

Report on the Socio-Political & Cultural Contexts of Violence

& their Impact on the Acceptance of Torture in Lebanon





**REPORT ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND
CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF VIOLENCE & THEIR
IMPACT ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF TORTURE IN
LEBANON**

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ALEF - ACT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS COMMITMENT TO TORTURE PREVENTION AND MONITORING IN LEBANON



Operational since 1996 (under the name of Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme-International) and officially registered in 2004, ALEF-Act for Human Rights ([Association Libanaise pour l'Éducation et la Formation](#)/Lebanese Association for Education and Training) is a Non-Governmental Organization, working on monitoring, protecting and promoting Human Rights in Lebanon through education, training, advocacy and lobbying activities.

MISSION

ALEF believes in the absolute value of Human Beings and in the moral and legal imperative to uphold this value. Embracing a comprehensive approach to monitor, defend, and educate on human rights, ALEF aims to complement and gear all efforts towards the achievement of an influential Human Rights constituency.

ALEF seeks to strengthen the respect and practice of human rights along all levels of the social, political, and economic structures and seeks to re-instate the fundamental value of every human being as a priority for policy makers and policy agendas.

ALEF has been engaged in working on “Torture Prevention and Monitoring in Lebanon” since the year 2007, when it implemented a 1-year project aimed at mobilizing the local community towards detecting, addressing and reporting torture cases; raising awareness on the brutality of this practice and advocating at the national and international levels for the transposition of international standards related to torture and ill-treatment into the national legislation. This project enabled ALEF to have a close view on the prevalence of violations related to torture and ill-treatment in detention centers and prisons, mostly directed towards vulnerable groups such as drug addicts, undocumented migrants, sex workers, Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Inter-sex (LGBTI), and people detained for national security reasons.

The work ALEF is conducting on torture prevention and monitoring is on-going, a second project of two years funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands started in December 2009 and aims to strengthen the efforts towards preventing torture and ill treatment in Lebanon as well as effectively monitoring and reporting torture allegations. The project works not only on the legal and media aspects, but also digs deep into the socio-political and cultural arenas to explore the various aspects of the Lebanese life that include one form or the other of violence and to raise awareness on the linkage between violence and the acceptance of the practice of torture.

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The statistical report used for this research was prepared by Statistics Lebanon in August 2010.

WHY AZAB MECH RAHA?

“Azabak Raha” means: it is a pleasure to be tortured by you!

This Arabic expression is commonly used in Lebanon and for that reason it was chosen as main title for the awareness raising campaign ALEF is conducting against torture and ill-treatment in prisons and detention centers. The difference between the use of the expression in daily life, which has a positive connotation, and its use in the awareness raising campaign lies in bringing it to life in its real meaning. Is it really a pleasure to be tortured? Is it legitimate and acceptable to have pleasure by torturing others?

The answer to that is: torture cannot be as acceptable and common as this saying is. In this report it is shown that violence is entrenched in the Lebanese society and that practices such as torture and ill-treatment are in general terms accepted as a normal punishment for alleged criminals, therefore the expression also indicates how this logic is reflected in the use of the language by Lebanese people in their daily life.

A- SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Lebanese society has suffered from many years of war and a long history of mistrust, violence and conflict between the different religious, social, and political constituencies. Since 1991 Lebanon has been passing through a transitional phase of instability between an unfinished war and unfound peace characterized by unachieved state-building process, weak rule of law and prevalence of violence on the socio-political and cultural levels.

This report represents an attempt to explore the perception and practice of violence in the various dimensions of socio-political and cultural life and the impact it has on the acceptance of torture practices and degrading treatment. The paper will focus on the various manifestations of violence in Lebanon over the last decade (2000-2010), and investigate their effects on torture in Lebanon.

B- DEFINITIONS

This report deals with 2 major terms: violence and torture. Alef adopts the definitions as indicated in international human rights instruments. As per the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN CAT) “torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”

Definitions of violence are numerous. The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) in art.19 defines violence as: “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”

In the World Report on Violence and Health (2002): “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity” is considered as violence. As per definitions of violence against women, gender-based violence is that that “... includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.”¹

¹ General recommendation No. 19 para. 7 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, ARTICLE 1

Violence against women “means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”²

The General Assembly resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women recognizes that “domestic violence can include economic deprivation and isolation and that such conduct may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of women.”³

C- METHODOLOGY

The paper builds on both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, stemming from primary and secondary sources of data mainly:

- 1- **Literature Review:** of national and international academic articles, books and journals that discuss social and political violence and its effect on society; along with a number of reports published by international and national non-governmental organizations about Lebanon.
- 2- **A Survey:** conducted to tap on the Lebanese public understanding and general attitude towards violence with a sample of 400 individuals⁴. The results of the questionnaire ensured that the analysis is relevant to Lebanon communal realities.
- 3- **Interviews with key informants:** to gauge experts’ opinions and gather in-depth information held with more than 20 concerned professionals and practitioners. Interviewees included government officials, academics, and non-governmental organization activists in the field of education, sociology, psychology, media, justice, security, human rights. (A list of interviewees attached in Annex 1).

