



## SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERTS GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

### *Summary of the meeting on Libya held on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2019*

On 29 August 2019, the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Libya. The participants received a briefing from the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Ms. Stephanie Williams, who updated the group on relevant developments on women, peace and security since November 2018.

Members of the Security Council asked several questions about the ways in which the United Nations can ensure the participation of Libyan women in the ceasefire negotiations and proposed international conference and national dialogue, as well as in track-two negotiations and initiatives. Their questions also probed the level of resources and capacity of the government's Women's Empowerment Unit, the impact that new regulations could have on civil society organizations, including women's organizations, and the measures undertaken or planned for to respond to growing violence against women and girls, from reprisals against specific women with a public role to displaced and refugee women and girls in a situation of vulnerability.

Below are the main points raised during the meeting:

- The resumption of hostilities in April 2019 halted the peace process and the plans for a national dialogue conference. At the previous meeting of the Informal Experts Group, the UN had committed to ensure women's meaningful participation at the national dialogue conference.
- With the end of hostilities and the return to the political track as the main priority, the mission held several track-two events where women were at least one-quarter of participants, a lower number than invited due to disruptions in travel and the uncertain security environment. At the local level, women continue to advocate publicly for disarmament, demobilization of combatants, humanitarian access, and ceasefires.
- The deterioration of the security situation has created an environment conducive to violence against women politics, characterized by smear campaigns and even physical assaults of women leaders. The renewed hostilities have also led to a diversion of resources and attention away from the implementation of women, peace and security commitments as well as humanitarian needs.
- On July 17<sup>th</sup>, a female member of the House of Representatives, Siham Sergewa, was kidnapped and remains missing. In two public statements and in private conversations with General Haftar, the SRSG has spoken up about this incident and has urged the authorities to investigate her disappearance, bring her back to safety, and deliver justice. The United Nations is aware of the increasing threats and attacks against women human rights defenders and has facilitated some to leave the country for their security. These incidents have a chilling effect on women's political participation and advocacy. After the assassination of human rights defender and political activist Salwa Bughaighis in 2014, many women activists left the country or went into silence.
- The UN has facilitated coordination between the Presidency Council's Women's Support and Empowerment Unit and international partners. The unit held its first coordination meeting with international partners in February 2019.
- Close to 280,000 women have been identified as in need of humanitarian assistance, including 170,000 who face challenges in accessing health and 150,000 who face protection issues. This is likely to get worse for women as they are expected to have a harder time to access food, health, and education. A majority of IDPs have reported lack of privacy and insecurity in shelters. UNFPA

runs three safe spaces for women and girls. More than 100 service providers have been targeted for capacity-building on clinical management of rape and the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) on reproductive health.

- A study commissioned by UN Women and coordinated by Monash University found that misogyny was much more correlated with support for violent extremism than all other variables, including gender, age, religion, religiosity, and income level.
- The insecurity of refugee, displaced, and migrant women continues to be severe. Coupled with recent airstrikes on detention centers, there are continuous reports of sexual violence and ill-treatment in these centers, as well as gang-rape by smugglers and traffickers throughout Libya. The Ministry of Interior has recently announced the closing of three of these centers and the transfer of prisoners, including female prisoners. The United Nations and humanitarian actors do not have sufficient capacity and resources to monitor gender-based violence adequately, let alone respond to the needs of survivors. Civil society organizations report a sharp increase of domestic violence, including femicide due to the widespread availability of weapons in Libyan households. Southern Libya is altogether out of reach for United Nations staff and operations, and the overall presence on the ground has been limited since the recent attack in Benghazi.
- The Women's Empowerment Unit has been strongly supported by the United Nations and international partners, which ensured they would have an operational budget. So far, the unit's leadership is in direct contact with the Prime Minister.
- The United Nations has supported gender mainstreaming initiatives in electoral assistance and in the security sector, working closely with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice. This has resulted in a gender strategy for the High National Elections Commission, a handful of appointments of women to positions of leadership, and capacity-building initiatives targeted at women police, judges, and prosecutors. More assistance is needed to provide legal aid to women in detention sites. In spite of ongoing conflict, 121 women competed for seats in municipal councils and 23 were elected.
- The new regulations on civil society are expected to constrain the operations of both international and national non-governmental organizations, but the United Nations is in dialogue with the government about these rulings and they have not been implemented yet.
- A Libyan woman speaking on behalf of civil society during the Security Council's annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence faced criticism, including through a formal letter from the Permanent Mission of Libya (S/2019/363). This letter was responded by a letter signed by the Ambassadors of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Peru, Poland, and the United Kingdom (S/2019/377), in support of the invited briefer from civil society.

As the secretariat of the Informal Experts Groups on Women, Peace and Security, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) presented the following recommendations to the group, complemented by a representative of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence:

- Council Members should call on the SRSG to report regularly to the Security Council on his engagement with women-led civil society and women peace activists and human rights defenders, and to establish a mechanism for periodic consultation on activities related to conflict resolution, peacebuilding, disarmament, counterterrorism, security sector reform and security plans, human rights, and the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- Council Members should inquire about the level of relevant expertise currently available in the mission and the panel of experts of the sanctions committee and address any gaps, as well as the staffing and resources of the government's Women's Empowerment Unit. For example, it is important that UNSMIL's Senior Gender Advisor, once recruited, report directly to the SRSG, as in other missions and as called for in resolution 2242, and to deploy Women Protection Advisers

to accelerate the implementation of the monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. Currently, the United Nations in Libya does not have UN Women staff in Tripoli, the post of Senior Gender Advisor remains vacant, there is no budget for a Women Protection Advisor, and the United Nations does not run either the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System nor the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements that they typically have in countries with a significant UN presence.

- In any future negotiations for a new resolution on Libya, apart from calling immediately for a ceasefire, the Council should maintain all the provisions on gender equality and women's protection and empowerment in resolution 2434; reinforce the language on monitoring and reporting on sexual and gender-based crimes; publicly condemn attacks and threats against human rights defenders, including women, and call for specific protection measures; dial up the need for women's meaningful participation to be a central requirement of all internationally-supported political talks and dialogues among the parties; and strongly urge all actors involved in humanitarian and recovery efforts to strengthen their gender analysis and target gender issues in their interventions.
- Council Members should ask the UN for information on efforts to support the legislative reforms advocated for by women's groups, including the absence of anti-trafficking legislation, provisions in the Penal Code that exonerate perpetrators of rape if they agree to marry the survivor, and protect husbands and fathers who assault their wives and daughters as long as they do not cause hospitalization, the omission of sexual and gender-based violence from the 2013 Transitional Justice Law, and the urgent need for prohibiting child marriage and embarking on gender-responsive security sector reform.
- The IEG co-chairs should reach out to Council Members and regional organizations with political influence over the conflict parties, such as the African Union, the European Union, and the League of Arab States, to communicate the main points of this discussion and ask how they are addressing the repeated calls for participation by Libyan women from civil society and the United Nations, including through immediate support -financial and otherwise- to women's participation in track 2 and track 3 efforts in Libya.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the Special Envoy for his participation and committed to follow up on the recommendations raised at the meeting.