

**President Nouri Abusahmain  
General National Congress of Libya**

**Tripoli, Libya**

**Brussels, 4 July 2014**

**Re: Concerns regarding the killing of Mrs Salwa Bugaighis, a human rights lawyer**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE expresses its profound shock over information that we have received that Mrs Salwa Bugaighis, a human rights lawyer, was shot dead inside her home in Benghazi by a group of unidentified men wearing military uniforms. According to reports, on 26 June 2014, five unknown gunmen came to Mrs Salwa Bugaighis' home, asked about her son Wael, then shot her security guard in the leg before storming the house. Salwa Bugaighis was shot and stabbed multiple times and died of her wounds. The whereabouts of her husband, who was present at the time of the attack, are unknown. It is assumed that her husband was abducted by these gunmen whose identity is still unknown.

The shooting took place shortly after Salwa Bugaighis cast her vote in the national parliamentary elections. She and her husband came to Benghazi from Tripoli to vote and, during a television appearance earlier that day, Salwa Bugaighis spoke about gunfire in her neighbourhood after militants attacked members of the military who were protecting the polling station. In addition, one month before the shooting, Salwa Bugaighis reported that her son was the victim of an assassination attempt while driving her car. She believed that she was the intended target of the attack, her family having been forced to move to Jordan due to death threats she has received in the past.

Salwa Bugaighis was a human rights lawyer, advocating for women's rights, and a former member of the National Transitional Council (NTC). She also played an active role in the 2011 uprising against Colonel Gaddafi. She was known for opposing armed militias and radical Islamic extremists.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Moreover Article 17 states that:

*Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.*

In view of the above, the CCBE condemns in the strongest terms the killing of Mrs Salwa Bugaighis and respectfully urges your Excellency to launch a full and impartial investigation into her killing with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards. The CCBE also asks you to take all necessary measures to guarantee in all circumstances that lawyers in Libya are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisal and restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI

CCBE President