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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 Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, 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.

[27 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Women Injustice and violation in UAE Release Sheikhha Latifa

The women rights in the UAE continue to be widely violated, despite some progress in access to education, health, and the economic sector. Legislation remains deeply discriminatory, in particular in the area of the family, and deep-rooted stereotypes of women's roles in society persist. Migrant women are particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights, both as non-nationals and as women.¹

According to the national News- UAE, Ms. Salam Al Amir wrote on March 10, 2019 that nearly 1,000 cases of abuse were recorded against women and children in the UAE in 2018.²

Research found a total of 955 instances of domestic violence, human trafficking or abuse outside of the home in the nine months from January to September 2018. Of that number, the bulk of cases - 893 - related to domestic abuse, of which 33 per cent of victims were Emirati women or children.

Afra Al Basti, director general of the Dubai Foundation of Women and Children, a non-profit which seeks to assist women in need, said victims of abuse needed wide-ranging support.

UAE: Reveal Status of Dubai Ruler`s Daughter

UAE authorities apparently forcibly returned and then disappeared Sheikhha Latifa bint Mohammad al-Maktoum, the 35-year-old daughter of the ruler of Dubai, after she tried to flee the UAE by sea to a third country.³ She was not seen in public or heard from for over nine months following her disappearance. On December 6, just hours ahead of the airing of a BBC documentary regarding her forcible return, Sky News reported a statement from Dubai's royal court claiming that she is back in Dubai and celebrating her birthday privately with her family. On December 24, the UAE's foreign ministry released photos of Sheikhha Latifa with Mary Robinson, a former United Nations high commissioner for human rights and a former president of Ireland, to rebut what they described as "false allegations" that she was taken home against her will. In an interview with BBC radio on December 27, Robinson echoed the ministry's statement and suggested that the princess was mentally ill.

Sheikhha Latifa abducted

Sheikhha Latifa, the daughter of the Emir of Dubai, and Prime Minister of the UAE, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, was reportedly abducted while attempting to flee the country in 2018. In February, footage was released that reportedly showed her being deprived of her liberty against her will.

On 20 April 2021, Independent rights experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović voiced concern that since the February video, and subsequent official request for further information on her situation, "no concrete information has been provided by the authorities".

¹ IFHR_ International Federation for Human Rights, Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Note submitted to the 45th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on the occasion of its first examination of the UAE.

² The national news- UAE, Salam Al Amir, March 10, 2019, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/nearly-1-000-cases-of-abuse-recorded-against-uae-women-and-children-in-2018-1.835285>.

³ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019, UAE: Reveal Status of Dubai Ruler`s Daughter. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/05/uae-reveal-status-dubai-rulers-daughter>.

The United Nations independent human rights experts demanded that the United Arab Emirates provide “meaningful information” on the fate of Sheikha Latifa Mohammed Al Maktoum as well as assurances regarding her safety and well-being, “without delay”.

“The statement issued by the Emirates authorities’ merely indicating that she was being ‘cared for at home’ is not sufficient at this stage”, they added.

The rights experts also said they were troubled by the allegations of human rights violations against Sheikha Latifa, and of the possible threat to her life. In addition to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the call was made by the members of the working groups on enforced or involuntary disappearances; and on discrimination against women and girls; as well as the Special Rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution.

The Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

Evidence of well-being ‘urgently required

According to the information received, she continues to be deprived of liberty, with no access to the outside world, they added, noting that “her continued incommunicado detention can have harmful physical and psychological consequences and may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment”.

“Evidence of life and assurances regarding her well-being are urgently required”, the human rights experts urged, calling for independent verification of the conditions under which Sheikha Latifa is being held, and for her immediate release.⁴

At present, there are only two women's associations operating in the UAE, the first is headed by the wife of the UAE's former ruler, and the second is run by the current ruler's wife. The activities and mandate of both these organizations is limited to the social welfare of women and family and does not refer to CEDAW or women's human rights as priorities. The Human Rights Association in the UAE is government run and its role is limited to receiving complaints.

- IRDG is strongly calling for immediate release of Sheikha Latifa and ask the human rights council to guarantee access to medical or legal help.
- IRDG asks the United Arab Emirates to provide compelling proof that Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed al-Maktoum – the missing daughter of Dubai’s ruler, last seen in late 2018 – is still alive.
- Abolish all discriminatory provisions on women's freedom of movement;
- Take all necessary measures to protect women from violence, and rectify the multiple injustices by immediately and unconditionally releasing the prisoners of conscience and women and stop abusing their human rights and undermining their dignity which is part of the tolerance.
- IRDG confirms that what the Emirati minister said that “the UAE is considered a model for tolerance in the Arab world”, is not correct because of the restriction of freedoms contained in the UAE’s record, the prosecution of human rights defenders, the arrest of many citizens without judgments and clear charges.
- We urge the esteemed Human Rights Council to demand the UAE to fulfill its obligations in tolerance, social justice, freedoms, and the release of detainees including Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammad al-Maktoum.

⁴ UN News: Human rights experts demand UAE provide ‘meaningful information’ on Sheikha Latifa. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090132>.

- To take all necessary measures to raise public awareness on women's rights under CEDAW and eliminate discriminatory stereotypes on the role of women in society
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