

## #NoShameNoBlame

**ABAAD: We demand the amendment of the articles relating to sexual assault crimes and the increase the penal sentences thereof.**

*This statement shall not be published before November 25 at 10:30am*

6 out of 10 women who were sexually assaulted in Lebanon did not report the crime due to considerations relating to dignity and honor. While 75% of women considered sexual assault primarily a physical and psychological assault on women, 71% stated that the society considers it an attack on the family's honor.

In this national statistical study conducted by ABAAD on sexual assault crimes in Lebanon, statistics reveal the extent to which women who are subjected to sexual violence resort to reporting such violence, and the reasons for abstaining from reporting.

**Ghida Anani, Director of ABAAD**, stated, "Unfortunately, sexual assault crimes in Lebanon are still linked to honor, dignity, and shame. It is important to address these crimes independently from society's deep-rooted stereotypes, and to deal with them firmly."

This study is part of a national campaign entitled **#NoShameNoBlame** ("لا\_عرض\_ولا\_عار#"), which is launched by ABAAD on the occasion of the 16 International Days of Activism campaign to end Violence Against Women and Girls.

Abaad, which previously worked on abolishing Article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, has tirelessly raised its voice to demand serious and severe sentences for sexual assault crimes, which would allow preventing them.

We have already begun coordinating with all relevant parliamentarian blocs in the Lebanese Parliament to submit the proposed legal amendments of Chapter Seven of the Lebanese Penal Code.

We count on the legislature in Lebanon to approve the proposed amendments and provide every survivor and victim of those crimes the justice they deserve," Anani added.

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## Notes to editors:<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Results of the national survey:**

According to the study, the primary issues that prevent women from reporting sexual assaults refer to honor and dignity, whether the crime is related to them or to their daughters:

- 6 out of 10 women who have been sexually assaulted did not report it due to dignity and honor
- 5 out of 10 women who were sexually assaulted did not report it because their families refused to do so due to dignity and honor
- 6 out of 10 women whose daughters were sexually assaulted did not report this assault due to dignity and honor
- 6 out of 10 women whose daughters were sexually assaulted did not report this assault because their families refused to do so due to dignity and honor
- 3 out of 10 women whose daughters were sexually assaulted did not report this assault because they thought no one would believe them
- Over half (55%) of the women who have experienced sexual assault have not reported it
- The majority of women (84%) who were not sexually assaulted said they would report it if they were assaulted.
- 6 out of 10 women whose daughters were sexually assaulted reported it
- 74% of women consider sexual assault primarily a physical and psychological assault on women, while 71% affirm that society sees it primarily as an attack on the family's honor.
- 60% of the participants in the study supported increasing the penal sentences to life imprisonment for perpetrators of sexual violence, indecent acts, and threats.
- 56% of the participants in the study considered that current sentences against perpetrators of sexual violence, indecent acts, and threats are unfair and are in favor of increasing them to life imprisonment.
- The Security Forces' figures on reported sexual assault crimes in Lebanon
  - 37 cases of sexual harassment in Lebanon during 2022 (around 4 crimes per month)
  - 20 cases of rape in Lebanon in 2022 (two crimes per month)
  - 57 cases of sexual assault in 2022 (around 6 reported assaults per month)

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<sup>1</sup> ABAAD conducted a national study on sexual violence in Lebanon. This study was carried out between the 13th and the 21st of October 2022.

## B. Testimonies from survivors of sexual assault<sup>2</sup>

- 1) "I was raped, and discovered I was pregnant five months after the crime. My family forbid me to report the perpetrator because they feared what people would say, and my brother threatened to kill me. I was in a deep state of shock, and was very affected psychologically, experiencing constant fear, anxiety and wanting to isolate. Today, I am better. I want to tell survivors of sexual assault that immediate reporting can save lives. Had I resorted to the authorities or specialized organizations immediately after the assault, I might have recovered quicker and the offender would have been sentenced as he deserved."
- 2) "My abuser had been blackmailing me on digital platforms before he sexually assaulted me. I reported him, but unfortunately it did not lead anywhere because he is well connected, and he also threatened my husband. This crime greatly affected my life, inducing a great shock, intense fear and losing sense of life. I often thought about committing suicide. I tell survivors of sexual assault to report their perpetrator to the relevant authorities immediately, to prevent them from threatening and blackmailing their victims. I also tell them to not fear society."
- 3) "Neither me nor my mother dared to report the assault. My family forced me to marry an older man to preserve their honor. It is hard to talk about this issue and everything I went through, but today, I am grateful that someone listened to me and supported me, it is very important to me. I tell every survivor of sexual violence to not feel guilty for what happened, it is not your fault. Try to be strong and seek support in people you trust."
- 4) "I reported the sexual assault I was victim of but long after it happened, and after relocating to another region. I didn't dare doing it before, I was too afraid of him. My environment was not supportive as the society always puts the blame on women victims of these crimes. I hope no woman will experience what I went through."
- 5) "I was raped. I did not report it to the security forces because I did not have legal papers. I have been a refugee in Lebanon for years, and I was afraid that I would be arrested. I did not tell anyone about the crime, and what torments me most today is that the perpetrator was not punished."

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<sup>2</sup> ABAAD's right holders



**About ABAAD:**

ABAAD is a civil, non-sectarian and non-profit organization established in 2011 promoting sustainable economic and social development in the MENA region through implementing principles of gender equality and justice, and providing direct services, protection and empowerment. ABAAD seeks to encourage women's active participation through policy development, legal reforms, gender integration, and empowering women by building their capabilities to participate effectively in their communities.

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