



Ahmed El-Fitouri) born (1955 is a writer ,novelist ,owner and editor of the "Al-Mayadeen "weekly ,which was published between May 2011 and September 2014 in Benghazi .He is currently residing in Cairo .He contributes through writing regular articles in the Libyan newspaper and website ,Al-Wasat .He was a prisoner of conscience for about ten years ,during the time of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi1978 and in ,1988 he released and gained many experiences in the cultural press in Libya .In this interview ,which was conducted specifically for "DAAM "periodical in July 2019 and it was an opportunity to explore his views on the reality of the media in his country after the revolution as he visits its cities until now.

How do you see the legislative framework for media changes in Libya after the 17th of February Revolution?

-To date, no new laws concerning the press and media have been issued in Libya. Only laws which allow freedom of the press release that were out of order during Gaddafi's days were activated. I also did not hear or know of any important and influential arrangements in organizing the media situation after the revolution.

What is your assessment of what happened to the official media, and were there attempts to move towards a public media?

Libyan journalist Ahmed Al-Fitouri:

We were forbidden from talking^o so we started screaming

■ Interviewed by Karem Yahya

-The official media was automatically liberated after the revolution, with the collapse of Gaddafi's authority. But in the end, things were fixed as they used to be. State media remained affiliated with the interim transitional authority. Perhaps what is new here is that you can issue a newspaper, and radio broadcasts are allowed by interpreting the press law. As for press publications, about 365 new editions were issued between 2011 and 2012.

Has there been any shift in the relationship between the state's authority and the official media?

-There has already been a discussion about shifting official media into public media, but it has fallen short of practical results. And of course there was a movement within the official media institutions to discuss their transformation into public media. There was a kind of openness to radio performance, for example. I think that what happened to these institutions have witnessed a case of random self-liberation in the beginning as a consequence for the erosion of state power and the disintegration of these media institutions relationship with the interim authorities before returning to a dependent relationship.

Can you brief us on the "Al-Mayadeen"'s weekly experience as an example of what happening in the press scene after the revolution?

-Al-Mayadeen was distributed all over Libya. It was issued in Benghazi and

the copies were being transported by aero planes and if air traffic is disturbed. We send to distributors in major cities and from there to less important cities and villages. The newspaper has a maximum circulation of 10,000 copies. It is a good number for a week. We did not have much financial burden. Most of the work is voluntary; we were not having financial troubles, as prepaid contributions helped us to keep going on, we had around 1,000 subscription, and expenses was not really a burden as the printer owner was really going easy on us.

What is the best distribution number achieved by the Libyan newspapers after the revolution?

-The maximum distribution number achieved by the Libyan newspaper is what "Libya Newspaper" which is issued by the Ministry of media and Culture and that number was 20 - thousand copies. But it is distributed mainly to the state institutions, while we in "Al-Mayadeen" were targeting people directly as we distributed even in villages and we also gain accessed the Libyan reader in Tunisia.

Was there an advertising market and did you have a share of it?

-Some organizations supported us with advertisements due to the newspaper's success.

What were the red lines facing Al-Mayadeen?

-We did not feel that we are facing any red lines except the authority of the streets.

Why did Al-Mayadeen stop, despite the success you're talking about?

-The newspaper was suspended in 2014 because the distributing driver who distributes its copies was attacked in Misrata.

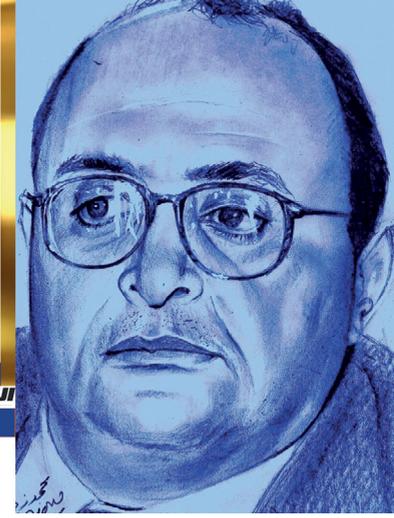
How do you generally assess the role of the media in Libya after the revolution regarding the transition to democracy?

