

Race and Arab Nationalism in Libya

by BAR executive editor Glen Ford

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Although a reawakened Arab nationalism “represents a catastrophe for U.S. imperialism,” the conflict in Libya dramatically exposes an “endemic” racism in the North African Maghreb. This racism “is not just against other Africans, meaning non-Libyan Africans, but also within Libya itself.” Its manifestations are immediately recognizable to African Americans.

”The Sudanese, the Chadians were massacred. We saw it ourselves.”

U.S. corporate media are sure about certain things in Libya, and admit total ignorance of others – which makes for an uninspiring mix. They are sure that Muammar Khadafi is hated by the vast majority of the Libyan people, whose sentiments, the western media all but unanimously believe, are expressed by the “rebels” that have taken Benghazi and other major cities. These same media, including correspondents that spend literally all their waking moments chronicling the rebels’ every move and utterance, have no inkling of the politics that animates these people, beyond opposition to the regime and an undeniable Arab and Libyan nationalism.

What has become apparent from reports filtering out of the country is that many of the 1.5 million black African migrant workers trapped in Libya feel themselves under racial siege, hunted by what Black Americans would immediately recognize as lynch mobs – “pogrom” is another word that springs to mind – especially in the rebel-held areas.

The testimony of black African victims is most disturbing. “We were being attacked by local people who said that we were mercenaries killing people. Let me say that they did not want to see black people,” 60-year-old Julius Kiluu, an African building supervisor, [told Reuters \[6\]](#). Even in Tripoli, where the regime is not in full control of neighborhoods, [Somalis told journalists \[7\]](#) they were “being hunted on suspicion of being mercenaries” and “feel trapped and frightened to go out.” Ethiopians told of being “dragged from their apartments, beaten up and showed to the world as mercenaries.” [Ethiopian News and Opinions \[8\]](#) reported that “Muammar Gadhafi haters are taking revenge on black Africans for money Gadhafi threw for many African dictators. The mob attacked and killed many Africans including Ethiopians for being only black.”

“Black African migrant workers trapped in Libya feel themselves under racial siege, hunted by what Black Americans would immediately recognize as lynch mobs.”

A Turkish oil worker told National Public Radio’s West African reporter [Ofeibea Quist Arcton \[9\]](#):

“We left behind our friends from Chad. We left behind their bodies. We had 70 or 80 people from Chad working for our company. They cut them dead with pruning shears and axes, attacking them, saying you’re providing troops for Gadhafi. The Sudanese, the Chadians were massacred. We saw it ourselves.”

An [Associated Press report \[10\]](#) described 20 men held as “mercenaries” in a Benghazi jail cell, “looking disheveled and frightened.” Outside, “three effigies were hanging from lampposts and flagpoles – all depicting mercenaries.” A spokesman for the local rebel organizing committee said, “If people knew they were up there, they would tear down the door.” He was clearly describing a lynch mob. But these men were “simply ordinary African workers who got caught up in the middle of this chaos,” according to Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch, who met with them.

A [Time Magazine \[11\]](#) story described videos that

“...show the bodies of several dead, black African men killed by the protestors, including the corpses of two men being paraded on the hood of a car and driven through a crowd of demonstrators in al-Baida. Another video shows a black African man, who has been caught by the demonstrators, being hit and punched. A protestor asks: ‘Who is giving you orders?’ The man replies: ‘They come from up high. I swear, I swear...orders, orders.’ The protestor asks: ‘They told you to fire at us?’ The man replies: ‘Yes, yes.’”

But a man calling himself Fazzani told [France 24 International News \[12\]](#):

“I am very sorry to see these clips. One of the guys in the seen [sic] is black Libyan ‘not from other African countries.’ His family lives in EL Mansoura village in Elwadi shatty district about 200 KM from Borack Ashhati. (Borack AL Shatty is about 700KM south of Tripoli). I have not got permission to put his name here. Hope his family will see this and they will clarify.”

Fazzani described himself as a “Disappointed Black Libyan.” He added a “few facts” of Libyan life:

“Most of the residents of Fezzan (Southern part of Libya) are black skinned. Try to find photo of Libyan Embassordor [sic] to UN Mr Abdelrahman Shalgam (Is he mercenary?) Try to see photo of Top man of Gaddafi’s Information office director (Bashir Saleh), he is more dark skinned than Nelson Mandela, does that mean he is a mercenary from Africa? I am not trying to be a racist but just to clarify few facts.”

“Racially motivated lynch mobs all act alike.”

