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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 August 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Contemporary Forms of Slavery Affecting Current and Former Prisoners**

### **Introduction**

Contemporary slavery affects thousands of prisoners and detainees in Middle Eastern countries, including multiple forms of exploitation: prisoners are forced to work for low wages or without pay, women and men are sexually exploited inside and outside prisons, and there is trafficking in prisoners, forcing them to provide services under threat or use of force, taking advantage of the vulnerable state of the prisoner during and even after their detention. Despite the political and legal efforts aimed at combating this phenomenon in many of these countries, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association is concerned about its continued escalation in a more violent and widespread manner, which seriously affects lives of prisoners and detainees.

### **Forced Labor**

Forced labor is the most prominent form of contemporary slavery prevalent in prisons and detention centers in many Middle Eastern countries. Analyses reviewed by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association indicate that the armed conflict and the lack of a unified government in Libya have made it difficult to limit or monitor the prisons and detention centers there. These include not only prisons under the supervision of the Ministries of Justice and Interior in Government of National Unity, but also secret places run by leaders of armed formations that are not subject to any legal authority and do not adhere to national and international standards regarding the treatment of prisoners. This lack of oversight has opened the way for the escalation of all types of violations inside them, especially those related to contemporary slavery.

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association has documented that detention centers for illegal immigrants in Libya, affiliated with the Department for Combating Illegal Immigration, force detainees to work both inside and outside the centers for private sector employers in areas such as agriculture, housework, garbage collection, construction, and road paving. In addition, they provide support services to pro-government armed groups, such as transporting weapons and ammunition, preparing food, and cleaning. When the assigned work is completed, detainees are returned to their cells. Testimonies have emerged indicating that the Ain Zara detention center, the main detention center in Tripoli, forces detainees to perform various manual labor without pay and under threat, and transfers a number of detainees to work in other areas outside the detention center(1).

In the same context, estimates indicate that Iranian authorities rent labor force from prisoners to private and government sectors because it is very cheap labor compared to its counterparts in both sectors. Those in charge of prison administration seize at least three-quarters of prisoners' salaries, and prisoners are usually employed in prison workshops or transferred to places outside them, such as mines and quarries, where they work long hours without time to rest. Female prisoners are forced to work in sewing workshops, packing goods, cooking, and baking for very low wages - estimated at \$2.9 per month for bakery workers in 2020, which is not enough to provide for their basic needs or help their families(2). The provisions of the labor law do not apply to them, and they do not enjoy any of the rights granted to workers(3). Guards in Tehran Grand Prison and Fashafuyeh Prison threaten prisoners with torture to encourage them to increase their productivity(4).

In the Sudan, Rapid Support Forces force detainees into forced labor without pay, which is evident in their use of detainees to dig graves on large areas of land they control to accommodate those killed during hostilities by all warring parties(5).

## Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation poses a serious threat to male and female prisoners in a number of Middle Eastern countries, especially in light of the impunity of perpetrators, who are usually prison employees. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association notes the spread of this phenomenon inside Syrian prisons, and the authorities are failing to make the necessary efforts to eliminate it. Testimonies from women who were detained in Jorin Prison (west of the Syrian Arab Republic ) stated that they were forced by the prison authorities to perform sexual work in exchange for money received by those authorities(6). One of the survivors stated that Lieutenant Colonel (A.B.) tried to harass her during the investigation, and after she refused to respond to him, he ordered her hands and feet to be tied and raped, and ordered five soldiers to take turns raping her(7).

On the other hand, women, men, and children detained inside Libyan prisons are sexually exploited by bargaining with them for food and drink and sometimes releasing them in exchange for sexual acts, according to testimonies of former detainees. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association denounces the failure of the Libyan government in most cases to protect the victims or identify them in the first place, as estimates indicate that the Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency did not cooperate with international organizations and civil society in the required manner to monitor and protect its detention centers, and prevented them from accessing detention centers under the control of armed militias and non-governmental entities present in Libya(8).

## Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is one of the most dangerous and widespread forms of modern slavery that threatens current and former prisoners. Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association has monitored some guards and workers in Libyan detention centers cooperating with human trafficking gangs and selling detained women into prostitution and other forced labor. One of the detainees in Abu Salim Center in Tripoli reported that one of the center's workers sold her to someone to work with him for 6 months as a condition for her release(9).

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association also documented the Israeli occupation forces stealing human organs from Palestinian dead, whether they killed them inside detention centers or during hostile operations. Doctors' testimonies indicated that many of the bodies released by Israel were missing one or more of their vital organs(10), such as the heart, cornea, kidney, and liver, which is a clear indication that the occupation forces practice human trafficking against Palestinian prisoners, especially since Jewish teachings permit the transfer and transplantation of organs(11), in addition to Israel having a reserve of human skin amounting to 17 square meters to treat Israelis who suffer from skin problems such as burns or the like, the main source of which is the bodies of Palestinians(12).

Rapid Support Forces have also been involved since the beginning of the Sudanese war in April 2023 in some human trafficking practices against women detained by them. The Rapid Support Forces and the militias supporting them set up markets in Darfur, specifically in the city of Al Fashir and other areas(13), to sell women and girls they have detained for prices reaching two million pounds, or to demand a ransom from their families of 600,000 Sudanese pounds in some cases(14).

## Recommendations

- We demand that the Libyan prison administration be placed under the authority of Ministry of Justice instead of Ministry of Interior, and that a civilian administration be assigned to manage it.
- Open a comprehensive and extensive international investigation into the incidents of the theft of organs from Palestinian bodies by the occupation forces, and hold those involved in these incidents accountable.

- Reduce number of detainees in the aforementioned countries to the extent that allows for the provision of their basic rights inside prisons, by releasing prisoners of conscience, and issuing amnesty decisions or alternative detention for those convicted in minor cases or those who have spent more than half of their sentence in misdemeanor cases.
- Train prison staff on humane treatment of prisoners according to international standards, and ensure that they are subject to strict legal accountability in the event of violations.
- We demand that the Iranian authorities not expand the imposition of custodial sentences on women, especially mothers, for less serious offenses and crimes, and sentence them to alternative sentences given that they bear the burden of raising their children and sometimes providing for them.
- Raise awareness among women in conflict countries about the clinical treatment protocol for rape, which provides treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and contraceptives.

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  - (5) Report monitoring violations against civilians in 52 Army and Rapid Support detention centers in Khartoum, Sudan Tribune, <https://sudantribune.net/article276788/>
  - (6) Jorin Prison for “sexual slavery” in Syria... testimonies of female survivors of hell, daraj, <https://2h.ae/qqXt>
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