² General Assembly resolution 48/104.

³ General Assembly resolution 58/147

⁴ The sample was representatively distributed to the different parameters: gender, religions/sects, social, economic status and marital status, educational levels and regions, areas of residence and difference between areas of residence (rural-urban). These inferential details are used to give a better scientific understanding of people’s responses and explore any possible correlations.

II- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence is an enshrined value in the Lebanese political, social, economic and cultural spectrums; well observed and researched at grassroots level, trans-regional, trans-sectarian. Perceptions against violence are not prevalent amongst the Lebanese, who accept violence practices in their social, economic and political lives.

This study suggests several conditions under which torture is an instrument of state and political powers, a tool that minimizes the protection of law and human rights, enforcing power and control over opponents, and creating fear.

The Lebanese political context and its repercussions on the state, groups and individuals together with the permissive attitude towards violence, hate speech, incitement and dehumanization of the other emphasizes impunity of torture perpetrators, and justifies not only their actions but also resorting to such practice as a conventional tool to punish alleged criminals.

Weak rule of law, poor law enforcement along with inadequate laws to protect citizens' and migrants' personal freedoms and interests, in addition to nepotism, impunity and corruption make it impossible to hold officials accountable for acts of abuses. This exacerbates the situation of torture practices in Lebanon and contributes to the widespread use and justification of torture by various political and social factions.

Poverty and marginalization that vulnerable groups and individuals experience do not allow them to defend themselves and demand their rights. This in turn helps create a climate of impunity favorable to continued torture and other forms of violence. The socio-economic status of poor and marginalized groups and individuals, including those marginalized on the grounds of their cultural identity, makes them particularly vulnerable to violence, including torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and its effects.

Specific groups in Lebanon (refugees, migrant workers, trafficked persons, undocumented migrants, LGBT persons, and some journalists) are at a high risk of being tortured, due to the prevalent cultural, social and political exclusion, and the discrimination they face.: Islamist militants and individuals suspected of collaboration with Israel are also subjected to torture as they represent a threat to national security. The justification of torture as a means of protection against threats to national security helps to legitimize and accept this

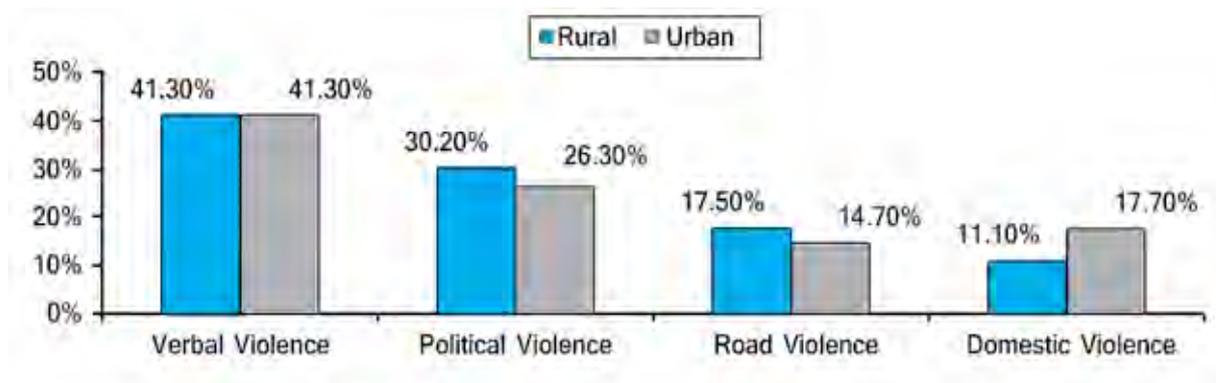


practice, thus contributing to weakening the moral restraints against engaging in torture and other gross violations of human rights.

