

Maxim Shugaley's statement on Experts Group on Libya Report for the UN

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I have thoroughly examined the Report by Experts Group on Libya (founded by resolution 1973, (2011)), dated February 18, 2021 and addressed to President of the UN Security Council. The report is available in open sources; its volume, together with annexes, is 555 pages. It would seem that a lot of work has been done, a lot of efforts, based on the results of the analysis of which, the global community and the UN will again make decisions, resolutions, etc. regarding long-suffering Libya.

The report describes a period from October 25, 2019 to January 24, 2021. For reasons beyond my control, I've spent almost all this time in that country – among the inmates of Mitiga prison. My country has set me free on December 10, 2020, after my captivity that lasted 1 year and 8 months.

I was arrested specifically for conducting social researches in an effort to understand the situation in a country torn apart by war and clans, not long before the Russia-Africa summit, which was held in Russia in October 2019. Every day for more than two months I've been interviewing locals, asking questions, systematizing answers, met public leaders in Libya. Someone obviously didn't like that, especially when report results (that were partly published in May 2019) have demonstrated that Libyans want to build their lives, choose their president and their government and use their country's natural resources without foreign American participation. Therefore, I was arrested.

For the rest of my life I will never forget that year and eight months I've spent in Mitiga. Neither will those who are still being held there, including some accused (or just kidnapped and incarcerated) for political reasons. There's no justice there in Libya, and none of the prisoners know how long they've left to live, or will they be free, and what's more important – what they'd been arrested for. The international community has put a blind eye on all these facts.

I never stopped doing my primary task even while being imprisoned. I needed to find out why more than three thousand people are held here. What are they guilty of? I won't deny, some of them are indeed criminal figures. However, a lot of people got there because of their political views. That was the strange way for the Government of National Accord (which controlled the country until recently) to define whether someone is a friend or a foe. The Report contains a paragraph citing “35. There are arbitrary arrests and cruel treatment of the inmates... held in the Mitiga prison. They have reported about arbitrary arrests and tortures... It was established that the main person responsible for it was Khalid al-Hishri. The investigating group tried to set up a meeting, but failed to do it.”

Undoubtedly, it's a very highlighting occasion – the UN experts were told to leave.

The situation is similar for all other subjects of this investigation. **Obviously, the UN experts weren't shown what's actually going on in the country. In other words, they were deprived of information.** This is the only explanation for the fact that the most part of the Report is based on phrases like “Experts consulted with confidential sources that confirmed that the interview is trustworthy...”, “There are trusted public reports...”, “Confidential sources of the expert group”. Who are these sources? What ‘truth’ did they tell the experts? Whose interests does this ‘truth’ serve? As a sociologist with a 20 year experience, I can say – these sources can't be considered reliable; and, of course, a UN Security Council report can't be based on such assumptions.

In their report, the experts highlighted the report on actions that threaten the peace, stability and security of Libya in a special chapter. This is a very correct message. But it's important for both experts and all other responsible persons to understand who is really threatening and who is trying to save the long-suffering Libya. While there, I had a lot of time to figure out who fights who. Believe me, Libyans want peace in their country no less than the UN Security Council. And most importantly, Libyans ask not to interfere with the construction of this world.

I would like to pay special attention to the references to my own country Russia.

It is a pity that for the experts of the UN, the sources of information about my country and the alleged (I emphasize – alleged) influence on Libya were three Internet projects ("Medusa", "Project", "Dossier"), which are long known for having purposefully distorted information about Russia and have never said anything good about Russia and will not say anything good. I can't even call them the opposition media. Believe me, in my country, the opposition is allowed much more in terms of promoting its point of view about the government and society compared to other countries.

Experts for some reason refer to online projects that are trying to smear my country all over the world using American grants (and this is an absolutely proven fact). Do you think they can be trusted?? Or it was still worth learning other points of view when preparing the report. And check the information? Because it was the blind faith in these media that put the experts in an awkward position.

For example, the report published the data of one of the alleged victims among the fighters of the Wagner PMC (a military company that experts associate with Russia and call a shadow organization). Personal data is also mentioned in the report: Vadim Bekshenev. According to the UN experts (judging by the fact that the report mentions

only three sources from Russia - the data was obtained from one of them), this person was killed in action in Libya, and this was confirmed by the Sberbank card that was found next to the body. So, I conducted my own investigation and I want to reassure the entire world community and UN experts: this person is alive and well, living and working in Russia in peace. He has no idea how come there was a card with his name and surname. Did it really happen? The report is filled with such unreliable, easily refuted data. And the whole structure built on the basis of unreliable information, instantly collapses.

I've spent a lot of time in Libya, the prison sentence seemed even more endless. But I was there. And even though I knew I was risking my life, I still worked, met people, talked, and systemized everything I learned. It was difficult and scary sometimes. And with all due respect to the experts who prepared the report, I still want to say: Libya, like any country, should be studied from the inside, not based on external and internal sources.