

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE**  
**February 17 - 24, 2011**

1. [Obama Says U.S. Preparing Response to Libyan Violence \(02-23-2011\)](#)
2. [Excerpt: Secretary of State Clinton's Comments on Iran \(02-23-2011\)](#)
3. [U.S. Urges Middle East to Respond to Protests with Reforms \(02-22-2011\)](#)
4. [Under Secretary Burns' Remarks at Arab League Meeting in Egypt \(02-21-2011\)](#)
5. [Clinton Says U.S. Wants Human Rights Protected in Mideast \(02-20-2011\)](#)
6. [U.S. Following Three-Part Strategy in Afghanistan, Clinton Says \(02-18-2011\)](#)

-----

**1. [Obama Says U.S. Preparing Response to Libyan Violence \(02-23-2011\)](#)**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says it is imperative that the world speak “with one voice” to condemn the suppression of peaceful demonstrators in Libya and to support their universal rights, and adds that the administration is preparing “a full range of options” that the United States can take unilaterally and multilaterally in response to the ongoing violence.

[Speaking at the White House February 23](#), Obama said the Libyan government has a responsibility to refrain from violence, allow humanitarian assistance to reach those in need and respect the rights of the Libyan people.

“It must be held accountable for its failure to meet those responsibilities and face the cost of continued violations of human rights,” he said.

“I have also asked my administration to prepare the full range of options that we have to respond to this crisis. This includes those actions we may take and those we will coordinate with our allies and partners, or those that we’ll carry out through multilateral institutions,” the president said.

Obama said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will be meeting with her counterparts on the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva on February 28, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns will continue to hold discussions in the region on Libya and other areas of unrest in the Middle East and North Africa.

According to press reports, after a week of protests, as many as 300 people have been killed in recent clashes between anti-government protesters and security forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

Obama said the bloodshed, threats and orders to shoot peaceful protesters in Libya are outrageous and unacceptable. "These actions violate international norms and every standard of common decency," he said.

The United States strongly supports the universal rights of Libyans and all people to enjoy the freedoms of peaceful assembly, free speech and the ability to determine their own destiny, Obama said.

"These are human rights. They are not negotiable. They must be respected in every country and they cannot be denied through violence or suppression," Obama said.

"The change that is taking place across the region is being driven by the people of the region. This change doesn't represent the work of the United States or any foreign power. It represents the aspirations of people who are seeking a better life," he said.

The most basic human aspirations are driving the current unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, Obama said. Throughout the current time of transition, the United States will continue to stand up for freedom, justice and "the dignity of all people," he added.

Secretary Clinton said February 23 that "this is now the moment for the international community to act together" in response to the situation in Libya.

"Everything will be on the table. We will look at all the possible options to try to bring an end to the violence, to try to influence the government," she said.

State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley told reporters February 23 that the Obama administration is considering "a full range of tools and options," including "sanctions that could be imposed, either bilaterally or multilaterally," as well as the possibility of freezing the financial assets of Libyan leaders in response to the violence.

Asked why the Obama administration has not yet taken action in response to the violence, Crowley said that many of the steps that the United States is contemplating will "require some preparation," such as legal and executive orders, and will need to have "a standard of due diligence" in order to have support.

Crowley also said that it is not up to the United States or any other power to "dictate who should rule or not rule a particular country."

"Who leads Libya is a matter between the government and the Libyan people," he said. The Obama administration is continuing to encourage political, social and economic reform in Libya and other countries in the Middle East, to allow all people in the region the ability to participate in a free, fair and transparent political process.

"They are the ones who ultimately will make the decisions as to ... who are their rulers, who are their legislators and what the policies of their country should be," he said.

## U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL CONDEMNS VIOLENCE IN LIBYA

The United Nations Security Council discussed the situation in Libya on February 22 and issued a presidential statement that condemns the use of violence against Libyan civilians and urges the Libyan government to immediately take steps to “address the legitimate demands of the population, including through national dialogue.”

The Libyan government has a responsibility to protect its population, the Security Council said and called on authorities to “act with restraint, to respect human rights and international humanitarian law and to allow immediate access for international human rights monitors and humanitarian agencies,” including ensuring the safe passage of humanitarian and medical supplies, as well as humanitarian workers, to help address reported shortages in Libya.

