

Sent in advance by email

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Mister Juma Abdullah DRISSI
Minister of Justice
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
Tripoli
Libya

Geneva, 18 February 2021

Assassination of Mrs Hanane AL-BARASSI

Mr Minister of Justice,
Mr Juma Abdullah DRISSI,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Geneva Bar Association, which represents nearly 1,900 lawyers in Geneva. The Geneva Bar Association is member of the Swiss Federation of Lawyers, the International Association of Lawyers and the International Bar Association. The Geneva Bar Association is also member of the International Conference of Bars (CIB), particularly very active in Africa.

The Geneva Bar Association, which places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law and is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world, has been deeply shocked by the news of Mrs Hanane AL-BARASSI's murder on 10 November 2020.

According to our records, Mrs Hanane AL BARASSI was shot and killed on 20th Street, one of Benghazi's main commercial streets.

Mrs Hanane AL-BARASSI battled for women's rights. She actively defended women victims of violence, whose condition she publicly denounced, through videos that she then broadcast on social networks. She also uses social networks to denounce corrupt elites and armed groups loyal to Marshal Khalifa HAFTAR.

A few minutes before she was murdered, she broadcast a live video on facebook in which she criticized armed groups close to Marshal Khalifa HAFTAR, saying also that she was "threatened". According to our sources, shortly before her assassination, she had promised to post a message in which she would reveal the exactions of the Marshal's relatives, including her son Saddam, without giving further details.

She never had the opportunity to do so.

The Geneva Bar Association observes that this tragic event occurs a year and a half after the disappearance of parliamentarian Siham SERGEWA, kidnapped by an armed group after criticizing Marshal Khalifa HAFTAR.

Remaining profoundly concerned about the situation, the Geneva Bar Association would like to draw the Libyan authorities' attention to the 1990 UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, according to which they have an obligation to ensure that lawyers can perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance,

harassment or improper interference and that they do not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution for any action taken while carrying out their duties (Principle 16).

Furthermore, according to Principle 17, "Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities".

The Geneva Bar Association therefore urges the Libyan authorities to comply with the standards set forth by the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers as well as their obligation under International Human Rights Law and to:

- protect all lawyers and human rights defenders in Libya against any present or future harassment, intimidation and/or reprisal in the exercise of their profession and of legitimate human rights activities;
- ensure that the investigations into Mrs Hanane AL-BARASSI's murder is independently and impartially conducted.

All necessary steps should be adequately taken to bring to justice those responsible, in accordance with international standards.

I thank you for your attention to this very serious matter, which the Geneva Bar Association and I will continue to closely monitor.

Respectfully yours,



Philippe COTTIER
Chairman

cc. Libyan Embassy in Switzerland, Tavelweg 2, P.O. Box 633, 3000 Bern 31, Switzerland (libyanemb_bern@yahoo.com).
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