



Press Release

THE UNITED NATIONS, THE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TASKFORCE AND THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR LEBANESE WOMEN LAUNCH A 16-DAY CAMPAIGN AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Beirut, Lebanon

Wednesday, 25 November 2020 (United Nations, SGBV TF, NCLW) - Today begins the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) (25 November-10 December). On this occasion, the United Nations System in Lebanon, the Sexual and Gender-based Violence Taskforce (SGBV TF) and the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) are joining forces, to end and prevent gender-based violence in the country.

As we mark 25 years of the adoption of the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) the year 2020 is an important milestone for gender equality and work on preventing and ending violence against women and girls. As the world imposed lockdown measures to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed an alarming increase in the already [existing pandemic of violence against women](#). In Lebanon, also, findings in 2020 showed that the COVID-19 lockdown has contributed to an increase in different forms of GBV in particular, [as experienced by women and girls](#). This was exacerbated by the Beirut explosion on August 4, 2020 which has indicated that women and girls are more vulnerable to such shocks, that the risk of violence has increased for them, with an even more limited access to basic services and needs, such as health services and food, and that gender must remain at the forefront of [Beirut's humanitarian response](#).

This year, the United Nations system in Lebanon, the SGBV TF and the NCLW are implementing a campaign articulated around the theme ***"Safety from violence is everyone's right: safety at home, safety at work, safety on the streets, safety online, and safe reporting"***. It focuses on ensuring the safety of women and girls anywhere and anytime, from all types of GBV and abuse, whether verbal, physical, emotional or sexual. We are here referring to all women and girls, including Lebanese, residents in Lebanon and refugees, domestic workers, LGBTQI, and girls and women with disabilities.

This campaign calls for zero tolerance towards violence against women and girls and draws attention to everyone's role - including women, men, boys, and girls, community leaders, policy makers and law enforcement officials - in preventing all forms of violence. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian actors and security forces are more than ever responsible to provide assistance to survivors of violence.

“There is no doubt that society and its institutions’ disregard of sexual and gender-based violence is the most dangerous form of discrimination against women. As we launch the global campaign "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence", we renew our call on the nation’s members of Parliament to achieve equality between women and men in laws and to ensure effective protection for women victims of violence and their children in legislation. We also call on everyone to oppose violence and spread a culture of respect and preservation of human dignity”, said Mrs. Claudine Aoun, President of the National Commission for Lebanese Women.

“Irrespective of all good intentions and hard work for gender equality and women’s rights including their political, economic, social and cultural aspects, violence against women and girls in Lebanon not only persists, but risks and occurrences have become even higher in the debilitating context of the compounded crises and Covid-19 pandemics. Only too often they are first to suffer both at home and in the public sphere from physical and psychological violence, pressure and coercion, with little recourse to protection, accountability, justice and help” said Mr. Ján Kubiš, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon. “To remedy this requires changing societal mindsets and bold structural reforms, including the creation of a unified personal status code, criminalization of sexual harassment and general strengthening of laws against gender-based violence or abolishment of the abhorrent kafala system. Given the deepening crises, priority must be equally given to immediate economic, social and legal measures that will put interests and concerns, safety and dignity of women and girls at the center, be it Lebanese, refugees or migrant workers” he added. “Women should play a central role in the political, security and economic decision-making processes necessary to put a stop to these shameful practices.”

Entitled **Safety from violence is everyone’s right** (السلامة من العنف حق للجميع) the campaign (25 November-10 December) will include a social media campaign which will run for 16 days, with the **#SafetyIsYourRight** #السلامة_حقك hashtags to call for women’s right to live free from violence. The campaign will include a 30-second video encouraging everyone to act in support of women and girls who are at risk or survivors of GBV.

“The COVID19 pandemic has resulted in a new wave of violence against women, with the most vulnerable bearing the brunt of excessive violence and widespread abuses. Women have had enough of this continuing brutality that is affecting their wellbeing and their safety. In today’s turbulent times, this must end to help create an enabling environment where women can thrive and feel safe”, said Najat Roshdi, Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon. “Every person has a role to play to stamp out all forms of violence perpetrated against women, because safety and protection from violence are basic rights, they are everyone’s rights and in everyone’s interest. That’s why I am calling on every community leader, policy maker, activist, man and woman, to take a collective stand against gender-based violence that is playing an obstructive role to the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” she asserted.



The international campaign 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence originated from the 1991 first Women's Global Leadership Institute and raises awareness and increases momentum toward ending violence against women and girls worldwide. The United Nations Secretary General, through the [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) Campaign, supports the 16 Days of Activism under the global 2020's theme ["Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!"](#).

The United Nations system in Lebanon comprises 23 agencies, funds and programmes as well as a peacekeeping mission, a political mission and a regional commission that cover a broad spectrum of peacekeeping, political, development, human rights and humanitarian work in Lebanon. The United Nations supports Lebanon to promote the country's long-term peace and security, development and human rights priorities.

The National Commission for Lebanese women (NCLW) is an official institution established by law at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 1998 with the aim of promoting the status of women and ensuring equal opportunities for women and men. Its General Assembly is composed of personalities who are known for their activities related to women's affairs and is chaired by the woman delegated by the President of the Republic.

The Commission carries out advisory functions at the Presidency of the Government and public administrations and institutions, as well as liaison and coordination functions with various administrations, institutions, public, community and civic organizations and Arab and international organizations. The Commission also performs various operational functions, including the formulation of strategies and plans.

The Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Taskforce (SGBV TF) comprises UN agencies and national and international NGOs dedicated to carry out SGBV activities in Lebanon both at the national and regional level alongside MOSA and other relevant government authorities. It aims at supporting a comprehensive and coordinated approach to SGBV, including prevention, care and support, and efforts to allow survivors to access justice. The SGBV Task Force also prioritizes life-saving activities and gap-filling as well as enhancing predictable and effective prevention, risk mitigation and response. The SGBV Task Force contributes to a shared vision and integrated strategies among humanitarian stakeholders to better address SGBV through a survivor-centered and rights-based approach.

Media Contacts:

For more information:

Roula Rached, UN Women, phone number: + 961 70351088

Micheline Elias Massaad, NCLW, phone number: + 961 3 452570



Erica Talentino, SGBV TF, phone number: +96176482273

Lisa Abou Khaled, SGBV TF, phone number: +96171880070