launch Wars

By Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya

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The war against Libya is built on fraud. The United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions against Libya on the basis of unproven claims, specifically that Colonel Muammar Qaddafi was killing his own people in Benghazi and Libya. The claim in its exact form was that Qaddafi had ordered Libyan forces to kill 6,000 people in Benghazi as well as in other parts of the country. These claims were widely disseminated, but always vaguely explained. It was on the basis of this claim that Libya was referred to the U.N. Security Council at U.N Headquarters in New York City and kicked out of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

False claims about African mercenary armies in Libya and about jet attacks on civilians were also used in a broad media campaign against Libya. These two claims have been sidelined and have become more and more murky. The massacre claims, however, were used in a legal, diplomatic, and military framework to justify NATO's war on Libya.

Using Human Rights as a Pretext for War: The LLHR and its Unproven Claims

One of the main sources for the claim that Qaddafi was killing his own people is the Libyan League for Human Rights (LLHR). The LLHR was actually pivotal to getting the U.N. involved through its specific claims in Geneva. On February 21, 2011 the LLHR got the 70 other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to send letters to the President Obama, E.U. High Representative Catherine Ashton., and the U.N. Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon demanding international action against Libya invoking the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine. Only 25 members of this coalition actually assert that they are human rights groups.

The letter is as follows:

We, the undersigned non-governmental, human rights, and humanitarian organizations, urge you to mobilize the United Nations and the international community and take immediate action to halt the mass atrocities now being perpetrated by the Libyan government against its own people. The inexcusable silence cannot continue.

As you know, in the past several days, Colonel Moammar Gadhafi’s forces are estimated to have deliberately killed hundreds of peaceful protesters and innocent bystanders across the country. In the city of Benghazi alone, one doctor reported seeing at least 200 dead bodies. Witnesses report that a mixture of special commandos, foreign mercenaries and regime loyalists have attacked demonstrators with knives, assault rifles and heavy-caliber weapons.

Snipers are shooting peaceful protesters. Artillery and helicopter gunships have been used against crowds of demonstrators. Thugs armed with hammers and swords attacked families in their homes. Hospital officials report numerous victims shot in the head and chest, and one struck on the head by an anti-aircraft missile. Tanks are reported to be on the streets and crushing innocent bystanders. Witnesses report that mercenaries are shooting indiscriminately from helicopters and from the top of roofs. Women and children were seen jumping off Giuliana Bridge in Benghazi to escape. Many of them were killed by the impact of hitting the water, while others were drowned. The Libyan regime is seeking to hide all of these crimes by shutting off contact with the outside world. Foreign journalists have been refused entry. Internet and phone lines have been cut or disrupted.

There is no question here about intent. The government media has published open threats, promising that demonstrators would meet a “violent and thunderous response.”

Accordingly, the government of Libya is committing gross and systematic violations of the right to life as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Citizens seeking to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are being massacred by the government.

Moreover, the government of Libya is committing crimes against humanity, as defined by the Explanatory Memorandum to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Libyan government’s mass killing of innocent civilians amount to particularly odious offences which

constitute a serious attack on human dignity. As confirmed by numerous oral and video testimonies gathered by human rights organizations and news agencies, the Libyan government's assault on its civilian population are not isolated or sporadic events. Rather, these actions constitute a widespread and systematic policy and practice of atrocities, intentionally committed, including murder, political persecution and other inhumane acts which reach the threshold of crimes against humanity.

Responsibility to Protect

*Under the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, you have a clear and unambiguous responsibility to protect the people of Libya. The international community, through the United Nations, has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect the Libyan population. Because the Libyan national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their population from crimes against humanity, should peaceful means be inadequate, member states are obliged to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the **Security Council**, in accordance with the UN Charter, including Chapter VII.*

*In addition, we **urge you to convene an emergency Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council**, whose members have a duty, under UNGA Resolution 60/251, to address situations of gross and systematic violations of violations of human rights. The session should:*

*-Call for the General Assembly to suspend **Libya's Council membership**, pursuant to Article 8 of Resolution 60/251, which applies to member states that commit gross and systematic violations of human rights.*

-Strongly condemn, and demand an immediate end to, Libya's massacre of its own citizens.

-Dispatch immediately an international mission of independent experts to collect relevant facts and document violations of international human rights law and crimes against humanity, in order to end the impunity of the Libyan government. The mission should include an independent medical investigation into the deaths, and an investigation of the unlawful interference by the Libyan government with the access to and treatment of wounded.

-Call on the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Council's relevant Special Procedures to closely monitor the situation and take action as needed.

-Call on the Council to remain seized of the matter and address the Libyan situation at its upcoming 16th regular session in March.

Member states and high officials of the United Nations have a responsibility to protect the people of Libya from what are preventable crimes. We urge you to use all available measures and levers to end atrocities throughout the country.

