

OVERCOMING ISIS LIBYA

A Disaster Recovery Plan

BY AREF ALI NAYED



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THE GRUESOME MASS-BEHEADINGS of 21 Egyptian Copts on the shores of my country, and the thousands of beheadings, murders, kidnappings, and displacements of Libyans, have combined to make the 4th anniversary of the February 17th a heavy day indeed!

A dark nightmare replaced our luminescent dreams of a better Libya—free from tyranny, and springing forward on a democratic path towards security, stability, rule-of-law, human-dignity, economic prosperity and national thriving.

Islamists have lost in every single one of the three, free-open-and-monitored, elections held in post-revolutionary Libya. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Libyan Fighting Group have utilized arguments of ‘inclusivity’ to insert themselves deep into the very joints of the Libyan State.

When Islamists lost the last election, they simply boycotted the resulting Parliament, and physically attacked both the Parliament’s seat in Benghazi and the legitimate Government’s Seat in Tripoli. Having lost through ballot-box, they effectively resorted to the gun!

Having been included, Islamists effectively excluded all others. They used their control over the Libyan State, with its vast resources, to make Libya into the ATM, gas-station, and a platform for their ‘Islamic State’. Even today, they continue to do so through their defunct GNC, and its Islamist pseudo-Government.

Thus, for four years, the resources of the Libyan State went into enabling an ‘Islamic State’, across the region, including in Syria and Iraq. Today, the Frankenstein that Islamists fostered from the very livelihood of Libyans (to the tune of tens of billions of dollars) slaughters Muslim Libyans, as well as their Christian guests with total impunity.

IS, its affiliates, supporters, and apologists today control airports a couple of hours flight from any European capital, in addition to controlling the illegal immigration boat traffic into Europe. The bloodied knife pointed at Rome, in the grotesque IS slaughter video, must be taken literally and seriously.

The Libyan State failed to rise from the ashes of the 2011 uprising, simply because another ‘State’ was the real aspiration of the Islamists: an ‘Islamic State’ (IS). They have been cannibalizing the resources of the Libyan State to feed a trans-national one.

The net result of four years of building an ‘Islamic State’ at the cost of the Libyan State has been a national, regional, and international *Disaster!*

Facing disaster, there is always an existential ‘either/or’: a ‘fight-or-flight’ response. I believe that we must fight for Libya, and according to a proper ‘Disaster Recovery Plan’, but let us first look at the flight-mechanisms being peddled around lately.

Fleeing from the disaster comes in at least three varieties:

1. *Denial* (example: there is no IS in Libya, and the video was a fabrication or an intelligence conspiracy!).
2. *Abandonment* (example: Libya is hopeless, let us just focus elsewhere).
3. *Appeasement* (example: let’s engage in dialogue and make friends with ‘moderate’ Islamists, who will help calm down their vicious IS attack dogs. Maybe we can even form a ‘National Unity Government’ with them).

None of the above three ‘flight’ tactics will work. The first two will mean doing nothing to address an existential threat not only to Libya and its Arab and African neighbors, but to the very heart of Europe. The third will lead to the continuation of the control of the Libyan State by Islamist Trojans who have four years of experience at using the resources of the Libyan State to build their own trans-national Islamic State.

We support the Bernardino Leon-led efforts at national dialogue leading to the formation of a National Unity Government. Such a dialogue must however be at the level of the social-fabric. The resulting government must be broadly representative of the Libyan people, be purely technocratic and be exclusively focused on building Libya—a Libya for Libyans. We can’t afford yet another government that includes trans-national ideologues at the joints.

In the face of the disaster afflicting Libya and threatening its neighbors, we have no choice but to courageously and consistently take up the option to fight. ‘Fighting’ however must consist of much more than just the necessary military engagement of IS and Ansar al-Sharia locations and forces.

To overcome the darkness of IS we must follow a clear Disaster Recovery Plan for Libya. Such a plan must be developed and implemented rapidly by Libyans, and in close partnership with a new ‘Friends of Libya’ consortium consisting of reliable and similarly-minded regional and international allies.

