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Al Jazeera

Gaddafi's hold on Libya weakens

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Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has appeared on state television to signal his defiance in the face of a mounting revolt against his 41-year rule.

"I am in Tripoli and not in Venezuela. Do not believe the channels belonging to stray dogs," Gaddafi told Libyan state TV, which said he was speaking outside his house on Tuesday.

On Monday, William Hague, the British foreign minister, had suggested that Gaddafi had fled to Venezuela, a report that the government of that country denied.

Gaddafi, in his first televised appearance since protests to topple him began last week, was holding an umbrella in the rain and leaning out of a van.

"I wanted to say something to the youths at the Green Square (in Tripoli) and stay up late with them but it started raining. Thank God, it's a good thing," Gaddafi said in a 22-second appearance.

State TV reported earlier that pro-government demonstrations were taking place in Green Square in the capital.

Libyan forces loyal to Gaddafi have fought an increasingly bloody battle to keep the veteran leader in power with residents reporting gunfire in parts of the capital Tripoli and warplanes reportedly bombing protesters.

Scores of people have been reported killed in continuing violence in Tripoli amid escalating protests across the north African nation.

"In a sense this is a pariah regime that will not have any chance of governing anymore and the international community could come to terms on whether this is a genocide and whether there should be international intervention to protect the Libyan people from the militias of the regime," said Marwan Bishara, Al Jazeera's senior political analyst.

"We've heard even a NATO spokesman saying that the Libyan regime should stop committing war crimes against its people so I think there is momentum out there but certainly it's not quick enough."

Deep cracks were showing and Gaddafi seemed to be losing vital support, as Libyan government officials at home and abroad resigned, [air force pilots defected](#) and major government buildings were targeted during clashes in the capital.

At least 61 people were killed in the capital city on Monday, witnesses told Al Jazeera.

Protesters called for another night of defiance against the Arab world's longest-serving leader, despite a crackdown by authorities

'Unacceptable bloodshed'

Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, has said it is "time to stop this unacceptable bloodshed" in Libya.

A group of army officers issued a statement urging fellow soldiers to "join the people" and help remove Gaddafi.

The justice minister resigned in protest at the "excessive use of violence" against protesters and diplomats at Libya's mission to the United Nations called on the Libyan army to help overthrow "the tyrant Muammar Gaddafi".

Both Libya and Venezuela denied reports that Gaddafi had fled to the South American country.

Two Libyan fighter jets landed in Malta, their pilots defecting after they said they had been ordered to bomb protesters, Maltese government officials said.

Libyan authorities have cut all landline and wireless communication in the country, making it impossible to verify many reports.

With reports of large-scale military operations under way in Tripoli, a spokesperson for Ban Ki-moon said the UN chief held extensive discussions with Gaddafi on Monday, condemned the escalating violence in Libya and told him that it "must stop immediately".

UN, Arab League meetings

The UN Security Council will hold a [closed-door meeting on Tuesday](#) to discuss the crisis in Libya, diplomats said.

They said the meeting, referred to as "consultations", had been requested by Ibrahim Dabbashi, the Libyan deputy ambassador, and would start at 1400 GMT.

Dabbashi and other diplomats at Libya's mission to the UN on Monday said they sided with protesters in Libya.

Earlier, Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani, Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, called for an extraordinary meeting of the Arab League to take place on Tuesday.

The aim is to discuss the current crisis in Libya and to put additional "pressure" on the government, Al-Thani told Al Jazeera.

He said the international community must act now. "I feel a big sympathy for the Libyan people. We don't accept using force in this way or any way against the people or against any nation from their governments," he said.

The comments came just hours after Ahmed Elgazir, a human-rights researcher at the Libyan News Centre (LNC) in Geneva, Switzerland, told Al Jazeera that security forces were "massacring" protesters in Tripoli.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, Ahmad Jibreel, a Libyan diplomat, confirmed that the justice minister, Mustapha Abdul Jalil, had sided with the protesters.

Jibreel further said that key cities near Libya's border with Egypt were now in the hands of protesters, which he said would enable the foreign media to enter the country.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian military on Tuesday said it was reinforcing the border with Libya, but that it would leave it open throughout the day for those who require medical or other assistance. The army says it has set up two field hospitals and camps to receive Egyptians and Libyans who cross the border into Egypt.