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**For immediate release**

## **NGOs call on EU urgent action to stop violence in Libya**

As Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's brutal crackdown continues, the European Union must act swiftly to translate its statements into action, said three leading human rights and humanitarian organisations, Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

The NGOs welcomed EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton's call today for restrictive measures in relation to Libya, but stressed that they need to be put in place immediately as opposed to Ms. Ashton's remarks that "in the next few days, we'll see what we can do".

"What Libyans need now is bold and unified EU leadership, not mere words of concern. As the bloodshed continues, the EU together with the UN Security Council must take urgent action to ensure the protection of civilians and prevent further violence," said Elise Ford, head of Oxfam International's EU office. "Member States must not get cold feet about defending the universal rights and values Europe claims to promote in the region and beyond."

The organisations call on the EU, and the wider international community, to immediately adopt two measures, which are currently under discussion among EU Member States:

- To freeze all assets of Col. Gaddafi and senior military and security leaders;
- To impose a total embargo on exports and transfers of arms, ammunition and military and security equipment to Libya.

"Governments throughout EU's southern neighbourhood are confronted with popular protests. How the EU responds in Libya may help determine whether others choose to use force against civilians rather than addressing legitimate popular demands," said Souhayr Belhassen, President of FIDH.

The EU has so far failed to reach a strong common position, while Member States such as Italy raised concerns about a possible large influx of immigrants.

"Concerns over a potential influx of people from Libya must not affect the EU's response to the atrocities which are occurring right now. The EU should be prepared to help people fleeing the violence in Libya and guarantee protection to those who need it in line with the UN Refugee Convention and EU asylum law," said Nicolas Beger, director of Amnesty International's European Institutions Office.

The organisations are also calling on the EU to support the establishment of an international commission of inquiry into alleged crimes under international law and other grave violations of international human rights law in Libya at the UN Human Rights Council's special

session in Geneva today. The inquiry should provide a basis for national and international authorities to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of any crimes committed.

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