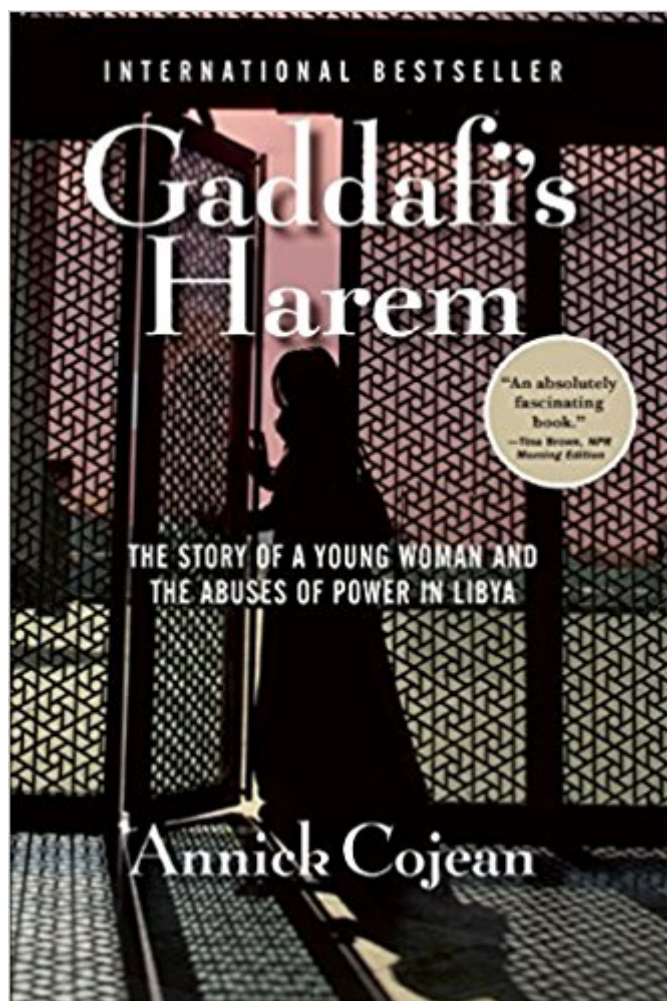


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# Gaddafi's Harem



## Synopsis

Soraya was just fifteen, a schoolgirl in the coastal town of Sirte, when she was given the honor of presenting a bouquet of flowers to Colonel Gaddafi, "the Guide" on a visit he was making to her school the following week. This one meeting—a presentation of flowers, a pat on the head from Gaddafi—changed Soraya's life forever. Soon afterwards, she was summoned to Bab al-Azizia, Gaddafi's palatial compound near Tripoli, where she joined a number of young women who were violently abused, raped and degraded by Gaddafi. Heartwrenchingly tragic but ultimately redemptive, Soraya's story is the first one of many that are just now beginning to be heard. But sex and rape remain the highest taboo in Libya, and women like Soraya (whose identity is protected by a pseudonym here) risk being disowned or even killed by their dishonored family members. In Gaddafi's Harem, an instant bestseller on publication in France, where it has already sold more than 100,000 copies in hardcover, Le Monde special correspondent Annick Cojean gives a voice to Soraya's story, and supplements her investigation into Gaddafi's abuses of power through interviews with people who knew Soraya, as well as with other women who were abused by Gaddafi, and those who were involved with his regime, including a driver who ferried women to the compound, and Gaddafi's former Chief of Security. Gaddafi's Harem is an astonishing portrait of the essence of dictatorship: how power gone unchecked can wreak havoc on the most intensely personal level, as well as a document of great significance to the new Libya.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A renowned French journalist for Le Monde uncovers another level of monstrosity in the recently overthrown dictatorship of Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. Cojean's riveting two-part story opens with the blunt firsthand account of the kidnap and rape of a young girl. In 2004, just after turning 15, Soraya was thrilled to present a bouquet of flowers to Gaddafi when he visited her school. The next day, three women from his Committee of the Revolution took her to visit his nearby encampment. She wasn't allowed to leave. Soraya was bathed, made-up, and delivered to Gaddafi's bedroom. Over the next five years, Gaddafi repeatedly raped and abused Soraya, forcing her to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, snort cocaine, and watch pornography. In the second half of the book, Cojean investigates Soraya's story. Navigating traditional Libyan cultural silences on rape, Cojean locates anonymous sources who corroborate chilling descriptions of Gaddafi's use of rape as a political weapon, and the resultant pall of disgrace cast on the victims and their families. Even after Gaddafi's death and the collapse of his regime, it is the Libyan women who continue to suffer—reviled by their families, ignored by their government and the international community, living in silent shame. A moving and disturbing wake-up call to the personal costs of totalitarianism. Agent: Heidi Warneke, Editions Grasset & Fasquelle. (Sept.) --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** In this horrifying inside look at the lives of Libyan women under the Gaddafi regime, Cojean, a special correspondent for Le Monde, has created a work of powerful and compelling nonfiction that will stagger readers. Drawing on the personal story of a teenage girl who caught Gaddafi's eye at a school event, Cojean splits the narrative between Soraya's first-person recollection of years as a captive subjected to continuous brutal violence and rape and her own investigative journalism on what happened to Soraya and other young women