

**Text of Speech by the Chairman of the Foundation and the Press Conference Marking the Release of 214 Members of Various Jihadist Groups..**



Today is indeed a very important day here in Libya, for it is a day of reconciliation and openness and reunification, and it is also a day for freedom. Today and in my capacity as Chairman of the Gaddafi Foundation, sponsor of this initiative -the initiative of dialogue with all Islamic groups in prison or abroad, in view to reopen the bridges of dialogue, debate and re-integration of all our brothers into the community so as they become factors of construction not for destruction- I would like to announce, today and after good efforts and thanks to God, the release of 214 prisoners from the various groups of course...

In detail, they are 100 individuals linked directly to the file of groups in Iraq, 80 individuals who also have links to jihadist cells at home and who were acquitted, but whose release was delayed for several reasons; but thanks God, they are released today, and 34 individuals of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and namely the group's leadership, and may our brothers allow me to identify them in person: They are of course, Mr. Hakim Khweldi Bel-Haj, the group's emir; Mr. Sami Khalifa Essa'di, the religious official, and of course Mr. Khaled al-Sharif, the security and military official in the group. In fact, this press conference is held for our brothers (members of the Islamic groups) to speak, and they are ready to answer all the questions. They are free to answer any question. As for me, today, I shall have a short intervention as a guest of honor in this event. I shall now make a simple introduction and will try to be brief, and will take up very limited questions in the same subject, and I hope that all questions are addressed in detail to the brothers because this event is theirs.

Today is an important day because 214 prisoners are released. However, its greatest importance lies in the release of the group's leaders, and therefore, today, we have reached the crest of the reconciliation and dialogue program. Thanks to the efforts of our brothers and the Gaddafi Foundation, 705 people were released including of course this group.

The number of those remaining in prison is 409. Over the coming period, nearly 232 of them are targeted for release. Of course the process will continue, as I told you. There are 232 already ready for the next batch, and as soon as we make sure that these individuals no longer pose a danger to society, and that they are ready for integration into the community, there will be no problem to set them free, and therefore, the process will continue until the release of the last prisoner, God willing.

As I said on this subject, we have begun it long time ago, but today we have reached the summit, because, today's event is in fact a historic one; it has a great meaning, but the journey will continue until the last person is released from prison, this is one point.

The second point, as far as the prison is concerned, and after all these efforts, it was decided that becomes a center rather than an open prison. It will be given any name but it will be open for all, not a prison: the press will be able to visit it, diplomatic experts also and therefore a center for rehabilitation of our brothers so that they do not resume (their previous acts) and be re-integrated into the community once again. As of today, there will be no prison in the conventional sense any longer, but rather a center open to all inmates. This means there will be an ongoing dialogue in order to reintegrate them into society... Frankly, our enthusiasm for this program emanates primarily from the fact that it is a good act, and we do not wish for anybody to be behind the bars, so I think that any good citizen wishes to see all Libyans free, carrying out constructive work in society. Such work will add, God willing, to our credit on Judgment Day. So, with respect to the first topic; it is a personal matter, if one wants to do good, he will be doing it also for God's sake, and you will be rewarded for it on Judgment Day. However, what we find today is that such good work is to serve the homeland, because I don't think that it is in the interest of anyone to see our brothers and young fellow countrymen, who have capacities and capabilities, prisoners. This is not in their interest, nor in the interest of the community.

The second topic which is more important here and from this very place is that we want to send a message to several parties. First, I want to send a message to the Libyan youth and tell them that our brothers were leaders in organizations that have turned to violence in Libya and killed hundreds of people, and there were hundreds of victims from all sides... Thus, from now on and in the future, we need to hear from our brothers and even from the leaderships themselves about their experience, and that they speak to the young generations and Libya's young men and tell them that the path taken by the Brothers, - and you No'man, you may have also taken it, was it the right way? Is the Libyan society really a community of infidels who deserves jihad? Is jihad a duty in Libya?

