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## Legitimacy in Libya

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[Malou Innocent](#)<sup>[2]</sup>

One of the strangest arguments in favor of America's involvement in the humanitarian mission in Libya—aside from the general incoherence of [of](#)<sup>[3]</sup> [the](#)<sup>[4]</sup> [mission](#)<sup>[5]</sup> —is that, "[...at least it was endorsed by the Arab League.](#)"<sup>[6]</sup>

But look at [what countries make up the Arab League](#)<sup>[7]</sup>, among others: Libya (although it was suspended just recently), Sudan (where thousands of innocent civilians were killed), Somalia (a lawless pirate mecca), Yemen (a medieval backwater), and a smattering of other countries led by sclerotic regimes. It is one thing for the United States to seek the support of the Arab League when a mission is not premised on the protection of human rights; the Gulf War of 1990-91 comes to mind. But when it comes to the case of intervention in Libya and the [stated](#)<sup>[8]</sup> premise of the mission—to stop the killing of innocent civilians—it should go without saying that most, if not all, of the Arab League's members have no legitimate claim to moral authority. The Arab League means little to the Arabs living under those individual regimes. Arab League support might mean a lot to us, but it means a whole lot less to the Arabs we're trying to sway.

Perhaps more importantly, aside from whatever patina of legitimacy the Arab League was meant to confer, the institutional body itself is being actively undermined by the particular nationalist movements in a number of its member states. The sun has clearly set on the Arab League's current aging cohort of Cold War era leaders.

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[1] <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&username=nationalinterest>

[2] <http://nationalinterest.org/profile/malou-innocent>

[3] <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/weinbergerpowell-doctrine-r-i-p/>

[4] <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/did-we-have-get-the-war-find-out-why-we-were-fighting-it-5063>

[5] <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/offensive-goals-defensive-tactics/>

[6] <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE72A6EC20110312>

[7] <http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/league.htm>

[8] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/21/letter-president-regarding-commencement-operations-libya>