

# Gaddafi defies revolt with tanks, planes as refugees flee

AGENCIES, Tripoli

Libya's Muammar Gaddafi used tanks, helicopters and warplanes to quell a growing revolt, witnesses said yesterday, as the veteran leader scoffed at reports he was fleeing after four decades in power.

The UN refugee agency urged to Libya's neighbours not to turn back those fleeing the violence, as hundreds of refugees streamed into Egypt on tractors and trucks, describing a wave of killing and banditry unleashed by the revolt.

Meanwhile, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Philippines and The Netherlands were among several countries who wanted to evacuate their citizens.

Warplanes bombed portions of the capital Tripoli yesterday in new attacks in the Mediterranean coastal city, and mercenaries fired on civilians, Aljazeera reported.

In the eastern town of Al Bayda, resident Marai Al Mahry told Reuters by telephone that 26 people including his brother Ahmed had been shot dead overnight by Gaddafi loyalists.

"They shoot you just for walking on the street," he said, sobbing uncontrollably as he appealed for help.

Protesters were being attacked with tanks and

warplanes, he said.

"The only thing we can do now is not give up, no surrender, no going back. We will die anyways, whether we like it or not. It is clear that they don't care whether we live or not. This is genocide," said Mahry, 42.

Security forces have cracked down fiercely on demonstrators across the country, with fighting now spreading to Tripoli after erupting in Libya's oil-producing east last week following uprisings that have toppled leaders in Tunisia and Egypt.

Human Rights Watch says at least 233 people have been killed and opposition groups put the figure much higher but independent verification is impossible.

Meanwhile, the UN's human rights chief yesterday demanded an immediate end to the "grave human rights violations" committed by Libyan authorities, warning that attacks on civilians could amount to "crimes against humanity".

"The authorities should immediately cease such illegal acts of violence against demonstrators," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said in a statement.

"Widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population may amount to crimes against humanity," she said.

The revolt in OPEC member Libya has driven oil prices sharply higher, with US crude for April delivery rising at one stage to almost \$99, around a two-and-a-half-year high.

As the fighting has intensified across the country, cracks appeared among Gaddafi camps. Some ambassadors resigning and calling for his removal, the justice minister resigned in protest and a group of army officers urged soldiers to "join the people." Two pilots flew their warplanes to nearby Malta.

Gaddafi's son Saif on Sunday vowed his father would keep fighting "until the last man standing" and the Libyan leader appeared on television yesterday after days of seclusion to dismiss reports he had fled to Venezuela.

"I want to show that I'm in Tripoli and not in Venezuela. Do not believe the channels belonging to stray dogs," said Gaddafi, who has ruled Libya since taking power in a military coup in 1969.

World powers have condemned the use of force against protesters, with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon accusing Libya of massacre.

"This must stop immediately," said Ban.

The Security Council and Arab League ambassadors were scheduled to discuss Libya separately later yesterday, diplomats said.



Protesters shout slogans against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi during a demonstration outside the Arab League headquarters in the Egyptian capital Cairo yesterday in support of anti-government protesters in Libya calling for Gaddafi's ouster.

PHOTO: AFP

## Gadhafi vows to fight on, die a martyr

AP, Cairo

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi vows to fight on and die a "martyr," calling on his supporters to take back the streets from protesters demanding his ouster, shouting and pounding his fist in a furious speech yesterday on state TV.

Gadhafi, swathed in brown robes and turban, spoke from a podium set up in the entrance of a bombed out building that appeared to be his Tripoli residence hit by US airstrikes in the 1980s and left unrepaired as a monument of defiance.

Shouting, he declared himself "a warrior" and proclaimed, "Libya wants glory, Libya wants to be at the pinnacle."

## Arab unrest risks bringing 'fanatics' to power: Medvedev

AFP, Moscow

The unrest in the Middle East risks bringing fanatics to power and triggering the disintegration of Arab states into "little pieces", Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned yesterday.

Medvedev made the startling comments at a meeting in Russia's conflict-torn Northern Caucasus and warned that the events in the Middle East could have a direct effect on security in Russia itself.

"The situation is tough. We could be talking about the disintegration of large, densely-populated states," he told an anti-terror meeting in the city of Vladikavkaz, warning that Arab countries could break up into "little pieces".

"These are not simple states and it is highly probable that there will be difficult events, including fanatics coming to power," Russian news agencies quoted him as saying.

"This will mean fires for years and the spread of extremism in the future. We need to look this straight in the eyes."

The presence in power of strongmen in the Middle East was long convenient for Russia, creating stability and also allowing Moscow to build up important economic ties especially in the arms industry.

