

UN Watch
UN Watch Oral Statement
15th Special Session
UN Human Rights Council
25 February 2011

The Situation of Human Rights in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

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Mr. President,

Time is running out.

Innocent people in Libya are being slaughtered by their own government, under the orders of Muammar Qaddafi.

Witnesses describe horrifying scenes. Libyan forces, with mercenaries under their command, are firing on peaceful protesters. Civilians are being attacked by warplanes. Ambulances are being blocked. The death toll is estimated to range from 600 to 2,000.

Time is running out.

According to Ibrahim Dabbashi, Libya's own delegate to the UN, "The regime of Qaddafi has already started the genocide against the Libyan people." Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, the former justice minister, warned that Mr. Qaddafi and his sons could use biological and chemical weapons—that they would "burn everything."

Mr. President, this week, on behalf of 70 human rights groups, UN Watch urged the council to convene this urgent session, to condemn Libya's crimes against humanity, to dispatch investigators, and to suspend Libya from this august body. We applaud the EU, the US, and the other sponsors of today's session for answering our request.

As our appeal made clear, however, today's session is hardly sufficient.

Time is running out.

The international community has a responsibility to protect the civilian population that is now under attack. We urge member states to take concrete, collective and decisive action to save those in danger. A no-fly zone is one way to start.

Mr. President, from the day this council was created, UN Watch repeatedly urged it to address the gross violations by the Libyan government. Why did all our requests fall on deaf ears? When Libya was elected to this council in May, a coalition of human rights groups led by UN Watch demanded it be expelled. Why was the UN silent? Why did no country speak out?

One foreign minister even justified Libya's membership, saying it was important to keep a dialogue with all countries to improve the human rights situation across the world.

Mr. President, today's session repudiates this doctrine. It repudiates the policy of accommodation and appeasement of rulers who oppress their own people. It recognizes that no tyrant has ever been improved by council membership. On the contrary, the veneer of legitimacy only provides international cover for their records of abuse.

If the world had acted earlier and signaled to the Libyan government that it was watching, maybe we would not be in the situation we are in today.

Let us now draw the necessary lessons so that future victims will be spared.

Thank you, Mr. President.