III- VIOLENCE IN LEBANON:

The definition of the terms violence and torture proved controversial in Lebanon. Key informants interviewed had trouble explaining the difference between violence and torture: where some referred to torture as violence practiced by the authorities, others considered that violence needs to be systematic and continuous, in order to be considered torture.; Interviewees familiar with human rights referred to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the UNCAT. Others believed that torture is intentional and has a specific purpose, whereas violence may be a reaction that is not planned. Public survey respondents define torture as the act of violence by the authority (legal or de-facto) mainly in prisons and detention centers.

A- POLITICAL VIOLENCE MANIFESTATIONS:



1- Political & Sectarian Conflicts

Lebanon has been suffering from a perennial political insecurity for the past five decades that have obstructed Lebanese political establishment and sabotaged the state building process. The various Lebanese constituencies share little vision for their country; they have different priorities and political agendas. The constitutional institutions have suffered from personalized political agendas, vacancy, and mutual de-legitimization over various periods of times since 1991, exasperated then by the 2005 events and their aftermath. Political unrest, including political assassinations, frequent bombings, and violent clashes between different factions, presents serious threats to the life of every citizen, leading to a weakened trust in state institutions and in the rule of law.

Political violence is spread between the different political/sectarian groups with high segregation of sects into political blocks and diminishing voice for non conformant members of a certain sect i.e. (every Shiite should be a supporter

of Hezbollah and AMAL likewise, every Sunni should be Future Party supporter; whilst Christians should be either supporters of the Free Patriotic Movement, or supporters of Lebanese Forces and Phalanges Party). Moreover, sectarian leaderships maintain contacts with regional powers to be used in their quest against other sects.

The sectarian tension and repetitive clashes coupled with poor law enforcement and limited capacity of official security forces to maintain order has led to the proliferation of small arms amongst civil groups in different regions. This has in turn led to the usage of armaments in handling personal disputes between citizens of different political/sectarian affiliations, resulting in casualties and putting the whole security of Lebanese citizens at stake. This problem adds up to the severe breaches of human security in Lebanon

2- Violent ideologies & Hate Speech

Political parties in Lebanon stem from violent ideologies; they glorify the use of force to achieve political goals, they consider dying for a cause sacred and maintain high levels of armaments. Lebanese political parties work insistently on recruiting young supporters and use indoctrination and display them in para-military parades (HCC 2004; PPM 2008). However there is no strong evidence of involving youngsters in military training⁵.

Whether sectarian or political, leaders of all factions have used violent political discourse, threatening words, personal attacks to instigate hate among supporters while depicting the other as a source of all evils. Inciting violence against the other lead to acts such as burning pictures and banners and vandalizing properties.

Following this logic serious unsubstantiated accusations of crimes punishable by law such as stealing, abusing public office, bribes and embezzlement, accusation of treason, conspiracy and spying are conveyed, endangering the concerned individual/group and making it permissible and just to inflict punishment without resorting to legal processes.

Violent and hate speech scored the highest percentage (35.42%) amongst the surveyed as the most prominent forms of violence, with an average rank of 4.29 violent intensity (on a scale of 1 -not violent to 5 very violent) compared to the 1.20% for "Violence of War".

⁵ The Special Representative of the Secretary General on children and armed conflict visited Lebanon in April 2007 and reported that there is only "anecdotal evidence" of the association of children with the military wings of some political parties but warned that "should sectarian violence flare in the current political climate in Lebanon, children and youth may well become involved". UN Report, Visit of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to the Middle East, UN OSRSG/CAAC, 9-20 April 2007

The fight on terrorism has exacerbated the use of torture against members of groups considered radical islamists e.g. Fatah Al Islam detainees have been subjected to severe torture when detained by the Lebanese military in 2007-2008.

3- Human security⁶

The political turmoil, the political affiliation of certain security forces unit, and the inability of Lebanese security forces to maintain control over specific areas of the country controlled by Lebanese and non-Lebanese de-facto powers weaken the authority and effectiveness of the security forces to maintain order, enforce the law and preserve rights and properties of citizens. Consequently organized crime and gangs activities flourish, small arms spread⁷ and citizens' security and life is at stake daily.

4- Statistical Findings & Analysis

In 2010 Lebanon scored 90.9 over 120 (120 being a completely failed state) on the failed states index⁸ and ranked 34, 7.3 on de-legitimization of the state and 8.9 on the security apparatus failure on a scale of 10; revealing the lack of proper law enforcement,

In the survey, 23.13% of the people responded that “political violence” comes first to their mind when they think of violence and 26.27% said they know at least one person who has suffered from beating by official Lebanese security agencies (65% of respondents) or de-facto authorities (35% of respondents)⁹. 94.94% of the informants considered violence in Lebanon to be a serious problem and that it should be considered a crime before the law (93.02%).

