STATEMENT

A Call to Congress for a Cease-fire in Libya, issued by U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations that Support Human Rights and Democracy in Africa

August, 2011

The undersigned organizations and individuals call on Congress to support peace, not war, in Libya. The four-month NATO military intervention in Libya, in which the U.S. Africa Command plays a vital role, has reached a stalemate, and is killing civilians rather than protecting them. The best way in the short term to save civilian lives and in the longer term to achieve the stability in which the Libyan people can develop democratic institutions is to promote an internationally-led cease-fire and negotiations between the warring parties, provide generous humanitarian assistance, and maintain a strict arms embargo. To encourage this, we urge Congress to bar funding for any military or intelligence operations against Libya.

We agree with the recent findings of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s special envoy to Libya, who “underscored the need for a political solution to the crisis that spares the Libyan people further suffering and meets their legitimate demands and aspirations for a democratic future.” Similarly, the African Union stated on June 15: “The correct way forward now is dialogue without pre-conditions... This dialogue should agree on the way forward in the direction of introducing competitive politics.” The U.S. policy of regime change first, peace later is prolonging the hostilities and adding to civilian casualties.

NATO and U.S. Africa Command military operations now far exceed the UN mandate to protect civilians and are clearly designed to oust the current regime. Some of the methods chosen for these operations — attempted assassination and attacks on economic targets — are patently illegal in themselves.

U.S. participation in NATO operations also violates the clear intent of the Constitution that Congress must decide when to go to war. We agree with Senator Richard Lugar, who dismissed the administration’s claims that “non-kinetic” intelligence and surveillance, attacks on air defenses, and targeted drone attacks do not constitute “hostilities” under the War Powers Resolution: “The fact that we are leaving most of the shooting to other countries does not mean that the United States is not involved in acts of war.”

The international community shares a “responsibility to protect” civilians threatened by mass violence, but the NATO operation in Libya shows that military force is often a poor instrument for putting these good intentions into practice. Going beyond financial sanctions, arms embargos, and non-recognition of governments substitutes violence for pressure and dialogue, and is often just as unlikely to be successful in saving lives.

The U.S. also has a long history of arming the very dictators whose repression later leads to calls for intervention. The United States backed the repressive regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, whose non-violent citizen movements launched the Arab Re-awakening. The U.S. continues to support abusive regimes in Bahrain, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Equatorial Guinea.

For all of these reasons, we urge Congress to protect the Libyan people by cutting funds for military operations in Libya and pressing the Obama administration to end US/NATO operations. We further urge the administration to allow a cease-fire and negotiations to proceed.

Signed,
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