

STRATEGIC NOTE

Libya

2022-2025





Photo: UN Women

INTRODUCTION

LIBYA'S LANDSCAPE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Libya is a country of great potential, thanks to the diversity and richness of its cultures and peoples, its strategic geographic position, and its abundant resources. But since the 2011 revolution, the country has experienced intense political conflict and violent confrontations, which have created the current fragile and volatile environment for humanitarian and development efforts. Long-standing challenges to Libya's development include a rigid economy, a bloated public sector, corruption, and deep structural inequalities; these have further been complicated by new political divisions, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic pressures. The UN continues to steward a delicate peace process, advocating for the

rescheduling of 2021 national elections and transitioning from a humanitarian focus to joint development interventions that promote stability and equality for all Libyans. Despite the absence of a centralized authority or a national development plan, the [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\) for Libya](#) was approved in 2022. The Framework charts a clear path to the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda 2030 in a coherent way, and highlights the urgency of a paradigm shift to support the essential role of women in contributing to a peaceful and prosperous Libya.



Photo: UN Women

A SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Libya has shown its commitment to equality between women and men on paper, starting with its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1989. However, its general reservation based on Sharia law leaves an open door to conservative forces who question the foundation of that equality. While the principle of equality is outlined in the draft Constitution and in the Libya Peace Dialogue Framework (LPDF) roadmap, the overall legal framework on women's rights remains weak and has not translated to gains in women's empowerment in practice. While some laws explicitly discriminate against women, others are open to an interpretation that works against women's empowerment.

Women's participation in governance and public life, including the critical peace process cautiously under way, suffers grave underrepresentation. Only 30 of 188 parliamentary seats (16%) are currently held by women and 5 of 33 ministers (15%) are women. This mirrors the situation in the peace process: Of the 75 Libyan delegates to the LPDF, a process stewarded by the international community, only 16 (21%) were women. Advocates for women's rights confront organized and targeted campaigns by entrenched conservative forces whose goal is to actively obstruct women's participation and empowerment. A recent campaign was

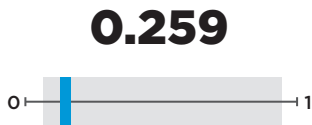
launched to block the development of a National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which promotes women's participation in peace processes.

Violence against women participating in public spaces is common, whether physical, psychological, or online. Attacks target women candidates, elected officials, activists, human-rights defenders and peacebuilders. A UN fact-finding mission in 2021-2022 documented pervasive violence against women including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of high-profile leaders.

The economy's dire circumstances following the global pandemic, coupled by the failure of national institutions to respond adequately, have intensified the already non-inclusive nature of the Libyan economy with detrimental effects for women, especially young women. Unemployment rates stand at 20 per cent overall, 26 per cent for women and almost 71 per cent for young women.

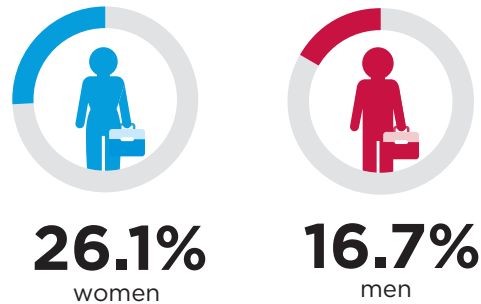
LIBYA'S SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

figure 1
Gender Inequality Index



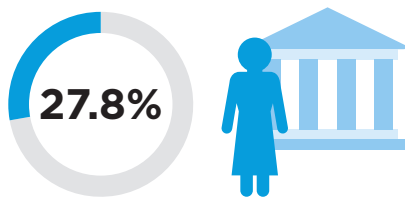
UNDP (2022). Human Development Report. (Note: Figure provided is for 2021)

figure 2
Unemployment rate by sex
Women's Economic Empowerment



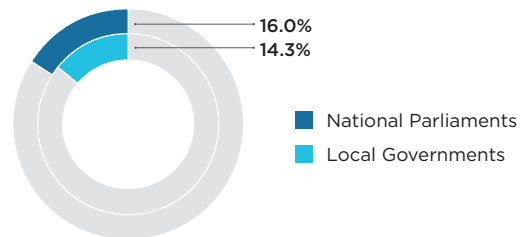
United Nations Libya. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2025. [Available online](#). (Citing 2020 modelled estimate by the International Labour Organization).

figure 3
Proportions of seats held by women in executive positions/ministers (cabinets)
Governance and Participation in Public Life



UNSMIL (21 NOV 2022). SRSG Abdoulaye Bathily: "Women have an important role to play in Libya's journey to stability". [Online](#). (Note: 5 of 18 ministers).

