

## UN LEBANON JOINT STATEMENT

### On International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)

Beirut, May 17, 2021

On the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) that is observed on May 17, 2021, the United Nations and its partners stand in solidarity with all people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).<sup>1</sup>

The economic, political, and humanitarian crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating Beirut port explosions have aggravated the vulnerabilities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ+) and gender diverse individuals in Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> These communities are experiencing an increase in gender-based violence, such as domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and death threats.<sup>3</sup> Fear of harassment in public spaces and the diminishing presence of LGBTIQ+ friendly spaces, are leading to social isolation and deteriorating mental health.<sup>4</sup> Pre-existing homophobic and transphobic discrimination have also contributed to a significant rise in unemployment, homelessness, and food insecurity.<sup>5</sup>

Against this backdrop, the United Nations emphasizes the importance of the recommendations put forth in the third Universal Periodic Review report of Lebanon (issued on January 2021) with respect to SOGIESC issues<sup>6</sup>, and reiterates its firm commitment to support the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Accordingly, all United Nations entities and their partners pledge to:

- Develop a LGBTIQ+ strategy that outlines a systematic approach to integrating LGBTIQ+ rights in all response plans and programming in Lebanon.
- Ensure that groups organizing around sexual and bodily rights are protected.
- Ensure that Lebanon's Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) upholds its commitment to reach and support the needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals during Lebanon's socio-economic recovery.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'People of diverse SOGIESC' is considered a more inclusive term describing people with diverse sexualities and genders. Other terms include LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTIQ+ and sexual and gender minorities.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/16/lebanons-covid-19-aid-vulnerable-including-lgbt-people>;

<sup>3</sup> <https://lebanon.unfpa.org/en/publications/gender-based-violence-information-management-system-annual-review-2020>

<sup>4</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/10/rapid-gender-analysis-of-the-beirut-port-explosion>

<sup>5</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/gender-alert-on-covid-19-lebanon>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LBIndex.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-reform-recovery-reconstruction-framework-3rf>



- Continue to scale-up and expand multi-sectoral services targeting the specific needs of the most marginalized people of diverse SOGIESC, especially trans individuals.
- Support advocacy efforts to repeal articles 534, 521, 526, 531, 532, and 533 of the Lebanese penal code, which are used to criminalize same-sex relations and discriminate against diverse gender identity and expression.
- Enact policies and procedures that take into account non-binary understanding of gender with regards to access to governmental and non-governmental services.
- Advocate for legislation that allows transgender individuals to amend the gender markers on their identity cards and official papers.
- Support efforts to prevent the arbitrary arrest and detention of trans and gender non-conforming individuals in Lebanon, especially refugees, migrant workers, and other groups marginalized by their legal status.

These commitments build on the United Nations' past and on-going support to people of diverse SOGIESC and LGBTIQ+ rights.<sup>8</sup> Over the past year, the United Nations and their partners in Lebanon have:

- Safeguarded the inclusion of people of diverse SOGIESC as a target group in the implementation of humanitarian response plans, with the representation of LGBTIQ+ organizations in Inter-Agency coordination structures.
- Ensured live-saving protection interventions and health services for persons of diverse SOGIESC, including for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Provided cash assistance and livelihoods support to alleviate the severe socio-economic impact on people of diverse SOGIESC.
- Convened governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to examine Lebanon's human rights record with respect to LGBTIQ+ rights for the country's third cycle of Universal Periodic Review (2021).
- Consulted with people of diverse SOGIESC and organizations to inform inclusive gender-responsive programming, including identifying needs and gaps.
- Supported LGBTIQ+ organizations with financial resources.
- Contributed to assessments and research undertaken on persons of diverse SOGIESC in order to build evidence on the population and their specific needs.

On this day of IDAHOBIT, and in recognition of its global mandate to "Leave No One Behind", the United Nations affirms its unwavering commitment to work for the protection, rights, and well-being of people of diverse SOGIESC in Lebanon.

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<sup>8</sup> In recognition of IDAHOBIT 2020, fifteen member states sent a letter to the United Nations in Lebanon, calling for more attention to the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. In response, the United Nations publicly announced its commitment to work to improve the rights and lives of people of diverse SOGIESC: <https://lebanon.un.org/en/126242-un-lebanon-response-idahobit-statement-addressed-united-nations-and-partners-support-rights>.

