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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Torture and ethnic persecution in Libya

Hundreds of African migrant workers in Libya and indigenous Tuareg people have been imprisoned and tortured by fighters allied to the new National Transitional Council, accused of being mercenaries for Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Some of their homes have been looted, and women and girls beaten and raped. Nigerian migrant workers, living in a slum home in a Tripoli suburb, reported threats and attacks by local militias in September 2011. Some 20 militia fighters forced their way into the migrants' home to search their belongings. They accused the African migrants for being mercenaries for Gaddafi and started to beat and torture the Nigerians. They stole their possessions and money, abducted the father of the house, locked the mother in the toilet and gang-raped her 16-year-old daughter.

Hundreds of African migrants or Tuareg have been arrested with little or no evidence of being supporters of Gaddafi; homes were pillaged and people beaten up. Mostly they were persecuted only due to their non-Arab ethnic identity and not because of concrete accusations. Most victims are terrified, heavily traumatized and too afraid to be identified publicly. Whole ethnic groups such as the Tuareg who have been living in Libya for centuries have been treated by militias allied to the National Transitional Council as traitors only due to the fact that some Tuareg had been employed by Gaddafi to launch a crackdown on the rebels.

Most black Africans in Libya have been living in Libya for years doing casual manual labor. But just as it was easier to suspect foreigners (rather than Libyans) of doing the Colonel's bidding throughout the course of battles for cities like Benghazi and Misurata, it was easier after the breakdown of the Gaddafi regime to round up those who can be easily distinguished by the color of their skin. The National Transitional Council has told its fighters to avoid revenge attacks and there has been far less violence than many had feared. But the jails of many Libyan cities are still full of men detained with little or no evidence, with no access to lawyers or even their families. The leadership of the National Transitional Council has repeatedly called on its fighters to show restraint, urging them to avoid revenge attacks. But it is clear that some appear to have ignored this.

Former prisoners of the militias have been testifying on massive abuses in jail. Prisoners who allegedly had supported the former Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi reported in February 2012 that they were tortured during detention. The inmates at a prison in Misurata testified that they endured prolonged beatings, whippings with electric cables and electric shocks. They said the torture occurred not at the prison but while they were detained by local militias at different sites. According to the latest estimates some 8,000 prisoners who allegedly supported Colonel Gaddafi still are being held in 60 prison centers. Serious abuses were committed in these detention centers, including beatings, ill-treatments and torture.

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the situation of the civilian population of Tawergha. The once bustling town of 30,000 people near Misurata was mostly inhabited by Black Libyans. Most of the Tawerghas are no migrant workers, but Libyans of slave descent living in the town. Tawergha has been deserted after the breakdown of the Gaddafi regime. Its buildings were looted, vandalized, many torched, and its citizens, allegedly loyal to Gaddafi, forced out by their neighbors in what appears to be the first major reprisal against supporters of the former regime. Deliberately Tawerghas were detained, taken from their homes simply for living in this town with many former supporters of Gaddafi. Many Tawerghas are now cowering in makeshift camps around Tripoli fearing for more reprisal attacks in their hometown.

But even in these IDP-camps, these people of Black-African origin are not safe. On February 6, 2012, twelve refugees from Tawergha died in the Janzour IDP-camp after the Misurata Brigade began shooting at and attacking civilians in the refugee camp. The area surrounding the camp was closed off by the brigade preventing any help from reaching the refugees. Residents in Tripoli, including the Tawerghan community outside of the camp who are unable to help their fellow countrymen, have been pleading with the international community to ensure the protection of Black-Libyans in the new Libya. The attack began when a heavily armed rebel militia from Misurata entered the squalid camp situated in a naval base firing anti-aircraft guns mounted on pickup trucks in the air to scare the inhabitants. This was followed by some of the rebels opening fire on the inhabitants.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the United Nations Human Rights Council to urge the National Transitional Council of Libya:

- to ensure complete control of all detention centers by state security officials;
- to efficiently prevent any ill-treatment and torture of prisoners;
- to immediately stop arresting and abusing Libyans or migrant workers only due to their ethnic origin;
- to guarantee the protection of IDPs;
- to ensure the rule of law and to build up an efficient justice system, police and national army;
- to make sure that all minorities in Libya are adequately represented in the General Assembly. During the constitutional process only a just representation of all minorities in Libya will ensure that their right to development, their cultural and language rights is properly secured.