Any American – any *Black* American – can recognize the pattern of racial lynch law that treats all black Africans as alien, potential enemies. Racially motivated lynch mobs all act alike. Libyan Arab mobs can no more be defended as acting upon special, exigent circumstances (the mercenary “threat”) than their American counterparts, who always had a ready excuse for their gruesome predations (Black crime, lust for white women, theft of white jobs, whatever).

The [Christian Science Monitor \[13\]](#), in typical obfuscatory fashion, manages to convey useful information under a largely misleading headline: “How Qaddafi Helped Fuel Fury Towards Africans in Libya.”

“I think that there are levels of racism within Libyan society that are quite problematic. But racism is not just against other Africans, meaning non-Libyan Africans, but also within Libya itself,” Na’eem Jeenah, executive director of the Afro-Middle East Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, told CSM. Another Johannesburg-based researcher, Issaka Souare, says that Libyans (presumably, those who are lighter-skinned) may perceive Qaddafi as favoring the darker-skinned (and less developed) south of the country, and resent his self-proclaimed “Pan-Africanism.” Such sentiments are familiar to Black American ears, echoes of U.S. whites with the words “reverse racism” dripping from their twisted lips.

Hussein Zachariah, a metal worker for a Turkish construction company, told of traveling by car with another Ghanaian and two Chadians to the Egyptian border, after an anti-Khadafi mob burned their migrant compound and all their belongings. The Chadians were forced out of the vehicle at an opposition roadblock, while the Ghanaians were allowed to continue their exit. Many Libyans, CSM explained, resent people from Chad because “Qaddafi has a known history of lavishing the nation’s wealth to build connections” with leaders of his southern neighbor. The fate of Mr. Zachariah’s Chadian co-workers is unknown. Hopefully, it was not the same as the “70 or 80” Chadian employees of a Turkish construction company whose slaughter was recounted to National Public Radio’s Ofeibea Quist Arcton.

“He was often pelted with rocks and called a ‘slave’ by Libyans on the streets during his three years working in Benghazi.”

Like virtually all black African migrants, Zachariah says he was often pelted with rocks and called a “slave” by Libyans on the streets during his three years working in Benghazi. The Arabic term is “abd,” which means one who is subordinated, a servant or slave, but is deployed with the same contempt as “nigger” in the mouths of American racists. Khadafi’s “mercenaries” are no more to blame for Libya’s latest paroxysm of anti-black violence than African American boxer Jack Johnson was responsible for the outbreak of deadly white riots after Johnson beat the Great White Hope, James Jeffries, in 1910. The underlying cause was racism, not the immediate event. Anti-black African riots claimed [at least 150 lives in Libya \[14\]](#) in 2000, with no marauding black “mercenaries” as an excuse.

Col. Khadafi has also played the “race card” in efforts to forestall European intervention in the Libyan conflict – the same tactic he used to cement business and diplomatic ties on the other side of the Mediterranean. As the [Huffington Post reported \[15\]](#), March 3:

“In his speech, Gadhafi lashed out against the freezing of his and other Libyan assets abroad and efforts by Europe to send aid to opposition-held Benghazi. In a pointed message to Europe, he warned, ‘There will be no stability in the Mediterranean if there is no stability in Libya.’

“‘Africans will march to Europe without anyone to stop them. The Mediterranean will become a center for piracy like Somalia,’ he said. Gadhafi’s regime has worked closely with Italy and other European countries to stop African migrants who use Libya as a launching point to slip into Europe.”

“The Mediterranean will become a center for piracy like Somalia,” Col. Khadafi said.”

The Arab re-awakening, as I [recently remarked \[16\]](#), “will be plagued by fits and starts and disappointments and tragedies – but it cannot be rolled back.” In the turmoil, what is also re-awakened – or never really dormant – is a “problematic” form of anti-black racism that appears, at least in some parts of the North African Maghreb, endemic and woven into the fabric of Arab nationalism.

The (re)emergence of Arab nationalism nevertheless represents a catastrophe for U.S. imperialism, which abhors all nationalisms except its own as it seeks to bend every national aspiration to the will of capital and its war machinery. However, the racism that is clearly manifest in Libya’s current dynamic is also a huge impediment to pan-African solidarity, inviting new waves of imperial mischief on the continent. On that score, we should have no illusions.

BAR executive editor Glen Ford can be contacted at Glen.Ford@BlackAgendaReport.com

African Migrants Targeted in Libya

from Al Jazeera

Anti-Khadafi forces have already killed hundreds of sub-Saharan Blacks, supposed because Black “mercenaries” are fighting for Khadafi. About 1.5m Sub-Saharan African migrants work in Libya as low-paid laborers. Said one man from Mali, “The most dangerous situation is for foreigners like us – and also us black people – because Gaddafi brought soldiers from Chad and Niger who reportedly killed Arabs.”

