

Libya: Authorities must drop plans to impose compulsory veiling amid wider crackdown on ‘morality’ grounds

Responding to an announcement by Libya’s Tripoli-based Minister of Interior in the Government of National Unity (GNU), Emad al-Trabulsi, of sweeping measures that would further entrench discrimination against women and girls and violate the rights to freedom of expression, religion, belief and bodily autonomy, including plans for “morality police” to enforce compulsory veiling, Bassam Al Kantar, Amnesty International’s Libya Researcher, said:

“The Minister of Interior’s threats to crack down on fundamental freedoms in the name of ‘morality’ are a dangerous escalation in the already suffocating levels of [repression](#) facing those in Libya not adhering to dominant social norms. Proposals to impose compulsory veiling on women and girls as young as nine, restrict interactions between men and women, and police young people’s personal choices with regards to hairstyles and clothing are not only deeply alarming, but also violate Libya’s obligations under international law.

“In a further attack on women’s rights and equality, the GNU’s Minister of Interior has proposed forcing women to seek the permission of male guardians before they can travel abroad and boasted about forcibly returning from Tunisia two Libyan women who travelled without ‘guardians’. He has also announced plans for ‘morality police’ to monitor public spaces, workplaces and personal interactions in flagrant violation of individuals’ privacy, autonomy, and freedom of expression.

“The GNU must scrap plans for these repressive measures and instead address the human rights crisis across the country, characterized by mass arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and unfair trials. The GNU must uphold the rights to freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and take measures to combat all forms of gender-based violence and other discrimination.”

Background

Emad Al-Trabelsi made his comments at a [press conference](#) on 6 November.

Amnesty International has [long](#) documented how Libyan authorities have promoted and legitimized leaders of militias that have been responsible for crimes under international law, instead of ensuring accountability, enabling further cycles of abuse. Prior to Emad al-Trabelsi’s appointment by the Tripoli-based government, he headed the notorious Public Security Agency militia, involved in horrific crimes against [refugees and migrants](#), including enforced disappearances and torture.