



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 December 2017

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-second session

12–23 March 2018

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

ABAAD believes that the issue of women in media and media institutions in times of conflict or in emergency settings is important but dramatically under-documented, and thus requires further research and advocacy.

The impact of violence and armed conflict depends, of course, on individual circumstances, but is however heavily linked to gender roles and stereotypes. Women and children are disproportionately affected by sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). In Lebanon, rape, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, survival sex, forced sex work, early, forced, and child marriage, as well as denial of resources are on the rise among refugee communities in a Lebanese context where gender inequalities were already widespread prior to the Syria war, with an intertwining of patriarchy, politics & sectarianism.

ABAAD and other women's rights organizations in Lebanon and in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) believe that SGBV is being widely underreported. In the case of Lebanon, only one quarter of incidents are reported.

Here comes a crucial question: what role(s) do the media play in shedding light on the cycle of violence women and girls from refugee communities are going through? How can media contribute in shaping the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of the citizens, in a hyper connected world?

Media reporting in conflict and post conflict Humanitarian contexts can play an effective and impactful role in advocating for the rights of sexual and gender-based violence survivors. It can inspire change at all levels: policy, institutional, and at community and public opinion levels.

Yet, it has also often proved poor or unethical when it further puts at risk the survivors of sexual violence and their families. A careful look at the media coverage of Gender-Based Violence in Lebanon shows that the issue is absent, as well as any form of debate about the best policies to prevent GBV during conflict, within refugee communities, host communities, or between both. Conflict and situations of displacement remain undoubtedly addressed from a male perspective, with no political will to operationalize Resolution 1325 or other resolutions made in relation to women during and after conflicts.

Lebanon today is host to more than 1 million registered refugees from Syria, but the country's fragile political equilibrium and weak public services are sources of increased tensions between refugees and host communities and hampers the safety of women and girls' refugees. Lack of legal status pushes men back to the domestic sphere while forcing women into the informal labour market where they face increased risk of sexual and Gender-Based Violence. In addition, 1/5 of refugee households in Lebanon are female-headed households.

Outbreaks of violence have flared up throughout the country while prejudices, stereotypes, and otherisation of refugee communities are furthering their marginalization.

In this regard, while many studies, analyse, and focus on the plight of refugees from a prevention and protection perspective, very few are engaging the media in the global response to gender-based violence. Yet, media are not playing their role in influencing the public discourses in relation to refugee women and girls' predicament in Lebanon; portraying them as either powerless victims and objects rather than subjects of their own destiny.

Media should contribute to a rhetoric based on social justice rather than charity and pity; thus, depicting them as powerful citizens rather than demographic threat whose wombs constitute a national peril.

Therefore, ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality would like to urge the international community to support policies and programs that are in line or seek to activate the UNSCR 1325 in Lebanon, to recall key recommendations developed by UN women in its 2015 report “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, and to implement the recommendations of the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Resolution 1325, to prioritize conflict prevention over the use of force, to address the obstacles to effective women’s participation in peace processes and reconstruction, to strengthen the human-rights based approach in dealing with women peace and security, and to fight impunity for the perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence, among other resolutions.

Given the role media have today, and the challenges facing women, peace and security, no change in policies and behaviours can occur without the effective engagement of the Media for gender-sensitive reporting and investigations that addresses violence and impunity while leaving enough space for women to express themselves, as individuals, but also as community leaders, and peace-builders.