

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/libya-news-media-targeted-amid-libyan-28-08-2014,46858.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Libya

Alarming situation

## News media targeted amid Libyan chaos

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Reporters Without Borders is extremely worried about the Libyan media, which continue to be targeted amid the chaos of the worst political and military crisis in Libya since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in August 2011.

Controlled by the government-backed Zintan brigades since Gaddafi's overthrow, Tripoli international airport has now been seized by the Misrata brigades and their allies in the course of the "Libya Dawn" campaign launched on 13 July. As the situation gets more complex by the day and the authorities struggle to win legitimacy in the face of destabilization by militias and other armed groups, the media, by being manipulated or physically attacked, find themselves at the heart of this political and military anarchy.

Condemning the use of news media as propaganda tools and to foment divisions, Reporters Without Borders reiterates the need for the utmost independence, impartiality and professionalism on the part the media in their reporting, especially during political and military crises, when the role they should play as objective sources of news and information is all the more crucial.

*"It is crazy and deeply regrettable that the principles for which the Libyan people fought in the revolution three years ago, including freedom of information, are again being flouted,"* said Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles. *"The original surge of hope has gradually been replaced by a new dark page in Libya's history. Journalists are being persecuted, assaulted or killed, and the media are prey to constant attacks or are being used to help generate biased news coverage."*

### Attacks, assaults and manipulation

One of the latest media to be targeted is the privately-owned satellite TV station *Al-Dawliya* (Libya International), located on the airport road in southwestern Tripoli, which was surrounded by cars belonging to "Libya Dawn" militiamen on the night of 25 August, a representative of the station said. The militiamen overran the station, ransacking its offices and seizing most of its equipment and files. By chance, no employee was present at the time except a security guard, who was able to warn its staff that an armed attack was under way.

An unidentified [video](#) posted on *Al-Dawliya's* Facebook page shows military men outside the TV station's ransacked studios with a car on which "Fajr Libya" (Libya Dawn) is written. The man shooting the video can be heard describing the TV station as *"corrupt, shameful and seditious"* and those responsible for the attack as *"brave and courageous heroes."*

The attack follows [threats](#) against *Al-Dawliya* and many of its employees. Its board is headed by Mahmoud Jibril, a former chair of the National Transitional Council and president of the National Forces Alliance (NFA), a liberal party critical of Libya's Islamists, and by Abdel Majid Al-Mligta, a senior NFA official and brother of Othman Al-Mligta, who heads *Al-Qa'qa'a*, one of the powerful Zintan brigades.

The attack on *Al-Dawliya* came just days after two of its producers, **Osama Rashid** and **Mohamad Al-Sa'di**, were kidnapped by the "Shuhada Janzour" brigade in the western Tripoli district of Janzour on the night of 17 August. At first, they were just stopped and questioned at a checkpoint, but when it emerged that they worked for *Al-Dawliya*, they were insulted and beaten, and then detained. They were finally freed after being mistreated and roughed up for five days. Rashid said they owed their release to the intervention of Nizam Al-Tayyari, who is the head of the board of the state-owned TV station *Al-Rasmiya* and one of its anchors. Rashid said Tayyari convinced the militiamen that the two producers were not responsible for *Al-Dawliya's* support for "liberal" sectors and its anti-Islamist editorial line.

*Al-Assima*, another privately-owned TV station, was attacked again on 24 August, just hours after the final Libya Dawn assault on Tripoli airport. Armed men stormed into headquarters at around 4 a.m., ransacking and destroying equipment and files and setting fire to the control room. No employee was injured but the station is still unable to broadcast. Headed by Jum'a

Al-Osta, Al-Assima is well known for supporting the NFA and Jibril and has been the target of repeated physical attacks for nearly two years.

In a separate development, the broadcasts of *Al-Rasmiya* and another state-owned TV stations, *Al-Wataniya*, were stopped on 20 August at the behest of the transitional government's information ministry, which asked the Egyptian state-owned TV satellite company Nilesat to stop carrying their signals.

This decision was taken after *Al-Wataniya* was overrun on 4 August by a militia controlled by Abdelraouf Kara, an Islamist ally of the Misrata brigades during the past two months of fighting in Tripoli, who ordered *Al-Wataniya* not to broadcast the new parliament's inauguration in the eastern city of Tobruq.

Ever since then, *Al-Wataniya* has remained under the control of Kara and his militias, including the "deterrent forces" and the Nawasi brigade, which has turned it into their propaganda mouthpiece. Several sources also claim that, after being arrested or kidnapped, many journalists have been taken directly to a secret Tripoli prison operated by Kara.

As for *Al-Rasmiya*, despite being the Libyan parliament's official mouthpiece, the station had not been broadcasting the sessions of the new parliament that was elected on 25 June. Violating its statutes, the TV station's Tayyari-led board refused on the grounds that the new parliament was not legitimate.

Ever since then, *Al-Rasmiya* has just been covering the Libya Dawn campaign, thereby becoming a completely one-sided and illegal news outlet. According to one of its leading presenters, Ahmad Ben Ashour, 21 of its journalists resigned just before satellite transmission was stopped because of its "*manifest support for extremists and armed militias.*"

Although Nilesat transmission was ended at the government's request, *Al-Wataniya* and *Al-Rasmiya* quickly resumed broadcasting by using the satellite frequencies of the children's TV station *Libya Al-Atfal*.

Reporters Without Borders urges all parties to the current fighting to immediately cease all attacks against journalists and to respect the principles of media independence and neutrality and the essential watchdog role that the media should play in their news coverage.

RWB also urges the Libyan authorities to deploy all necessary resources to end the physical attacks on journalists and their news media, and to guarantee the safety of all Libyan and foreign reporters.

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