

AI Index: PRE 01/073/2011  
22 February 2011

## **Security Council and Arab League must act decisively on Libyan crimes today**

Amnesty International has today called on the UN Security Council and the Arab League to launch an immediate mission to Libya to investigate events that have left hundreds of protesters dead.

The call for the investigation, which could lead to prosecutions at the International Criminal Court (ICC), comes as both the UN Security Council and the Arab League meet today for special sessions to discuss the spiralling violence in the country.

The organization also called on the UN Security Council to impose a total arms embargo on Libya, amidst reports that security forces are continuing to deploy a range of weaponry, munitions and related equipment to use lethal force against protesters.

“Colonel al-Gaddafi and his government appear to be prepared to kill as many people as it takes to stay in power. The international community needs to act now to put a stop to this.” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary-General.

Amnesty International said that the UN and Arab League should send representatives to Libya immediately, either jointly or separately, to investigate the situation on the ground and report rapidly to the Security Council.

The organization said that the recommendations should include a judgement as to whether the scale of the crimes being committed in Libya warrants a Security Council referral to the Prosecutor of the ICC.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay yesterday said that the Libyan authorities’ actions against protesters may amount to crimes against humanity.

Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi, Colonel al-Gaddafi’s son, said in a televised speech on 20 February that the army would “play a big part whatever the cost” to end anti-government protests and that the Libyan authorities will “fight to the last man and woman and bullet”.

“It is an outrage that al-Gaddafi’s son feels able publicly to announce the readiness to massacre Libyans in order to maintain his father’s hold on power.

“The international community must immediately make it clear to all those in the Libyan government, military and security apparatus that they and those carrying out their orders will be held to account for crimes under international law, such as those now being reported,” said Salil Shetty.

Amnesty International warned that reports it had received from hospitals in eastern Libya indicated that some 200 people had been killed by security forces up to 20 February. Hospital staff told Amnesty

International that they were struggling to cope with the number of casualties.

The true number of deaths could be much higher as this sample represented only the major hospitals. Some families are also likely to have buried their dead without taking the bodies to hospitals.

“The Security Council must also put an immediate end to the export or transfer of all arms and military equipment to Libya. People are being killed in their hundreds with intent.

“Other states must not be complicit in further killing. All military and police supplies and cooperation with Libya must stop now until the risk of such serious human rights violations is ended,” said Salil Shetty.

In addition to the United Nations and Arab League, Amnesty International also called on the African Union to take action.

“All international bodies that Libya holds membership of need to recognise the gravity of this crisis. The African Union must urgently address the gross human rights abuses being committed in Libya in a special session of its Peace and Security Council,” said Salil Shetty.

## **Background**

The UN Security Council has the authority to refer to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court situations that would not otherwise fall under the court's jurisdiction, for example when the state in question is not a party to the statute.