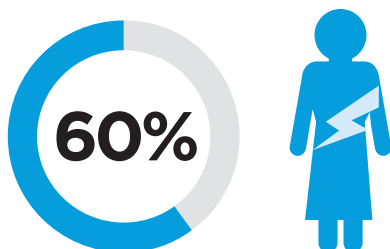
figure 4
Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
Governance and Participation in Public Life



(a) United Nations Libya. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2025. [Available online](#). (Citing Inter-Parliamentary Union data on the 2014 parliamentary elections: 30 of 188 parliamentary seats at national level. [Available online](#)).

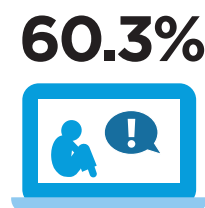
(b) UNDESA (2022). SDG Indicator Global database. Extracted on Dec 2022. Refers to administrative data on election results at municipal level (2021) produced by Central Municipal Elections Committee)

figure 5
Percentage of respondents (women municipal councillors or candidates) who report having experienced some form of violence during their candidacy or term in office
Ending Violence against Women



UN Women (2022). Research on Violence Against Women in Politics in Libya. Unpublished. (Report pending online publication by UN Women Libya, to be [accessed here](#)).

figure 6
Percentage of women respondents who report having experienced online violence at least once in the previous year
Ending Violence against Women



UN Women (2021). Violence Against Women in the Online Space: Insights from a Multi-Country Study in the Arab States (Summary Report). [Available online](#).

UN WOMEN STRATEGIC NOTE: A roadmap to strengthening women's rights

The Strategic Note (SN) articulates the multi-year strategy, rationale, envisioned results, targets, and resource requirements for a UN Women Office. In essence, the SN provides a roadmap for improving the lives of women and girls in the context where UN Women operates. It is developed in consultation with key partners and in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), UN Women's Strategic Plan and key national, regional, and global priorities for women's rights. SNs are funded by a combination of core (loosely earmarked) and non-core resources (earmarked).

UN Women's SN is similar to a Country Programme Document (CPD) used by other UN entities.

UN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

UN Women has contributed to progress on issues of equality and women's empowerment in Libya since it first established a presence with the UN Country Team (UNCT) in 2019, leveraging its triple mandate for concrete results. For example, it has advanced the **normative**, or legal, framework on women's rights by stewarding the process to draft a new law for Libya to combat violence against women in **coordination** with UN partners such as the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). UN Women's coordination has been central to all its work in Libya, for example in bringing a strong dimension on women's issues to the UNCT, especially for

the development of the newly approved UNSDCF, which guides the UN's work through 2025. It also established and co-chairs the Gender Working Group, which is the expertise clearinghouse on women's issues for UN agencies and international partners to coordinate initiatives in Libya. Its **operational**, or on-the-ground, work operates directly with women's groups and national institutions. This work has been highlighted by the increased capacities of more than 200 women political candidates, including young women and women with disabilities, and employees of the High National Election Commission (HNEC) to improve women's participation in elections and to combat violence against women candidates.

UN Women Libya key achievements (2021)

257 WOMEN AND YOUTH

are better equipped to participate in legislative elections, including Layla Ben Khalifa, one of two women to announce their candidacy for president.

MORE THAN 100 CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

actively contributed to consultation sessions for the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, increasing local ownership of the process.

5 NEW RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

provide advocates on women's rights with evidence to help influence peace and security processes.

40 HIGH NATIONAL ELECTION COMMISSION STAFF

members have better knowledge on issues of women's rights, women's leadership and the role of electoral monitoring bodies.

To learn more about the work and results of UN Women Libya visit our [Transparency Portal](#).

LIBYA'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The UNCT and Libyan national institutions have agreed on a set of strategic development priorities. These are set forth in the UNSDCF and are based on the unique Libyan context, including a shared understanding of key national priorities, opportunities, risks, and persisting inequalities. UN Women Libya's Strategic Note pursues two specific priorities contributing to the achievement of the UNSDCF,

and remains active in mainstreaming women's issues across other UNSDCF priority areas. UN Women's priorities have been decided collectively with other UN agencies and partners, based on its ability to help mainstream women's issues throughout all aspects of the UN's work. These priorities are aligned with the [UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#).

