

Nada Harib

Unearth

Before I started to explore my country through my camera, Libya for me was hidden beneath layers of mystery. After the revolution in 2011 and the fall of the Gaddafi Regime, these layers began to peel back with each year. Every time I made photos, I became more aware of the value of our culture and also of the complexities of our everyday challenges and the reality we live in.

In 2018 I started my on-going project Women of Libya, exploring my Amazigh roots, reviving the cultural heritage of my hometown in the Nefussa Mountains. When the war began on April 2019, I took on the new role of being a photojournalist, and I began documenting the challenges of everyday life for people in Libya, motivated by the need to bear witness to what was happening around me.

After the war ended in 2020, I began documenting the aftermath of the conflict zones. Then other assignments from the civilians displaced by war to the migrants living in Tripoli. In 2021, I visited Tarhuna, 92 kilometers from Tripoli, and bear witness of the mass graves that committed by al-Kaneyat. During the war, The city was controlled by seven siblings known as Al-Kaneyat, a pro-Haftar self-styled militia-brigade.

All these experiences converged to create my ongoing series "Unearth," which, hopefully becomes a book. I tell the story of my homeland, intertwined with my autobiography and my work as a photojournalist from the time when Libya was in the hands of Gaddafi's regime, to the 17th of February revolution, the civil war, and then a new tyrant. 'Unearth' is an intimate recollection of childhood memories and the fears of change mingled with the hopes that Libya's new chapter would reveal beauty. The title itself hints of sadness and death, but also of the honest process of digging for truth and waiting for the beauty and hope truth brings.

After the revolution, life in Libya has gone through many phases that one can't ignore. Even though there are people dying, chaos, war, destruction, oppression, and revenge; there is also another side of Libya that people are trying to revive: there are some good changes amid this turmoil. The contradiction is obvious. During the time of Gaddafi, it was a silent war, a meaningless, flat existence. It was only about Gaddafi. The world didn't know about us. Before, with Gadhafi, we felt we didn't have any problems. We didn't know about democracy; we didn't even know about our own culture. It was all one single non-dimensional perspective. There was only one color, green, and no cultural alternative to Gadhafi's system.

My work attempts to discover the cultural aspects of my fast-changing country, from the disappearance of the military uniforms Libyans used to wear in the public high school as a child, to the tlabba, a woolen garment, worn by women from the Nafussa mountains. Focusing my lens to the destruction the civil war has left behind, the dark corners of recent history.
