Al-Gaddafi arrest warrant 'a step towards justice'

The International Criminal Court Prosecutor's request for an arrest warrant for Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi is a step towards justice for the victims of human rights violations in Libya, Amnesty International said today.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo said on Monday he was seeking warrants for Al-Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam and military intelligence chief Abdallah al-Sanussi on two types of crimes against humanity – murder and persecution.

"The request for arrest warrants is a step forward for international justice and accountability in the region," said Michael Bochenek, Amnesty International's Director of Law and Policy.

"However, the international community that came together in such unprecedented agreement to refer Libya to the International Criminal Court, cannot allow justice to appear selective. By any standard, what is happening in Syria is just as bad as the situation was in Libya when the Security Council referred that country to the ICC."

Amnesty International's research in Libya since February points to the commission of possible crimes against humanity and war crimes.

A wave of killings and enforced disappearances of any suspected critics of the government began in February this year when anti-Gaddafi protests began in Benghazi following mass protests that erupted across the Middle East and North Africa.

Amnesty International is calling on the UN Security Council to uphold the neutrality of international justice, by authorising an ICC investigation into killings of hundreds of protesters Syria.

"Real international justice has to be for everyone in the Middle East and North Africa," said Michael Bochenek.

If the arrest warrants are issued as expecte, Amnesty International urges Colonel al-Gaddafi to surrender himself to face trial before the International Criminal Court.   All member states of the United Nations would be obliged to deny him and his co-accused safe haven.