Libya must also “respect the freedom of peaceful assembly and of expression, including freedom of the press,” the Security Council said, as it called for “the immediate lifting of restrictions on all forms of the media.”

The Security Council statement also stressed “the importance of accountability,” with the “need to hold to account those responsible for attacks, including by forces under their control, on civilians.”

Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo, the deputy U.S. representative to the United Nations, expressed strong U.S. support for the Security Council statement. [In remarks after the statement was issued](#), she said she hopes that it “will help bring an immediate end to this unacceptable situation.”

“The international community has said in one clear and unified voice that it condemns the violence against civilians in Libya, that the violence must cease immediately and that the government of Libya must exercise restraint and protect the rights of its people,” DiCarlo said, adding that the United States will continue to “stand up in support of the legitimate aspirations and universal rights of people everywhere.”

The full text of the Security Council statement can be found at the [U.N.’s website](#).

---

## **2. Excerpt: Secretary of State Clinton’s Comments on Iran (02-23-2011)**

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman  
Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota  
after Their Meeting

... QUESTION: Thank you. The question is for Secretary Clinton, but we would also like for Minister Patriota to comment afterwards. Does the American Government see a change in the position of the Brazilian Government in regards to Iran? And will the U.S. – will Brazil have the support of the U.S. for a permanent seat at the Security Council, as did India?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first, with respect to Iran, we are constantly speaking with our Brazilian friends because we share the view that we do not want Iran to become a nuclear weapons state. And Brazil has been very active in its diplomacy, and Brazil has also worked to enforce the international sanctions that were adopted by the Security Council. So our view is that we are all looking for ways to influence the behavior of the Iranian regime. And we believe strongly that the sanctions are working, that they are having an impact within Iran, and we are going to continue to work with partners across the world to enforce those sanctions.

We are also looking for action in the Human Rights Council in the upcoming session to once again point out the human rights abuses within Iran. I mean, it's been the height of irony and even hypocrisy to see Iran cheering on protestors who are peacefully demonstrating in Egypt or Tunisia while they brutally suppress peaceful protests in Iran. So I think that there's a lot that we're all trying to pursue in a common effort by the international community to influence the actions of the Iranian Government when it comes to their nuclear program.

FOREIGN MINISTER PATRIOTA: Thank you very much. (Via interpreter.) Well, I want to quickly respond to the question. (In Portuguese.)

(Via interpreter.) You all know what the Brazil – what Brazil's intention and goals are. Through dialogue and diplomacy we want to help solve issues that may be destabilizing to peace in the world and be it the ones that the Security Council deal with or others that are outside the Security Council. Of course, the nuclear aspirations of Iran is one of those issues, and Brazil wants to contribute and be one of the countries that help solve that problem and also to reduce the mistrust that exists between Iran and the countries that are part of the Security Council among others. So this is the mindset that guides our actions.

I think the United States understands our position. We talked a lot about Iran; we talked about the Arab world in general, and I think there is a certain convergence or idea, ideas about what we would like to see happen in the region. I mean, all the protests that are happening there now – I mean, it is a crisis, but this crisis also opens up the door to opportunities. ...

[U.S. Designates Iranian Officials for Human Rights Abuses](#) (02-23-2011)

---

### **[3. U.S. Urges Middle East to Respond to Protests with Reforms](#) (02-22-2011)**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States urges Middle Eastern countries to take concrete action and work toward political reform in response to protests across the region, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

“Across the Middle East, people are calling on their governments to be more open, more accountable and more responsive, and the United States believes it is in the interest of governments to engage peacefully and positively in addressing their demands, and to work to respond to them,” Clinton said in Washington February 22.

“Without genuine progress toward open and accountable political systems, the gap between people and their governments can only grow and instability can only deepen,” she said.

Clinton welcomed the processes that are creating a new Tunisia and a new Egypt, and said the United States looks to them for more political change.

“We will continue to be a supportive partner to the peoples of both countries as they seek a better future,” she said.

The secretary repeated the U.S. concern over violent clashes in Libya. She said the United States has received “reports of hundreds killed and many more injured.” The bloodshed is “completely unacceptable,” and it is the responsibility of the Libyan government to “respect the universal rights of their own people, including their right to free expression and assembly,” she said.

