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BURKINA FASO

Your Excellency,

It is with great concern that I have learned about the thousands of girls across Burkina Faso that are still subjected to early and forced marriage. Most of them are married off at an age as early as 11 – 12 years. They are rarely sent to school and frequently endure egregious violations of their sexual and reproductive rights. Despite incredible family and societal pressure, many girls have refused such forced marriages and have overcome huge obstacles in order to escape. Amnesty International visited and interviewed some of these girls in several shelters. One of them is Maria (not her real name). At the age of 13, her father forced her to marry a 70 year old man. He even threatened to kill her if she did not marry him. Although there have been positive steps towards ending early and forced marriages, more remains to be done to prohibit special arrangements for early marriage under the age of 15.

I would like to urge you to ensure that all national laws prohibiting early and forced marriage are implemented and strengthened in line with international obligations. This should include the amendment of the Persons and Family Code to set the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls at 18 years, in line with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other international and regional human rights instruments. Please also ensure that all victims of early and forced marriages get justice and that perpetrators of early and forced marriages are punished. Lastly, please facilitate the set-up of public shelters to protect victims of early and forced marriages and other services.

Yours sincerely

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