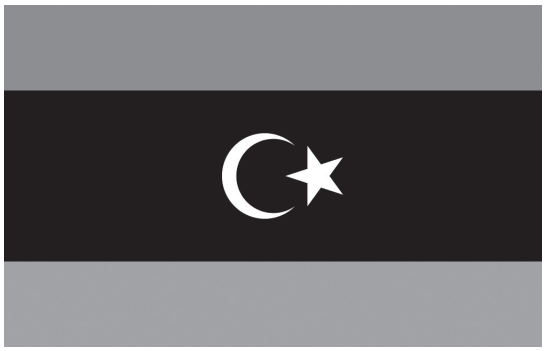
WLG 603

WestVirginiaUniversity
EXTENSION SERVICE

Welcome to Libya

By Abdelsalam M Areibi, 2014-2015 International Student and Denis Scott, WVU Extension Specialist

Ahllan (Hello)



About Me

Abdelsalam M. Areibi

Greetings, West Virginians. My name is Abdelsalam M. Areibi. In the Arabic language, my name is translated as the servant of peace. I was born in Libya's capital city Tripoli, which is located in the northwestern part of the country; however, I was raised in the second largest city, Benghazi, which is located in northeastern Libya. Benghazi holds a special place in my heart, because all of my family and close friends live there.

Benghazi is known throughout Libya as a very prosperous and active city, attracting people of various backgrounds from all over the country. Given the cosmopolitan nature of its people, the city offers a great mix of culture and diversity.

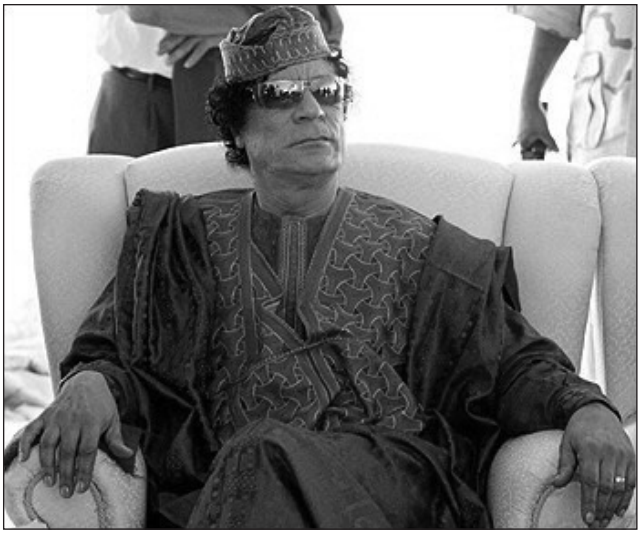
I am the middle child in a family of 11, and I am grateful for the hard work, patience and support that my parents gave each of us. I started to learn English as a second language when I was 15 years old and started to dream of studying abroad – ultimately learning to fluently speak English. As time passed, my life went on, but I never let go of that dream. I am now married to a great woman, and we were even blessed with a son, who is now five years old.

Being so far away from home, Morgantown, West Virginia became my second home. When I first came to Morgantown, I noticed that everything was very different compared to what I was accustomed. The mountains, the forests with steep hills, and the cold weather were such a contrast to the geography and climate of my homeland. As I started my schooling and got to know the town better, things started to become easier. One of the things I liked about Morgantown is the kind people, especially the university staff, my classmates, and neighbors. I must say that it was indeed a very new and amazing experience.

I started my degree in industrial engineering at West Virginia University's Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources. Each day, I attend classes and become more involved. I try my best to achieve the highest grades, and I have even earned a spot on the Dean's honor list a few times. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the WVCEOS Scholarship Committee who gave me their support and helped me to follow my dream.

History

Over the last 100 years, the Libyan people have experienced many unfortunate events. In 1911, the Italian forces took control over Libya and drove out the Turkish Sultan. Italy remained in Libya until 1943 when they were defeated in World War II. Libya then passed to United Nations administration and on December 24, 1951 Libya was declared an independent sovereign nation.