Photo: UN Women



AS A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR
WOMEN AND GIRLS,
UN WOMEN CONVENES AND
INFLUENCES A RANGE OF
PARTNERS FOR A GREATER AND
LONG-LASTING IMPACT

IMPACT

Women and girls in Libya contribute to and benefit from good governance and sustainable peace

COLLECTIVE CONTRIBUTION
(priority results)

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS, PEACEBUILDING AND POLICY MAKING

Enhance the capacity of institutions and civil society actors to support **gender-responsive constitutional development and policy reform** processes

RULE OF LAW, RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING WITH A FOCUS ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Enhance parliamentarians' capacities to draft and adopt **non-discriminatory legislation** that responds to women's issues

UN WOMEN SOLUTIONS*

Strengthen the capacities of electoral bodies and civil society organizations to **promote women's issues in electoral processes**

Build the capacity of rule-of-law institutions to **administer justice for women and girls** according to national commitments on international human rights standards and transitional justice

Strengthen the capacity of the government, civil society and gender-equality advocates to **improve frameworks on women's issues** in processes around women, peace and security

Improve national authorities' capacity to **deliver preventative, accessible and responsive protection services** to address violence against women

Increase civil society's capacity to advocate for **legal reforms to eliminate violence** and discrimination against women and girls

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Political instability and conflict causing dysfunctional governing structures

Lack of representation and participation in governance and policy processes

Limited data- and evidence-based policy development

Non-inclusive economic system and limited livelihood opportunities including lack of access to credit and resources

Systemic insecurity and lack of equitable access to justice services

Weak legal framework and enforcement on women's issues

Weak enforcement and lack of protection to address multiple types of violence against women

Deeply rooted religious and cultural norms inconsistent with women's rights

UN Women solutions are aligned to UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025

UN WOMEN'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

UN Women's comparative advantage in Libya lies in its expertise on women's rights, its agility to respond to diverse partnerships including with local women's groups in a dynamic humanitarian-development nexus, and its ability to leverage its coordination and normative mandates to advance the mainstreaming of women's issues across UNCT and its processes. UN Women Libya has a unique network with diverse and extensive connections to women at all levels: civil society, local governments, academia, and national-level institutions. UN Women has built relationships of trust with women and leaders in Libya, including trust in its expertise and convening power, which have opened entirely new spaces for these women to participate, exchange ideas, offer inputs and build their own capacities. **Its comparative advantage vis-à-vis UN partners emphasizes complementarity**, where women's issues are woven across all major elements of the UN's

presence. For instance, the new blueprint for UN coordination in Libya to transition from a humanitarian approach to a development model includes UN Women's advisory role on women's issues, and it positions UN Women to mainstream the role and perspectives of women across all partner agencies' efforts, joint programmes and UNCT processes; and to support the coordination of groups focusing on disability, youth, and gender-based violence (against women or men).

Photo: UN Women



UN WOMEN LIBYA'S STRATEGY

UN Women has determined that the most strategic entry points to address inequality between women and men in Libya, given the volatility of the current political environment, is by facilitating women's participation in governance and public life, including their role in the fragile peace process, and strengthening a rule of law that is inclusive of women's rights, with a special focus on ending violence against women. This involves normative work,

to make legal frameworks friendly to women's participation and robust in the face of combatting violence against women, and safeguarding access to justice. It also requires on-the-ground capacity-building of women, women's organizations, and institutions to demand those rights, advocate for legal reforms and then respond to and protect those rights to participation, and a life free from violence.

PRIORITY RESULT 1:

Women's leadership and participation in elections, peacebuilding and policy making

UN Women will build the capacities of institutions and civil-society actors to integrate women's perspectives, and their participation, into the critical processes of governance and peacebuilding in Libya. This includes capacities for: constitutional and policy reform; elections and the electoral process at local and national levels; and policy work around the agenda for women, peace and security.

To support policy reform, UN Women will conduct a comprehensive policy analysis on women's role in public life, and on how most effectively to support the mainstreaming of women's issues across key ministries. The agency will also identify entry points for gender-responsive budgeting through public financing and fiscal policies, and data collection and analysis. In parallel, UN Women will provide technical support to mainstream women's perspectives in the national development planning process with key ministries, including institutional strengthening of the Gender Support Unit of the HNEC. UN Women will work together with national stakeholders, civil society and UN partner agencies to provide strategic technical support for the development of a roadmap for elections assistance and women's political participation. Finally, capacity-building of key stakeholders, including women's organizations and journalists, will focus on building skills in conflict negotiation, mediation and resolution, and on opening spaces for women's role in reconciliation to ensure that women's issues and their perspectives are considered throughout the ongoing Berlin Peace Process.