“As victims of racism and ruthless exploitation, they are Libya’s most vulnerable immigrant population.”

As nations evacuate their citizens from the violence gripping Libya, many African migrant workers are targeted because they are suspected of being mercenaries hired by Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader.

Dozens of workers from sub-Saharan Africa are feared killed, and hundreds are in hiding, as angry mobs of anti-government protesters hunt down “black African mercenaries,” according to witnesses.

About 90 Kenyans and another 64 citizens from South Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Zambia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Burundi landed in Nairobi on Monday, according to officials.

“We were being attacked by local people who said that we were mercenaries killing people. Let me say that they did not want to see black people,” Julius Kiluu, a 60-year-old building supervisor, told Reuters.

“Our camp was burnt down, and we were assisted by the Kenyan embassy and our company to get to the airport,” he said.

“Dozens of workers from sub-Saharan Africa are feared killed, and hundreds are in hiding.”

Rights organizations say that thousands of workers are stranded in camps and private homes, protected by their colleagues as their governments fail to evacuate them from the chaos.

“But why is nobody concerned about the plight of sub-Saharan African migrants in Libya? As victims of racism and ruthless exploitation, they are Libya’s most vulnerable immigrant population, and their home country governments do not give them any support,” Hein de Haas, a senior fellow with the International Migration Institute, [writes in his blog](#)

Al Jazeera’s Nazenine Moshiri met Seidou Boubaker Jallou, a Malian citizen, who said he fled Libya after many black migrants came under attack.

“The most dangerous situation is for foreigners like us – and also us black people – because Gaddafi brought soldiers from Chad and Niger who reportedly killed Arabs,” he said.

Experts say that Gaddafi has had a long relationship with African fighters who now came to his assistance.

Low-paid laborers

Hundreds of black immigrants from poor African countries, who mainly work in Libya’s oil industry as cheap laborers, have also been injured in the violence. Some were unable to seek medical treatment for fear of being killed.

Saad Jabbar, deputy director of the North Africa Centre at Cambridge University, confirms Africans have become targets.

“I tell you, these people, because of their scheme, they will be slaughtered in Libya. There is so much anger there against those mercenaries, which suddenly sprung up,” Jabbar said.

About 1.5m Sub-Saharan African migrants work in Libya as low-paid laborers in the oil industry, construction, agriculture and service sectors.

Rights organizations say some anti-Gaddafi protesters wrongly associate African workers with state-sponsored violence.

“A genocide is possible.”

“African immigrants are now linked to state-orchestrated violence and mass killings, and we may therefore fear the worst about the violent backlash that may follow particularly after Gaddafi is ousted,” said Haas.

Ignored by their governments, African workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in Libya right now. Analysts say unless a preventative measure is taken, a massive bloodletting is feared.

“I think it is urgent to do something about it now, otherwise, a genocide against anyone who has black skin and who doesn’t speak perfect Arabic is possible,” said Jabbar.

Des Africains pourchassés en Libye comme des mercenaires de Kadhafi

04/03/2011 à 09h:11 | AFP

Ils sont terrorisés. Certains se sont barricadés chez eux, d'autres se sont cachés dans le désert. Insultés, menacés, frappés, chassés, volés, les Africains de Libye assimilés aux "mercenaires" de Kadhafi abandonnent tout pour sauver leur peau.

Cissé Ousmane, Ivoirien de 31 ans, regardait la télévision chez lui, à Zouara (ouest de la Libye), quand "les Libyens" sont arrivés. "Ils ont frappé à la porte, boum, boum, plusieurs fois, il était 2H00 du matin. Ils voulaient rentrer de force. Ils disaient +sortez, on va vous tuer, vous êtes des blacks, des étrangers, dégagez+".

C'est la porte blindée et les barreaux aux fenêtres qui l'ont sauvé, lui et sa famille. Des maisons de Nigériens ont déjà brûlé, dit-il, et ce soir-là il en est persuadé "un black qui sort, il va mourir".

Deux heures plus tard, ils fuyaient en pleine nuit pour venir s'échouer à Ras Jedir à la frontière entre la Libye et la Tunisie.

Les témoignages des Africains de Libye arrivés à Ras Jedir ces derniers jours se suivent et se ressemblent. Ils viennent du Mali, du Soudan, du Tchad ou du Ghana, étaient venus en Libye pour trouver un emploi bien payé, aider leurs parents restés au pays ou s'installer et fonder une famille.

"Je gagnais environ deux fois plus qu'au Soudan", explique Moussa, un ouvrier soudanais de 33 ans, qui a fui avec ses quatre enfants. "Invités" à venir en Libye pendant des années par le panafricain Mouammar Kadhafi, ces émigrés étaient régulièrement victimes d'actes de racisme.

