



Interview with Ashur A. Shamis*

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1. What remains a question mark among the general public and perhaps the academia is the true character of Libya's anti-Qaddafi opposition. Is it tribal, Islamist and, finally, can it produce a reliable post-Qaddafi regime?

Those who oppose Gaddafi in Libya today are the whole of the Libyan people. This opposition has no ideological or partisan colour or leaning or trend. It is driven by a total refusal of Gaddafi as a leader and as representative of the Libyan aspirations. It is made up of people of all ages and direction of opinion. Libya is a Muslim country and its society is a Muslim society. Its people are liberal, modern, city-dwellers, urban and forward-looking. Tribe, as a social bond or kinship, is a fact of life in Libya, and Libyans citizens are generally proud of their tribes but this is not divisive of decisive factor. Tribe, like everything else, can be put into good use or destructive or noxious or harmful when it is exploited and misused as it was by Gaddafi, throughout his 42 years of rule.

Yes, there are Islamic groups such the *salafis*, *sufis*, *Tabliegh*, *jihadists* and Muslim Brotherhood, but these are either small or social or spiritual groups. Those with an element of political Islam exist and function within mainstream Islam and are free to do so as part of free society and are accepted as such.

2. It seems that the USA is very reluctant to help the opposition in a practical manner. Why do you think this is? And, if in the last moment they decided to intervene, which kind of help do you think is the most appropriate?

The USA has shown some reluctance because it is nor fully acquainted with the constituents and membership of the Interim Council. It fears there might be anti-American and die-hard Islamic elements in it, or elements still loyal to Gaddafi. I believe once the US is assured on this and other points, it will cooperate with it remove any reservation they might have. Of course, the US and all other countries, should not expect the Council or even the new political set-up in Libya to be according to their wishes. Libya will be open and friendly with all countries and will produce its own "democracy" and integrate into the modern world community in a way that would surprise and please everybody.

Libya in 1951 when it gained its independence, it had very few qualified people and very meagre resources. Now is has more talent and more qualified people in all filed and it can rise up from the nightmare of 42 years.

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3. As we can see, Qaddafi is winning in the battlefield. Why so? Is the opposition losing the tribes or there was no real army defection?

I do not think that Gaddafi is winning on the ground. He has been stripped of all legitimacy to rule Libya. He and his sons and few acolytes must give themselves up to international justice or meet up with a most horrific fate inside Bab Alazizya. The National Interim Council must now prepare all the force it has to enter Tripoli and take it over. I foresee trouble and dissention and splits within the Gaddafi camp in Bab Alazizya which will end up with his fall. There is total unity and agreement among Libyans to oust Gaddafi from Libya, no matter what it takes. There is no tribal factor at play here. Of course we need the rest of the world to stand with us and stop supplying him with weapons and gasoline as Greek companies unfortunately have done.

4. Do you feel we are approaching a humanitarian crisis and can you see a way out through a compromise between Qaddafi family and the opposition?

There will be no humanitarian crisis in Libya. We are seeing the dying days of Gaddafi and his family. There is no room whatsoever for compromise or reconciliation. An end must be made to this regime for the good of Libya and the whole world who has suffered a great deal from Gaddafi and his shenanigans
