

VIDEO: 'Before NATO Intrusion, Libya was Africa's Switzerland'

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Global Research, August 26, 2011

Russia Today 26 August 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

NATO's presence in Libya little resembles a humanitarian mission with houses, hospitals and schools being hit. But Libya prospered prior to NATO's intrusion, Yvonne Di Vito, an activist from Libyanfriends.com told RT. RT: You have been saying that here in Italy the news reports about what is happening in Libya were very confusing, a lot of conflicting information there. Can you tell us what you saw and what you found?

Yvonne Di Vito: We went to Libya on the 28th July and we came back on the 7th August and we found a totally different situation because NATO was bombarding civilians.

The bombings were not only carried out on military targets, but they also hit houses, hospitals, schools, television centers, and this was totally against the humanitarian reasons they said they were there for.

I believe they were doing this to bring panic in the city. That's why they were bombing the things that people use daily, like places with food and essential utilities like hospitals.

This was also a difficult period for Muslims because of Ramadan and that is why in the daytime they're in their houses. We went to Tripoli and to Zitan and we saw huge protests with thousands of pro-Gaddafi supporters turning out against NATO and all these demonstrations were not shown in Italy.

We also visited Tanjur and Sansur and found a lot of women that were screaming at us, asking 'Why you Italians are bombing us? What did we do to you? Why are you killing our children?' That was their main question. When we went to Zitan, the same day they bombed a house and in this house two children were killed. We tried to show the pictures of these children that were dead. But apart from us, no one else did the same.

Except the things that we saw with our own eyes visiting these places that were bombed, we have so much material that press officers and journalists from Libya gave to us as testimony to all the dead from the NATO bombings.

After all the things that we saw we have one question: is this a humanitarian war? Are they really helping the civilians, because I believe that all this is because of economic reasons, or at least there are other reasons that this war happened, petroleum or other things.

We also visited Libya before and what we found was a normal situation where people were fine. Differently from other countries that went through a revolution - Libya is considered to be the Switzerland of the African continent and is very rich and schools are free for the

people. Hospitals are free for the people. And the conditions for women are much better than in other Arab countries.

RT: You've met Gaddafi personally on a number of occasions. What do you think post war and post Gaddafi Libya is going to look like?

YDV: Even if all the television stations are showing people fighting and demonstrating against Gaddafi, I personally saw many people demonstrating for Gaddafi. I don't know why so many journalists are not showing this, because they are manipulating the situation. Independent media show these videos on the internet because there is more freedom. From what we saw personally from when we were in Libya and from the documents we got we saw the rebels as disorganized groups.

RT: Are there fears among the people that the rebels coming to power will prove an ongoing continuation of the volatile situation?

YDV: I believe that the rebels will not be able to do a good job after Gaddafi. Among them there are many extremist groups, Islamists, Tunisian people, I don't know why they are there. Al-Qaeda, rebels from Libya that just wanted a change, but there is too much disorganization to make a good job.

The people we interviewed were very afraid to imagine that the rebels could take power, because they think that they are not able to govern the country or take control in a proper way. The chiefs of these groups of rebels are ex-politicians, former politicians that before were with Gaddafi and then they completely changed their face. They went with the wind, as they say in Italy.

RT: Are there concerns that amongst the rebels now there are many ex-politicians that are simply taking off their uniforms joining the rebels and leaving to fight?

YDV: I think they are corrupt politicians. And this was also demonstrated as the chief of the rebels was killed at the order of the leader of the rebels.

We've seen many times that these rebels are making criminal acts, for example they've taken Libyan soldiers and killed them by cutting their heads off and they take their hearts out and show [sic] them to the people. So our question is, are we making allies of these people who are committing criminal acts and can these people really govern a country.

RT: NATO as a humanitarian mission – does this stand up to scrutiny now?

YDV: I believe it's not a valid justification because most of the targets were civilian and many people say the people were targets on purpose to create panic on the ground.

RT: How much of a discrepancy did you see on the ground between what NATO was saying and what was happening?

YDV: We saw many discrepancies every day. The first day that NATO bombed a civilian target, I apologized to people saying that it was a mistake.

But the day after, they kept bombing the civilian targets and when the Libyan government was asking why they are bombing civilians, NATO were denying it saying it was Gaddafi

propaganda. That wasn't true. We saw it.

RT: This has been described by you as a war of disinformation. How much of that did you see on the ground?

YDV: We can see still how much the media are manipulating this situation – they say that Gaddafi's sons have been arrested, whilst this turns out to be untrue. They report that all of Tripoli has been taken over by the rebels and this also proves untrue.

A friend of ours who is a businesswoman who lives in Tripoli and also created a commission to make an investigation into the facts of what happened in Libya, told me she found some journalists who were making false reports, saying that the rebels were behind them when in fact the city behind them was empty. We saw pictures of Green Square that is completely full of rebels. But if you compare those pictures to other pictures of Green Square it's completely different, it seems like a set was created on purpose to make the public think that all of Tripoli was taken by the rebels, and all the Gaddafi family was dead.

We think this is a NATO tactic because they want people to think that rebels have taken power and I believe they are doing this because NATO is in a hurry to show this before the 30th August, because they do not want to have to provide further financing for the war.

RT: Are there fears among the people that the rebels coming to power will prove an ongoing continuation of the volatile situation?

YDV: This was not a popular demonstration, but a huge military action against Gaddafi. I think after Gaddafi it will be very difficult and NATO won't leave the National Transitional Council to govern as they have put a lot of money into this war, so probably they will want some of that power and to be in charge.

So it is just an excuse or justification that they want to help the people – they will continue to take control on the city.

RT: You were talking about the tribes in Libya. Do you think that Western countries understand exactly what it is going to take to unite and bring democracy to Libya?

YDV: Before it was difficult to maintain the government in Libya because it is made of many tribes, it's a tribal democracy, a society made of tribes that have conflicts with each other. So it was difficult before and I imagine now it'll be even more so.

RT: What do you think will going to happen in Libya now?

YDV: Me and many other people that are watching Libya are afraid that it may become another Afghanistan – a country that is devastated by wars that last for years and years.

It is a society completely different from us and our idea of democracy, they don't approve it. Their idea of government is based on groups and tribes that have their own chief, then those chiefs together form a national counsel.

They believe that this is the only way to represent all the social groups. For example they don't like our form of democracy because if 60 per cent of a country votes for one president, then the remaining 40 per cent don't agree with the president, they believe this is not a form of democracy.

This is the first time that a country was attacked even though they asked for a commission to go into the country and to investigate and find facts. That didn't happen. They just attacked. This was started with false pictures sent by Al Jazeera through the media. Other media took these pictures and confirmed them as true and the war was on.

The most important thing is that the government said it was open to negotiations, but NATO didn't want that.

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