

Should the U.S. Intervene in Libya?

To the Editor:

Re "Momentum Shift as Libyan Rebels Flee an Oil Town" (front page, March 11):

Will yesterday's opponents of a no-flight zone for Libya — who perhaps, forgivably, assumed that the rebels would win without one — continue to allow the imminent, systematic, but still preventable mass slaughter?

It's too bad that years of American interventions and favoritism in the region now harm our credibility at a time when we could do good. But do the Libyans deserve to suffer because of George W. Bush's arrogance in Afghanistan and Iraq? Have we become too self-doubting to save Muslim lives in Libya?

Is President Obama going to emulate Bill Clinton's intervention to save lives in the Balkans, or instead what Mr. Clinton has called his biggest regret of his presidency, his failure to save lives in the Rwandan genocide?

JAMES ADLER

Cambridge, Mass., March 11, 2011

To the Editor:

Re "NATO Steps Back From Military Intervention in Libya" (The New York Times on the Web, March 11):

It is clear to me that undemocratic states on the United Nations Security Council will not approve a no-flight zone or other military intervention in Libya. Why should they? They might be in the same position as Libya in the future; one United Nations veto-wielding state, China, has already used its army to put down freedom-seeking demonstrators.

For NATO to insist on United Nations authorization before it acts is to decide not to act and to hide from political reality while people die for seeking freedom.

ARTHUR L. GOLDBERG

Larchmont, N.Y., March 11, 2011

To the Editor:

"Discord Grows on the Politics of Intervention" (front page, March 8) describes the tactical and political risks of American intervention in Libya, but nowhere does it state that such an action would be illegal unless authorized by the United Nations Security Council. NATO intervention without such authority would likewise be illegal. The United Nations Charter guarantees the territorial integrity of every state and mandates that force can be used only in self-defense or by a resolution of the Security Council.

Nor is there a widely recognized legal exception for so-called humanitarian intervention, and for good reason. Often

such claims are a fig leaf for interventions in countries that are of strategic importance for oil or other reasons.

So, for example, there has been no rush to intervene in Ivory Coast, where hundreds have been killed in the continuing conflict. The difference: Ivory Coast, unlike Libya, is not a major exporter of oil.

MICHAEL RATNER

President

Center for Constitutional Rights

New York, March 8, 2011

To the Editor:

While the United States, NATO and Europe dither over what action to take regarding Libya now, we also need to be thinking about the future if Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi manages to retain power.

Could anyone doubt that he would no longer feel obliged to remain nuclear-free and would, at the first opportunity, send a buying delegation to North Korea, if he hasn't already done so? Colonel Qaddafi with nuclear weapons would be a far greater danger to us, Europe or Israel than Iran would ever be.

If anyone still needs a reason for us to intervene to stop the carnage, then the prospect of a nuclear Libya should be enough.

KAY SHOWKER

St. Petersburg, Fla., March 10, 2011

To the Editor:

Re "The Case for a No-Fly Zone," by Nicholas D. Kristof (column, March 10):

Why would there be any more of a case to impose a no-flight zone over Libya than other places in the world where innocent humans have been murdered: Gaza, Darfur, Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo. A no-flight zone in Libya smacks more of oil suffering in America than human suffering in Libya.

LINDA BARNES

Durango, Colo., March 10, 2011

To the Editor:

Why can't Arab and African organizations, instead of the West, set up no-flight zones to protect innocents?

TITA BEAL

New York, March 10, 2011





ANDRÉ DA LOBA