The United States continues to watch the situation there with alarm, and joins the international community in condemning the violence, Clinton told reporters.

In a statement February 21, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed “outrage at press reports the Libyan authorities have been firing at demonstrators from war planes and helicopters.”

Ban said such attacks, if confirmed, “would constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law and would be condemned . . . in the strongest terms.” The U.N. Security Council met in an emergency session February 22 to discuss the violent crackdown on protesters in Libya.

Clinton said the United States is also “gravely concerned by reports of violence in Yemen and elsewhere.” She urged governments across the region to exercise restraint, underscoring that there is no place for violence against peaceful protesters.

In Bahrain, the secretary said, the United States has welcomed significant steps taken “to initiate a meaningful dialogue with the full spectrum of Bahraini society,” including the decision to release a number of prisoners. She called the initiative a constructive path to preserve Bahrain’s stability and meet the aspirations of its people.

Clinton said the United States will continue to support the Middle East as its countries take steps toward more open, inclusive and responsive political systems.

---

#### **4. Under Secretary Burns’ Remarks at Arab League Meeting in Egypt (02-21-2011)**

United States Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William J. Burns  
Remarks at the Arab League, Cairo, Egypt

Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be back in Cairo. I have just finished a very interesting and comprehensive conversation with Secretary General Amr Moussa about developments in Egypt and around the region. As always I learned a lot.

This is a moment of extraordinary promise for Egypt and for Egyptians. It's a moment when Egypt has only just begun its historic transition to democracy. It's a moment when the voices, the courage and sacrifice, and the remarkable peaceful determination of Tahrir Square have been heard around the region and around the world.

Americans deeply respect and admire what Egypt has already achieved, but we know that the road ahead is not going to be easy. We also know that it's a road that can only be navigated by Egyptians themselves. The United States has great faith in the capacity of Egypt to navigate that path successfully and to set an example for the rest of the region. We want to do everything we can to help as Egypt builds an open, inclusive process aimed at producing real political change, economic recovery, and long-term economic modernization.

I look forward with my colleague David Lipton over the next couple of days to listening to the priorities of Egyptians inside and outside government, to understand better how we can connect our

resources to Egypt's priorities and to be as helpful as we can in this process. Along the way, we'll continue to encourage concrete steps to build confidence and to sustain the momentum of the transition, ranging from the constitutional amendments that are being considered, through careful preparations for elections, to the further release of political detainees, to the lifting of the Emergency Law.

In this process of democratic transition, as in the process of tackling many other regional and global challenges, the United States looks forward to remaining a very strong partner of Egypt and Egyptians. Thank you very much once again.

---

## **5. Clinton Says U.S. Wants Human Rights Protected in Mideast (02-20-2011)**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says that the United States does not want to see continued violence and civil strife in countries such as Bahrain, Libya and Yemen, but it does want to see human rights protected and political reforms made.

“This is not an easy journey for any people to make,” Clinton said during an interview on the ABC News television program “This Week” February 20. “In general, Americans are in favor of human rights, freedom, and democracy.”

The United States continues to promote the advancement of human rights, freedom and democracy, she said.

“We try to hold everyone to a similar standard, but we cannot dictate the outcomes. We cannot tell countries what they’re going to do,” Clinton said. “We had, you know, no control over what happened in Egypt. We expressed our opinion as we went along and we’re working with our Egyptian counterparts so that their transition is peaceful, meaningful, transparent, produces results.”

Clinton said that the United States will continue to work with those yearning for political change because of the belief that democracies are greater forces for stability in the world.

“With Bahrain, as they move toward greater reform, which we have consistently encouraged, recommended and urged, we’re going to be supporting that, and we will speak out where we see them violating human rights and using violence inappropriately,” Clinton said.

President Obama condemned the violence in Bahrain and spoke with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa by telephone February 18 to discuss the ongoing situation in the Gulf state, according to White House press secretary Jay Carney. Bahrain is home to the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet Headquarters.

“The president reiterated his condemnation of the violence used against peaceful protesters, and strongly urged the government of Bahrain to show restraint, and to hold those responsible for the violence accountable,” Carney told reporters traveling with the president on the U.S. West Coast.

