



National Lawyers Guild International Committee www.nlginternational.org

March 7, 2011

To: Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair, House Foreign Relations Committee;
Rep. Howard Berman, Ranking Member, House Foreign Relations Committee;
Sen. John Kerry, Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee;
Sen. Richard Lugar, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
cc: President Barack Obama; Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

The National Lawyers Guild International Committee writes today to express its support for the people's movements in Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen, as well as occupied Palestine, who are facing severe repression at the hands of governments financed and supported by the United States, and to call for an immediate end to all military, political and economic support for the regimes in these countries. At the same time, we wish to make clear that the United States has lost any and all legitimacy by its long-time support of such repressive regimes, and we strongly oppose any form of U.S. military, political or economic intervention in Libya and other countries where movements are rising in opposition to dictatorships and military rule, including any imposition of a "no-fly zone." As leaders in the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committees, we ask that you undertake an immediate review of the foreign military aid the U.S. is giving to regimes in the Middle East suppressing people's fundamental rights, including, but not limited to Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Israel.

The United States government is, through its silence, inaction and continuing support for repressive regimes, complicit in the killing of protesters in Libya, as well as the severe repression of protesters in Bahrain and Yemen, where unarmed protesters have been killed and scores wounded at the hands of government military, police and other paid forces. Now, instead of supporting the self-determination of the Libyan people, the US government is issuing threats of military intervention despite the frequently expressed calls from Libyan protesters that they oppose military intervention and can and will handle their struggle for democracy themselves.

In fact, the governments of Libya, Bahrain, Israel and Yemen have all received significant U.S. aid and support, much as did the deposed dictatorial regimes of Zein Abedine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, who were viewed as key allies in the US "war on terror" and, particularly in the case of Mubarak, were the recipients of substantial aid from the U.S. government.

Libya's ruling regime under Col. Muammar Gaddafi has engaged in blatant war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, using warplanes and warships to bombard and shell

civilian protesters. Gaddafi has appeared on Libyan state TV, threatening the Libyan people with yet more killing, death, and "cleansing house to house." Gaddafi and all others in his regime who are responsible for these crimes and violations must be held accountable first and foremost by the Libyan people.

Libya has in recent years been strongly supported by the United States despite its unsatisfactory human rights record. This record includes the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacre in which 1,200 Libyan political prisoners were killed. The United States has insisted that it is safe to return long-exiled Libyan citizens imprisoned in Guantanamo to Libya, despite the Gaddafi regime's long record of prisoner abuse. While the Libyan people have continued to suffer under an unabated dictatorship, U.S. relations with Libya have been continually upgraded as Libya's repressive security regime was viewed as an ally in the "war on terror" and U.S. oil companies sought profit from Libya's immense oil wealth.

The Obama administration's original response to state violence in Libya echoed previous calls, heard in Egypt and Tunisia, for "restraint". Only once the Libyan opposition controlled 90% of Libya did the rhetoric change dramatically - not acknowledging the U.S. responsibility for protecting and supporting dictatorial regimes and seeking a new policy, but instead, by threatening invasions, air strikes and NATO military maneuvers. A U.S. or NATO invasion and/or intervention is not a solution acceptable to the Libyan people. We oppose any repetition of the horrific consequences of U.S. (and U.N.) imposed economic sanctions against Iraq and of U.S./U.N. "no-fly zones" over northern and southern Iraq.

In Bahrain, home to the U.S. Fifth Fleet, where the self-appointed king's government opened fire on protesters from U.S. made tanks with U.S.-made weaponry, killing four and wounding scores, the U.S. government praised the regime's "positive steps," reminiscent of U.S. government praise for Hosni Mubarak's violent response to Egypt's protests. The government of Yemen is an official U.S. ally. Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled Yemen for over 32 years, killed a dozen protesters and wounded many more while the U.S. remained largely silent. The U.S. government continues to support the dictatorial monarchy in Saudi Arabia as an ally and continues to provide military, economic and political aid to the increasingly discredited Saudi dictatorial regime.

From Tunisia to Egypt to Libya, Yemen and Bahrain, the democratic revolutions sweeping the Arab world are calling for democracy, social justice, human rights, dignity, and national sovereignty. The revolutions demand governments held in place by popular legitimacy rather than by military force. They want an end to dictatorial regimes that derive military, economic and political support from the U.S. government.

We call on the U.S. government to end its decades of support for oppressive monarchies, dictatorships, and human rights abusing regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, including ending U.S. aid to Israel, which has used much the same tactics as the other named regimes in its occupation of Palestinian land. The recent U.S. veto in the United Nations Security Council of a

widely-supported resolution condemning Israeli settlements in the West Bank, universally recognized in international law as illegal, once again shows U.S. government disregard for Arab dignity, rights and humanity.

The U.S. has both domestic laws and international treaty commitments that require that its weapons and its international aid funds are not used for international human rights or humanitarian law violations. The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act prohibits assistance to the government of any country that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Libya is not alone in this regard. Yemen, Israel and Bahrain are clearly exposed as human rights violating regimes, and to continue to provide aid to those regimes is not only to fail to support the popular democratic movements in these countries and to actively oppose the people's struggle to attain their fundamental human rights, but also to put the U.S. on the wrong side of U.S. and international law. We demand that all aid to these regimes end immediately. The U.S. should instead support the people's right to determine their own future, free of dictatorship, oppression, and injustice. We oppose U.S. military invasion and intervention as well as U.S. political interference. We demand that the U.S. government support allowing people to determine their own future free of external interference. Furthermore, we ask that you undertake an immediate review of the military aid and cooperation the U.S. provides and has provided to regimes in the Middle East suppressing people's fundamental rights, including Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Israel, and end all such aid now.

Sincerely,

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