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Foreign Policy Experts Urge President to Take Action to Halt Violence in Libya

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Forty one former U.S. government officials, human rights and democracy advocates, and foreign policy experts expressed concern Friday regarding the ongoing crisis in Libya, urging President Obama, in conjunction with NATO allies, to take action to seek an end to the violence being propagated by the regime of Muammar al-Qaddafi.

In an open letter to President Obama, the bipartisan group outlined several specific actions the United States and NATO should take in response to the ongoing violence including establishment of a presence in Libyan airspace and waters to prevent the use of regime air and naval assets against civilians, the freezing of Libyan government assets, and consideration of a temporary halt to importation of Libyan oil, as well as provision of humanitarian aid. The group wrote that failure to take action "will cast doubt on the commitment of the United States and Europe to basic principles of human rights and freedom."

The letter notes that "There is no time for delay and indecisiveness" and that "clear U.S. leadership" is required.

The signatories include Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) Directors Eric Edelman, Robert Kagan, William Kristol, and Dan Senor as well as former Bush and Clinton administration human rights and foreign policy officials and other experts.

About The Foreign Policy Initiative

FPI is a non-profit, non-partisan, tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. FPI seeks to promote an active U.S. foreign policy committed to robust support for democratic allies, human rights, a strong American military equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and strengthening America's global economic competitiveness. The organization was founded in 2009 and is led by Executive Director Jamie Fly. FPI's Board of Directors consists of Eric Edelman, Robert Kagan, William Kristol, and Dan Senor. Visit our website at www.foreignpolicyi.org for more information.

For additional information or to arrange an interview with Jamie Fly, Executive Director of the Foreign Policy Initiative, please contact Randan Swindler at (202) 296-3322 or rswindler@foreignpolicyi.org.

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The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC

February 25, 2011

Dear Mr. President:

In your 2009 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, you rightly declared that “Inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to more costly intervention later.” Today the United States and our allies in Europe must take action in response to the unfolding crisis in Libya. With violence spiraling to new heights, and with the apparent willingness of the Qaddafi regime to use all weapons at its disposal against the Libyan people, we may be on the threshold of a moral and humanitarian catastrophe. Inaction, or slow and inadequate measures, may not only fail to stop the slaughter in Libya but will cast doubt on the commitment of the United States and Europe to basic principles of human rights and freedoms.

Therefore, we recommend the United States, in conjunction with NATO allies, take the following specific actions immediately:

- 1) The United States should call upon NATO to develop operational plans to urgently:
 - Establish a presence in Libyan airspace to prevent the continued use of fighter jets and helicopter gunships against civilians and carry out other missions as required.
 - Move naval assets into Libyan waters to aid in evacuation efforts and prepare for possible contingencies. Establish the capability to disable Libyan naval vessels used to attack civilians.
- 2) Freeze all Libyan government assets in the United States and Europe.
- 3) Consider temporarily halting importation of Libyan oil to the United States and Europe.
- 4) Make a clear statement that Col. Qaddafi and other officials who order and participate in massacres of civilians will be held accountable for their crimes under international law.
- 5) Provide humanitarian aid to the Libyan people as quickly as possible.

The United States and our European allies have a moral interest in both an end to the violence and an end to the murderous Libyan regime. There is no time for delay and indecisiveness. The people of Libya, the people of the Middle East, and the world require clear U.S. leadership in this time of opportunity and peril.

Elliott Abrams
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Max Boot
Ellen Bork
Scott Carpenter
Eliot Cohen
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Larry Diamond
Thomas Donnelly
Michelle Dunne
Eric Edelman
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Ken Weinstein
Leon Wieseltier
Damon Wilson
Paul Wolfowitz