If you would allow me, I want to speak frankly today... Because today is a day of frankness and truth, and so the idea that you kill a Libyan citizen or a policeman or a soldier or accuse the Libyan society of unbelief, all this is a false argument. We are a Muslim society as a whole. Libya is among the few countries that apply "hudood" (specific punishments assigned by the Qur'an) and Sharia, the law of God in Libya. Even alcohol in hotels and for tourists is forbidden, and this is a rare situation.

In Libya, it said everywhere that the Koran is the law of the community in Libya. We do not have infidels or even minorities of other religions. Today, -and if H.E. the U.S. Ambassador allows me- we are all friends of course, but the truth I say is that in the period when there were clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood in the nineties, we were under the embargo, and in a state of confrontation, and we were in the opposite trench.

Even this issue, if anyone would like to speak, he can use it: Libya has always been in confrontation, in an outpost and in war. If we want to talk of the theme of preaching Islam, we may ask ourselves: who spread Islam in Africa and Asia? It is the Libyan state who has created the Islamic Call Society, who in turn has spread Islam everywhere in the world. I, personally, have contributed to these campaigns and I went to the Philippines, Africa and even the islands of Tahiti, and we worked. The first place we tried to work in, despite the fact that there were problems then, but the French ambassador helped us in putting an end the issue of the Islamic

Center in Tahiti. So, even with respect to disseminating Islam, and the Call, we are all up to the task. The Brothers (members of Islamic groups), and others also know well the treatment when they were captured in other countries, and they have been arrested in other countries. How they were treated by others and how they were treated in Libya, and the difference between foreign intelligence services and Libya's Internal Security Organization. In fact there is a difference.

It is a very, very big difference in treatment, even when they were extradited by other states. I want the Brothers to speak about their own experience, here; they found people who are their brothers, families and relatives, unlike the treatment they had suffered in other inhumane places. The Gaddafi Foundation and the Brothers probably also know well as we are discussing this topic, we may ask: Who helped the Libyans families in Afghanistan during the war or the invasion of Afghanistan come home. I mean, I personally and with our brothers have supervised the repatriation of the Libyan families who belonged to these groups in Afghanistan. We put them on board of aircrafts, and repatriated them through Pakistan to Libya. I mean all these reasons and others, and we say that jihad is not permissible, nor to declare jihad against Libya or the Libyan society or the Libyans.

I want also to speak of the topic of jihad. So far, things have changed also, even if you talk, you would say, we fight; let me say we fight against Americans, for example. I can tell you Americans are withdrawing from Iraq now. In Afghanistan, President Obama extended his hand and said, "We want dialogue, we want a solution for Afghanistan."

Libya had been in a confrontation with the West and with America, but now we are friends, we are working together and doing business. I mean, that even the view of fighting and calling for Jihad against America needs to be reviewed. The only place where we want to fight is Palestine, and who thinks he is able to go there and fight. There are tunnels and walls, a wall behind another, it is very difficult, and thus the Arabs themselves have decided that peace is a strategic option, although, I think that it is a stupid option. Now, in Gaza and in the West Bank, who prevents the firing of rockets and who forbids operations are the Palestinians themselves; Our brethren in Hamas or Fatah in the West Bank, I mean are the ones who forbid the firing of rockets and operations. This is not a secret, this is a common knowledge, we all know it, therefore, even the topic of jihad, -and this is not an appropriate place to talk of it- needs to be reconsidered, especially in light of the Great War against terrorism around globe. Of course, honestly, what I care for is the Libyan internal affairs, and thus I think our brothers have done a very important work, which is the Corrective Studies of the Concepts of Jihad, Accountability and Governance of the People, and in fact this is the most important reference work in the world with respect to the topic we mentioned earlier on: the jihad, and the details of the subject. This work was done by our brothers who have long experience in this area, and therefore I advise a lot of young people, before they get ready to blow up oil installations in Libya or think of kidnapping tourists in Libya, or to join armed groups in Algeria and Mali, I advise them to read this book, and on this occasion, I also convey a message to other Libyan brothers who are now fighting in the mountains of Algeria and in the Malian desert, and tell them that you are in the wrong place. Algeria is a Muslim country that has gone through a civil war and very harsh conditions. Babies, women and children were slaughtered and beheaded and all similar atrocities, and I tell you that I went to Algeria more than once, the message is that your brothers in Algeria do not need your fighting in the mountains...

