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Legacy of Repression Marked Qaddafi Rule That Left Rich Nation in Poverty

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Muammar Qaddafi's four decades of rule in [Libya](#) were marked by international sanctions and a distribution of income that left Libyans, who sit on [Africa's](#) largest oil reserves, poorer than the people of almost every other major Arab oil producer.

Two months after a NATO-backed uprising forced him from power, Qaddafi died in his hometown of Sirte today. He was 69.

"We announce to the world that Qaddafi has been killed at the hand of the revolutionaries," Abdel Hafiz Ghoga, vice chairman of the country's National Transitional Council, told reporters in the eastern city of Benghazi, where the revolt began in February.

State television announced: "Libya is joyous, Libya is celebrating."

Qaddafi, who turned his guns, aircraft and soldiers on his own people even before their peaceful protests grew into armed revolution, failed in his bid to avoid the fate of the leaders of [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#), both toppled by popular uprisings this year. His death may bring to an end eight months of fighting between loyalists and the one-time rebels who now run the country after seizing the capital, Tripoli, in August.

Qaddafi had been in hiding since then. The transitional council said it would wait for the fall of Sirte, the last main holdout where Qaddafi loyalists were fighting, before declaring the country liberated. The council has said it would then hold elections within eight months.

Assets Frozen

When the uprising against Qaddafi began, the [Libyan Investment Authority](#), the country's main sovereign-wealth fund, had about \$65 billion of assets, most of it cash and short-term securities, according to its former deputy chief executive, Mustafa Zarti, who quit in February to protest the violent crackdown on protests. All of its

stakes were frozen by the European Union and [Switzerland](#) to prevent Qaddafi from raising money to support his military efforts.

The holdings include 7.5 percent of the Turin-based Juventus soccer club; 2 percent of [Finmeccanica SpA \(FNC\)](#), Italy's biggest defense company; and 3 percent of [Pearson Plc \(PSON\)](#), publisher of the Financial Times. Libyan investors own 7.2 percent of UniCredit SpA, Italy's biggest bank, including a 4 percent stake held by Libya's central bank, according to Bloomberg data.

Libya was producing about 1.6 million barrels of oil a day before the conflict broke out, causing output to slump to a "trickle," according to the [International Energy Agency](#), as foreign companies fled and fighters battled for control of the oil facilities.

Production will be back up to 600,000 barrels by the end of this year, the agency said last week. Libya's estimated reserves of 47 billion barrels are the ninth-largest in the world, according to the [CIA World Factbook](#).

Low GDP

Even at peak oil production, after the return of U.S. firms in recent years, Libya's gross domestic product per capita, measured in terms of purchasing power, remained lower than all major Arab oil producers except [Algeria](#), International Monetary Fund [data](#) show. Crude accounts for 95 percent of Libya's exports.

Qaddafi spent some of Libya's revenue on personal security, building up a militia loyal to his family that was implicated in some of his worst human-rights violations. Those include what [Human Rights Watch](#) described as the "mass killing" of as many as 1,200 people at Tripoli's Abu Salem prison in 1996.

"I could not see the dead prisoners who were shot, but I could see those who were shooting," Hussein al-Shafa'i, who said he was jailed at Abu Salem between 1988 and 2000, said in remarks published on the group's website. "They were special units and wearing khaki military hats. Six were using Kalashnikovs."

Bedouin Family

Muammar Abu Minyar Qaddafi was born on June 7, 1942, to a Bedouin family near Sirte. A former army officer, he seized power in a 1969 coup that overthrew Libya's [monarchy](#).

Among the acts since attributed to the world's longest-serving non-royal leader: a 1996 prison massacre that left hundreds of inmates dead, the 1988 bombing of a [passenger jet](#) over Lockerbie, [Scotland](#), which killed 270 people, and a plan to make an atomic bomb. In the last decade, Qaddafi improved ties with the West, seeking to remove the "mad dog" label applied by former U.S. President [Ronald Reagan](#).

