



## **Press Release**

ShameOnWho? Campaign Launch

Prosecute the Rapist. Do Not Blame the Victim.

On the occasion of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2018, ABAAD, in partnership with the Office of the Minister of State for Women Affairs and the National Commission for Lebanese Women, and with the financial support of the Dutch Embassy in Lebanon, the British Embassy in Lebanon and the Norwegian People Aid, and a number of partners and allies, has launched the “#ShameOnWho?” nationwide campaign.

“The aim of this campaign is to press for tougher sanctions and accelerate trials against rapists, in cases of sexual violence and rape in particular, and to change social perceptions that stigmatize and shame female rape victims, pushing them to cover up the crime. It also aims to create a supportive public opinion that condemns the act of rape as a crime punishable by a deterrent punishment” said Ghida Anani, Founder & Director of ABAAD. “We urge female rape victims to exercise their rights, by raising their voices and reporting the rapists/criminals, seeking retribution and bringing them to justice” added Anani.

This campaign is part of a larger effort by ABAAD to address the issue of rape in Lebanon, which began in 2016 with the “White Dress Doesn’t Cover Rape- #Abolish\_522” from Lebanese Penal Code. The objective of the latter was to reform the cultural system that exempted the rapist from punishment, in case he married the victim. The campaign resulted in the repeal of Article 522 from the Lebanese Penal Code. This was followed by the “Life for Life” campaign in 2017 that focused more on the issue of incest/family rape. Today, the “#ShameonWho?” campaign calls for the prosecution of all rapists and promotes a public opinion that supports the victim instead of judging her.

What makes this campaign unique is the social experiment that was conducted, in more than one area in Lebanon, to observe the behaviors and reactions of people who were present during the experiment. These behaviors reflect the negative perception and attitudes of the society towards rape victims. To watch the social experiment, please visit the following website:

<https://www.facebook.com/abaadmena/videos/706309793085423/>

After months of preparation, ABAAD released the social experiment video, “Min el-Felten,” which aimed to capture the people’s real responses to rape. The two co-directors and a team of over 15 people filmed the video using hidden cameras and microphones in three areas of the Lebanese capital, aimed to represent different demographics. The microphones were planted on the actress, as well as on moles embedded in the crowds, and the five cameras in inconspicuous locations such as neighboring balconies and tinted cars.

The majority of people blamed the survivor, accusing her of instigating the rape and “running loose,” but very few asked about the rapist. This begs the question, who is really on the loose (Min el Felten)? Prosecute the rapist; do not judge the survivor.

The social experiment shows that a large number of people are negligent and unaware of how to interact with a rape victim, choosing instead to accuse, blame and shame her. This type of reaction devastatingly affects the victim’s psychological and social well-being and promotes a “culture of silence and concealment”. Overcoming such problem requires community awareness raising in order to support victims of rape, demand justice and punish criminals with deterrent penalties.

Figures indicate that 1 out of 4 women in Lebanon are sexually harassed and 49% of those cases are perpetrated by the victims’ close relatives or acquaintances. However, around 13 women per month report sexual assault in Lebanon (according to the statistics of the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces), which is equivalent to the average of only 3 women per week. A national survey conducted by ABAAD in 2017 showed that 80% of women in Lebanon believe that social and cultural beliefs justify sexual assault and violence against women and girls.

Today, with the launch of the 2018 campaign under the slogan of “#ShameOnWho?”, we call on citizens to unite and put pressure on government officials, by demanding increased punishment for perpetrators of rape and sexual violence, and to direct the blame on the perpetrator rather than the survivor.

Prosecute the rapist, do not blame the victim!