Algeria has enough problems, and we tell you that you can now lay down your arms and return to your home, I mean you return to Libya as free citizens to contribute in building this community because your country Libya needs you, and this speech is also directed to our Libyan brothers who are now in Mali, the Malian desert, and Mauritania. Now they can contact us and come back, and all safeguards shall be provided to them, God willing ... Of course, a real war was raging in the nineties between the Libyan state and the armed groups, and I will give you numbers from the Libyan armed forces and security and police officers, where 165 people were killed, and 159 were so far either wounded or disabled. And from the armed groups also, 177 people have killed during the clashes; of course if we exclude the subject of Abu Salim, this is another topic. Even these figures of the people who have died in armed clashes, in the alleys and streets of Libyan cities and in the valleys and mountains of the Jebel Al-Akhdar. This is a big number; I mean hundreds of people who lost their lives. I would like to say that we are now, God willing, about to close a painful and black chapter in the modern history of Libya, and I hope to close the ends of this tragic chapter.

As regards with our brothers who are in prison, we owe them dialogue, rehabilitation, and freedom, God willing, and as for the people who died, our brothers in the army and security services, we can only invoke God's mercy and forgiveness for them, and the issue of compensations, thanks God, is now almost completed except for a very simple number that will be addressed soon, God willing. The families of the vast majority of people who died were compensated, and this was part of a Gaddafi Foundation's initiative vis-à-vis their families.

The last message, I want to convey is to tell you that our slogan has always been "together for Libya of tomorrow". You, the Brothers, you do not know Libya from 1988, and when you came back, you went to prison, so today, God willing, you will see Libya. Libya today is not Libya of yesterday, and Libya of tomorrow, God willing, will be even better than Today's Libya.

At the end of this presentation in which I intended to be short but turned out to be a long one, I will tell a few anecdotes.

First of all when, the Brothers came here today... They said this hotel is inaugurated today. And for the first time this luxury hotel which was equipped for the Arab summit is exploited to host this event for the first time, this is surprising... They said, so we come out from prison straight into the most luxurious hotel in Libya. On his way here, Brother Khalid was approached by someone who asked him for his phone number...but he told him, I've just come out from prison; I have no phone or number.

The Brotherhood members and the Chief of Internal Security Mr. Tuhami and officials from the Internal Security Services, we were having tea together just before we come to the conference; yes, the leaders of LIFG and security officers drinking tea and juice in a five-star hotel in Tripoli, this was a dream but a reality today... A reality not thanks to Seif al-Islam, as Today is a day of frankness, a day of appreciation for all the clean hands and generous hands that contributed to the completion of this work, and without which, we would not have been able to gather now in this place... Of course, special thanks are extended to the Internal Security headed by Mr. Tuhami for their cooperation, and in fact to all homeland security officers who

worked hard and tirelessly to accomplish this job. From this podium, I would like to pay tribute to all members and officers and members of the Libyan Internal Security services, and also from this place, we extend a special thanks to Brigadier Abdullah Senoussi, for his effective and important role in the success of this initiative, we should not also forget Sheikh Sallabi, my friend, we were together at the beginning of this work in Jebel Al-Akhdar debating this subject, and I would like to remind you of the Koranic verse you recited to me in the car when we were together in Jebel Al-Akhdar, debating this initiative:

In the name of God the Merciful

(Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then! he, between whom and thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom friend).