Ten years after gaining independence, more political adversity occurred in Libya. In 1969, Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi came to power by overthrowing King Idris. As the military and political leader, Gaddafi began a radical new chapter in modern Libyan history. He promoted his controversial ideas via his Green Book, which he thought was the alternative solution to both communism and capitalism. He also changed the country name of Libya to al-Jamahiriya, which is translated as "the state of the masses." Gaddafi assumed that the power was held by people's committees, without any presence of political parties; however, in reality, Gaddafi was controlling everything with a firm iron fist. Gaddafi established his power through the revolutionary committees, which were formed by his loyalists.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Gaddafi used Libyan oil revenues to promote his ideology outside of the country in an attempt to be seen as a major influential world leader. He engaged in many controversial acts, which attracted the attention of the international news. He financially supported terrorist groups around the world. In 1988, Gaddafi was accused of being involved in the Lockerbie bombing over Scotland, and in 1989, people close to his administration were linked to a bombing of a French airplane over Niger.

In 1992, Gaddafi was recognized as a threat by members of the international community, and the United Nation put sanctions over Libya to isolate his regime politically and economically. Later, in 2003, sanctions were lifted due to Gaddafi's previous cooperation with the United Nation by turning in two bombing suspects and compensating the families of the victims of the Lockerbie bombing.

Recent Developments

In February 2011, Gaddafi commanded his militaries to suppress the uprising protest in Benghazi that was inspired by the fall of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes. I still remember the first days of the uprising. I was both happy and afraid. I had conflicting hopes and fears about what was going to happen to all the people I care about. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution to protect civilians. After seven months of brutal fights, the opposition fighters entered into Tripoli and two months later Gaddafi was captured and killed in his last holdout city of Sirte.

A transitional government took charge with the promise to impose order by dismantling the former unorganized opposition fighters; by rebuilding the national army and the economy; and by managing a smooth transition to democracy. In July 2012, elections for a General National Congress were held. It was the country's first free national election in more than four decades. However, tensions

and struggle for power grew within the corrupted General National Congress between the Islamists, who have the majority, and members, who belonged to the civil movement. As a result, General National Congress failed to provide stability and security that Libyan people were seeking.

In January 2014, a new election was held to form a new parliament. The result of the election was a huge disappointment for the party who had been in power. Soon after the announcement of the election results, the struggle for power grew into a brutal fight, which killed many innocent people and forced many others to flee their homes.

The Libyan people have suffered enormously from Gaddafi's regime, and now in many ways it is even worse. Libyan people deserve a better life, security, and stability. I hope that the politicians, who have not participated in the recent instability stand up and take their responsibility and set aside their differences and start to think more responsibly to stop this ongoing tragedy.

Geography

Libya is strategically located, because it is a connection from the southern part of Europe, across the Mediterranean Sea, to the rest of the African nations. Libya stretches approximately 1,000 miles on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The country is surrounded by six neighboring countries: Tunisia and Algeria to the west; Egypt on the east; and Sudan, Chad, and Niger to the south.

Weather and Climate

Compared to West Virginia, the populated areas of Libya have an extremely mild climate. The Mediterranean Sea in the north and Saharan deserts in the south greatly influence Libya's climate. The southern side is mostly desert and is very sparely populated because of the dry, hot climate. Most Libyans live on the northern coastal side where the weather is moderately mild with a reasonable amount of rain. During the summer, the temperatures range between 86 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Because of the hot weather during this time, many families that live by the sea camp on the sandy beaches.

Population and Economy

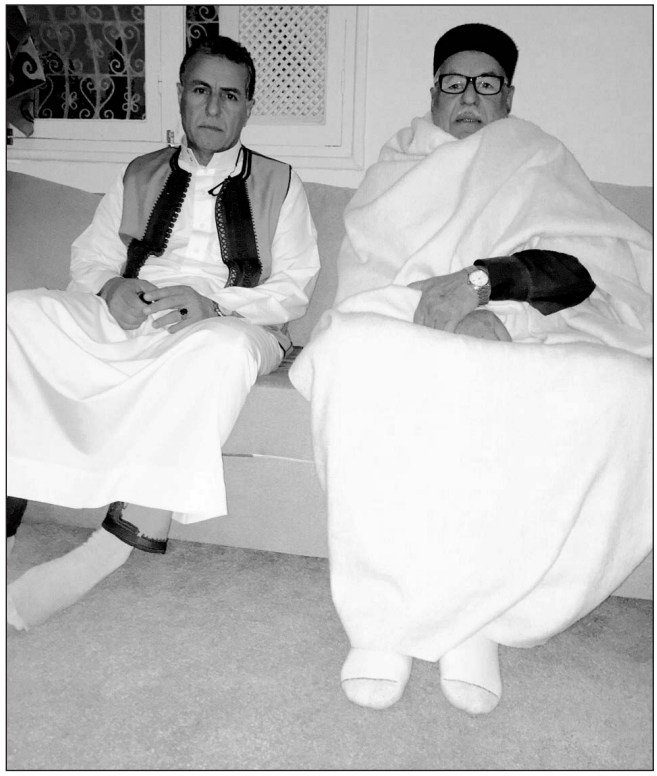
Libya has a small population estimated around 6.2 million residing in 1,759,540 square kilometers (a geographic area slightly larger than Alaska). The base and hub of the country's