Respondents indicated that they are against “ideological education for children”

(1.09 over 5), “violent and instigating speech” (1.09), “following a political leader whose speech is violent and loud” (1.22). In another answer 75.42% of respondents

⁶ The Commission on Human Security's definition of human security: to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms- freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

⁷ Almost 17% of the interviewees admitted owning a weapon at home, mostly hunting weapons (75%) but also military weapons of different kinds (25%). Among those who admitted owning a weapon men were significantly more (24% of men and 9.5% of women). However when looking at sectarian distribution, the Shiite give the lowest percentage of admission (8.5%) which shows that answers in this critical issue do not reflect reality.

⁸ “The Failed States Index 2010”, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings

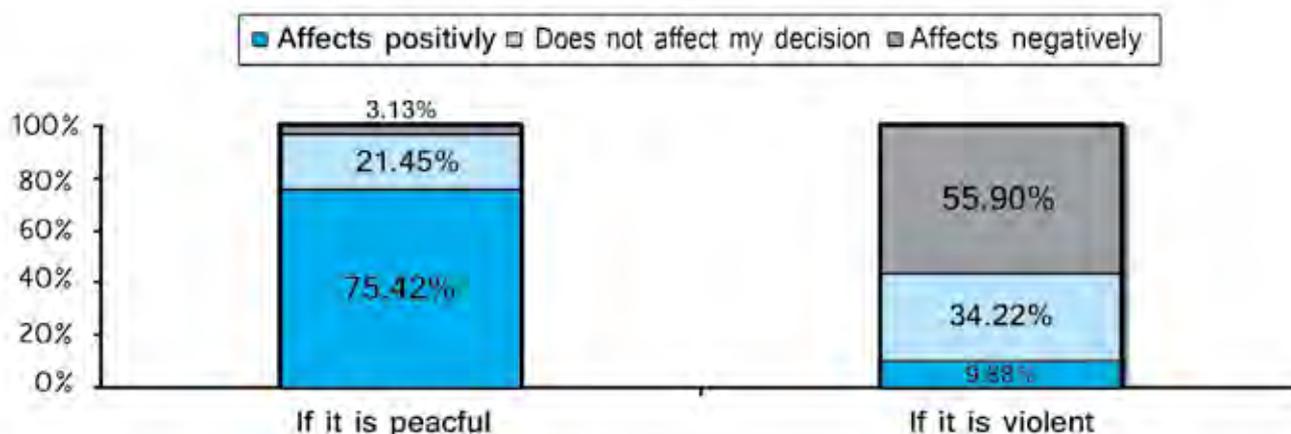
⁹ The percentage of Sunni and Christian people knowing a person who has suffered from beating was 31 & 32% whereas the percentage of Shiites was 19% and Druze only 10%. The percentage is also significantly higher in the Metn 42%, the North 36.5% and Baabda 32% while it drops to less than 27% in other areas.

said that peaceful political speech influences their decision to follow a political leader positively whilst 55.90% are negatively affected by violent speech. On the other hand 34.22% mentioned that violent speech does not shape their decision to follow a political leader and 9.88% asserted this will affect them positively¹⁰.

The above mentioned answers contradict with the political practice prevalent in Lebanon and the severe political segregation between the various political camps. Mere observation shows that political leaders, who gain massive popular support, use violent speech in their discourse. However, the answers reveal that Lebanese tend to either morally reject political violence and use politically correct language when expressing their ideas or simply accept violent speech and ideology as standard daily discourse. This makes the attempt to measure the existence of other dimensions of violence in a society all distorted and inaccurate.

When life is at risk and political violence prevalent, smaller offences, injustices and infringements seem insignificant to the general stability and security of society. Violence become more acceptable and practiced as an integral part of the life dynamic. Torture itself, or at least some forms of it, may become acceptable as a tool to bring some offenders to justice, take revenge from an opponent or revive some “fake” stability and control.¹¹

If your leader's speech is violent or peaceful, does this affect your decision to follow him?



¹⁰ The age group 16-18 showed the highest percentage of being effected positively with a violent speech. Among the areas, Kesrwan/Jbeil and the South have shown the highest percentage 18% and 17% of being positively affected by a violent speech and Beirut showed the lowest 2.50%. In urban areas 11% are effective positively while only 3% in rural areas. On the other hand the Sunnis appear to be the most affected negatively by a violent speech with 65% compared to 59% for the Shiites and 50% for the Christians and Druze.

