

# LIBYA: AUTHENTIC VOICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



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In December, 2011 Ms. Wafa Taher Bugaighis was hosted by the International Visitor Program of the World Affairs Council in Seattle, Washington. In the accompanying videos she responds to two questions: "What would you like American students to know about Libya?" and "What would you like American students to know about life for women in Libya?" After watching the interviews have your students discuss the following questions, ponder the *Did You Know* facts, and/or explore the resources on the following page.

## Discussion Questions for Bugaighis' Interview

- 1) What surprised you the most about Ms. Bugaighis' description of Libya?
- 2) How did Ms. Bugaighis' description of life for women in Libya break stereotypes and/or misconceptions about the lives of women in the Middle East and Northern Africa?
- 3) How would you respond to the questions "What would you like Libyan students to know about America...and about life for women in America?"

## DID YOU KNOW?



1. Libya is located in Northern Africa and shares borders with Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria, and Tunisia. Its entire northern border runs along the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Libya is 1, 759, 540 sq. kilometers in area, or slightly larger than Alaska. Despite dramatically different climates, each is home to one of the world's largest deserts – the Arctic desert (a polar desert in Alaska) and the Sahara desert (a subtropical desert in Libya).
3. While Arabic is the official language; Italian is also spoken in Libya. Approximately 280 miles of seawater separate Tripoli from the southern tip of Sicily, about the same distance from Seattle to Eugene.
4. The life expectancy for women in Libya is 80 years, approximately five years longer than their male counterparts.
5. It is estimated that 92.4% of men are literate while only 72% of women are literate, a disparity of over 20%.
6. Women gained suffrage in the early 1960s, and voting rights were granted to all citizens 18 years and older. Due to the current political revolution, the previous parliament has ceased to function and the nearest elections are estimated to occur sometime in 2012.
7. Libya was under the rule of Muammar Abu Minyar al-Quadhafi from 1969 until the overthrow of his regime in 2011. This national revolution was part of the greater movement known as the Arab Spring.
8. Libya's main commodity is crude oil, primarily exported to the European countries Italy and France.
9. Libya is both a transit and destination country for human trafficking. Most of these trafficked men and women come from sub-Saharan Africa.
10. Libya is home to about 8,000 Palestinian refugees.

What do Libya and Alaska have in common?

Libya exports mainly to which two European Countries?

[ Sources: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ly.html>, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html>, <http://geology.com/records/largest-desert.shtml>, <http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/calculate-distance.html>, and <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> ]

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## CURRENT TIMELINE

**The Guardian: Arab Spring – An Interactive Timeline of Middle East Protests (1/5/2012)**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

This interactive timeline shows the progression of the Arab Spring within each involved country. Protests, political moves, regime changes and international responses are listed on a moving and growing timeline.

## ARTICLES AND RESOURCES

**NPR: In Post-Gadhafi Libya, Islamists Start to Rise (1/3/2012)**

<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/03/144586903/in-post-gadhafi-libya-islamists-start-to-rise>

One year ago, protesters across the Arab world began to rise up against autocratic rulers, forcing several from power. These revolutions have led to the region's biggest upheaval in decades. It's still not clear how these seismic changes will play out, and so far, the results have been mixed. In a six-part series, *NPR* is taking a look at where the region stands today. In the second installment, *NPR's* Lourdes Garcia-Navarro reports on how Islamists in Libya, long suppressed during Moammar Gadhafi's 42-year rule, are now able to operate freely.

**Carnegie Endowment: Building a New Libya (9/15/2011)**

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/15/building-new-libya/6jxq>

As new leaders look to consolidate control, attention is turning to building a government that is more democratic, representative, and stable. In a new video Q&A, Thomas Carothers analyzes what it will take for Libya to transition smoothly in the post-Qaddafi era and the role international actors will play in the development of the political system.

**PBS: What Political Models Might Shape the New Libya, Tunisia? (10/24/2011)**

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world/july-dec11/arabspring2\\_10-24.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world/july-dec11/arabspring2_10-24.html)

Hisham Melhem, the Washington bureau chief of *Al Arabiya News*, Michele Dunne, director of the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East at the Atlantic Council, and Marina Ottaway of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace speak with Gwen Ifill about the next steps for the Arab spring in Libya, Tunisia and Syria.

## BREAKING STEREOTYPES

**USIP: Women and the Arab Spring (11/2/2011)**

<http://www.usip.org/publications/women-and-the-arab-spring-o>

“Women were a crucial motivating factor in the midst of the struggle for freedom. Whether it was the hundreds of Libyan women who traveled with the men to the frontlines to form makeshift kitchens or the women positioned inside Qaddafi strongholds who smuggled guns and information, women carved out a space for their participation.

Women across Libya nursed the injured, while Libyan women in the diaspora returned to provide technical assistance to the newly formed NTC. Libyan women were able to gain access and they played both traditional and nontraditional roles that earned them a clear chapter in Libyan history.”

**Huffington Post: Women in Libya and the Arab Spring (11/4/2011)**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manal-omar/arab-spring-libya-women\\_b\\_1076873.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manal-omar/arab-spring-libya-women_b_1076873.html)

On November 2, the Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy, and Global Women's Issues and the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Central Asian Affairs organized a testimony for the Senate Foreign Relations committee on the role of women in the Arab Spring. As part of the panel representing civil society viewpoints, I [Manal Omar] took the opportunity to focus on the specific role of Libyan women, and the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead of them during the nation building process.