Earlier on February 19, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon spoke by telephone with Bahraini Crown Prince Salam bin Hamad al-Khalifa, following up on [the president’s conversation with the king](#), according to the White House.

Obama had called for restraint by the governments of Bahrain, Libya and Yemen following news reports of violence in response to protests. The president has said that the three countries must show respect for the rights of its citizens to demonstrate peacefully for political and economic reforms.

“We express our condolences to the family and friends of those who have been killed during the demonstrations,” [Obama said in a statement February 18](#) released by the White House. “Wherever they are, people have certain universal rights including the right to peaceful assembly.”

Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, is traveling to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and Kuwait for a weeklong visit to show U.S. strategic support with its allies, Joint Chiefs spokesman Captain John Kirby told reporters.

“Though this trip was planned well before the recent unrest in the region, the chairman will be interested to gain the perspectives of leaders here about these protest movements,” Kirby said.

---

## **6. U.S. Following Three-Part Strategy in Afghanistan, Clinton Says (02-18-2011)**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the United States is following a three-part strategy to support transition in Afghanistan, a strategy through which Afghans will “take responsibility for their own future.”

Clinton spoke about U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan February 18 at the Asia Society in New York.

“We are following a strategy with three mutually reinforcing tracks — three surges, if you will: a military offensive against al-Qaida terrorists and Taliban insurgents; a civilian campaign to bolster the governments, economies and civil societies of Afghanistan and Pakistan to undercut the pull of the insurgency; and an intensified diplomatic push to bring the Afghan conflict to an end and chart a new and more secure future for the region,” she said.

The diplomatic surge, Clinton said, aims to support “an Afghan-led political process to split the weakened Taliban off from al-Qaida and reconcile those who will renounce violence and accept the Afghan constitution with an increasingly stable Afghan government,” leaving al-Qaida “alone and on the run.”

Clinton emphasized that as the transition proceeds and Afghan leadership strengthens, a process of political reconciliation with former Taliban militants who agree to those conditions “will become increasingly viable.” Clinton added that successful reconciliation will reduce threats to the Afghan government and make the transition more sustainable.

“In 2001 — after 9/11, I would remind us all — the Taliban chose to defy the international community and protect al-Qaida. That was the wrong choice, and they have paid a heavy price,” Clinton said. “Today, the escalating pressure of our military campaign is sharpening a similar decision for the Taliban: Break ties with al-Qaida, renounce violence and abide by the Afghan constitution, and you can rejoin Afghan society; refuse, and you will continue to face the consequences of being tied to al-Qaida as an enemy of the international community.”

The Taliban, Clinton added, “cannot wait us out. They cannot defeat us. And they cannot escape this choice.”

Achieving and maintaining reconciliation will depend on the support of Afghanistan’s neighbors, Clinton said, with Pakistan having a pivotal role.

“For reconciliation to succeed, Pakistan will have to be part of the process. It will have to respect Afghanistan’s sovereignty and work with Afghanistan to improve regional security,” Clinton said. She called on Pakistan to take “decisive steps” to ensure that Afghan Taliban militants do not operate from Pakistan’s border regions.

The secretary said the three-part plan is part of the U.S. vision for transition in Afghanistan, reaffirmed by President Obama in his [December 2010 policy review](#) and endorsed previously by NATO at the [November 2010 summit](#) in Lisbon, Portugal.

The transition is set to launch formally in March, with troop reductions starting in July based on conditions in the country. Clinton said the process will be completed by the end of 2014.

The secretary’s speech was the first in a series of Richard Holbrooke Memorial addresses at the Asia Society. Ambassador Holbrooke was the State Department’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan when he died in December 2010. Clinton announced during her remarks that Holbrooke will be succeeded by [veteran diplomat Marc Grossman](#).

Grossman will “marshal the full range of our policy resources to support responsible Afghan-led reconciliation that brings the conflict to a peaceful conclusion,” and will “actively engage with states in the region and the international community to advance that process,” Clinton said.

Clinton repeated the “enduring commitment of the United States” to regional stability, but emphasized that the people and leaders of South Asia are ultimately responsible for creating their own futures. She said if countries of the region are able to move past their historic conflicts and cooperate to seize 21st century opportunities, “there are no limits to what they can achieve.”

---