Mais leur vie a définitivement basculé avec la révolution libyenne: la répression la plus féroce a été menée par les "mercenaires africains" du leader libyen, selon de nombreux témoins qui ont décrit "des hommes noirs tirant sur les foules sans prévenir".

Dans les villes "libérées", la chasse aux Africains a commencé, des insultes aux coups en passant par le racket voire le viol, disent les Africains interrogés.

"Les Libyens nous accusent d'être des miliciens de Kadhafi, des mercenaires africains", explique Mohamed Ali, ingénieur soudanais de 40 ans, arrivé de Zawiyah. "Nous ne sommes que de simples manoeuvres!", s'indigne Saïd Moussa, Malien de 42 ans, employé d'une société chinoise à Tiji (ouest). Il raconte que quand les Chinois sont partis, la population du village leur est "tombé dessus". "Ils nous ont agressés, ils nous ont tout pris".

A Zouara, "les civils voulaient nous tuer, ils ont battu plusieurs d'entre nous. Pour moi, ce sont des animaux", lâche Abdel Ahmed, ouvrier ghanéen de 25 ans. "Ils nous ont chassé de chez nous, nous ont tout volé, ont causé des problèmes aux femmes", dit un autre sous couvert de l'anonymat. Un commerçant soudanais de 20 ans, arrivé de la même ville, explique qu'il a eu tellement peur qu'il est allé se cacher deux jours dans le désert.

Chacun a une histoire à raconter mais ils restent terrorisés. Au poste-frontière, ils ne se mêlent pas aux autres. Et quand on les interroge sur ce qu'ils ont vécu, souvent la conversation est interrompue: "Ne raconte pas ce qu'il se passe là-bas, dis qu'il n'y a pas de problèmes", leur lancent des compatriotes par crainte de représailles.

L'arrivée à Ras Jedir est rude. Des milliers d'Egyptiens, Bangladeshis ou Africains s'entassent à même le sol, dans des abris de fortune, des tentes ou des hangars dans l'attente d'être rapatriés. L'incertitude du retour dure des jours.

Pour tout refaire après des années en Libye, ils n'ont pratiquement rien. Saïd Moussa montre une petite valise: "C'est tout ce qu'il me reste après deux ans en Libye. Tout ce qu'on demande à Dieu, c'est de rentrer au pays".

Cissé Ousmane compte s'installer avec sa femme tunisienne à Tunis. Il a réussi à emporter un frigo, une machine à laver "pour les vendre". Après quatre ans en Libye, "il faut tout recommencer à zéro, on ne sait pas ce qu'il va se passer on n'a pas de maison, rien".

Libya, Getting it Right: A Revolutionary Pan-African Perspective

by Gerald A. Perreira

The conflict in Libya is not a revolution, but a counter-revolution. The struggle “is fundamentally a battle between Pan-African forces on the one hand, who are dedicated to the realization of Qaddafi's vision of a united Africa, and reactionary racist Libyan Arab forces who reject Qaddafi's vision of Libya as part of a united Africa.” The so-called Black African “mercenaries” are misnamed. “As a result of Libya's support for liberation movements throughout Africa and the world, international battalions were formed” which are part of the Libyan armed forces.

“The media and their selected commentators have done their best to manufacture an opinion that Libya is essentially the same as Egypt and Tunisia.”

Thousands of Indians, Egyptians, Chinese, Filipinos, Turks, Germans, English, Italians, Malaysians, Koreans and a host of other nationalities are lining up at the borders and the airport to leave Libya. It begs the question: What were they doing in Libya in the first place? Unemployment figures, according to the Western media and Al Jazeera, are at 30%. If this is so, then why all these foreign workers?

For those of us who have lived and worked in Libya, there are many complexities to the current situation that have been completely overlooked by the Western media and 'Westoxicated' analysts, who have nothing other than a Eurocentric perspective to draw on. Let us be clear - there is no possibility of understanding what is happening in Libya within a Eurocentric framework. Westerners are incapable of understanding a system unless the system emanates from or is attached in some way to the West. Libya's system and the battle now taking place on its soil, stands completely outside of the Western imagination.

News coverage by the BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera has been oversimplified and misleading. An array of anti-Qaddafi spokespersons, most living outside Libya, have been paraded in front of us – each one clearly a counter-revolutionary and less credible than the last. Despite the clear and irrefutable evidence from the beginning of these protests that Muammar Qaddafi had considerable support both inside Libya and internationally, not one pro-Qaddafi voice has been allowed to air. The media and their selected commentators have done their best to manufacture an opinion that Libya is essentially the same as Egypt and Tunisia and that Qaddafi is just another tyrant amassing large sums of money in Swiss bank accounts. But no matter how hard they try, they cannot make Qaddafi into a Mubarak or Libya into Egypt.

