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EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

2021 COUNTRY UPDATES

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*.This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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well as fighting corruption. The EU also urged the Lebanese authorities to deliver on their commitment to an impartial, credible, transparent and independent investigation into the Beirut port explosion. HR/VP Borrell visited Lebanon in June to express EU solidarity with the Lebanese people and called for reforms, including in the field of human rights and democracy. On 30 July 2021, the Council adopted a framework for targeted restrictive measures to address the situation in Lebanon, including possible sanctions against persons and entities undermining democracy or the rule of law. In August, European Council President Michel attended alongside HR/VP Borrell an international conference on Lebanon and reiterated the need for Lebanon to pursue reforms. The EU also continued providing support to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating former PM Rafik Hariri's assassination. The EU continued to advocate for transparent and inclusive parliamentary elections. An EU Election Follow-up Mission was organised as well as two missions of Euro-parliamentarians. Following the official invitation issued by Lebanon, the EU will send an EU Election Observation Mission in 2022.

4. EU financial engagement: In 2021, the EU continued to embed a human rights-based approach in its programming and development efforts that are mainly implemented by CSOs and UN agencies. Support to migrant workers amounted to EUR 1 million under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the EU increasingly addressed pressing socio-economic essential needs of persons in vulnerable situations, including migrant and refugee communities. The EU Trust Fund adopted a final package of EUR 98 million in response to the Syrian crisis to address the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities, including support for the response to COVID-19. The EU supported UNRWA through bilateral support and mainstreaming the coverage of Palestinian refugees in all programmes. The EU also continued its support to UNDP's Lebanese Electoral Assistance Project with EUR 6 million over the period of 2020-2023.

5. Multilateral context: The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights visited Lebanon in November and emphasised the urgent need for a credible plan to transform the economy, address inequality, ensure tax justice and prevent further political stalemate. During its third Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon received 297 recommendations, of which it supported 179 (an increase of 39.84% with respect to the second cycle). 48% of the recommendations related to "peace, justice and strong institutions" and 13% to "reduced inequalities". The recommendations mainly concerned the ratification of international treaties (42) and women's rights (discrimination and violence against women (40), and economic, social and cultural rights (35). Lebanon accepted two recommendations in the third cycle's final UPR report from July 8 2021 to address the issue of enforced disappearances.

Libya

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: The human rights situation in Libya in 2021 continued to raise serious concerns. Despite the ceasefire and subsequent establishment of an interim government (the Government of National Unity – GNU) to shepherd the country towards elections, attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure continued. Violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, including abductions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, continued to be committed in the country with almost total impunity. Various armed groups throughout Libya undermined the independence and work of the

media, judiciary, civil society and human rights defenders. A crackdown on peaceful demonstrations against a lack of public services raised serious questions regarding the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Civic space has been affected by the co-existence of different decrees in the country's three main regions. Based on these decrees, direct cooperation of CSOs with foreign entities and without the prior authorisation by the authorities was considered irregular, and could lead to the freezing of bank accounts and operations of non-compliant organisations. Lengthy registration procedures with unpredictable results discouraged many CSOs from continuing their activities. In July 2021, the GNU proposed a new decree regulating civil society, which, if adopted, would reportedly replicate (if not worsen) at the national level the restrictions already implemented by regional CSO regulators. The human rights situation for migrants remains a critical issue, especially for those in detention centres where living conditions are often below standard and where there are continued reports of violations of human rights.

2. EU action - key focus areas: EU programmes continue to support institution-building at both central and local levels. Actions aiming to strengthen the rule of law and national institutions include, in particular, i) support to anti-corruption to recovery agencies and related ministries, ii) capacity building to the relevant ministries and instances (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs, Higher Council for Childhood) to agree on a child-friendly juvenile justice system, and iii) support to the Secretariat-General of the Libyan House of Representatives focusing on legislative drafting and research and the functioning of the committee and legal departments. Furthermore, the EU has established a new flexible facility that can provide demand-driven support to Libyan public institutions (e.g. technical assistance on institutional development, policy development and dialogue, peer exchange and research). The aim is to strengthen the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Libyan public administration.

The EU provides capacity building and funding to civil society organisations (CSOs). In partnership with a Libyan diaspora organisation, the EU monitors cases of torture and ill-treatment in Libya and works towards the establishment of a national referral mechanism. The action also includes the provision of legal aid to victims of torture and inhumane treatment within the Libyan judicial system. EU programmes have contributed to monitoring developments towards reducing civic space as well as providing support to formal and less formal networks of CSOs by facilitating access to financial means. Furthermore, the EU provides the Ministries of Justice and Interior support to strengthen their capacities to enforce the rule of law and to bring those responsible for human rights violations and abuses to justice, in particular with regard to forensics and digital evidence gathering (EUTF funding), as well as responses to the investigation of recently discovered mass graves.

The EU further funds a number of initiatives that promote and protect fundamental rights and freedoms. It continues to support Libyan fact-checking platforms and media organisations to dispel disinformation. A new action to monitor and report, in particular, hate speech and disinformation around the electoral process started in the second half of 2021. While the effectiveness of the National Council for Civil Liberties and Human Rights has so far been limited, it has recently been re-composed and may benefit from future EU assistance. Since late 2020, the EU has engaged in policy dialogue with Libyan authorities on the need to establish a national mechanism to respond to the reporting requirements of UN Treaty Bodies.

Lastly, EU programmes have provided assistance in the emergency relocation of Libyan human rights defenders.

The EU has been supporting gender equality, encouraging the involvement of women in the peace process, fighting gender-based violence and assisting victims. The current support in the sector is unfolding systematic gender mainstreaming in all current programmes financed through bilateral EU funding. In October-November 2021, the EU co-funded capacity-building training for female candidates and women supporting the election process. In 2021, the EU delegation completed the first comprehensive Gender Country Profile and a gender sensitive assessment of EU cooperation.

More than half of the EU funding to Libya has been used for protection and assistance to the most vulnerable migrants, refugees and IDPs. The EU provides lifesaving assistance, protection services and support community stabilization. EU's efforts are coordinated with all relevant actors in the international community. In particular, the situation of migrants in detention centres remains of great concern. The EU only provides lifesaving support to migrants and refugees in detention while advocating for overcoming the current detention system. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has supported fumigation and sterilisation campaigns in detention centres and increased the distribution of hygiene kits and health assistance.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The EU has engaged with the relevant institutions in Libya on the importance of adopting the necessary legislation in line with internationally recognised standards and providing the space and protection needed for civil society and human rights defenders. Particularly, in early December 2021, the EU delegation engaged with the Chairman of the re-established National Council for Civil Liberties and Human Rights of Libya to explore avenues of capacity building. In addition, the EU reacted to grave violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law through both public statements and silent diplomacy. The EU has repeatedly called for ending the policy of arbitrary and unlawful detention and the closure of migrant and refugee detention centres, while raising cases of persecution, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention of journalists, human rights defenders, and CSOs representatives.

4. EU financial engagement: The EU is one of Libya's largest providers of assistance. Libya is the main beneficiary of the EUTF North Africa window with total funding of EUR 455 million so far. The EUTF Africa supports migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and host communities with protection and direct emergency assistance in Libya. Since early 2020, the EU has allocated an extra EUR 22 million for specific COVID-19 actions.

5. Multilateral context: The EU continued to be a strong supporter of the Working Group on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law established under the Berlin process. Moreover, after supporting the creation of the UN Fact-Finding Mission in 2020, the EU supported and advocated for the renewal of its mandate. Lastly, the EU has used all the relevant international fora to raise its concerns regarding human rights in Libya.

Syria