



# WOMEN'S MARCH GLOBAL

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **WOMEN'S MARCH GLOBAL JOINS ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR URGENT MEASURES TO PROTECT PRISON POPULATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

SIGNATORIES CALLING FOR RELEASE OF “LOW-RISK” DETAINEES AND GUARANTEE THAT PRISONERS ARE GRANTED ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HEALTHCARE

**GLOBAL | MARCH 26, 2020** - With prison systems in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) experiencing rampant overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, Women's March Global and 40 allied signatories are calling on governments in these areas to immediately release “low-risk” detainees and prisoners to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Several countries in the MENA region have overstretched healthcare systems and inferior social infrastructure, with detainees commonly denied proper access to medical care. In the midst of a global pandemic, these challenges are further exacerbated, placing prisoners, staff, police officers, health professionals and the general public at risk.

“International human rights law requires that states treat detainees and prisoners humanely and with respect for their dignity and are not subject to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment,” said Women's March Global Executive Director Uma Mishra-Newbery. “With COVID-19 presenting a direct threat to their health and the health of those around them, it is critical that MENA governments take the necessary steps to reduce their risk of exposure.”

In addition to calling for the release of “low-risk” detainees and prisoners, the signatories are also calling on MENA governments to:

- Order the immediate release of detainees and prisoners particularly vulnerable to the virus including the elderly and individuals with serious underlying health

conditions including lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and autoimmune diseases

- Release facility-specific policies and emergency preparedness plans to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in detention centres, prisons and police stations
- Provide proper training to relevant staff and authorities to ensure sufficient and sustained access to healthcare and hygiene provision
- Allow individuals serving probation and probationary measures to fulfil these measures in their homes

For individuals who must remain in detention, Women's March Global and its allies are calling on MENA governments to guarantee that prisoners will be granted their right to due process, as well as full access to medical care, including COVID-19 testing and treatment. When in-person visits are cancelled, prisoners and detainees must also be provided with alternative communication options.

The [WHO](#), [OHCHR](#), [African Commission on Human's and Peoples Rights](#) have all released statements providing guidelines and measures to implement in light of this situation.

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## **ABOUT WOMEN'S MARCH GLOBAL**

Women's March Global is a network of 100+ Chapters and thousands of Members worldwide who take action every day in their local communities to advance women's human rights.

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