

Civil Society Petition

General Assembly should suspend Libya's UN Human Rights Council membership rights

As nongovernmental organizations from all regions of the world working in the field of human rights, we call upon the United Nations General Assembly to immediately suspend the rights of membership of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC).

The General Assembly contemplated the possibility that suspension of a member's rights in the Human Rights Council might be necessary in the event of serious deterioration in the human rights situation that state. Resolution 60/251, which created the Council, provides, in operative paragraph 8, that "the General Assembly, by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights."

The Libyan government of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi, is committing "gross and systematic violations of human rights." A variety of sources report numerous repeated attacks by the Libyan authorities on the civilian population of Libya, including by firing live ammunition at demonstrators. Many hundreds of demonstrators have been killed by Libyan state authorities.

Colonel Gaddafi has admitted the systematic intent behind the violence unleashed on the Libyan population and has given cause for substantial concern that further violence will occur. On February 22, Colonel Gaddafi spoke of protestors as "cats and dogs" and threatened to "cleanse Libya house by house." His son Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi said on February 20 that the authorities would "fight to the last man and woman and bullet" in combating the protests and threatened that "rivers of blood" would flow.

The League of Arab States on February 22 denounced the acts of violence being committed against civilians as severe violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular the hiring of foreign mercenaries and the use of live ammunition and heavy artillery against protestors, and banned Libyan delegations from participating in all bodies affiliated with the Arab League until the Libyan authorities met the League's demands to guarantee the security of its people.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union on February 23 strongly condemned "the indiscriminate and excessive use of force and lethal weapons against peaceful protestors" and called for an immediate end to all acts of violence.

United Nations institutions and authorities have also spoken out regarding the deplorable situation in Libya. On February 22, the UN Security Council expressed grave concern about this situation and “condemned the violence and use of force against civilians, deplored the repression against peaceful demonstrators and expressed deep regret at the deaths of hundreds of civilians.” The Security Council also called on Libya “to meet its responsibility to protect its population and to act with restraint, to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, and to allow immediate access for international human rights monitors and humanitarian agencies.”

Both UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay have condemned the attacks on demonstrators, with Secretary-General Ban expressing outrage at the situation and Ms. Pillay noting explicitly that the attacks against the Libyan population are both widespread and systematic, and may amount to crimes against humanity. Ms. Pillay’s concern was echoed by the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Francis Deng, and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Edward Luck, who also stated that if the reported nature and scale of the attacks by Libyan authorities are confirmed, they may well constitute crimes against humanity.

It is time for the UN General Assembly to follow without delay the lead set by the UN Security Council, UN officials and the concerned regional institutions. It is exactly for situations such as this that the General Assembly provided for the suspension of membership rights of a member of the Human Rights Council. Failure to act in the face of the gross and systematic violations committed by Libya would seriously undermine the credibility of both the Human Rights Council and of the General Assembly itself. In the face of the extreme deterioration in the human rights situation in Libya and the risk of further violence, we urge the General Assembly to adopt a resolution suspending Libya’s membership rights in the Human Rights Council immediately.

24 February 2011

Signatories:

Accountability Watch Committee, Nepal

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies

African Democracy Forum

Al Mezan Center for Human rights –Gaza, Palestine

Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies

Amnesty International

Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
ARC International
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)
Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Egypt
Association for Human Rights Legal Aid
Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights
Burma Centre Delhi, India
Cairo Institute of Human Rights Studies
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Canter for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance
Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services, Egypt
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), Argentina
Christian Development Alternative (CDA), Bangladesh
Christian Solidarity Worldwide
The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Indonesia
Committees for the Defense of Democracy Freedom and Human Rights, Syria
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies
Democracy Coalition Project, United States
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
Egyptian Association for Enhancing Community Participation
Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
El Nadim Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims, Egypt
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
Fahamu Refugee Programme, United Kingdom
Hisham Mubarak Law Center, Egypt
Human Rights Education Institute of Burma, Thailand
Human Rights First Society, Saudi Arabia
Human Rights Organization in Syria – MAF
Human Rights Watch
The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor (IMPARSIAL)
INFORM Documentation Centre, Sri Lanka
INHURED International, Nepal

International Commission of Jurists
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Service for Human Rights
Journalist for Human Rights - JHR – Sudan
Korean House for International Solidarity, Republic of Korea
Korean Public Interest Lawyers Group (GONGGAM), Republic of Korea
Kurdish Committee for Human Rights in Syria al-Rased
Kurdish organization for the defence of human rights and public freedoms in Syria–
DAD
Maharat Foundation, Lebanon
National Council of Liberties, Tunisia
New Woman Foundation, Egypt
Odhikar, Bangladesh
Open Society Foundations
Palestinian Human Rights Organization, Lebanon
Partners for Law in Development (India)
Pax Romana - International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
Pax Romana - International Movement of Catholic Students
The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring
Thai Committee for Refugees
The Arab Organization for Human Rights-Syria
The Iraqi Human Rights Association in Denmark
West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)