We urge you to send a clear message that, collectively, the international community, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council will not be bystanders to these mass atrocities. The credibility of the United Nations — and many innocent lives — are at stake. [1]

According to Physicians for Human Rights: “[This letter was] prepared under the guidance of Mohamed Eljahmi, the noted Libyan human rights defender and brother of dissident Fathi Eljahmi, asserts that the widespread atrocities committed by Libya against its own people amount to war crimes, requiring member states to take action through the Security Council under the responsibility to protect doctrine.” [2]

The letters signatories included Francis Fukuyama, United Nations Watch (which looks out for Israel’s interests and according to Israeli sources organized the entire session against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), B’nai B’rith Human Rights Commission, the Cuban Democratic Directorate, and a set of organizations at odds with the governments of Nicaragua, Cuba, Sudan, Russia, Venezuela, and Libya. Some of these organizations are viewed with hostility as organizations created to wage demonization campaigns against countries at odds with the U.S., Israel, and the European Union. Refer to the annex for the full list of signatories for consultation.

LLHR is tied to the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), which is based in France and has ties to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). FIDH is active in many places in Africa and in activities involving the National Endowment for Democracy in the African continent. Both the FIDH and LLHR also released a joint communiqué on February 21, 2011. In the communiqué both organizations asked for the international community to “mobilize” and mention the International Criminal Court while also making a contradictory claiming that over 400 to 600 people had died since February 15, 2011. [3] This of course was about 5,500 short of the claim that 6,000 people were massacred in Benghazi. The joint letter also promoted the false view that 80% of Qaddafi’s support came from foreign mercenaries, which is something that over half a year of fighting proves as untrue.

According to the General-Secretary of the LLHR, Dr. Sliman Bouchuiguir, the claims about the massacres in Benghazi could not be validated by the LLHR when he was challenged for proof. When asked how a group of 70 non-governmental organizations in Geneva could support the LLHR’s claims on Geneva, Dr. Buchuiguir has answered that a network of close relationship was the basis. This is a mockery.

Speculation is neither evidence nor grounds for starting a war with a bombing campaign that has lasted about half a year and taken many innocent civilian lives, including children and the elderly. What is important to note here is that the U.N. Security Council decided to sanction the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on the basis of this letter and the claims of the LLHR. Not once did the U.N. Security Council and the member states pushing for war once bother to even investigate the allegations. In one session in New York City, the Indian Ambassador to the U.N. actually pointed this out when his country abstained from voting. Thus, a so-called “humanitarian war” was launched without any evidence.

The Secret Relationship between the LLHR and the Transitional Council

The claims of the Libyan League for Human Rights (LLHR) were coordinated with the formation of the Transitional Council. This becomes clear when the close and cagey relationship of the LLHR and the Transitional Council becomes apparent. Logically, the Obama Administration and NATO had to also be a part of this.

Whatever the Transitional Council is and whatever the intent of some of its supporters, it is clear that it is being used as a tool by the U.S. and others. Moreover, five members of the LLHR were or would become members of the Transitional Council almost immediately after the claims against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya were disseminated. According to Bouchuguir individuals with ties to the LLHR or who hold membership include Mahmoud Jibril and Ali Tarhouni.

Dr. Mahmoud Jibril is a Libyan regime figure brought into Libyan government circles by Saif Al-Islam Qaddafi. He would undemocratically be given the position of Transitional Council prime minister. His involvement with the LLHR raises some real questions about the organization.

The economist Ali Tarhouni on the other hand would become the minister for oil and finance for the Transitional Council. Tarhouni is Washington's man in Libya. He was groomed in the United States and was present at all the major meetings about plans for regime change in Libya. As Minister of Oil and Finance the first acts he did were privatize and virtually handover Libya's energy resources and economy to the foreign corporations and governments of the NATO-led coalition against Libya.

The General-Secretary of the LLHR, Sliman Bouchuguir, has even privately admitted that many influential members of the Transitional Council are his friends. A real question of interests arises. Yet, the secret relationship between the LLHR and the Transitional Council is far more than a question of conflict of interest. It is a question of justice and manipulation.

Who is Sliman Bouchuguir?

Sliman Bouchuguir is an unheard of figure for most, but he has authored a doctoral thesis that has been widely quoted and used in strategic circles in the United States. This thesis was published in 1979 as a book, *The Use of Oil as a Political Weapon: A Case Study of the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo*. The thesis is about the use of oil as an economic weapon by Arabs, but can easily be applied to the Russians, the Iranians, the Venezuelans, and others. It examines economic development and economic warfare and can also be applied to vast regions, including all of Africa.

Bouchuguir's analytical thesis reflects an important line of thinking in Washington, as well as London and Tel Aviv. It is both the embodiment of a pre-existing mentality, which includes U.S. National Security Advisor George F. Kennan's arguments for maintaining a position of disparity through a constant multi-faced war between the U.S. and its allies on one hand and the rest of the world on the other hand. The thesis can be drawn on for preventing the Arabs, or others, from becoming economic powers or threats. In strategic terms, rival economies are pinned as threats and as "weapons." This has serious connotations.

