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Aboriginal activists will visit Gaddafi

By EDMUND DOOGUE,
Adelaide

Two members of the Committee to Defend Black Rights will go to Libya next week to accept an offer from the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, to pay the committee's legal costs at the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Mr Len Culbong, of Perth, and Mr Allen Campbell, of Murray Bridge, will go to Libya with the Aboriginal activist Mr Michael Mansell to accept what Mr Culbong described as an offer from Colonel Gaddafi to help the Aborigines at the commission.

The Committee to Defend Black Rights is a support group for the families of Aborigines who have died in custody.

Mr Campbell said he and others were forced to accept Libyan help because the Federal Government was willing to pay each bereaved family only \$5000 for commission legal costs.

"In Libya there is more money available," he said. "I would rather have a QC than a junior lawyer."

Mr Campbell said he would go to Libya as a private citizen, but he believed the Libyan Government would pay the fares.

The plans follow strong criticism by the Committee to Defend Black Rights of the administration

and structure of the royal commission, being conducted by Mr James Muirhead, QC.

"We are flogging a dead horse and we want to bring it back to life," Mr Campbell said. "If that means getting money from Colonel Gaddafi, then so be it."

"We are being treated like immigrants to this country."

Mr Culbong said it was interesting that such a fuss was made over help from Colonel Gaddafi, but no mention was made of offers of help from American Indians, who had had meetings with Aborigines.

Mr Mansell, a solicitor and legal adviser to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, said in Hobart late yesterday that he had spoken to Mr Culbong and Mr Campbell and he did not object to their accompanying him to Libya. He refused to confirm whether Colonel Gaddafi had made an offer to help the Committee to Defend Black Rights.

Mr Mansell first visited Libya last year and will discuss trade sanctions against Australia and Aboriginal links with other countries when he meets Colonel Gaddafi.

Mr Campbell's brother, Mr Peter Campbell, died in Long Bay Jail in 1980.



Mr Len Culbong, left, and Allen Campbell protest outside the royal commission hearing in Adelaide.