economy is oil exportation. Since the discovery of oil in 1959, the Libyan economy has heavily relied on the money generated from the exportation of oil.

Cuisine

Preparing and serving food is an essential activity for most Libyan families. At mealtime, all family members sit and eat together. Libyan foods are a mix of Arabic and Mediterranean cuisine. The most popular dishes are couscous, steamed rice, pasta, sharba, lebrak, embatten, and boureek. These dishes are cooked either with lamb, chicken, or fish meat.

Breakfast also has popular traditional dishes, such as asida. This dish is made of boiled flour pudding cooked primarily in water. Asida is served with honey or date syrup and melted butter, although some prefer to use olive oil instead of butter. Because it's so popular, it is usually served during births or Eid holiday celebrations.



Clothing

The traditional dress and accompanying jewelry are very expensive in today's market. There are many dresses for both males and females that are considered traditional. These special clothes are only worn when family and friends gather to celebrate the rarest of occasions, such as the wedding celebration that continues for up to three days.

National Holidays in Libya

There are three official holidays in Libya:

- Eid Al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. On the day of Eid, people gather in the early morning to go to mosques to perform the Eid prayer. After the Eid prayer, people usually visit various family and friends. People give gifts at this time – especially to children.
- Eid Al-Adha is a religious holiday, which translates into the "Feast of the Sacrifice." Since it commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, it is typically celebrated by sacrificing an animal. The meat is distributed among family, neighbors, friends, and through donations to poor people.

- Libyan Independence Day (December 24, 1951 celebrates the formal establishment of Libya as an independent country through rule separation from the United Kingdom and through resolutions by United Nations.

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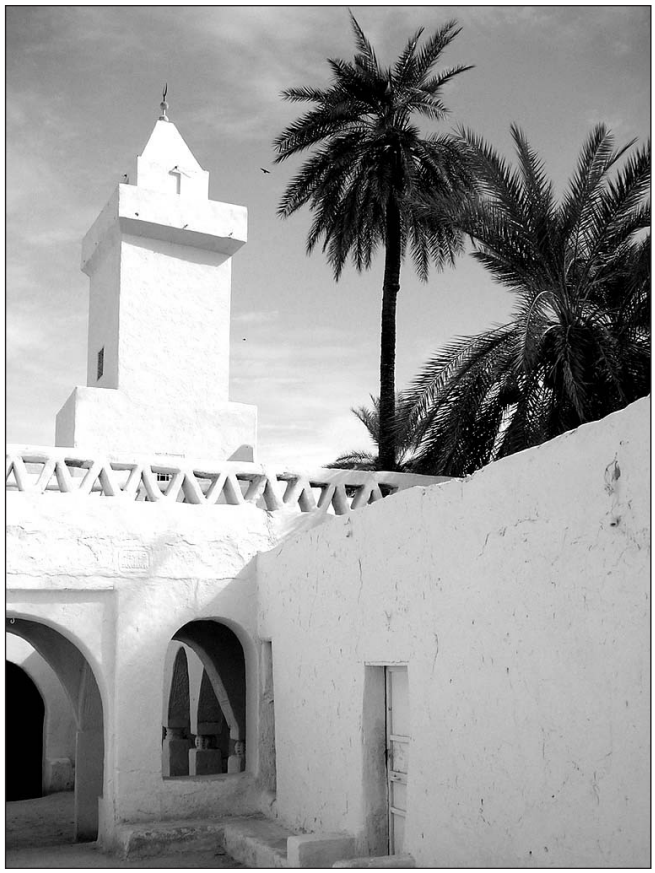

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