

# NATO deploys attack helicopters in Libya

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NATO has announced it has successfully deployed attack helicopters in Libya for the first time. British and French choppers are said to have attacked and destroyed a road checkpoint and radar site.

It comes just a few days after NATO extended its intervention mission in Libya. Recent weeks have seen intensified allied strikes on the Libyan army.

At the same time, UN officials have accused Colonel Gaddafi of war crimes, while saying rebels were also guilty of similar abuses.

Speaking on American television, Russia's ambassador to the UN, Vitaliy Churkin, says Libya must decide its own future, something which no intervention can force.

"There are indications that a dialogue can start, which will produce a genuine Libyan political process. If you simply keep dictating things from the outside by supporting the rebels, by saying that this person has to go, this person has to stay, bringing somebody in, announcing that some particular individual is legitimate, the other is not legitimate. Then you have to adopt the country, just go ahead and adopt the country, do another Iraq in Libya. We don't believe that foreign capitals can determine who is going to head the country and what is going to happen there. There has to be a political process. So our idea is that there must be a ceasefire as quickly as possible, because it can produce a situation where civilians are not going to suffer any longer," stated Churkin.

Commenting on the NATO deployment of helicopters in Libya, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that the Alliance's actions resembled a ground operation more and more.

"We believe that the coalition is transforming the operation in Libya into a ground one, either intentionally or not. This is extremely sad," stated Lavrov as cited by Itar-Tass news agency.

Political author Jean Bricmont said there is no way NATO's actions in Libya can be part of a humanitarian mission.

"I don't see how it can be called a humanitarian mission; they are just taking part in a war with Gaddafi and replacing him by the rebel government, that's as simple as that. They are not protecting civilians anymore – that has been obvious for a long time," stated Bricmont.

The political author admitted that though both sides are to blame for committing war crimes. He maintained that though the most humanitarian thing would be to simply stop the

war, it will not work in Libya.

“A civil war is always ugly. The most humanitarian thing will be to just try to find a peaceful solution, but that’s what they don’t want. The rebels are not going to make any concessions, the same way the Israelis don’t want to make any concessions to Palestinians,” says Bricmont.

Bricmont also stated that what the West is doing in Libya is violating the UN 1973 resolution without actually contravening it.

“The problem with the resolution is they say you can take all the necessary measures to achieve peace. So they can always say what they do is taking a necessary measure. And who is going to decide and judge that? Also there was the question of the prestige of NATO. So the coalition knows it has to win at any means and it will do whatever is necessary,” Bricmont concluded.

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