## Libya's diplomats desert regime

AFP, New Delhi

A host of senior Libyan diplomats in Asia deserted the tottering regime of Moammar Gadhafi yesterday, voicing outrage at the killing of civilians and the use of the air force against demonstrators.

Top officials in Australia, China, India and Malaysia have severed ties with the leadership, saying the killing has gone too far and Gadhafi had lost all legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

"My resignation is because of the massive violence against civilians in my country," Libya's envoy to India, Ali al-Essawi, told AFP in New Delhi.

"Yesterday they started to use airplanes to bomb civilians demonstrating peacefully. This is unacceptable."

He called on the international community and UN Security Council members meeting in New York later yesterday to enforce a no-fly zone in Libya similar to the one imposed in 1991 on Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War.

"The international community has to intervene to protect Libyans," he said.

Elsewhere in Asia, Libya's embassy in

Australia was reported to have cut its ties with Tripoli, with the mission's cultural counsellor Omran Zwed announcing the news to The Australian newspaper.

"We represent the Libyan people and no longer the Libyan regime," he was quoted as saying.

In Malaysia, embassy staff condemned the "massacre" of anti-government protesters and said they were no longer loyal as some 200 Libyans staged an angry anti-government protest outside the embassy in Kuala Lumpur.

On Monday, a senior Libyan diplomat posted in China stepped down in an on-air interview with the Al-Jazeera news network, while there were unconfirmed reports yesterday that the ambassador to Bangladesh had also deserted.

The diplomat in China, Hussein Sadiq al Musrati, "called on all diplomatic staff to resign" in an interview with Qatar-based Al-Jazeera.

Libyan diplomats at the United Nations have condemned Gadhafi as a "tyrant" and accused him of "genocide" as they called on him to stand down or be forced out of power.

## NEWS IN brief

### US sends search teams to NZealand

AFP, Washington

The United States sent a search and rescue team to New Zealand yesterday to help with the aftermath of a powerful, deadly earthquake that hit the country's second city, the State Department said.

Spokesman Philip Crowley said in a twitter message that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had phoned her counterpart to "express sorrow" over the disaster, which killed at least 65 people in Christchurch.

The tremor hit at lunchtime, toppling buildings and leaving the downtown strewn with debris.

### Vietnam to hike power rates

AFP, Hanoi

Vietnam will raise electricity prices by 15 percent to help attract investment for new power plants in the energy-hungry nation, official media said yesterday, adding to concerns over inflation.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung approved the increase of 15.28 percent, to take effect next month, but has also announced measures to help control rising consumer prices, Vietnam News said.

Pham Chi Lan, a former government adviser, said keeping prices under control would be difficult. On top of the electricity hike, the price of petrol may also go up soon after a currency devaluation this month.

### Iranian warships enter Med despite Israel warning

AFP, Cairo

Two Iranian naval ships crossed the Suez Canal yesterday into the Mediterranean sea for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution on a training mission that Israel calls a provocation.

"They are now in Mediterranean waters," a canal official said.

The patrol frigate Alvand and support ship Kharg are reportedly bound for Syria, a destination that would take them near Israeli waters.

The 1,500-tonne Alvand is normally armed with torpedoes and anti-ship missiles, while the larger 33,000-tonne Kharg has a crew of 250 and facilities for up to three helicopters, Iran's official Fars news agency has said.

### 4 Americans killed by Somali pirates

AFP, Washington

Somali pirates killed four Americans yesterday onboard their hijacked yacht on the Indian Ocean as surrounding US forces tried to negotiate an end to the hostage drama, the US military said.

Two Somali pirates were also killed in the incident, a violent ending to one of a raft of hostagetakings on the lawless waters near the Gulf of Aden which often are resolved through ransom payments.

Jean and Scott Adam, a retired couple active in missionary work, had been sailing the world on the S/V Quest yacht for more than seven years and had planned to take in sites from India to Djibouti to

### Rocket attack kills four in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Rockets aimed by militants at an army checkpoint in northwestern Pakistan hit civilian houses yesterday, killing two women and two children, police said.

"Militants fired six rockets from an undisclosed location in the tribal region of Kurram targeting an army checkpoint of the neighbouring town of Hangu, which struck civilian houses," local police official Abdul Rasheed said.