“Libya's system and the battle now taking place on its soil, stands completely outside of the Western imagination.”

The first question is: Is the revolt taking place in Libya fuelled by a concern over economic issues such as poverty and unemployment as the media would have us believe? Let us examine the facts.

Under the revolutionary leadership of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya has attained the highest standard of living in Africa. In 2007, in an article which appeared in the *African Executive Magazine*, Norah Owaraga noted that Libya, “unlike other oil producing countries such as Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, utilized the revenue from its oil to develop its country. The standard of living of the people of Libya is one of the highest in Africa, falling in the category of countries with a GNP per capita of between USD 2,200 and 6,000.”

This is all the more remarkable when we consider that in 1951 Libya was officially the poorest country in the world. According to the World Bank, the per capita income was less than \$50 a year - even lower than India. Today, all Libyans own their own homes and cars. Two Fleet Street journalists, David Blundy and Andrew Lycett, who are by no means supporters of the Libyan revolution, had this to say:

“The young people are well dressed, well fed and well educated. Libyans now earn more per capita than the British. The disparity in annual incomes... is smaller than in most countries. Libya's wealth has been fairly spread throughout society. Every Libyan gets free, and often excellent, education, medical and health services. New colleges and hospitals are impressive by any international standard. All Libyans have a house or a flat, a car and most have televisions, video recorders and telephones. Compared with most citizens of the Third World countries, and with many in the First World, Libyans have it very good indeed.” (*Source: Qaddafi and the Libyan Revolution*)

Large scale housing construction has taken place right across the country. Every citizen has been given a decent house or apartment to live in rent-free. In Qaddafi's Green Book it states: “The house is a basic need of both the individual and the family, therefore it should not be owned by others.” This dictum has now become a reality for the Libyan people.

Large scale agricultural projects have been implemented in an effort to “make the desert bloom” and achieve self-sufficiency in food production. Any Libyan who wants to become a farmer is given free use of land, a house, farm equipment, some livestock and seed.

“The standard of living of the people of Libya is one of the highest in Africa.”

Today, Libya can boast one of the finest health care systems in the Arab and African World. All people have access to doctors, hospitals, clinics and medicines, completely free of all charges. The fact is that the Libyan revolution has achieved such a high standard of living for its people that they import labor from other parts of the world to do the jobs that the unemployed Libyans refuse to do. Libya has been called by many observers inside and out, “a nation of shop keepers.” It is part of the Libyan Arab psyche to own your own small business and this type of small scale private enterprise flourishes in Libya. We can draw on many examples of Libyans with young sons who expressed the idea that it would be shameful for the family if these same young men were to seek menial work and instead preferred for them to remain at home supported by the extended family.

No system is perfect, and Libya is no exception. They suffered nine years of economic sanctions and this caused huge problems for the Libyan economy. Also, there is nowhere on planet earth that has escaped the monumental crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. It has impacted everywhere – even on post revolutionary societies that have rejected “free market” capitalism. However, what we are saying is that severe economic injustice is not at the heart of this conflict. So then, what is?

A Battle for Africa

The battle that is being waged in Libya is fundamentally a battle between Pan-African forces on the one hand, who are dedicated to the realization of Qaddafi's vision of a united Africa, and reactionary racist Libyan Arab forces who reject Qaddafi's vision of Libya as part of a united Africa and want to ally themselves instead with the EU and look toward Europe and the Arab World for Libya's future.

One of Muammar Qaddafi's most controversial and difficult moves in the eyes of many Libyans was his championing of Africa and his determined drive to unite Africa with one currency, one army and a shared vision regarding the true independence and liberation of the entire continent. He has contributed large amounts of his time and energy and large sums of money to this project and like Kwame Nkrumah, he has paid a high price.

Many of the Libyan people did not approve of this move. They wanted their leader to look towards Europe. Of course, Libya has extensive investments and commercial ties with Europe but the Libyans know that Qaddafi's heart is in Africa.

Many years ago, Qaddafi told a large gathering, which included Libyans and revolutionaries from many parts of the world, that the Black Africans were the true owners of Libya long before the Arab incursion into North Africa, and that Libyans need to acknowledge and pay tribute to their ancient African roots. He ended by saying, as is proclaimed in his Green Book, that “the Black race shall prevail throughout the world.” This is not what many Libyans wanted to hear. As with all fair skinned Arabs, prejudice against Black Africans is endemic.

