

25 September 2019

Statement to UN Human Rights Council 42nd session (9 - 27 September 2019)

Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building - *Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral update on Libya*

Statement on Libya

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is gravely concerned about the crisis unfolding in Libya since the armed offensive was launched in early April. The fighting has resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties, damaged critical infrastructures, and halted the political process.¹

The ongoing crisis has exacerbated the already precarious humanitarian situation by displacing more than 100'000 persons, half of whom are children,² and making more than 800'000 persons in need of humanitarian assistance³. It has also severely damaged civilian infrastructure by hindering the access to health and educational facilities and by leaving the population without any electricity or access to water for many days in a row, which is aggravating problems of communication, mobility and protection.

The widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas by all warring parties is particularly alarming and is exposing civilians to extreme risks. Several national and international reports indicate that all parties have been involved in conduct that could amount to violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law⁴. In this context, WILPF calls on all parties to immediately stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We also call on all States to fully implement the UN arms embargo on Libya.

Women and girls in Libya have been disproportionately impacted. They face an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence,⁵ those who are pregnant are subjected to increased risks to their health due to lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. Child marriage is steadily increasing. Furthermore, women-headed households and displaced persons are more food-insecure than other forms of households⁶.

The highly militarized environment has severely weakened the rule of law, jeopardized the security of civilians, and increased cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, particularly of human rights defenders and journalists. Women human rights defenders and political activists have faced gender-specific risks and paid a high price for being vocal in the public sphere since 2014. Siham Sergiwa, a vocal Member of Parliament, who was abducted by armed gunmen in August, is the latest in a series of Libyan

¹ See, for example, Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council S/2019/682 (August 2019), paras 2 and 3.

² See, UNOCHA, Libya Situational Report (2019).

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sitrep_libya_en_24_may.pdf

³ See, Humanitarian Response Plan – July 2019.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LYB_2019_hrp_review_20190711_Final.pdf

⁴ See, for example, Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council S/2019/682 (August 2019), The Situation of Human Rights in Libya

⁵ UNOCHA, Libya Situational Report (2019).

⁶ World Food Program Food Security Report in Libya (2018): https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000102636/download/?_ga=2.125797001.240086304.1562842390-1832116931.1562677465

women who have faced targeted assassinations, attempted killings, assaults, in addition to other gender-specific human rights violations.⁷

Mr. President,

WILPF urges the Human Rights Council to establish an independent, international and gender-sensitive fact-finding mechanism to investigate violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law by all warring parties with the aim of ensuring accountability and holding all perpetrators to account.

⁷ *Libya: Fears mount for abducted woman politician a month since she went missing*, Amnesty International (2019). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/libya-fears-mount-for-abducted-woman-politician-a-month-since-she-went-missing/>