

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/144/2011
18 March 2011

Civilians must be protected during Libya military action

Amnesty International has today urged all parties to make the protection of civilians in Libya their top priority, after the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 paved the way for possible military action by international forces.

"While we welcome the strong emphasis on the protection of civilians in Libya reflected in UN Security Council resolution 1973, we call on all parties to the conflict, including any external forces acting under the authority of the UN Security Council, to put the protection of civilians above any other considerations" said Claudio Cordone, Senior Director at Amnesty International.

"It is critical that all Libyan and any other forces that may become involved in the conflict respect fully the laws of war".

The organization also called on all parties to ensure that any civilians who want to flee the country be allowed safe passage to the borders in safety, and to ensure that anyone fleeing Libya is allowed immediate access to whichever country they are able to reach, without discrimination.

Yesterday the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 with 10 votes in favour and five abstentions. The resolution authorizes member states to take all necessary measures short of a foreign occupation force to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libya.