

Brussels, 29. 04. 2011
A(11)342002

Ms Ana Maria Gomes MEP
Ms Eva-Britt Svensson MEP
Ms Heidi Hautala MEP
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your email of 29 March in which you raise the case of Ms Eman al-Obeidy.

I fully share your concern about the disappearance of Ms Eman al-Obeidy and about the fate of the reportedly 20,000 cases of detainees, disappeared and missing people in the Western part of Libya, still under control of Colonel Gaddafi.

The EU has placed respect of human rights at the forefront of its priorities regarding the European response to the Libyan crisis. As a result of the regime's brutality against its own citizens, the EU decided to suspend the negotiations of the EU-Libya Framework Agreement which had started in November 2008, for which one of you (Ana Gomes) had been appointed rapporteur in the European Parliament. In addition, the EU decided to suspend all ongoing cooperation contracts with Libya as from 22 February.

The EU, deeming as unacceptable the reported actions carried out by the Libyan army against demonstrators, was instrumental in gathering support to secure Libya's suspension from membership of the UN Human Rights Council. It should be noted that during the adoption of the Resolution, no EU Member State intervened to speak "nationally" as they all felt represented by the EU statement as delivered by the Hungarian Presidency.

We have also welcomed UNSC Resolution 1970 which authorises the International Criminal Court to investigate the events in Libya; those who are found guilty of war crimes will have to face the consequences. All 27 Member States of the EU are signatories of the Rome Statue and will therefore do their utmost to bring those responsible of crimes to justice.

The EU Heads of State and Government agreed on a clear message at the extraordinary summit on 11 March: *"Colonel Gaddafi must relinquish power immediately. His regime has lost all legitimacy and is no longer an interlocutor for the EU. The European Union has adopted restrictive measures against the country's leadership and against entities holding sizeable assets controlled by the regime and stands ready to adopt further sanctions."*

In line with that clear position, the EU has imposed a visa ban and an assets freeze on Colonel Gaddafi and other persons responsible for the violent clampdown on civilians. The sanctions adopted by the EU both implement the measures called for by the UN and go further. The EU has equally adopted restrictive measures against entities holding sizeable assets controlled by the regime (e. g. Libyan National Oil Company). The latest package of sanctions was adopted on 12 April by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs which I chaired. The EU will continue to deprive the regime completely of all funding derived from exports of oil and gas.

The EU has also welcomed UNSC Resolution 1973 which imposes a no-fly zone, calls for an immediate cease-fire and authorises the international community to adopt all necessary measures to protect civilians. The EU is taking its part of responsibility through its continuous involvement in the political process, its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, and the military means to support the latter if needed. In that regard, the EU has decided, if requested by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to conduct in the framework of the CSDP a military operation ("EUFOR Libya") in order to support humanitarian assistance in the region.

The EU will continue working hand in hand with its international partners to obtain the Gaddafi regime's compliance of UNSC Resolutions 1970 and 1973 and to address the humanitarian situation in Libya.

Yours sincerely

C. Ashton

Catherine Ashton