who entered Gaddafi's orbit. The picture that emerges is of a depraved, drug-fueled despot, who controlled Libya through fear and gained the complicity of others with expensive gifts and suitcases full of cash. What remains after his death is a country that cannot face its victims. Soraya has no chances whatsoever in Libya anymore, her father tells Cojean. Our society is too stupid, too traditional, and too unforgiving. These women could not be saved, and now everyone wishes them to be forgotten. Given Cojean's powerful scrutiny, however, Gaddafi's Harem is a journalistic exposé that cannot be denied and that readers will not be able to put down. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Its a real shocking book.....And when you just think that this dictator just 5 years ago used to gret all

the European presidents and prime minister and on our journals was his face smiling with our prime minister or president...I just feel so angry that no one could see beyond that sunglasses was viagra and cocaine.....This is a real piece of journalism about modern day sex slaves and how wars are being won by using sex against women....Dictators and Warring chiefs show their dominance by forcing themselves into the sex slavery and beastly sex....

This painful story shows again how people believe the worst of the innocents held captive by tyrants. Much of the book contains the story of one woman, but her story is followed by information no one might know about in the patriarchal society that blames the innocent for crimes perpetrated against them. Tragic.

I lived in Libya when Ghaddafi took over the country and I absolutely thought he was going to be good for the country . I still liked him 4 years later when I left but after reading this book I now hate this man. He died too easy compared what he did to this young girls. He was a sick human being.

Vivid in description and powerfully written. Not just the heart wrenching true story of one, but of many girls who were abused not just sexually and physically, but also mentally and emotionally by Gaddafi during his rule. Also their struggles after the revolution and failure to enter back into normal society. The lies, the cruelty, the honest truth.

I've never been a history buff (modern or ancient), but to read these events not only through first person point of view, and to have smatterings of Gaddafi's rule in the background made this a compelling story. It's so well told and so tragic at the same time. It's impossible to imagine this world, but Annick has done a remarkable job of recounting the young girl's life events during what should have been her prime years. I could not put this book down, for various reasons, but felt incredibly honoured to know her story.

Interesting reading. I was surprised at the depth and berth of his support among people loyal to him, controlled by Qaddafi through personal threats or intimidation by threats against his or her family. Large scale corruption requires a large scale support system. Good reading for anyone interested in the "Dark side" of human nature.

This is a true story that I wish would never happened. My reality and the most of people who live in

'free' countries is completely different from what we see in this book. Without a work like this it would be hard to understand the extension of the evil spread by Gaddafi to his own people. This book is well written and contains an important journalistic work about how power can reveal the darkest side of human beings.

I didn't find the book particularly thought provoking as I wouldn't expect the described, decrepit behaviour any less from a despot as Gaddafi. I did not find the book insightful or well written for a journalist. I wouldn't recommend the book.

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