¹¹ In the questionnaire 60.24% of the interviewees considered that the security forces do abuse their authority notably through disrespecting detainees (42.40%), physical punishment and beating (35.60%) and extended detention (12%), however very little of these 60% that are aware of the problem have engaged in civil actions to change the situation or make accountable those who commit it.

B- SOCIAL VIOLENCE MANIFESTATIONS

Violence in Lebanon is a social and cultural value; it is widely spread throughout the various social and cultural manifestations of life of the Lebanese people.

1- Family Violence

The family still resembles the main unit of society despite the increasing challenges it is facing. The family continues to play a pivotal influence on the psycho- social status and foster inter-personal relations with other members. Families suffer from violence between the couple (with more frequency of violence from males towards females), towards children, amongst the children and violence from children towards their parents.

Dr. Mirna Mzawak, expert on sociology - (Holy Spirit University of Kaslik - USEK), explains that the family and the school are the basic educational agents that shape the individual's perception of authority, interaction with it, and behavior towards it. She affirms that our society still avoids disclosure and openness, thus reporting cases of violence inside the family is still very limited. Ms. Zoya Rohana of KAFA organization emphasizes this, reasserting that abuse is only reported when it reaches extreme violence.

Ms. Joyce Kawkabani from Himaya organization explains that parents and teachers lack the skills and methods of non-violent pedagogy and thus feel compelled to use violence as the only mean they know to impose authority. Hitting children is a normal and integral part of parenting. On the other hand, many parents encourage their children to use violence as a means to defend themselves, says Ms. Kawkabani, defending acts of violence that their kids commit (hitting / hurting other children). Moreover, the influence of war or the memory of it passed through parents to their children makes using toy guns and rifles and killing the bad guys –their favorite pretend games. Maksoud & Aber (1996)

Larger numbers of children in the workforce or the streets suffer different types of abuse, exploitation and violence (HCC 2004; HCC 2006; HCC 2008; MOJ 2008; Usta et al 2008)

Women suffer from domestic violence, with cases of accidental or intentional killing, honor crime is still an appealing factor, forced marriages (at young age), trafficking and sexual exploitation are still heavily present within the society (Baydoun 2009 & 2010). Ms. Rohana indicates that statistics on violence against

women do not illustrate any significant differences between sects, regions or social classes, leaving it as an enshrined cultural and social value.

The legislation concerning family violence is still very loose with regard to the children¹² and inexistent with regard to women¹³. The passing of Law 422 in 2002 has been a positive step towards providing protection for children in danger and for juveniles in conflict with the law in specific. However, this law fails to provide preventive measures and does not criminalize violence against children. Whether secular or religious, Lebanese laws, says Ms. Rohana, impose the supremacy of man over woman in marriage and divorce (Hatab 2008; Baydoun 2009). Loose laws render violent practices permissible and not criminalized; aspect that is common to what regards provisions on torture.

Ms. Hala Abu Samra of the juvenile justice department of the Ministry of Justice indicates that, in spite of some improvement and adjustments in the judicial system and specialization of judges in matters related to children, women or family cases are not taken into consideration in judicial assignment. She added that the Ministry of Justice is working to provide alternative punishments for juvenile offenders that will radically influence the correctional nature of the sentences and spare children imprisonment and thus exposure to violence and torture.

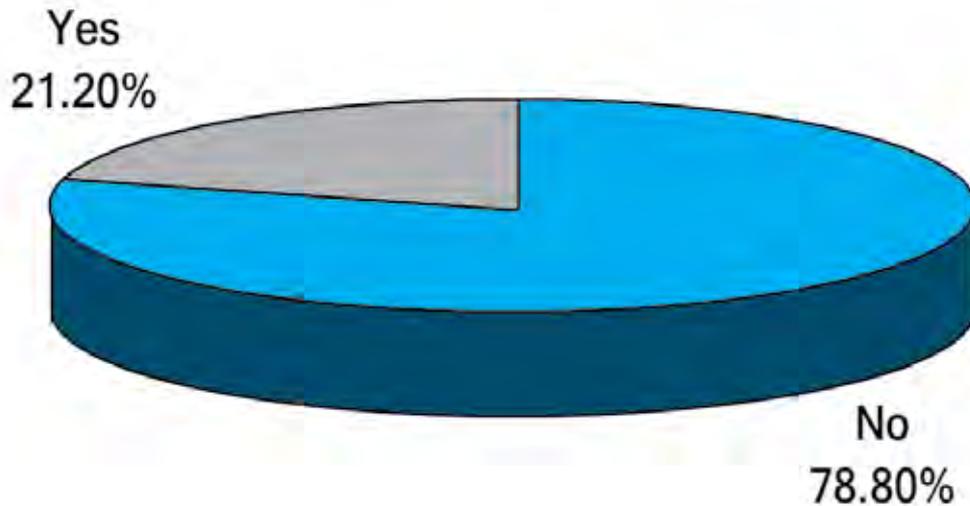
2- Corporal Violence:

