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Libya: Experts troubled by discriminatory policy restricting movement of women and girls travelling abroad

20 July 2023

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GENEVA (19 July 2023) – UN experts* today expressed deep concern about a discriminatory policy issued by the Libyan Government of National Unity (GNU) in April 2023 that effectively restricts the rights of women and girls to travel abroad without a male guardian or *mahram*.

“Not only is this policy discriminatory, but it also restricts the freedom of movement of women and girls, including students who leave the country to study abroad,” the experts said, noting reports that women and girls who refuse to complete or submit the form are denied exit.

The new policy has reportedly been systematically implemented without any formal or prior announcement and has required all women and girls travelling to fill in a form providing personal information, reasons for travelling without a male guardian or *mahram*, and details of their previous history of travelling without a *mahram*.

“We are particularly concerned about the negative impact of the discriminatory procedure on the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls, in contradiction with Libya’s international and national obligations on non-discrimination, equality and the right to privacy,” the experts said.

They were also concerned by reported attempts by the Libyan Internal Security Agency (ISA) to intimidate human rights defenders, including women, who have spoken out against these policies.

In addition to being discriminatory, the policy has restricted the freedom of movement of women and girls, including students who study abroad. Women and girls who refuse to complete or submit the form are reportedly denied exit. “The restriction marks a further erosion of the rights of women and girls in Libya and sends the wrong signal,” the experts said. “Women’s equality and dignity must be ensured.”

The experts urged the authorities to withdraw this discriminatory requirement and to prevent all intimidation, harassment and attacks against women and human rights defenders who have protested against this discriminatory policy.

ENDS

* **The experts:** Reem Alsalem, [Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences](#); Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#); Dorothy Estrada-Tanck (Chair), Ivana Radačić (Vice-Chair), Elizabeth Broderick, Meskerem Geset Techane and Melissa Upreti, [Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#); Ana Brian Nougères, [Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy](#); Farida Shaheed, [Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#).

The experts are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN human rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms. Special Procedures mandate-holders are independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent of any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

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