

Reports from Newspapers

November 1993 - March 1994

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Violence against women, especially battery, remains relatively marginal in the responsible coverage of human tragedies. Violence against women receives little attention, whether in the formal or informal sectors of the Lebanese society. Although it would seem that we are beyond establishing whether it exists or not, mainstream media does not contribute to understanding and evaluating the situation. Furthermore, as this survey will show, there is an evident shortage in valid and reliable data needed to endorse and produce action.

In a preliminary attempt to investigate reported violence against women in Lebanon, we screened the section on security reports in Lebanese newspapers. This study consists of analysing reported crimes against women in three leading daily Lebanese newspapers, Al-Nahar, Al-Safir, and Al-Diyar, covering a period of six months: November 1993 until March 1994.

The investigation aimed to detect trends, if any, in the kinds of violence inflicted on women, their frequencies, reasons, and existing legal procedures. After reviewing the security breaches of the day, incidents in which the victim was a woman were coded according to relevant content categories.

These categories included details about the victim as well as the aggressor such as their ages, occupations, educational levels, the relationship between them, if any, and the reported or alleged reasons of the crime. Additional data included the kind of violence, the weapons used, the region in which the crime occurred, whether legal action was taken against the aggressor, and if the victim received medical attention.

Information about legal action and medical attention to the victim were almost inexistent because the report focused on the available details of the crimes themselves. The areas were evenly spread between urban and rural

regions, with a slightly higher occurrence in cities, notably Beirut, where security reports and police patrols are more prevalent. It is to note that newspaper reports of crimes are mostly incomplete and publish only preliminary data about the nature of the crime and the victim. As will be shown in the following tables, little is reported about domestic violence, which seems to remain a private family matter.

A total of 113 incidents of violence against women were reported in a period of six months. More than one form of violence was inflicted on some of the victims totaling 134 acts which explains the discrepancy between the total in Table 1 and the other tables presented here. These forms of violence include rape, killing, mugging, kidnapping, beating, attempted rape, incest and attempted killing. As shown in table 1, rape was the most frequently reported crime (30.6%) followed by murder (25.4%) and mugging or burglary (12.7%) which sometimes included kidnapping, imprisonment, rape and/or murder. Beating represented only 6.7% and was related mostly to domestic arguments. The aggressors in these cases were an ex-husband or a member of the extended family who

coerced the victim for transfer of property or real estate, an insurance policy, or for other financial matters. One particular case involved the brother-in-law of a widow beating and raping his victim after she refused to marry him and then refused to endorse her deceased husband's insurance policy.

The reasons for the crimes were mostly unknown or not reported, i.e., 80 out of the 113, the equivalent of 71% of the sample (see Table 2). Family related conflicts, although small, formed the second largest category in the examination of reasons given by the aggressor reaching approximately 11%. In one of the cases of unwanted marriages, the father and the brother killed the victim because she wanted to marry someone from a different religion. Three crimes of honor were reported, two of which involved the killing of the victim, and the other was an unsuccessful attempt at murder. The category for other reasons (see table 2) includes violence resulting in burglary, sexual assault cases where the victims claim force and the aggressors deny it, political conflicts, burglaries, and a 'joke' that got out of hand.

The majority of reported cases, 52.2% (see Table 3), did not contain information about the relationship between the aggressor and his victim, most likely because they are unknown. Together, members of the immediate family form 28.3% of the total number of perpetrators. If members of the extended family are added they total 37.2%.

Table 1**Reasons for Violence**As reported in three Lebanese newspapers
November 1993 - March 1994

Forms of Violence	Total Number of Incidents	Percentage
Rape	41	30.6
Killing	34	25.4
Mugging / Robbery	17	12.7
Kidnapping / imprisonment	13	9.7
Beating	9	6.7
Attempted Rape	8	6.0
Incest	8	6.0
Attempted Killing	4	2.9
Total	134	100.0

Table 2**Forms of violence Against Women**As reported in three Lebanese newspapers
November 1993 - March 1994

Reasons for Violence	Number of Incidents	Percentage
Unknown / Not reported	80	70.8
Family reasons (domestic, inheritance, insurance, money, honor, religious differences, etc.)	12	10.6
Drugs / sexual assault / psychological disturbances	8	7.1
Other reasons	13	11.5
Total	113	100.0

Table 3**Relationship of Aggressors to Victims**As reported in three Lebanese newspapers
November 1993 - March 1994

Relationship	Number of Incidents	Percentage
Males in the nuclear family (father, brother, son, including one sister)	19	16.8
Husband / Ex-husband	13	11.5
Members of extended family (brother-in-law, nephew, uncle, step-son, aunt's husband)	10	8.9
Others (boyfriend, friend, employer, neighbor)	12	10.6
Unknown / Not specified	59	52.2
Total	113	100.0

Reports per
Newspaper
Al-Nahar = 52
Al-Diyar = 39
Al-Safir = 22
Total = 113

Battered Women In Lebanon

Women victims of violence are largely defenseless given their youth and consequently, their vulnerability to coercion by older males. A large proportion of the victims were reported to be below the age of 15 (Table 4), whereas their aggressors were between 21 and 30. We would have liked to examine the link, if one does exist, between the kind of violence and the age of the victim in light of the relationship between the aggressor and his victim. Such an analysis would have shed more light on the assumed sexual/incestuous nature of the crimes given the fact that a large number of the victims are below 15. The absence of a complete set of data for each case and the high range of the unknown/not reported category did not allow for statistically significant tabulations and deductions.

According to a study published in *Al-Nahar*, it was reported that the rape of minors in Lebanon total 2,671 between 1988 and 1992. Of this total, there were 970 females and 1,701 males. Further-more, the aggressors were teenagers and/or kin to the victim, such as brother or father. (1)

In addition to the existence of more than one form of violence per incident and victim, some involved more than one aggressor. According to our content analysis,

117 aggressors were involved in the 113 incidents appearing in the other tables of this report.

More in-depth investigation is needed to access the determinants and variables of the situation on violence against women in Lebanon, despite the relevance of the data presented in this study. Violence against women remains an extremely peripheral problem in Lebanon. Despite the fact that media indulge in scandals and shock stories, violence against women, especially if related to sex and do-

mestic battery, seems to remain highly linked to honor. People feel that reporting any actual or suspected violation of that honor -- whether it is of the woman's doing or is inflicted on her -- may cause more harm to the entire family. Therefore, it is not perceived as a public issue or as a social problem, but a private one. When reported, it seems as if it only concerns people and women from the lower brackets of society or who have been abandoned by their families, work as maids, or are dead.

Table 4

Age of Women Victims of Violence

As reported in three Lebanese newspapers
November 1993 - March 1994

Age of Victim	Number of Victims	Percentage
Less than 15	26	23.0
16 - 20	13	11.5
21 - 30	16	14.2
More than 30	12	10.6
Unknown / Not specified	46	40.7
Total	113	100.0

Table 5

Age of Aggressors

As reported in three Lebanese newspapers
November 1993 - March 1994

Age of Aggressors	Number of Aggressors	Percentage
up to 20	7	6.0
21 - 30	20	17.1
31 - 40	14	12.0
More than 40	10	8.5
Unknown /Not reported	66	56.4
Total	117	100.0

(1) Ibrahim al-Samsamani, *Incestuous Relations*, *Al-Nahar*, Saturday April 23, 1994.