Corporal violence in schools such as hitting and physical harassment, though banned by a decision from the Ministry of Education, still exists due to the poor enforcement and control. Despite initiatives and reforms, the Lebanese educational system applies patriarchal approaches, enhances competitiveness, enforces receptive learning by students, and lacks experimentation, critical thinking and creativity. Teachers remain the authority figure that is seldom wrong and that exercise full control over the class.

¹² The existing law accepts corrective actions "that are conform to popular custom" without any further specification about what this may mean. Certainly the popular custom may also vary from one region to another and thus make people un-equal before the law.

¹³ A bill was passed in the Council of Ministers in 2010 after a long time of advocacy and pressure by a coalition of NGOs, and still awaits Parliament approval to become a law. The bill is entitled "Family Violence" but in reality it addresses mainly violence against women which made it subject of many criticisms, for neglecting aggressed males and children.

Are you with the use of force in children upbringing?



3- Migrant Workers

Migrant workers have been subject to serious human rights violation in addition to poor protection by law; moreover, they do not have legal residence and experience withholding of passport, restrictions to movement, physical, emotional and verbal violence, poor working conditions, -including long working hours -, deprivation of health insurance, medical treatment, sleep and poor accommodation, sexual exploitation - including rape and bad treatment-. Migrant workers are also targeted by prejudices, they are “usual suspects” of any crime committed within the region they live in and are often subject to aggression accordingly.

Very few are the enforcement mechanisms that bind the employer to respect the workers’ rights or preserve both parties’ rights in case of infringement by any of them, leaving individuals to handle matters the way they deem better¹⁴.

Authorities, when capturing, detaining and deporting illegal migrants, commit serious violations of human rights as reports in the international and local media

¹⁴ Two articles found in the research shed significant light on the complex situation however from the two opposing sides. An article was written by a prominent entertainment journalist Ms. Nidal Ahmadiye describing the case of a domestic worker that ran away and left a one and half year old child unattended for several hours until her parents came back and found her in a bad situation. Ms. Ahmadiye used to entitle her article an old Arab proverb that can be translated into “Don’t buy the Slave without a stick because slaves are sullen and impure”, and by slave she was referring to domestic workers. The article contains all kinds of insults, humiliation and diminishing adjective like liars, dogs, slayers, evil, criminals, ignorant, stupid, terrorist, etc... (Ahmadiye 2010) Another article presenting the opposite side of the situation is an article in the “Jeune Afrique” magazine talking about hundreds of women from Madagascar and other African countries working in inhumane conditions in Lebanon, with some of them returning crazy, hurt, or even dead (Carayol 2010).

and human rights organizations show¹⁵. Cases of arbitrary arrest, detention beyond sentences, long pre-trial detention, inhumane detention conditions, violence and torture during interrogation amongst others are heavily recurrent. NGOs interventions have reported some of these cases, thus holding persons in charge accountable as Ms. Chahda from Caritas Migrant confirms.

Ms. Chahda highlighted that some efforts are on the way to correct the situation, after a court ruling against an employer and a labor agent. A new law is being developed taking into consideration many of the aforementioned problems and creating a complaint mechanism that abused migrant workers can recur to.

Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation is widespread, where women are trafficked to Lebanon as artists or dancers and then sexually exploited. Likewise, some women and children refugees are also coerced into sexual exploitation (MOJ 2008, pp.40-41). Other reports indicate trafficking of Lebanese children within the territory of Lebanon for the same purpose (ALEF – Project on Child Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation, 2009-2011).

The afore-mentioned groups are at high risk of facing torture, if and when they deal with the authorities, due to poor legal protection, discrimination against them and impunity of Lebanese employers.