Brother Leader, Guide of the Revolution and King of Kings are some of the titles that have been bestowed on Qaddafi by Africans. Only last month Qaddafi called for the creation of a Secretariat of traditional African Chiefs and Kings, with whom he has excellent ties, to co-ordinate efforts to build African unity at the grassroots level throughout the continent, a bottom up approach, as opposed to trying to build unity at the government/state level, an approach which has failed the African unification project since the days of Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure. This bottom up approach is widely supported by many Pan Africanists worldwide.

African Mercenaries or Freedom Fighters?

In the past week, the phrase “African mercenaries” has been repeated over and over by the media and the selected Libyan citizens they choose to speak to have, as one commentator put it, “spat the word ‘African’ with a venomous hatred.”

The media has assumed, without any research or understanding of the situation because they are refusing to give any air time to pro-Qaddafi forces, that the many Africans in military uniform fighting alongside the pro-Qaddafi Libyan forces are mercenaries. However, it is a myth that the Africans fighting to defend the Jamahiriya and Muammar Qaddafi are mercenaries being paid a few dollars and this assumption is based solely on the usual racist and contemptuous view of Black Africans.

Actually, in truth, there are people all over Africa and the African Diaspora who support and respect Muammar Qaddafi as a result of his invaluable contribution to the worldwide struggle for African emancipation.

“It is a myth that the Africans fighting to defend the Jamahiriya and Muammar Qaddafi are mercenaries being paid a few dollars.”

Over the past two decades, thousands of Africans from all over the continent were provided with education, work and military training – many of them coming from liberation movements. As a result of Libya's support for liberation movements throughout Africa and the world, international battalions were formed. These battalions saw themselves as

a part of the Libyan revolution, and took it upon themselves to defend the revolution against attacks from within its borders or outside.

These are the Africans who are fighting to defend Qaddafi and the gains of the Libyan revolution to their death if need be. It is not unlike what happened when internationalist battalions came to the aid of the revolutionary forces against Franco's fascist forces in Spain.

Malian political analyst, Adam Thiam, notes that "thousands of Tuaregs who were enrolled in the Islamic Legion established by the Libyan revolution remained in Libya and they are enrolled in the Libyan security forces."

African Migrants under Attack

As African fighters from Chad, Niger, Mali, Ghana, Kenya and Southern Sudan (it should be noted that Libya supported the Sudanese People's Liberation Army under John Garang in their war of liberation against Arab hegemonists in Khartoum, while all other Arab leaders backed the Khartoum regime) fight to defend this African revolution, a million African refugees and thousands of African migrant workers stand the risk of being murdered as a result of their perceived support for Qaddafi.

One Turkish construction worker described a massacre: "We had 70-80 people from Chad working for our company. They were cut dead with pruning shears and axes, attackers saying: 'You are providing troops for Qaddafi. The Sudanese were also massacred. We saw it for ourselves.'"

This is a far cry from what is being portrayed in the media as "peaceful protesters" being set upon by pro-Qaddafi forces. In fact, footage of the Benghazi revolt shows men with machetes, AK 47s and RPGs. In the Green Book, Qaddafi argues for the transfer of all power, wealth and arms directly into the hands of the people themselves. No one can deny that the Libyan populace is heavily armed. This is part of Qaddafi's philosophy of arms not being monopolised by any section of the society, including the armed forces. It must be said that it is not usual practice for tyrants and dictators to arm their population.

Qaddafi has also been very vocal regarding the plight of Africans who migrate to Europe, where they are met with racism, more poverty, violence at the hands of extreme right wing groups and in many cases death, when the un-seaworthy boats they travel in sink.

"Qaddafi has also been very vocal regarding the plight of Africans who migrate to Europe."

Moved by their plight, a conference was held in Libya in January this year, to address their needs and concerns. More than 500 delegates and speakers from around the world attended the conference titled "A Decent Life in Europe or a Welcome Return to Africa."

"We should live in Europe with decency and dignity," Qaddafi told participants. "We need a good relationship with Europe not a relationship of master and slave. There should be a strong relationship between Africa and Europe. Our presence should be strong, tangible and good. It's up to you as the Africans in the Diaspora. We have to continue more and more until the unity of Africa is achieved.

From now on, by the will of God, I will assign teams to search, investigate and liaise with the Africans in Europe and to check their situations...this is my duty and role towards the sons of Africa; I am a soldier for Africa. I am here for you and I work for you; therefore, I will not leave you and I will follow up on your conditions."

Joint committees of African migrants, the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and international organizations present at the conference discussed the need to coordinate the implementation of many of the conference's recommendations.