Seven other people were also wounded when the rockets hit the two houses in Targhundai, a village in

## Gaddafi's Next Move: Sabotage oil and sow chaos?

TIME ONLINE

There's been virtually no reliable information coming out of Tripoli, but a source close to the Gaddafi regime said the already terrible situation in Libya will get much worse. Among other things, Gaddafi has ordered security services to start sabotaging oil facilities. They will start by blowing up several oil pipelines, cutting off flow to Mediterranean ports.

The sabotage, according to the insider, is meant to serve as a message to Libya's rebellious tribes: It's either me or chaos.

There was a general belief that the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt would never touch Libya. Gaddafi, as believed, had a tight lock on all of the major tribes, the same ones that have kept him in power for the past 41 years. But the belief, of course, turned out to be wrong.

Sources said Gaddafi's desperation has a lot to do with the fact that he now can only count on the loyalty of his tribe, the Qadhadhfa. And as for the army, as of Monday he only has the loyalty of approximately 5,000 troops. Among them is the unit commanded by his second youngest son Khamis, the 32nd Brigade.

As sources claim, Gaddafi told people around him that he knows he cannot

retake Libya with the forces he has. But what he can do is make the rebellious tribes and army officers regret their disloyalty, turning Libya into another Somalia. "I have the money and arms to fight for a long time," Gaddafi reportedly said.

As part of the same plan to turn the tables, Gaddafi ordered the release from prison of the country's Islamic militant prisoners, hoping they will act on their own to sow chaos across Libya. Couple that with a shortage of food supplies, and any chance for the rebels to replace Gaddafi will be remote.

In order to understand Gaddafi's present state of mind, we need to understand that he feels deeply betrayed by the media, specially Aljazeera, which he blames for sparking the revolt. He also feels betrayed by the West. Over the weekend, he warned several European embassies that if he falls, the consequence will be a flood of African immigration that will "swamp" Europe.

Gaddafi's threats to turn Libya into another Somalia at this point may be mostly bluffing. On the other hand, if Gaddafi in fact enjoys the loyalty of troops he thinks he has, he very well could take Libya to the brink of civil war, if not over.

## African leaders pursue peace plan in I Coast

AFP, Abidjan

Four African leaders met the Ivory Coast's internationally recognised president Alassane Ouattara yesterday to present proposals to end a deadly impasse with his rival, who refuses to step down.

The South Africa government said the proposals centred on forming a power-sharing interim government to run the west African country until new polls are held, following the disputed November 28 election.

The four presidents tasked by the African Union with finding a solution to the nearly three-month-long deadlock met on Monday Laurent Gbagbo, who refuses to acknowledge the election commission ruling that he lost the vote.

The latest mediation bid comes amid increasing tensions.

## Fidel Castro says US plans Nato invasion of Libya

REUTERS, Havana



Cuba's former leader Fidel Castro says it's too early to criticize Libya's government but just the moment to denounce something says is planned: A US-led invasion of the North African nation.

Castro uses a column published in Cuban media yesterday to accuse the United States of planning a NATO invasion of Libya to

control its oil. He says that might happen "in a question of hours or very short days."

He says the plan "has to be denounced."

The Communist revolutionary is more cautious about reports by Arab and Western news media that troops loyal to his Libyan ally Moammar Gadhafi have slaughtered civilian protesters. Castro says, "We have to wait the necessary time to know with rigor how much is fact or lie."

## Mass rally continues against Bahrain govt

AFP, Manama

Tens of thousands of supporters of Bahrain's Shiite-led opposition poured into a Manama square yesterday calling for the government's downfall in the largest rally in more than a week of protests.

Meanwhile, a Bahraini opposition figure was set to return to the Gulf Arab country yesterday.

Hassan Mushaimaa, leader of the opposition Haq movement, said on his Facebook page on Monday that he wanted to see if the island nation's leadership was serious about dialogue or if it would arrest him.

Streets of the capital were clogged as protesters marched from the capital's Bahrain Mall to Pearl Square, the focal point of anti-regime demonstrations, an AFP correspondent said.

Those leading the protest carried a large banner reading, "The march of loyalty to martyrs", while a poster strung from a bridge read in English, "No dialogue before the downfall of the ruling regime."

The banner carried by the crowd bore the photographs of seven "martyrs" killed by security forces, the last of whom succumbed to his wounds Monday and was buried earlier yesterday.

"The people want the fall of the regime," protesters chanted in unison, waving red-and-white Bahraini flags as they swarmed into Pearl Square.



PHOTO: AFP

Ivory Coast's internationally recognised President Alassane Ouattara (L) speaks with South African President Jacob Zuma (R) during a meeting with four African leaders at the Golf Hotel in Abidjan yesterday in a latest mediation bid to break the Ivory Coast deadlock.