

COUNTRY PROFILE: LIBYA

August 2008



BASIC FACTS

- Population of 6,173,579 (2008 est.), area of 1,759,540 sq km.
- Life expectancy at birth – 75 years (men), 79 years (women)
- Total adult literacy rate – 82.6%.
- GDP per capita – US\$ 5,530 (Nominal - 2006 estimate), US\$ 13,100 (PPP - 2007 estimate)

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

A former Roman colony, Libya is a mostly desert country which saw invasions by Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks and, more recently, Italians before gaining independence in 1951. The Italians supplanted the Ottoman Turks in the area around Tripoli in 1911 and did not relinquish their hold until 1943 when defeated in World War II. Libya then passed to UN administration and achieved independence in 1951.

Following a 1969 military coup, Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi developed a political system, the Third Universal Theory. The system is a combination of socialism and Islam derived in part from tribal practices and is implemented by the Libyan people themselves in a unique form of “direct democracy.” UN sanctions in 1992 isolated Libya politically following the downing of Pan AM Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. During the 1990s, Qadhafi began to rebuild his relationships with Europe. UN sanctions were suspended in April 1999 and finally lifted in September 2003 after Libya accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing.

Libya has made significant strides in normalizing relations with Western nations since then, receiving various Western European leaders as well as many working-level and commercial delegations. Libya has responded in good faith to legal cases brought against it in US courts for terrorist acts that predate its renunciation of violence. In late 2007, Libya was elected by the General Assembly to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2008-09 term.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

AT A GLANCE:

- Full name: The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- Population: 6.2 million (UN, 2007)
- Capital: Tripoli
- Area: 1.76 million sq km (685,524 sq miles)
- Major language: Arabic
- Major religion: Islam
- Life expectancy: 75 years (men), 79 years (women)
- Monetary unit: 1 Libyan dinar (LD) = 1,000 dirhams
- Main exports: Crude oil, petroleum products, natural gas
- GDP per capita: US \$5,530 (World Bank, 2006)
- Internet domain: .ly
- International dialling code: +218

POLITICS:

There are two branches of government in Libya. The "revolutionary sector" comprises Revolutionary Leader Qadhafi, the Revolutionary Committees and the remaining members of the 12-person Revolutionary Command Council, which was established in 1969. Secondly, the legislative branch of government comprises Local People's Congresses in each of the 1,500 urban wards, 32 Sha'biyat People's Congresses for the regions, and the National General People's Congress. These legislative bodies are represented by corresponding executive bodies (Local People's Committees, Sha'biyat People's Committees and the National General People's Committee/Cabinet).

Every four years, the membership of the Local People's Congresses elects their own leaders and the secretaries for the People's Committees. The leadership of the Local People's Congress represents the local congress at the People's Congress of the next level. The members of the National General People's Congress elect the members of the National General People's Committee (the Cabinet) at their annual meeting.

According to the Association Act of 1971, the establishment of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is allowed. However, because they are required to conform to the goals of the revolution, their numbers are small in comparison with those in neighbouring countries. Trade unions do not exist, but numerous professional associations are integrated into the state structure as a third pillar, along with the People's Congresses and Committees. Professional associations send delegates to the General People's Congress, where they have a representative mandate.

ECONOMY:

The Libyan economy depends primarily upon revenues from the oil sector, which contribute about 95% of export earnings, about one-quarter of GDP, and 60% of public sector wages. Substantial revenues from the energy sector coupled with a small population give Libya one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa.

Libyan officials in the past five years have made progress on economic reforms as part of a broader campaign to reintegrate the country into the international fold. Libyan oil and gas licensing rounds continue to draw high international interest. The National Oil Company set a goal of nearly doubling oil production to 3 million bbl/day by 2015. Libya has applied for WTO membership, reduced some subsidies, and announced plans for privatization, laying the groundwork for a transition to a more market-based economy. The non-oil manufacturing and construction sectors, which account for more than 20% of GDP, have expanded from processing mostly agricultural products to include the production of petrochemicals, iron, steel, and aluminium.

AGRICULTURE:

Climatic conditions and poor soils severely limit agricultural output, and Libya imports about 75% of its food. Libya's primary agricultural water source remains the Great Manmade River Project, but significant resources are being invested in desalinization research to meet growing water demands.

Sources:

BBC News - http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/819291.stm

Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya>

UN OCHA Financial Tracking System - <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts2/>

<http://www.undp-libya.org/>

<http://www.who.int/countries/lby/en/>

<http://www.wfp.org>