

What to Do About Libya



London conference, including participation by the Vatican nuncio to Great Britain, discusses the best way to safeguard human lives.

The Vatican observer at the London conference on Libya said the situation in the North African country is forcing the international community to examine its obligation to intervene when the lives and rights of civilians are being threatened.

Meanwhile, the bishop in Libya's capital, Tripoli, said it appears to him that people just want the fighting to continue.

"They want to continue the war," said Bishop Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli of Tripoli. "Arming part of the Libyan population against another part other doesn't seem, to me, to be a moral solution," he told Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Archbishop Antonio Mennini, the Vatican nuncio to Great Britain and observer at the London conference March 29, told Vatican Radio that the discussions by three dozen participating countries and international agencies "seemed to raise again the question of the fundamental vocation of the international community to respond to the basic needs of a population that is extremely exhausted."

Archbishop Mennini told the radio March 30 that he believed participants really were concerned about "safeguarding civilians' human rights and safeguarding human lives."

In the piece aired by Vatican Radio, the archbishop did not discuss the military operation launched by the United States, France and Great Britain, and he expressed no judgment about the London conference's call for a "regime change" in Libya, other than to say that Italy and several other countries seemed to be looking for a way to help leader Moammar Gadhafi go into exile.

Bishop Martinelli, on the other hand, continued to express hope that the African Union would be

recognized as a mediator in the crisis, and he questioned the real precision of the military action launched by the United States, Great Britain and France.

“I can’t bring myself to say that the bombardments are being done to defend the civilian population,” he told Fides. “Even if bombardments of military objectives are precise, they certainly have an impact on nearby buildings. I know at least two hospitals have suffered indirect damage because of the bombings. The doors and windows were destroyed, and the patients are under shock. For all one knows, the military action may be causing victims among the very civilians that they say are being protected by these military operations.”

Cindy Wooden - CNS