Sen. Frank Lautenberg joined other lawmakers Monday in urging Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to prosecute Moammar Gadhafi for his role in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, killing 270 people.

Thirty-seven New Jersey residents were among those who died. Several of their relatives said Monday that they welcomed Lautenberg's call for the Libyan leader to face a full accounting of justice in the International Criminal Court in The Hague if he is captured.

Lautenberg, D-N.J., also said that Gadhafi should be prosecuted for his role in the La Belle discotheque bombing in West Berlin, Germany, in 1986, in which 79 Americans were killed. American officials have suspected for years that Gadhafi was at least partially responsible for both attacks.

"Justice for the U.S. victims of terrorist attacks committed by [Gadhafi] and his regime must remain a top priority for our country," Lautenberg said in a letter to Clinton. "Should [Gadhafi] be arrested and sent to the ICC, he must stand trial for his terrible crimes against our fellow citizens."

Bert Ammerman of River Vale lost his brother Tom in the Lockerbie explosion. Ammerman said that prosecuting Gadhafi would be an acceptable alternative to his first choice, "elimination."

"If he's arrested, he should be tried for international crimes against humanity, absolutely," Ammerman said. He added that Gadhafi's increasingly untenable position could mean that closure in the case may now be nearer than ever. "We're almost there," he said. "The last chapter has been written, and it means our loved ones didn't die in vain."

Eileen Walsh of Glen Rock, who lost her father, brother and sister on the plane, said that Gadhafi's potential capture was less important than the re-capture of the convicted Lockerbie bomber, Abdel Baset al-Megrahi. The Scottish government released al-Megrahi from prison in 2009 after doctors said he had three months to live. He has since returned to Libya, where he appeared last month alongside Gadhafi at a televised rally in Tripoli.

"I think Gadhafi should be tried, but, personally, I think we should see al-Megrahi back in jail because he's been proven guilty," Walsh said. "They let this guy get away with murder."
Mary Kay Stratis of Montvale, who lost her husband on the Pan Am plane, agreed that al-Megrahi should remain among the top American priorities.

"It's hard to ignore the atrocities against Americans that Gadhafi is guilty of, but we want to not lose sight of al-Megrahi," Stratis said.

Stratis and Walsh also applauded the Libyan people for their ongoing revolt, but Walsh said that seeing Libya in the news dredges up painful memories.

"It just makes you relive the whole thing," she said.