PARTNERS

Partners on policy reform include the Ministries of Planning and of Finance, as well as women's empowerment units of other ministries and the Gender Support Unit of HNEC. On elections, in addition to the HNEC and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, women municipal candidates and their networks at the local level are primary partners alongside regional networks, especially the Arab Network for Women in Elections. UNSMIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been trusted partners on women's political participation and election laws that are responsive to women's rights. On peacebuilding, partners include women's organizations spanning a diverse social, political, generational and geographic range across the country, including the Libyan Women's Network for Peacebuilding.

PRIORITY RESULT 2:

Rule of law, reconciliation and peacebuilding with a focus on Ending Violence against Women

The current instability in Libya points to the critical importance of upholding the rule of law, promoting reconciliation, and peacebuilding that is inclusive of women and their perspectives. Reforming the discriminatory legal framework is among the top strategic priorities, with a special aim at addressing the multiple forms of violence against women. To facilitate that goal, UN Women will: support parliamentarians to draft and adopt non-discriminatory legislation that accounts for women's rights; support justice and rule-of-law institutions to respond to diverse forms of violence against women, especially online violence; build the capacities of national institutions to provide adequate and quality services across diverse and hard-to-reach subregions of Libya for women facing violence; and increase the capacities of women's organizations to advocate for and demand laws and services that respond to these multiple types of violence. UN Women's strategy to work on this priority is based on evidence from a regional study by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia titled [Gender Justice & The Law](#).

PARTNERS

UN Women's linkages across national institutions, regional organizations and women's groups on the ground again prove key entry points for advancing towards goals around rule of law, and especially ending violence against women. In parliament, individual champion legislators and the women's caucus will be the base from which UN Women can support a comprehensive analysis of discriminatory laws and a strategy for priority reforms to legislation. On addressing violence against women, especially new forms such as online violence, UN Women will work jointly with UNSMIL and UNFPA to advance policy and law reforms; with the national women's machinery and women's units within line ministries; and with the HNEC to address violence against women in politics.

Photo: UNSMIL

UN WOMEN
DRIVES RESULTS
ADVANCING
NORMATIVE
STANDARDS,
COORDINATING
ACTION ACROSS THE
UNITED NATIONS,
AND **OPERATING**
ON THE GROUND



Becoming a funding partner

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 calls for transformative, collaborative action. Strategic, innovative, and efficient funding partnerships are essential to realize UN Women's vision of advancing women's rights, articulated in the Strategic Note.

How can funding partners engage with UN Women's SN?

Partners may provide **SN direct funding**, which is softly earmarked by geography (regional or country SN). These funds are flexible and catalytic; they enable UN Women to choose the highest-impact use of the funds in the country in which it operates. SN funding is also predictable, as commitments are often made for the full SN time span, better enabling transformative results for women and girls.

Importantly, SN direct funds strengthen UN Women's ability to respond to emerging needs in response to unforeseen contextual changes, including humanitarian needs (e.g., to prioritize the safety of women and girls in a crisis or in response to the adverse effects of natural disasters).

Furthermore, these funds can be reallocated when emerging evidence suggests a new approach is needed to produce the desired result more efficiently or effectively. They can be used for diverse types of costs and can therefore draw funds to areas that are often unfunded—yet crucial—such as advocacy for behavioural change, UN Coordination and supporting the organization's effectiveness.

Funding partners may also provide **project funding**, which is tightly earmarked for a specific project or initiative in the SN. These funds are not flexible. Reporting on the use of such funds is done against the specific project but not against the full SN.

SN funding represents an ambitious, targeted, and smart investment in women's rights and women's empowerment.

To learn more about UN Women Libya's funding partners landscape visit our [Transparency Portal](#).

