

NATO stretching UN Libya mandate: Evans

AAP Newsfeed May 4, 2011 NATO has stretched the UN mandate on Libya to its absolute limit in attacking the palaces of Muammar Gaddafi and talking of regime change, former Labor foreign minister Gareth Evans says. (...) In a lecture on the lessons and challenges of the "responsibility to protect" doctrine to be delivered at the university on Thursday night, he says the Libyan intervention had ignited the debate on when it was appropriate to take military action against another state to protect civilians.

Professor Evans says there is growing anxiety that the Security Council mandate on Libya is being stretched to breaking point by the NATO operation.

He says there is growing frustration that Gaddafi was still hanging on despite NATO air attacks on his air force, heavy weapons, command centres and other facilities.

"But as NATO responds to those pressures by stretching its UN mandate to the absolute limit ... then the risk accelerates of buyers' remorse from those who did not oppose Resolution 1973, and of a backlash when the next extreme responsibility-to-protect case comes before the Security Council," he says.

Professor Evans says NATO is pushing the mandate by targeting Gaddafi's palaces, command centres and heavy weapons and being more willing to talk about regime change as the primary objective or only means to protect civilians effectively.

As well, there is talk of putting advisers on the ground and arming the rebels despite the embargo on the latter.

He says if the constituency which created UN Resolution 1973 was to remain unbroken, it was crucial for NATO to not test the limits of the resolution any further than it had already.

"Unless and until another Security Council resolution can be negotiated putting the military intervention on a broader 'international peace and security' rather than just responsibility-to-protect footing, which is extremely unlikely, the only course to embrace is patience," he says. Professor Evans says there is real concern that events in Libya, far from setting a new benchmark for future commitment, will prove to be the high water mark of responsibility-to-protect from which the tide would now recede.

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