

Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on Libya
Australian Statement
25 February 2011

The Australian Government condemns recent events in Libya and strongly urges the Libyan authorities to take immediate action to respect the human rights of its people. Australia deplores the use of lethal weaponry against peaceful protestors. We are hearing all too vividly of the brutality of the Libyan authorities' violent suppression of the Libyan population. *We applaud the High Commissioner for her forceful statement this morning.*

What we are witnessing is a profound reminder of the universality of the yearning for democratic freedoms. A profound reminder that it is impossible to suppress permanently the voice of the people. Australia supports the universal rights and freedoms of the people of Libya. The right to life. The right to liberty. The right to security. The right to freedom of opinion and expression. The right to freedom of assembly.

Immediate action is required. The Council should seize this moment now to stand by the people of Libya and to take action against one of its Member States. We call on the Council to pursue its mandate to send a strong message to the Libyan authorities that their actions will not be tolerated. Each Member State of the United Nations has a responsibility to protect civilian populations from mass atrocities including crimes against humanity.

We urge this Special Session of the Council to adopt a strong and action-oriented resolution on Libya, which calls upon the Libyan authorities to cooperate fully with the Special Procedures of the Council, and which calls for the establishment of an independent and credible international investigation into the violent suppression of protests across Libya.

It is also our strong belief that the gross human rights violations committed by the Libyan authorities warrant Libya's suspension from this Council by the UN General Assembly. Australia will be supporting such a move at a meeting of the General Assembly currently planned for 1 March in New York.

Australia also looks to the UN Security Council to take decisive action.

Our thoughts are with the people of Libya at this most challenging of times – people who have lost friends and family, and who continue to struggle for freedom from oppression. We salute your bravery.