Statements are appearing all over the internet from Africans who have a different view to that being perpetuated by those intent on discrediting Qaddafi and the Libyan revolution. One African commented:

"When I was growing up I first read a comic book of his revolution at the age of ten. Since then, as dictators came and went, Colonel Qaddafi has made an impression on me as a man who truly loves Africa! Libyans could complain that he spent their wealth on other Africans! But those Africans he helped put in power, built schools and mosques and brought in many forms of development showing that Africans can do for themselves. If those Africans would abandon him to be swallowed by Western Imperialism and their lies and just let him go as a dictator in the name of so-called democracy...if they could do that...they should receive the names and fate that the Western press gives our beloved leader. If there is any one person who was half as generous as he is, let them step forward."

And another African comments:

"This man has been accused of many things and listening to the West who just recently were happy to accept his generous hospitality, you will think that he is worse than Hitler. The racism and contemptuous attitudes of Arabs towards Black Africans has made me a natural sceptic of any overtures from them to forge a closer link with Black Africa but Qaddafi was an exception."

Opportunistic Revolt

This counter-revolutionary revolt caught everyone, including the Libyan authorities, by surprise. They knew what the media is not reporting: that unlike Egypt and Tunisia and other countries in the region, where there is tremendous poverty, unemployment and repressive pro-Western regimes, the Libyan dynamic was entirely different. However, an array of opportunistic forces, ranging from so-called Islamists, Arab-Supremacists, including some of those who have recently defected from Qaddafi's inner circle, have used the events in neighbouring countries as a pretext to stage a coup and to advance their own agenda for the Libyan nation. Many of these former officials were the authors of, and covertly fuelled the anti-African pogrom in Libya a few years ago when many Africans lost their lives in street battles between Africans and Arab Libyans. This was a deliberate attempt to embarrass Qaddafi and to undermine his efforts in Africa.

Qaddafi has long been a thorn in the Islamists side. In his recent address to the Libyan people, broadcast from the ruins of the Bab al-Azizia compound bombed by Reagan in 1986, he asked the "bearded ones" in Benghazi and Jabal al Akhdar where they were when Reagan bombed his compound in Tripoli, killing hundreds of Libyans, including his daughter. He said they were hiding in their homes applauding the US and he vowed that he would never allow the country to be returned to the grip of them and their colonial masters.

Al Qaeda is in the Sahara on his borders and the International Union of Muslim Scholars is calling for him to be tried in a court. One asks why are they calling for Qaddafi's blood? Why not Mubarak who closed the Rafah Border Crossing while the Israeli's slaughtered the Palestinians in Gaza. Why not Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Blair who are responsible for the murder of millions of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan?

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The answer is simple - because Qaddafi committed some "cardinal sins." He dared to challenge their reactionary and feudal notions of Islam. He has upheld the idea that every Muslim is a ruler (Caliph) and does not need the Ulema to interpret the Quran for them. He has questioned the Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda from a Quranic/theological perspective and is one of the few political leaders equipped to do so. Qaddafi has been called a Mujaddid (this term refers to a person who appears to revive Islam and to purge it of alien elements, restoring it to its authentic form) and he comes in the tradition of Jamaludeen Afghani and the late Iranian revolutionary, Ali Shariati.

Libya is a deeply traditional society, plagued with some outmoded and bankrupt ideas that continue to surface to this day. In many ways, Qaddafi has had to struggle against the same reactionary aspects of Arab culture and tradition that the holy prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was struggling against in 7th century Arabia – Arab supremacy/racism, supremacy of family and tribe, historical feuding tribe against tribe and the marginalisation of women. Benghazi has always been at the heart of counter-revolution in Libya, fostering reactionary Islamic movements such as the Wahhabis and Salafists. It is these people who founded the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group based in Benghazi which allies itself with Al Qaeda and who have, over the years, been responsible for the assassination of leading members of the Libyan revolutionary committees.

These forces hate Qaddafi's revolutionary reading of the Quran. They foster an Islam concerned with outward trappings and mere religiosity, in the form of rituals, which at the same time is feudal and repressive, while rejecting the liberatory spirituality of Islam. While these so-called Islamists are opposed to Western occupation of Muslim lands, they have no concrete programmatic platform for meaningful socio-economic and political transformation to advance their societies beyond semi-feudal and capitalist systems which reinforce the most backward and reactionary ideas and traditions. Qaddafi's political philosophy, as outlined in the Green Book, rejects unfettered capitalism in all its manifestations, including the "State capitalism" of the former communist countries and the neo-liberal capitalist model that has been imposed at a global level. The idea that capitalism is not compatible with Islam and the Quran is not palatable to many Arabs and so-called Islamists because they hold onto the fallacious notion that business and trade is synonymous with capitalism.

