

**Libya: Gaddafi Must Be Held Accountable for Crimes Against Humanity** Richard Dicker  
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(...) Amid preparations for the Libya contact group meeting in Istanbul on Friday, which sought a solution to the conflict in Libya, some states reportedly were behind the scenes exploring the possibility of offering Muammar Gaddafi the option of internal exile in exchange for relinquishing all power.

The Istanbul talks are a chance to end the nearly five-month-long conflict in Libya. However, to achieve this much-needed peace, governments involved in peace-brokering should bear in mind that the prosecution of people who are wanted for grave crimes should not be bargained away. Indeed, any political solution that avoids meaningful justice will undercut prospects for a long-lasting peace. (...)

By issuing arrest warrants, the ICC has taken an important step toward providing the victims of serious crimes in Libya the chance for redress. The ICC's action sends a strong message that the law can reach even those long thought to be immune to accountability. Justice should not be abandoned as efforts to end the devastating conflict are pursued. Human Rights Watch research in countries such as Sierra Leone and Angola shows that the failure to hold perpetrators of the most serious international crimes to account can contribute to future abuses.

The record from other conflicts also shows that arrest warrants for senior leaders can actually strengthen peace efforts by stigmatizing those who stand in the way of conflict resolution. For example, the indictments of Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia are credited with keeping them sidelined during the Dayton peace talks, which led to the end of the Bosnian war. In this way, accountability for the most serious international crimes can serve not only the interests of victims who want to see justice for their suffering, but also the longer-term interests of peace and stability. (...)

Handing Gaddafi a "get out of jail free card" would not only be inconsistent with the international community's expressed commitment to justice for crimes in Libya, but would also have serious consequences for a durable peace. Sidestepping accountability in Libya would send a message to abusive leaders around the world that if they hang on long enough, all will be forgiven. (...)

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