Key-features for a **Disaster Recovery Plan**, for Libya are as follows:

1. Uphold, and internationally support, the duly elected bodies that exist in Libya today: the House of Representatives (HoR) and its Government, the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA), and local municipal councils.
2. Protect and secure the HoR, the Government, the CDA, and local elected leadership, to enable them to work without pressure, intimidation, and duress.
3. Protect and secure the Supreme Court of Libya and its Constitutional Council, and publish the results of an independent international investigation of its latest important decisions. Judgments made under duress should be declared null-and-void by the international community.

4. Complete the membership of the HoR through demanding that its few boycotting members re-join it. They must participate from within—by stepping outside and then complaining about ‘lack of inclusivity’ they are in effect excluding all other members. Members who continue to refuse to re-join the HoR must be duly replaced by the runners-up from the same electoral districts.
5. Provide a safe location for HoR to hold its meetings in Tobruk, until it can safely move back to its official seat in Benghazi.
6. Provide urgent technical assistance to the CDA in a safe and supportive environment, in order to expedite the completion of Libya’s Constitution.
7. If the constitutional drafting process takes more than another 90 days to complete, we should return to the original recommendations of the February Commission, and then call a general Presidential election. The HoR had unfortunately absorbed the powers of the President, on the assumption that the CDA was to be done with the constitution drafting by December of 2014.
8. Provide urgent technical assistance to the HoR-appointed Government, and introduce mechanisms for improved governance and transparency.
9. Urgently form an ‘Emergency Economic Board’ that can bring together Libya’s top technocrats in Central Banking, Oil, Fuel, Humanitarian Relief, Finance, Investment, and Telecom, with top-experts from the UN, the EU, the World Bank, and the IMF. The Board must be tasked with safeguarding and optimizing Libya’s remaining resources in order to protect against the effects of the economic and financial abyss facing Libya, due to the deadly combination of collapsing oil production and pricing.
10. Immediately convene clusters of social fabric and civil society meetings, including municipal, tribal, and reconciliation councils, in preparation for convening a pan-Libyan gathering of key leaders at the municipal, tribal, and civil society levels. Such social consensus-building is vital for supporting constitutional and democratic processes.
11. Urgently form a National Security Joint-Command Center that can lead the fight against IS, Ansar-al-Sharia, and all their affiliates, allies, and backers. This Council must include officers from all of Libya’s key cities, towns, and tribes, who are genuinely committed to fighting terrorism in Libya. This Council must be vitally linked to regional and international consortia that are now fighting IS and other terrorists in other countries. Such links can be facilitated by placing international expert advisors within the Center.
12. Urgently form a Libyan Rapid Deployment Force (LRDF) that consists of army officers and soldiers from across Libya, and provide three bases from which they can operate: in the East, West, and South of Libya. The LRDF must include international expert advisors provided by the UN, to ensure that the force remains pan-Libyan in command and orientation. The LRDF must not include any ideologically-motivated

elements. Its Doctrine must be Libya-focused, and must not include any trans-national aspirations.

13. The International Community must demand and help to enforce the demilitarization of Tripoli, enabling the HoR-appointed Government to function from the Capital. It must also demand and help enforce the demilitarization of Benghazi, enabling the HoR to function from its official Seat.
14. The economic and cultural effort against radicalization and extremism must be given top priority. We must re-start the Libyan economy, offer Libyan youth a forward-looking and inspiring Vision for the country. A truck stuck in sand can only be pulled out from a fixed point at the front, beyond the sand. A forward-looking Vision is vital for getting Libya unstuck.

The capacity-building and visionary-inspiration of young Libyan women and men is key to national recovery. In the face of the hate, despair, and cynicism propagated by IS through its grotesque videos, we must retrieve and propagate the authentic virtues of compassion, faith, and hope!

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The views expressed here by the author are personal and not in his capacity as Ambassador; they do not represent the views of the House of Representatives (HoR) or the Government of Libya.



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