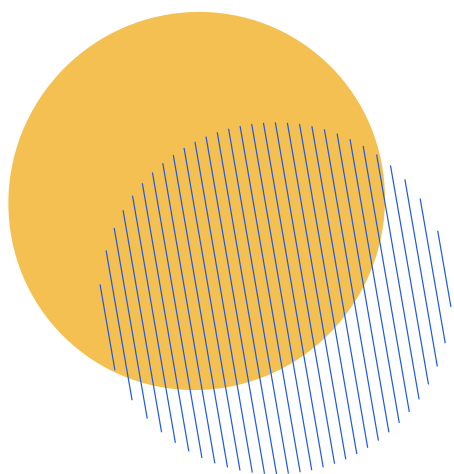


Photo: UN Women

UN SYSTEM COORDINATION

UN Women has accompanied the peace process and the UN's presence in Libya since 2018 ensuring that women's issues and the principle of equality between women and men is firmly rooted in all UN work. Since 2019, UN Women Libya has made further, exceptional inroads to position its mandate clearly within the UNCT, coordinating on women's issues and catalysing partnerships across UN agencies. UN Women cemented its unique position within the UNCT through three key processes: (a) mainstreaming equality between women and men throughout the Common Country Analysis; (b) the elaboration of the UNSDCF, building on the Analysis, and which in turn paves the way for joint programming embedded with a strong dimension on women's rights for all UN actors in Libya; and (c) the establishment and co-chairing, by UN Women, of the pivotal Gender Working Group, which serves as the singular nexus for coordination on women's issues for all UN entities and international partners with a presence in Libya.

UN Women's role *vis-à-vis* UN partners highlights complementarity, where women's issues are integrated across all UNCT planning and processes. Emphasizing that complementarity, UN Women has coordinated efforts on the draft law on the elimination of violence against women, with UNFPA and UNSMIL, but then focuses uniquely on new emerging forms of online and political violence while UNFPA leads on service provision. Currently, under the government-led recovery and peacebuilding assessment process, supported by the EU, the World Bank, and the UN, UN Women will ensure that sex- and age-disaggregated data are integrated into the process to support the formulation of a national development plan.

Joint Programming

This Strategic Note for UN Women is the first ever for Libya. With the first UN Coordination Framework (UNSDCF) approved for Libya in its history, UN Women is positioned to join an unprecedented opportunity for the country, and to lead on mainstreaming women's issues. Joint programming will begin under this new UNSDCF, approved in June 2022.

This means UN Women will, from the beginning, be part of designing, advising and implementing joint programmes with UN agencies and other partners to fulfil commitments on equality between women and men as outlined in the UNSDCF, including on: peace and governance; inclusive and sustainable economic recovery; social and human capital development; climate change and the environment; migration; and for internally displaced persons and returnees. UN Women's focus will remain on its SN priority areas; however it is committed to responding to the needs of mainstreaming women's issues across other thematic areas of the UNSDCF, with its expertise on women's issues.

“DESPITE THE VIOLENCE, I WILL CONTINUE”

Haniya Abu Khirais returned to her home city of Sirte in 2010, in northern Libya, to find a whole new reality after living abroad to complete her postgraduate studies in international business. Haniya soon realized that she could be a good candidate for local office: She was highly motivated to serve her community, had a strong professional resume, and was familiar with the aspirations and struggles of Libyan youth. In 2014, Haniya became the first woman ever elected to the Municipal Council of Sirte.

She has had to face not only the risk of ongoing armed clashes, but also male counterparts who doubted her abilities. “I have to constantly prove that I am not just a weak woman who cannot participate in decision-making,” Haniya explained. Persisting, Haniya became acting mayor in 2018. At that time, ISIS forces threatened to kill her if she did not abandon the delegated municipal position. Despite these threats, Haniya continued.

Haniya became connected with UN Women as a member of the Libyan Women Network for Peacebuilding, through which she benefited from capacity-building trainings in mediation and negotiation.

In 2022, Haniya shared her first-hand experience of online threats and abuse as a woman politician in a special session organized by UN Women with Meta (Facebook) on online violence against Women.