"It was a brutal, closed and repressive regime that never hesitated to use violence against its people," said Philippe Moreau-Defarges, a researcher at the Paris-based French Institute of International Affairs. "He'll be remembered as a third-rate, wannabe Castro," he said, a reference to former Cuban leader [Fidel Castro](#).

Popular Committees

Qaddafi said his regime gave power to the people through so-called Popular Committees of ordinary Libyans. The committees functioned as ministries; human-rights critics said the organizations were merely fronts for his autocratic rule.

Qaddafi called himself "The Brother Leader of the Revolution" and regarded political parties as a source of strife, according to his revolutionary manifesto, "[The Green Book](#)." He had no formal title and never designated a successor or a succession procedure in a country with no written constitution.

The leader's global reputation was shaped by his eccentric behavior, such as surrounding himself with an all-female bodyguard corps and pitching a Bedouin tent in the courtyard of a Paris mansion during a 2007 state visit to [France](#).

"What we'll remember of Qaddafi was mostly a lot of show," Ettore Greco, the Rome-based director of the [International Affairs Institute](#), said in an interview before Qaddafi's death. "He tried to ride all sorts of movements, from pan-Arabism to pan-Africanism, but he never had any results."

U.S., U.N. Sanctions

His attempts to export the self-styled revolution to other countries put Libya under U.S. and United Nations sanctions in the 1980s and 1990s, accused of sponsoring terrorism, including the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie.

U.S. Air Force and Navy aircraft struck Tripoli in April 1986 in a raid that Reagan said was retaliation for the bombing of a Berlin discotheque that killed two U.S. servicemen.

The turnaround in relations with the West started in 1999, when Qaddafi allowed the extradition of two Libyans suspected in the Lockerbie case. One of them, Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. He was released by Scottish authorities in 2009 on compassionate medical grounds -- he was said to be in the final stages of terminal prostate cancer -- and allowed to return to Libya, where he now resides.

In 2003, Qaddafi offered to pay as much as \$2.7 billion to compensate families of those killed on Pan Am 103. He also abandoned a nuclear-arms development effort, pledged to destroy a chemical-weapons stockpile and renounced terrorism.

Oil Investment

The actions led to an easing of sanctions and improved ties with the U.S. and European nations. Western investment to expand Libyan oil production followed, as did Libyan investment in the West.

At a Group of Eight dinner in [Italy](#) in 2009, which Qaddafi attended in his role as head of the [African Union](#), the Libyan ruler shook hands for the first time with an American president, 23 years after Reagan ordered the bombing of his tent.

The handshake was orchestrated by [Silvio Berlusconi](#), prime minister of Italy, the country that had kept Libya as a colony from 1912 until World War II. Berlusconi shuffled the seating arrangements, putting Qaddafi on his left and U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) on his right. The premier also promised to spend \$4.8 billion over 20 years, mostly paid to Italian companies, to build a road across Libya from Tunisia to Egypt.

Eight Children

Qaddafi's wife, Safia, along with three of his eight children -- daughter Aisha and sons Hannibal and Mohammed -- crossed the border into Algeria at the end of August, along with the sons' wives and children, and were granted exile. One of the eight children, Mohammed was born to Qaddafi's first wife, Fatiha.

Qaddafi's son and presumed heir, Saif al-Islam, was thought to be hiding in Bani Walid, according to Libya's transitional council. Another son, Saadi, was arrested in Niger when his convoy of vehicles was intercepted by the Nigerian army, Justice Minister Amadou Marou said last month.

The other three Qaddafi sons are known or reported to have been killed in recent months. Mutassim was shot to death today, the Misrata Military Council, which led the assault on Sirte, said in an e-mailed statement. Saif al-Arab was killed in a NATO missile strike on April 30. Khamis, who commanded the elite 32nd Brigade based in Bani Walid, was also killed in a NATO air strike, [Sky News](#) reported on Aug. 29, citing a man claiming to have been his bodyguard.

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