4- Economic Violence

Lebanon follows a free economic system that encourages individual initiative and investment. Lebanon's post-war economy is characterized by: a growing economic gap between the rich and the poor, high unemployment rates, low purchasing power for limited income earners, severe brain drain where most educated seek work overseas and largely opt for migration, poor economic planning, a skyrocketing public debt exceeding)The gross public debt was equivalent to 134.5% of estimated 2010 GDP, down from 146.5% of GDP at end-2009(. This should also be coupled with very poor social benefits (social security, education, hospitalization, retirement, public transport, etc...), high levels of government corruption, spread of bribes and nepotism. Unbalanced division of infrastructure

¹⁵ A recent case that is still developing is the arrest of a number of Sudanese celebrating a cultural event and the continuing arbitrary detention of many of them awaiting extradition. One Sudanese human rights activist was still on hunger strike at the time of writing this report demanding respect for migrant, faster trials, immediate extradition (for those who have been sentenced) and a special committee from the migrant to follow up on their status (Berjawi 2010). Another recent article in As-Safir newspaper (Husseini 2010) reflected the situation of many foreigners lying in the Zahle prison without trials or deportation although some of them have themselves provided the necessary money for their travel.

rehabilitation and reconstruction focused in specific regions, thus depriving others from basic services. Moreover, the taxation system adopted after the war has weakened the productive economic sectors for the raise of services and tourism. As a result, poverty grows and areas, where the majority of people live in severe poverty, developed around suburbs of cities, in refugee camps. Poverty forces people to resort to illegal activities like crime, drugs, sexual exploitation, human trafficking and illegal trading in order to survive, thus creating a cycle of where some individuals violate the human rights of others in order to fulfill their needs. Another key term is economic deprivation and inequality. The World Organization against Torture (OMCT) study on the roots of violence and the Lebanese reality both show a clear link between socio-economic variables and violence. This should have a significant effect on policy makers, pushing them to act for equal socio-economic development to address the levels of violence.

5- Inter-personal Violence

Individuals in Lebanon resort to various forms of violence in dealing with daily incidents and to solve conflicts; in parallel they are faced by unavoidable violence, due to the absence of a system that deals with inter-personal conflicts and that is based on justice and merit, without preferential treatment or discrimination. Thus, any conflict of interest may easily develop into violent clashes where all kinds of violence - physical, moral, verbal and sometimes weapons - are used. This is a normal psychological reaction of anyone who feels powerless, defenseless or lacks protection. (Interview Dr. Gerbaa; Macksoud & Aber 1986; Staub 2003; Langdren 2005)

6- Statistical Findings & Analysis

The questionnaire showed that domestic violence comes first to 14.22% of respondents' minds when violence is mentioned. Answers divided by gender show a percentage as high as 23.80% when women are targeted versus the 10.40% of men.

On a scale of 1-5 on how violent the relationships between spouses, with children and in the family, the men average was 3.11 (spouses), 2.83 (children) and 2.68 (family), and the women average was again higher in all three reaching 3.57, 3.12 and 3.14 respectively. The answers to these questions differs also

significantly on the religious levels with the Druze considering these relationships the most violent (3.87, 3.43 and 3.27) then the Christians, the Sunnis and finally the Shiites considering them the least violent (3.11, 2.70 and 2.76).

The questionnaire also proves that hitting children regularly occurs: where 21.20% answered that they use violence for children obedience; 14.77% use “shouting and threatening”, 9.09% use “confinement to the house”, 5.68% use “beating” and 3.41% use “deprivation of play time”, “deprivation of outings” and “deprivation of allowance”¹⁶ - the last three are not considered violent but obedience by international child protection standards.

The questionnaire reveals that only 3.86% would accept an unjustified reprimanding of domestic workers and only 41.69% accepted justified punishment as long as it is only verbal and does not include physical violence. On the parallel track, 14.70% accepted occasional oppression of foreign workers while 3.13% responded they should always be oppressed without use of force (only 1.36 on a scale of 1-5). When asked about forms of violence in interpersonal relations, “road violence” comes first to minds of 13.01% of respondents (4th most mentioned answer). Lebanese consider driving as a “very violent” act (4.78 on a 1-5 scale) and they are “very bothered” by drivers quarrels (4.42). On the other hand, 59.76% of the interviewees said they would react to an argument with another driver by “Keep walking as if nothing has happened”, 23.37 % said they would “reply”, 7.23% said they would “severely reply”, 6.02% said they would “defend themselves by using force” and 3.61% said they would “fight with the other person considering it a matter of honor”. Details show no significant differences in the responses when looking at parameters such as age, religion, area, or level of education; the only slight difference refers to gender, with women being more peaceful 68.10% compared to 56.90% men respondents. 58% of informants said they would “simply walk away” to a question on their reaction to a verbal abuse in the street, 23.37% would reply back and 14.70% would engage in a fight. Almost 40% indicated that they were subject to verbal abuse before: 75% of the females indicated that they ignored it versus 48.40% of males. While 23.70% of the males indicated that they will resort to violence versus 5% of the females. Significant difference appears in

¹⁶ Here it is worth mentioning that according to the questionnaire and unlike general belief, people living in rural areas gave a significantly lower percentage (9.50%) than urban areas (23.80%) in accepting the use of force in children upbringing. This may however be referred to the different understandings to what “use of force” means, especially if we see that the detailed examples mention acts that are not really violent but still have been considered by urban interviewees as “use of force”.

the age factor with 23.50% of the 19-34 age group resorting to violence, while less than 8% in the 35-49 and 50-64 age groups does the same.

