

Rwandans Know Why Gaddafi Must Be Stopped

AllAfrica.com Paul Kagame 24 March 2011 (...) My country is still haunted by memories of the international community looking away. No country knows better than my own the costs of the international community failing to intervene to prevent a state killing its own people.

In the course of 100 days in 1994, a million Rwandans were killed by government-backed "genocidaires" and the world did nothing to stop them.

So it is encouraging that members of the international community appear to have learnt the lessons of that failure. Through UN Resolution 1973 we are seeing a committed intervention to halt the crisis that was unfolding in Libya. (...) (...) Our **responsibility to protect** is unquestionable - this is the right thing to do, and this view is backed with the authority of having witnessed and suffered the terrible consequences of international inaction.

My main concern however, is whether this necessary action will not be compromised by ambivalence and wavering arguments. Now that the UN Security Council has taken a strong stand and sent the message that our global community will be relentless in protecting civilians under threat, particularly from their own leaders, we cannot be seen to be indecisive about moving forward in completion of this aim.

There are no two ways about it: the resolution authorises the use of all necessary means to protect Libyans - so wherever there is need of protection, the allied coalition should act, and do so in no uncertain terms. (...)

(...) From the African perspective there are important lessons to learn, the main one being that we as the African Union need to respond faster and more effectively to situations such as these.

Despite the AU Peace and Security Council holding consultations early this month to discuss the crisis in Libya, and subsequently deciding to send a fact-finding mission to that country, this response was slow and in the end overtaken by events on the ground.

However, let me also contend that the international community would have done well to include the African Union in the decision-making process in the same way that, for example, the Arab League was consulted: this certainly would have lent added legitimacy to the operations we are now witnessing.

It is regrettable that although Libya is a member of our regional community, Africa's only voice on this crucial issue was that of the few countries that sit on the UN Security Council.

This is not sufficient for our Continent: we should be doing, and seen to be doing, the right thing at the right time - not from the sidelines of operations such as this, but right at the heart of solutions to the problems that are facing our people.

We cannot assume that there would have been a unanimous consensus on what course of action to pursue, but I do believe the majority of member states would have supported Resolution 1973 for the simple reason that we cannot continue watching the chaos that was consuming Libya while its people were crying out for help.

While the support may not have been military, the AU could have offered something far more valuable - political support and moral authority for the coalition's actions on the ground.

There would have been other advantages to Africans having been more actively involved in the process that led to this joint action in Libya: first, it would have shown that African nations were ready to step up to the plate, accept their responsibilities and do the right thing. (...)

(...) Second, African Union support for Operation Odyssey Dawn would have acted as a further deterrent to other African leaders who might be tempted to target their own people with violence. (...) See [full article](#) .