So yesterday's enemy is a friend today, and thanks God we are sitting together in one place. I wanted to remind you of this verse with which we began our program and with which we conclude our program today. Special thanks are due for Sheikh Sallabi for all the efforts he made. And in the end, the biggest thanks and gratitude is for the greatest leader Muammar Gaddafi, because, frankly, without his decision to resolve this issue, nothing would have happened. And he knows well that the people he released and pardoned tried to assassinate him more than once, and threw grenades at him and tried to blow up his motorcade. There were instructions that anyone from the (LIFG) members may assassinate Muammar Gaddafi anywhere, but the truth is that we have left all this behind; it is over, it is history; and Muammar Gaddafi took his courageous decision to release the Brothers (members of Islamic groups), and I announce modestly, that I think, and this is the truth, that I made the least effort compared to our brothers. May be my prayers have been beneficial to them, but the efforts on the ground are theirs; the Brothers'.

I finished my words, and I would like to answer three questions. And may I ask that the questions be related to the subject and do not go out to other topics.

Afaf Qiblawi (AFP)

A month ago, the Leader of the Revolution, said there are no guarantees for the release of the Group, so what are the guarantees now? I mean it was a very short period: just a month ago when they Leader said they are time bombs and their release represents a danger for Libya, what has changed now and what are the guarantees?

Seif al-Islam: This is the topic, to be clear today, for example we have a decision to release a lot of people who had acquittal verdicts, but they were not released in the past, and there are people convicted with life sentences and also Islamic groups' members sentenced to death for example; today they are all set free and others are the way to be released, because there is a program for dialogue, discussion and verification, and this is a complex mechanism involving several parties, and once we are sure that a person no longer represents a problem, he is released. However, the problem is that, -and we have to admit it- in reality the problem that happened to many people, is that prosecution made many procedural and substantive errors and thus when it is submitted for consideration before the judge, he said that the case does not hold out, and therefore he acquitted those persons. In practice they have serious security

problems, but as a result of procedural errors during arrest, investigation and court proceedings, it is said that these proceedings are incorrect, and hence the person is innocent. This is in theory, but in practice they are not acquitted. Let me give you a simple example. A young man from a neighboring country sneaked into the country. He had a weapon. He was arrested by the internal security services, and they received an info that this person came to Libya, so when they caught him quickly and it was late at night, and he had a weapon, and they found all the equipments with him, he turned out to innocent and he was acquitted, because the judge you did not arrest him by warrant from the prosecutor, and the Internal Security officer says that at 3:00 a.m. I do not have time to call prosecutor regarding this subject. This is a security affair, this is the whole story!

Khaled Al-Deeb, from Al-Jazeera: We really hope that today will be a chance for collective reconciliation.

Seif al-Islam: Yes, ... please ...

Khaled El-Deeb: The question that imposes itself here is how were you able to persuade the leaderships to abandon their jihadist ideology, whereas their followers have not given up this trend?

Seif al-Islam: I think, your question is inaccurate, because today we are not just talking about the release of the leaders of the organization, but of hundreds of individuals who have been released in the past and tomorrow, 214 people will be released. All of those were members in the (Islamic group); so, we are not talking only of the leaderships, but of hundreds of people.

Salah Sarar - Reuters:

Q: Now, through this openness and this dialogue, we have reached this result: the release of this number, can we ask what is next after this phase? Especially for those already released and who will be released; what is the program that will enable them, as you said, to reintegrate into society?

Seif al-Islam: From now on, the members of the Islamic groups will go of this room, and they are free to go anywhere they like and act freely, I mean tomorrow, 214 will leave the prison and become ordinary citizens just like any other citizen in society. Furthermore, there is a program; we considered how to help them those people when they get out to freedom again and how to return to the community, how to rehabilitate them so that they are properly re-integrated and also become effective and constructive forces in society in terms of education and of job opportunities.

Thank you. Our brothers are present with you, this day is dedicated to them, and all questions shall be addressed to them. Feel free to talk to them... Thanks