Getting it Right

Whatever the mistakes made by Qaddafi and the Libyan revolution, its gains and its huge contribution to the struggle of oppressed peoples worldwide cannot and must not be ignored. Saif Qaddafi, when asked about the position of his father and family, said this battle is not about one man and his family, it is about Libya and the direction it will take.

That direction has always been controversial. In 1982, The World Mathaba was established in Libya. Mathaba means a gathering place for people with a common purpose. The World Mathaba brought together revolutionaries and freedom fighters from every corner of the globe to share ideas and develop their revolutionary knowledge. Many liberation groups throughout the world received education, training and support from Muammar Qaddafi and the Libyan revolution including ANC, AZAPO, PAC and BCM of Azania (South Africa), SWAPO of Namibia, MPLA of Angola, The Sandinistas of Nicaragua, The Polisario of the Sahara, the PLO, The Native American Movements throughout the Americas, The Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan to name but a few. Nelson Mandela called Muammar Qaddafi one of this century's greatest freedom fighters, and insisted that the eventual collapse of the apartheid system owed much to Qaddafi and Libyan support. Mandela said that in the darkest moments of their struggle, when their backs

were to the wall, it was Muammar Qaddafi who stood with them. The late African freedom fighter, Kwame Ture, referred to Qaddafi as “a diamond in a cesspool of African misleaders.”

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The hideous notion being perpetuated by the media and reactionary forces, inside and outside of Libya, that this is just another story of a bloated dictatorship that has run its course is mis-information and deliberate distortion. Whatever one’s opinions of Qaddafi the man, no one can deny his invaluable contribution to human emancipation and the universal truths outlined in his Green Book.

Progressive scholars in many parts of the world, including the West, have acclaimed The Green Book as an incisive critique of capitalism and the Western Parliamentary model of multi-party democracy. In addition, there is no denying that the system of direct democracy posited by Qaddafi in The Green Book offers an alternative model and solution for Africa and the Third World, where multi-party so-called democracy has been a dismal failure, resulting in poverty, ethnic and tribal conflict and chaos.

Every revolution, since the beginning of time, has defended itself against those who would want to roll back its gains. Europeans should look back into their own bloody history to see that this includes the American, French and Bolshevik revolutions. Marxists speak of Trotsky and Lenin’s brutal suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion by the Red Army as being a “tragic necessity.”

Let’s get it right: The battle in Libya is not about peaceful protestors versus an armed and hostile State. All sides are heavily armed and hostile. The battle being waged in Libya is essentially a battle between those who want to see a united and liberated Libya and Africa, free of neo-colonialism and neo-liberal capitalism and free to construct their own system of governance compatible with the African and Arab personalities and cultures and those who find this entire notion repugnant. And both sides are willing to pay the ultimate price to defend their positions.

Make no mistake, if Qaddafi and the Libyan revolution are defeated by this opportunistic conglomerate of reactionaries and racists, then progressive forces worldwide and the Pan African project will suffer a huge defeat and set back.

Gerald A. Perreira has lived in Libya for many years and was an executive member of the World Mathaba. He can be contacted at mojadi94@gmail.com.

So where does this sudden uprising (in Libya) come from?

The answer is that the same groups the US has been funding for decades are now taking their chance to gain control over the nation. A group recently arrested in Libya consisted of dozens of foreign nationals that were involved in numerous acts of looting and sabotage. The Libyan government could not rule out links to Israel.

Great Britain funded an Al Qaeda cell in Libya, in an attempt to assassinate Gadaffi. The main opposition group in Libya now is the National Front for the Salvation of Libya. This opposition group is being funded by Saudi Arabia, the CIA, and French Intelligence. This group unified itself with other opposition groups, to become the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. It was this organization that called for the "Day of Rage" that plunged Libya into chaos on February 17 of this year.

It did this in Benghazi, a conservative city that has always been opposed to Gadaffi's rule. It should be noted that the National Front for the Salvation of Libya is well armed. In 1996 the group tried to unleash a revolution in the eastern part of Libya before. It used the Libyan National Army, the armed division of the NFSL to begin this failed uprising.

Why is the United States so opposed to Gadaffi? He is the main threat to US hegemony in Africa, because he attempts to unite the continent against the United States. This concept is called the United States of Africa. In fact, Gadaffi holds all sorts of ideas that are contrary to US interests. The man blames the United States government for the creation of HIV. He claims that Israel is behind the assassination of Martin Luther King and President John. F. Kennedy. He says that the 9/11 hijackers were trained in the US. He also urged Libyans to donate blood to Americans after 9/11. Khadaffi is also the last of a generation of moderate socialist pan-Arab revolutionaries that is still in power, after Nasser and Hussein have been eliminated, and Syria has aligned itself with Iran.

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