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## SNAPSHOT

**Libya looks to the future as the process of writing a constitution begins.**



USAID/Libya

Community leaders in Libya participate in a workshop designed to facilitate the constitution-writing process.

*"I see in the near future grey for Libya. But in the far future, I'm hoping for a bright future – not for me, but for my grandchildren."*

—Fawzia Siala  
Deputy Social Affairs Minister

**Telling Our Story**  
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## The Making of Democracy

**December 2011** – Muammar Qadhafi, one of the longest-serving dictators in modern history, controlled the state in Libya for 42 years. His "position" as Brother Leader gave him a role outside the legal constructs of the government and allowed him to exercise unlimited control of the state using the country's vast oil wealth to purchase loyalty and a massive security apparatus to violently suppress opposition.

Now that Qadhafi is gone, the Libyan people are coming together to reform a dysfunctional autocracy into a vibrant democracy that reflects the spirit of freedom, equality, and national unity that drove the revolution. The first step in this historic transition will be the election of a 200-member National Council to oversee the formation of a Constituent Committee to draft the country's first functioning constitution in nearly half a century.

From December 4–6, 2011, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), in partnership with the U.S. Institute for Peace, supported local organization Attawasul to bring together government and community leaders to begin the long discussion on constitution making. The workshop drew on the experiences of international experts in four nations, while affording generous amounts of time for Libyan participants from different sectors and regions to discuss how to ensure the constitutional process reflects the principles of inclusiveness, participation, transparency, and consensus. On the second day of the event, the U.S. Ambassador to Libya spoke about America's own constitutional history, which—through a long participatory process beginning in 1787—resulted in a document that proved acceptable to all 13 states and has endured to this day.

The workshop allowed Libya's diverse leadership to begin its own participatory, inclusive, and transparent process of thinking through the unique issues that Libyans face in developing a governmental system that is accepted throughout the nation. Beginning with questions such as "Why does Libya need a new constitution?" and "Why does the way a constitution is developed matter?" participants went on to cover the technical aspects of constitution making, how civil society can engage in the process, and how international experiences apply to the Libyan context.

Reflecting on his workshop experience in a *Tripoli Post* op-ed, local journalist Intissar K. Rajabany made the following observation: "By using the unique dynamics of the society in Libya and also by the simple fact of communicating constantly, a bond is formed, everybody's interests are ensured and hence met; contentious and controversial issues are out of the closet, knowledge is transferred, trust is promoted and hearts and minds are won, thereby ensuring that the elements of inclusiveness, transparency, consensus and public participation are present, which would not make the perfect constitution, but the best living document possible for the country."

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