

# Joint Efforts Between Law Enforcement and NGOs to Improve GBV Response

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While traditional policing is responsive, community policing assumes a proactive role. It consists of networking with the private sector as well as civil society in order to prevent crimes and raise awareness of criminal matters. Such collaboration with the community establishes a safer environment.

The Internal Security Forces (ISF) has set the latter policing model as their goal and embedded it in their core vision. For this reason, it is no surprise that the ISF would be the first to address crimes that threaten society and defy the values that it is built on, such as gender-based violence (GBV).

In line with our endeavor to keep pace with the advances in policing, and driven by our proactive, strategic vision, we took part in the parliamentary subcommittee entrusted with drafting a law on the protection of women from domestic violence. Having set our sights on protecting human rights, we ensured that the new law would meet the greater needs of Lebanese society and simultaneously complement existing legal texts that regulate the ISF's work.

Our fundamental and persistent commitment to protecting women from violence and providing them with critical support in such situations led us to partner with 'KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation', a non-profit organization. Together, we developed a training module that explains the procedure to be followed by the ISF judicial police when dealing with and investigating crimes of domestic violence, in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. A memorandum followed, providing ISF members with guidance on how to communicate with survivors of domestic violence in operations' rooms and territorial centers, in order to best assist them in seeking justice.

Moreover, we successfully urged the Public Prosecution Office of the Court of Cassation to issue a decision limiting the power to investigate such crimes to judicial brigades and specialized units within the judicial police. Subsequently, the ISF trained the members of these specialized units on the content of the adopted training module and memorandum. It equipped these units with women-friendly investigation rooms, containing beds for forensic medical examinations.

Recently, the ISF and KAFA together published a training module on the role of the ISF in combating human trafficking, especially sexual exploitation.

In addition to this successful partnership, the ISF collaborated with 'ABAAD (dimensions)', another non-governmental organization (NGO), to develop two training programs for the ISF. The first of these training programs covered the psychological approach to GBV and explained the role of the judicial police; the second centered on the management of sexual violence.

Subsequently, we sought to incorporate the feedback and recommendations collected from these two training programs into further training, or a new project altogether. As a result, we collaborated with ABAAD, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to prepare a draft memorandum on handling and investigating human trafficking and sex crimes. We and the Public Prosecution Office of the Court of Cassation are finalizing the memorandum.

By providing information on how to deal with survivors of such crimes, this memorandum will fill a significant gap. It outlines the proper referral pathway for survivors of GBV, and where officers should send survivors to receive appropriate psychological, legal, and health support. This memorandum also includes special procedures for minors and asylum-seekers.

The ISF continues to advance the protection of women's rights and to support women's empowerment through various activities:

- The formation of a committee charged with managing a project aimed at training judicial police members on how to deal with and investigate crimes of domestic violence;
- Participation in all national committees relating to gender and GBV;
- Active involvement in putting together a manual on human trafficking and the standardized indicators of trafficking, which have been adopted at the national level by all relevant authorities;
- Participation in all projects and activities implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the Arab States region;
- Involvement in drafting the anti-trafficking national strategy and the Standard Operating Procedures.

The ISF has also issued several internal memorandums that encourage personnel to provide all kinds of help to women who have suffered abuse or violence, or received threats.

The ISF's collaborations with both civil society and the private sector are innumerable. In fact, the ISF has played a major advocacy role using audiovisual, audio, and print media to shed light on issues that women face in criminal cases and on gender-based issues, in times of peace as well as armed conflict. Through numerous media appearances, the ISF has been raising awareness on gender-based crimes, human trafficking - especially of women - and women affected by armed conflict.

Finally, we collaborated with the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) to provide female and male

officers from the ISF and the GS with a training on the development of law-enforcement workers' competencies. The twenty-five day training was held at the ISF Academy in Aramoun. It resulted in a training manual created by a high-ranking group of officers and civil society experts that are well-experienced and highly competent in the field of human rights in general, and women and vulnerable groups in particular. This manual was developed as a guideline for all frontline workers.

In light of the lectures included in the manual, a group of ISF and GS officers were then trained on harmonizing positive law and international human rights standards. This training aimed to showcase the uses of international conventions to fill existing gaps in national legislation.

Through their collaboration, the General Directorate of the ISF and IWSAW have taken a precursory, pioneering step towards the prevention of gender-based crimes, the empowerment of women, and the training of a responsive judicial police whose members quickly counter such crimes.

Lastly, we hope this collaboration will set an example to be followed by all societies and organizations wishing to fight the same fight. Such collaborations positively impact, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the younger generations' future and protect our nation's, as well as its citizens' interests.

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