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Al-Gaddafi's forces carry out indiscriminate attacks in Misratah

Amnesty International today corroborated claims about the use of anti-vehicle mines in Misratah's port by forces loyal to Colonel al-Gaddafi, as indiscriminate attacks on the Libyan city continue.

The latest attack on the area around the port set on fire several fuel tanks, depriving the city of much needed fuel for generators which supply electricity to hospitals and other essential facilities.

"The use of anti-vehicle mines against Misratah's port is yet more evidence of the Libyan regime's determination to further isolate the city's inhabitants from the outside world and to deny them the humanitarian aid they so desperately need," said Donatella Rovera, Senior Advisor at Amnesty International.

According to information corroborated by Amnesty International, the mines are delivered by Chinese-made 122mm rockets which burst open in flight, each scattering eight (Type 84 Model A) anti-vehicle mines over a large area.

Each mine is equipped with a parachute to activate the mine's arming system and to regulate its descent to the ground. The rockets, which have a range of several miles, are fired from mobile multi-rocket-launch systems (MRLS) which carries 24 rockets.

"Such attacks are an ongoing threat to civilians. These rockets cannot be directed at specific targets, their payloads of mines are scattered over a large area, and the mines themselves cannot distinguish between civilian and military vehicles," said Donatella Rovera.

This is the second time in the space of a week that forces loyal to Colonel al-Gaddafi use mines to attack Misratah's port. On 29 April they laid sea-mines two to three kilometers offshore and in the approaches to Misratah. All the while they have continued to fire rockets and other projectiles into and around the port from their positions around the city.

"Such systematic targeting of Misrata's only conduit for humanitarian supplies and for the evacuation of critically ill and wounded patients is nothing short of collective punishment against the city's population," said Donatella Rovera.

"Those in the Libyan regime up and down the chain of command must be aware that who are responsible for indiscriminate attacks and collective punishment may one day have to answer to charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity" I reverted to the original wording as we are not yet saying that war crimes and crimes against humanity are committed.

"They must immediately end indiscriminate attacks and collective punishment and allow adequate humanitarian assistance to reach civilians."

The protection which the international community has pledged to the civilian population of Libya

includes the protection from collective punishment.

The international community must step up its efforts to put an end to the barrage of rockets and shelling against Misratah ceases and to guarantee safe passage to and from the city for people and humanitarian supplies.