

An interview with Emad Raqiaa, head of media committee for the return of Tawergha's people

**The Convention on return is a major injustice, a violation of human rights, racist and represents domination of majority citizens on other vulnerable sectors**



Activist Emad Raqiaa, head of media committee for the return of Tawergha people, has been struggling to end what he called "racist and unfair terms" imposed on the return of Tawergha's sons. In the next interview, our guest dives deeply into the people of Tawergha's sufferings and explains their current situation.

The humanitarian crisis of Tawergha branched out between the people's determination to return, and its transformation into a political inducements case made it a real new challenge for the Government of National Accord. Can we exactly know what happened in this crisis briefly?

Since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, the people of Tawergha have not taken any violent approach in order to achieve a safe return, whether on the people's level, Tawerghan tribes or the local Council at that time.

After the split that happened in the country as a result to "Libya's dawn operation", Al-Thani's government that operated in the east worked on handling the issue of Tawergha politically, where it tried to interfere in some matters and agreed on establishing a municipality in eastern Libya to achieve victory after the Accord government entered Tripoli. As for the Government of National Accord, it tried in all ways to make a change in the situation by making the Tawergha's people return happen under the Government of National Accord to achieve a political gain that would be in their favor in case any international discussions on the situation in Libya occurred.

The implementation of the Government of National Accord Presidential Council's declaration in early February 2018 that aimed to the returning of displaced persons to their cities has



been hampered by the objections of Misrata's city components to certain provisions of the agreement, particularly those relating to reparation and compensation for those who were affected by the people of Misrata. Do you think that the Government of National Accord bears full responsibility for the grave violations that occurred for the displaced

Of course, it is the authority's responsibility towards its people, as well as Misrata's instigators and actually, they are numerous, primarily some members of the Municipal council, as many actors in Misrata's crisis scene did not recognize the Government of National Accord bears in the first place. As for reparations, its results were disastrous, as the return was achieved in return for money, but in reality, a real return did not happen at all, as the city still suffers from the non-existence of the most basic elements such as water and electricity. The terms of the agreement were extremely unfair and represent a violation of human rights, and the Elders and Shura Council presented a document, in which reasons for refusing the agreement were stated, it included insult, racism, egoism, and domination of powerful groups over other vulnerable citizens groups.

The two Libyan cities of Tawergha and Misrata signed a reconciliation charter between them ending a seven-year dispute that states the return of the displaced people of Tawergha to their city from which they left in 2011. Yet the return has not been completed. In your opinion, what are the reasons that prompted the displaced to not return to their city?

The reasons are numerous, that include the refusal of Misrata's local authorities to give the city its administrative independence, preventing the people of Tawergha from participating in the municipal elections, the dominance of the central military zone, which is mostly composed of Misrata's citizens which control the city's inside and outside gates, and the throwing tons of garbage in the city despite a lot of warnings issued against the seriousness of this issue. The residents also felt unsafe because of the large number of militias that were waning the coastal road that passed through central Tawergha and sometimes assault the residents, and even the police station that had just opened up was not able to perform its duties professionally because of armed groups harassments.

Have all the terms of this agreement been implemented? Did Tawergha get the agreed compensations?

Not exactly. But the sums were divided into parts and not all the people got their share because of the lack of liquidity and the presidential Council's procrastination in handling financial matters, not to mention the confusion that Tawergha's local Council suffers because of its officials unilateral acts and opinions, unstudied decisions, and the deliberate and random decision-making for issues related to people's fate and which resulted in spreading confusion in the social fabric of society after signing the agreement, which the people of Tawergha consider disgraceful and an insult to all that patience they

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had through all these tough years.

What is the role of the Presidential Council in re-providing basic services in the city of Tawergha in order to facilitate the return of the population to their own city and to enjoy normal conditions basic services?

There is no real role for Misrata's local authorities because of their domination over the city by force of arms and threats and anything actually may happen to displace the people. The presidential Council decided the matter once they signed and they did not know what to do afterward, they considered the signing itself a political victory and did not care to consider what would happen after that. Despite what we see, I mean the Head of the Presidential Council and the Head of Tawergha's local Council sham meetings, unfortunately, there is no real implementation for decisions in reality.

Impunity has spread widely, and successive governments have not taken steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who have committed abuses, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government, and militias and other armed barely have affected court proceedings that have been operating. How can victims be identified, get compensation for their damages and get sure that this grave violation will not be repeated

Reparations and justice towards victims are crucial, but the control of armed groups over the judicial and police stations and victims' lack of confidence in reaching justice locally will provide a long way for victims at this stage and what we can only do is to document crimes, make files and prepare for another stages, especially when the criminal starts to play all angles in order to be influential and seek to clean up his image before the public opinion, unfortunately, victims are waiting for the construction of the State and there is no use under the present circumstances to seek to achieve what you have mentioned.