Moreover, Bouchuguir did his thesis at George Washington University under Bernard Reich. Reich is a political scientist and professor of international relations. He has worked and held positions at places like the U.S. Defense Intelligence College, the United States Air Force

Special Operations School, the Marine Corps War College, and the Shiloah Center at Tel Aviv University. He has consulted on the Middle East for the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. State Department and received grants such as the Defense Academic Research Support Program Research Grant and the German Marshal Fund Grant. Reich also was or is presently on the editorial boards of journals such as *Israel Affairs* (1994-present), *Terrorism: An International Journal* (1987-1994), and *The New Middle East* (1971-1973).

It is also clear that Reich is tied to Israeli interests. He has even written a book about the special relationship between the U.S and Israel. He has also been an advocate for a “New Middle East” which would be favourable to Israel. This includes careful consideration over North Africa. His work has also focused on the important strategic interface between the Soviet Union and the Middle East and also on Israeli policy in the continent of Africa.

It is clear why Bouchuiguir had his thesis supervised under Reich. On October 23, 1973, Reich gave a testimony at the U.S. Congress. The testimony has been named “The Impact of the October Middle East War” and is clearly tied to the 1973 oil embargo and Washington’s aim of pre-empting or managing any similar events in the future. It has to be asked, how much did Reich influence Bouchuiguir and if Bouchuiguir espouses the same strategic views as Reich?

The “New North Africa” and a “New Africa” – More than just a “New Middle East”

A “New Africa” is in the works, which will have its borders further drawn out in blood like in the past. The Obama Administration and its allies have opened the gateway for a new invasion of Africa. United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) opened the salvos of the war through Operation Odyssey Dawn, before the war on Libya was transferred to NATO’s Operation Unified Protector.

The U.S. has used NATO to continue the occupation of post-Second World War Europe. It will now use AFRICOM to occupy Africa and create an African NATO. It is clear the U.S. wants an expanded military presence in Libya and Africa under the disguise of humanitarian aid missions and fighting terrorism – the same terrorism that it is fanning in Libya and Africa.

The way is being paved for intervention in Africa under the guise of fighting terrorism. General Carter Ham has stated: “If we were to launch a humanitarian operation, how do we do so effectively with air traffic control, airfield management, [and] those kind of activities?” [4] General Ham’s question is actually a sales pitch for fashioning African military partnerships and integration, as well as new bases that could include the use of more military drones against Libya and other African countries. *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) have both made it clear that the Pentagon is actively trying to establish more drone bases in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to expand its wars. [5] In this context, the AFRICOM Commander says that there are ties between the Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa, and the Boko Haram in Nigeria. [6]

The War in Libya is a Fraud

General Ham has said: “I remain confident that had the U.N. not made the decision, had the U.S. not taken the lead with great support, I’m absolutely convinced there are many, many people in Benghazi alive today who would not be [alive].” [7] This is not true and a far stretch from reality. The war has cost more lives than it could have ever saved. It has ruined a country and opened the door into Africa for a neo-colonial project.

The claims of the Libyan League for Human Rights (LLHR) were never supported or verified. The credibility of the United Nations must be questioned as well as the credibility of many humanitarian and human rights organizations that have virtually pushed for a war. At best the U.N. Security Council is an irresponsible body, but it has clearly acted outside of due legal process. This pattern now appears to be repeating itself against the Syrian Arab Republic as unverified claims are being made by individuals and organizations supported by foreign powers that care nothing for authentic democratic reforms or liberty.

***Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya** is a Sociologist and Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG). He specializes on the Middle East and Central Asia. He was on the ground in Libya for over two months and was also a Special Correspondent for **Flashpoints**, which is a program based in Berkeley, California.*

NOTES

[1] United Nations Watch *et al.*, “Urgent Appeal to Stop Atrocities in Libya: Sent by 70 NGOs to the US, EU, and UN,” February 21, 2011:

<<http://www.unwatch.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=bdKKISNqEmG&b=1330815&ct=9135143>>

[2] Physicians for Human Rights, “PHR and Human Rights Groups Call for Immediate Action in Libya,” February 22, 2011:

<<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/press/press-releases/news-2011-02-22-libya.html>>

[3] The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Libyan League for Human Rights (LLHR), “Massacres in Libya: The international community must urgently,” respond, February 21, 2011:

<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/article_PDF/article_a9183.pdf>

[4] Jim Garamone, “Africa Command Learns from Libya Operations,” American Forces Press Service, September 15, 2011:

<<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65344&reason=1>>

[5] Gregory Miller and Craig Whitlock, “U.S. assembling secret drone bases in Africa, Arabian Peninsula, officials say,” *The Washington Post*, September 20, 2011; Julian E. Barnes,

“U.S. Expands Drone Flights to Take Aim at East Africa,” *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), September 21, 2011.

[6] Garamone, “Africa Command Learns,” *Op. cit.*

[7] *Ibid.*