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LITERATURE: GREAT LIBYAN ITALIANIST TILLISI DIES ***

(ANSAmEd) - ROME, JANUARY 14 - Khalifa Mohammed Tillisi, one of Libya's best-known and respected writers, and one of the greatest italianist in the Arab world, has died in Tripoli, at the age of 80. The news featured prominently in Libya's main newspapers, and was announced in the General Peoples Congress. Tillisi was known throughout the world for his literary works, his poetry, his histories and literary criticism. In Italy he was known for being one of the greatest Arab Italianists, the author of an Arabic-Italian dictionary. He translated works by writers such as Luigi Pirandello and Eugenio Montale into Arabic, and other writers like Pablo Neruda and Federico Garcia Lorca from Italian into Arabic. His passion for Pirandello's work was well-known, and he wrote a number of essays on the writer, which have been collected in two volumes: 'A journey towards words and Literary notebooks'. The funeral will take place tomorrow, following Friday prayers, in the presence of leaders from the worlds of politics and culture. "His death leaves a void in the country and in my heart too, because I have lost someone who was a friend for more than 60 years," Ali Sadik Husnein, Secretary General of the Academy of the Arabic Language in Tripoli, told ANSAMed. Their friendship dates back to 1951, when Libya first gained independence, "and we all wanted to do something for the nation, and Kahlifa and I decided to teach Arabic in schools," explains Husnein. From then on Tillisi's commitment to literature went hand in hand with his public commitment. Husnein remembers the several assignments given to Tillisi, including "parliamentarian, Minister for Culture, Ambassador, publisher, President of the High Commission for Culture, Radio and Television, Vice President of the Union of Arab People of Letters, not forgetting the Honorary Degree awarded him by the L'Orientale University in Naples". But the work which his friend Husnein remembers most of all is what he describes "as a beautiful long poem in Arabic," published in 1990 and entitled 'The poem of the single verse'. (ANSAmEd).

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