

14th August 2020

**DCI SOMALIA STATEMENT
OUR POSITION REGARDING;
The Proposed 'Sexual Intercourse Related Crimes Bill' In The Somali Federal
Parliament.**

We have learnt with shock that the Somalia parliament is considering a Sexual Intercourse Related Crimes Bill that would allow two disturbing scenarios;

- i. Allow for **child marriage** once a girl's reproductive organs mature and
- ii. Allow for **forced marriage** as long as the family gives their consent.

If enacted, this bill would represent a major setback in the fight against sexual violence in Somalia and globally. Already, Somalia has the tenth highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world. According to UN figures, 45% of girls are married before they turn 18, whilst 98% have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM). This bill would undermine efforts carried out over the past years to ensure greater protection for women and girls.

Top UN officials such as the Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten, have [stated that the Bill](#) would “grossly contravene international human rights law and standards to which Somalia is a party,” and UN High Commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet added that passing this Bill would be “a serious step backwards for the rights of victims of sexual violence in Somalia, in particular women and girls”. Earlier on August 10th, 2020, Ms Bachelet urged the Somali Federal Parliament to enact the 2018 Sexual Offences Bill and to fight against gender stereotypes and harmful practices such as child marriage that have a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls.

Our position is to urge the Somali parliament to consider immediately withdrawing it as this represents retrogressive legislation and to instead bring forward laws that give more and better protection to girls and women such as the proposed Sexual Offences Bill from 2018 which was the result of a five year process in collaboration with the United Nations, civil society and women themselves.

The adoption of this bill would only serve to encourage the increase in child marriage that we are witnessing in the region following the effects of the COVID19 pandemic, which has led to school closures and economic difficulties.