- Before the country did not have real media. It was propaganda and publications but we had no press. Therefore, when the situation in the country was changed widely, the professional and unprofessional media appeared strongly. I remember that an early of (BBC) said that Libya has taken great steps on the road to press freedom. And that was true as we started from scratch, of course there were and will continue to be errors in the practice of the media, its beginners' mistakes, but the scene in general resembles a positive development in press freedom and elections.

ليبيا في ههب الربيع العربي

كتاب
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أحمد الفيتوري



ليبيا في ههب الربيع العربي - أحمد الفيتوري
الطبعة الأولى



هذا الكتاب....

كُتب على جرعات تلاحق الأحداث المتواترة على الأرض الليبية في أهم مرحلة مخاض تمر فيها في تاريخها، كان أحمد الفيتوري كطفل يلعب لعبة المكعبات، أو بالأحرى لعبة تركيب الصور المجزأة، وهذا ما يجعل سرد الوقائع نفسها يتكرر، مثلما يتكرر وضع جزء من الصورة المجزأة، كل مرة، في مكان لاختبار صحة مدى تطابقها مع السياق ومدى إسهامها في مرادة السؤال، ما بالك حين تخرج اللعبة عن كونها لعبة، وتغدو محاولة لترميم صورة ممزقة إلى قطع صغيرة.

- سالم العوكلي

Have the media in Libya been able to develop mechanisms for self-adjustment and for the sake of professionalism?

- I was against promulgating a press honor code in Libya; because of the overpowering forces were conservatives and Islamists and I said that we should have an honorable profession first and then legislate a code for it later and there is no need for setting early restrictions on press.

There is a perception that suggests that Libya does not have today a media outlet that operates on a national level and covers the entire country because of the fighting and division... What do you think?

- We have probably the UAE-backed TV channel "218", it has reporters throughout Libya who perform amazingly and follow thoroughly local news even at the level of countryside villages. And that did not happen before in the history of Libya.

Here, electronic technologies helped to overcome the Libyan division, as well as the nature of Libya as a country with long borders. But actually there is no national newspaper now in Libya. National newspapers are dead. Today there is no newspaper that can be classified as No. 1 in Libya due to the security situation.

Are radio stations becoming the most important outlet among media's outlets in Libya?

- No... I personally consider that TV is number 1, 2 and 3 and then come social media and radio in rank.

National Libyan Radio was unable to develop itself and attract audience and I think that private radio broadcasting defeated it

We have to look beyond politics here, as now in Libya, there are television and radio stations that are concerned mainly with social, cultural and artistic interests. This is what attracts the general population of Libyans as these subjects go beyond political divisions that are reflected in media broadcasting and political opinion programs. This is an important development for the media in Libya.

How do you see the most prominent general features of the new media scene in Libya?

- First, I noticed that most of the current employees in the Libyan media are youth and they occupy leadership positions in various media outlets. Secondly, there is a professional development related to the profession due to excessive training and transferring experiences. We had before the revolution a Media College in Benghazi and another one was established in Tripoli during Gaddafi's reign. But the development we are witnessing right now is due to excessive training courses and the contribution of regional and international organizations. The third feature is that when you are forbidden from talking you begin to scream. We have to understand this when it comes to Libyans. But, of course, there are those who intend to continue hate speech, including the Muslim Brotherhood. We indeed have a hate speech but I do not consider it overwhelming, as it is declining and people no longer care about it. We have to realize the significance of the Islamist' loss of the three elections held in Libya between 2011 and 2012.

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What is the position of the Journalists and Media Professionals' Syndicate in Libya after the revolution?

- There were already several syndicates and organizations established But it remained weak and divided as a result of the political crisis and the civil war.