

Press release

**16th Summit of Heads of State and Government Addis Ababa,
January 24 – 31, 2011**

The African Union must face its responsibilities

“The African Union’s credibility will depend on how it reacts to the situation in Tunisia, Ivory Coast and Sudan”

January 26, 2011 – While the African Heads of State and Government are preparing to discuss African Shared Values during the 16th Summit of the African Union (AU), “*concrete responses are awaited from the continental organisation for dealing with the crisis and conflict situations in a manner respectful of Human Rights*”, stated Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. “*The organisation’s credibility will depend on its own acts*” she added.

FIDH calls on the AU to adopt a firm attitude in the case of Ivory Coast, in order to avoid an electoral conflict degenerating into a bloody civil war, at the same time creating a dangerous precedent for democracy in Africa at a time when 19 presidential elections are to be held in 2011. Whereas candidate Laurent Gbagbo and his supporters are stubbornly refusing to move from their illegal positions and to relinquish power, and are calling for an ethnic and religious split, the AU must take effective measures to punish the former president and his supporters and ensure compliance with the election results. The decisions of the regional organisation on this issue must be based on the overriding consideration of protection of the civilian populations and Human Rights.

The AU has not been very vocal on the “Jasmine Revolution” in Tunisia, and should take advantage of the Summit to condemn the violations committed by militias and the presidential guard of the former Ben Ali regime, to call for them to be prosecuted, to call for respect for the right of assembly, information and expression, and for free and transparent elections at the earliest possible date. The AU should also support all transitional government supporting the work of the Committees set up on corruption, institutional reform and the establishment of facts in abuses and human rights violations committed between December 17, 2010 and January 14, 2011. FIDH asks the AU to request the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights to send an emergency mission to Tunisia to support the efforts of the interim authorities to introduce reforms in favour of Human Rights.

FIDH also calls on the AU to address the situation in Sudan. The fact that the referendum on the independence of South Sudan went smoothly is to be welcomed, but the AU should call on the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to respect the results of the poll and to take the necessary measures to fully implement the provisions of the Agreement, in particular regarding the status of the Abeyi region. Furthermore, the AU must remain attentive to the situation in Darfur, where serious Human Rights violations have been committed in recent months.

The African Heads of State and Government should also condemn the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The AU should also call for measures to be taken against the impunity enjoyed by the authors of the most serious crimes, and demand that the States concerned protect civilian populations and human rights defenders.

In the face of these crisis and conflict situations, “*any decision that would run counter to the right of victims of the most serious crimes to obtain justice would not be understood, and would show contempt for the African civilian populations*” stated Sidiki Kaba, FIDH Honorary President. FIDH therefore invites the AU to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and to confirm Senegal’s mandate to bring former President Hissène Habré to trial on its territory, before a special court set up by the African Union.

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