

Civil Society: African Governments must protect the People of Libya

Johannesburg, 25 February 2011.

We, civil society organisations from all over Africa, urge our governments to protect the people of Libya against whom crimes against humanity are being committed by a vicious regime.

As news reports and testimonies of people caught up in the events in Libya indicate, the violent unprecedented brutal crackdown against protestors is continuing. Libya's 'supreme leader' Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has urged his supporters to come out on the streets to attack the "rats" and "cockroaches" opposing his iron grip on power.

Indications from his public address of 22 February show that he is in no mood to relent to the legitimate demands of the pro-democracy protestors. Instead, he has threatened to purge opponents "house by house" and "inch by inch" and do whatever it takes to hold on to his iron grip on power. The situation in Libya is fast spiralling into an international and continent-wide crisis.

Article 3 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) lists the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent as one of its key objectives. Despite this, the AU and African governments have been slow to react. Issuing statements urging the violence to stop will not deter the Libyan regime, which has practised its brutal methods for over 40 years.

The UN Security Council has issued a unanimous statement condemning the violence but has failed to take any concrete action to restore peace and security to the people of Libya. The three African countries that sit on the UN Security Council – South Africa, Nigeria and Gabon – as representatives of the continent have a special responsibility to ensure that the people of Libya are protected from grave human rights violations constituting crimes against humanity.

It is vital that all African governments immediately recognise that this is an extraordinary situation which is fast becoming a threat to peace and security in Africa and internationally that must be recognised and acted upon resolutely by the UN and the AU.

Signed:

Afesis-Corplan, South Africa

African Democracy Forum, South Africa

Anti-Human Trafficking Advocacy Initiative, South Africa

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, South Africa

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa

Cooperative for Research and Education (CORE), South Africa

Durban YMCA, South Africa

Ecumenical Service for Socioeconomic Transformation (ESSET), South Africa

Fair Play for Africa, South Africa

Gender Links, South Africa

Global Call to Action against Poverty, South Africa

Hillside Digital Trust, South Africa

Media Monitoring Africa, South Africa

National Council of Women in South Africa, South Africa

National Welfare Forum, South Africa

Open Democracy, South Africa
South African History Archive, South Africa
South Africa YMCA, South Africa
Tri-Continental Human Rights Film Festival, South Africa
The Women's Lobby, South Africa

Bahrain Transparency Society, Bahrain

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Council of NGOs, Botswana

The American University in Cairo, Egypt
The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt
Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, Egypt
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt
Egyptian NGO Support Centre, Egypt
Nadim Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, Egypt

Pro-Hope International, The Gambia

Arab NGO Network for Development, Lebanon

Fleurita Women Association, Mauritius

Espace Associatif, Morocco

Associação Coalizão da Juventude Moçambicana, Mozambique

Movement for Protection of the African Child, Nigeria
Nigerian Network of NGOs, Nigeria

Re'seau des Plates-formes nationale d'ONG d'Afrique de 'Ouest et du Centre (REPAOC), Senegal

Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID), Sierra Leone
Youth Partnership for Peace and Development, Sierra Leone

Concern for Development Initiatives in Africa (ForDIA), Tanzania

Family Forum, Uganda

Organisation Development Community Management Trust, Zambia

National Association of NGOs, Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), Zimbabwe

Professor Adam Habib, South Africa (individual)
Ghada Barsoum (individual)
Professor Ibrahim Awad, Egypt (individual)
Professor Hamid Ali, Egypt (individual)
Kharim Khashaba, Egypt (individual)
Melusi Nkomo, West Africa (individual)