

His Excellency  
Roch Marc Christian Kaboré  
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Burkina Faso

Excellency,

I am deeply concerned about the risks faced by girls in relation to their human rights and sexual and reproductive rights in Burkina Faso as a result of early and forced marriage.

Early and forced marriage is a serious human rights violation. In Burkina Faso, one in two girls is married off before the age of 18.

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Burkina Faso's Constitution, women and girls are entitled to the same human rights as men and boys. But in practice, they are discriminated against and denied their rights. They are frequently denied their right to decide if and when they marry, and to whom they get married, and whether to have children and if so when and how many. This situation must be urgently addressed.

In November 2015, Burkina Faso finalized a National Strategy to End Child Marriage by 2025 and the Ministry of Justice promised to eradicate early and force marriage and revise the penal code in a press release.

Two years after this positive step and commitment, there have been no concrete actions towards ending early and forced marriage. As a result, many girls continue to be married before the age of 18 and without their consent.

It is a matter of urgency for thousands of girls that the Code of Persons and Family is amended to set 18 years as the minimum age of marriage, including for traditional and religious marriages, for boys and girls. It also of the utmost importance that you ensure that the Penal Code is amended to ensure that forced marriage is clearly defined.

I call on you to ensure that the National Strategy to End Child Marriage by 2025 is fully implemented.

I urge you, as to ensure that the Burkina Faso complies with its international legal obligations and re-commit to end early and forced marriage.

I also urge you to publicly declare a zero tolerance towards early and forced marriages and to conduct a nationwide campaign in communities, schools and health centres, providing information about the laws on forced and early marriage, raising awareness about the negative impact on girls' human rights, as well as disseminating information about how to access support services if girls find themselves at risk.

Yours sincerely

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