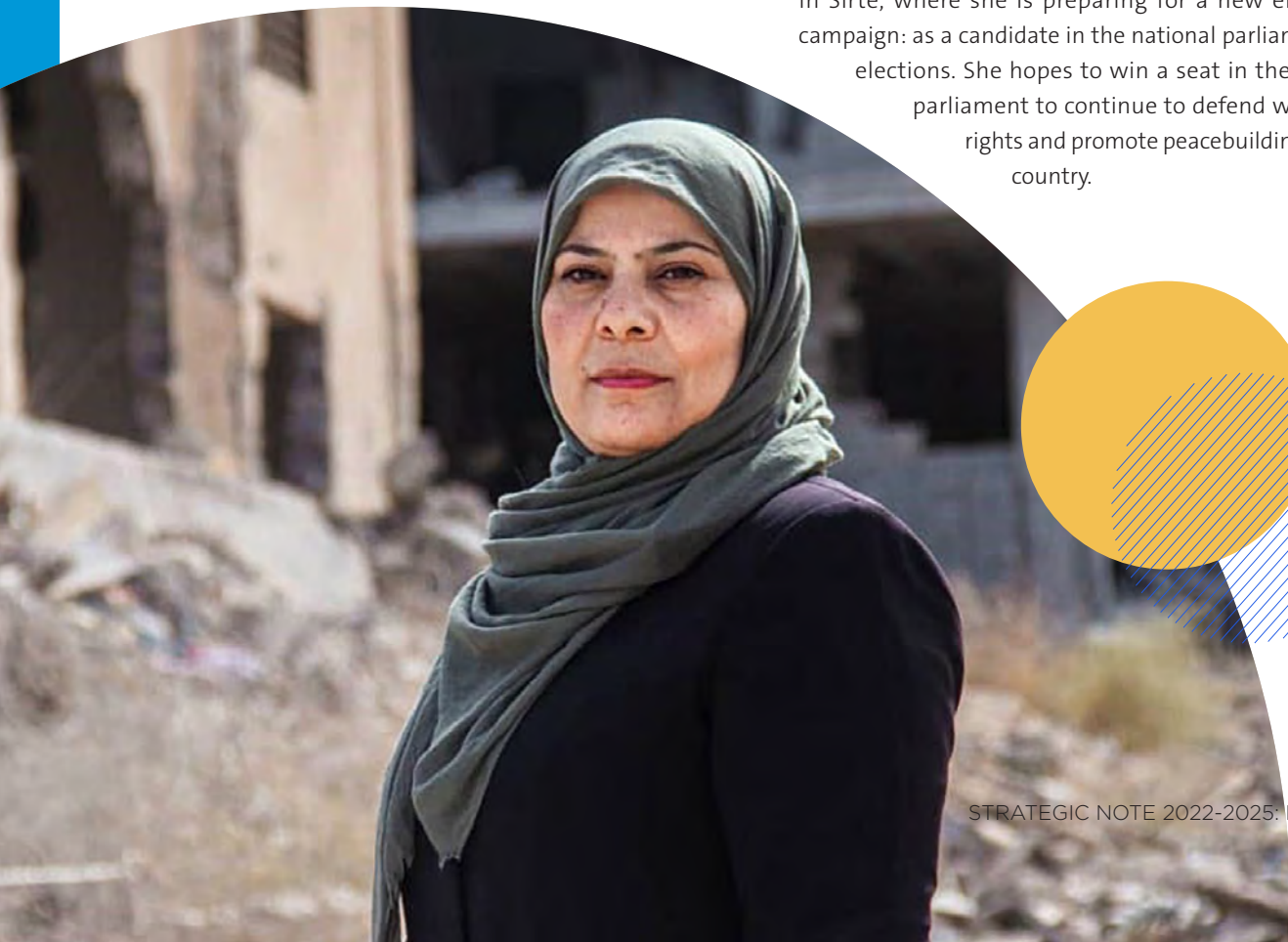
“The attacks [by] extremely conservative groups went so far that they created Facebook pages where they shared my private photos with my international friends [...] to justify their accusations that I am an immoral woman who does not respect the traditions and Islamic Sharia,” Haniya said. Her harassers even shared Haniya’s mobile number over social media, which led to a barrage of threatening calls both day and night.

“I went through episodes of stress, anxiety and a constant feeling of insecurity,” she said.

Haniya decided to break her silence for herself and other women in politics and asked for the support of her friends from her network of elected women. With support from UN Women, she contacted Meta (Facebook) to report the abusive pages, seeking to close the accounts.

Currently, Haniya is still working as a municipal councillor in Sirte, where she is preparing for a new electoral campaign: as a candidate in the national parliamentary elections. She hopes to win a seat in the Libyan parliament to continue to defend women’s rights and promote peacebuilding in her country.

Photo: Courtesy of BENDALLA



UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



UN WOMEN TUNISIA AND LIBYA CLUSTER OFFICE

Maison Bleue -Rue de Lac Windermere, Les
Berges du Lac I - 1053 Tunis - Tunisie

P.O. Box 1053

+216 36 011 680