In response to their child being hit at school, 45.81% will “call the school to understand what happened” and 14.66% will “try to understand from their child what happened and act accordingly”. 14.66% only totally rejected hitting and indicated they will “press charges against the school and teacher, 11.26% will “object and ask that whoever did it to be punished”. Only a small percentage (6.54%) answered they will “have no reaction and that they appreciate the school role in educating their kids”¹⁷. But when the violence is committed by a schoolmate, 46.60% of the respondents will “ask the school administration to punish the student” 27.49% will “call their parents” and 5.50% said they will “directly intervene to punish the aggressor”. On the other hand 20.42% answered they “would not meddle in relationships between schoolmates”¹⁸.

Violence is enhanced by the absence of rule of law, poor law enforcement along with inadequate laws to protect citizens’ and migrants personal freedoms and interests. The political situation also exacerbates societal violence and, as a result, individuals tend to take matters into their own hands instead of recurring to legal remedies. A clear example of this fatal combination is the crime committed by a large number of angry civilians in the village of Ketermeya against a murder suspect. When the suspect, under the custody of the Internal Security Forces, was taken to the crime scene, an angry mob of villagers killed him. The case happened in the village of Ketermeya shows not only the level of societal violence but also the lack of trust in the justice system.

C- CULTURAL VIOLENCE MANIFESTATIONS

Is violence part of culture and traditions in Lebanon, it is related to socio-political factors and the long years of civil war, it is an exacerbation of an already existing factor or the creation of a new phenomenon?

Most key informants interviewed agreed that the cultural background in Lebanon initially includes forms of violence based on the long history of conflict; however, it is generally

¹⁷ The details of the answers showed that the Shiite community is the most receptive of educational violence with 16% “doing nothing and appreciating what the school is doing” while this percentage drops to less than 6% in all other sectarian communities. The Christians are the most severely opposed to it 20% willing to “press charges against the school” significantly ahead of other sects.

¹⁸ Not meddling in the children’s quarrels gains 26% of the Christian answers while it remains between 12 and 19% for the other sects.

conciliatory and tends to reject violence. The informants continue to indicate that the excessive use of violence is the result of war and the lack of rule of law in the post Taif Agreement period. Dr. Gerbaa, advisor of Ministry of social affairs, argues that violence is not part of the culture; it has increased due to the poor rule of law and unstable political system. On the other hand, other interviewed informants, notably Dr. Awad, Dr. Mitri, Dr. Mzawak and Dr. Yunan considered that the Lebanese culture, due to the gap created by 15 years of civil of the war, suffers from a crisis in values and concepts. S Cultural violence is reflected in the following spheres:

1- Violence Against the different

Lebanese people have a track record of being discriminatory and aggressive towards the different and the unfamiliar “other” that does not conform to their norm.

Stereotypes and prejudices about foreigners and Arabs are widespread; for many Lebanese a sex worker is a “Russian” or a “Romanian” woman because in past years many trafficked to Lebanon for sexual exploitation came from these geographical areas. Stereotypes also target everyone whose skin is darker as well as nationals of East Asian and African countries. Many are the stories about incidents with tourists, officials being treated as “house maids” or prohibited from entering a restaurant or a resort due to the color of their skin. Racism in Lebanon has even classified people, said Ms. Chahda, according to their country of origin and thus some are “worth” more than others and are paid higher salaries accordingly.

Lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender, inter-sex (LGBTI) are discriminated against rejected by the large part of the society and harassed in public places as well as in their working environment, despite relative growing tolerance in some liberal communities. LGBTI have been victims of moral, verbal, and physical violence by the police and by individuals who decided to “correct” them¹⁹. They are also subject to professional violence where sometimes they were fired from jobs or denied recruitment on the basis of their sexual orientation. Mr. Azzi from Helem association stated that social rejection has pushed many people to keep their

¹⁹ A study done by Yacoub, H. (2009) discussed article 534 of the criminal law and describes how this vague article have been abused by the security forces and how they apply it strictly to homosexuals allowing themselves illegal “correctional” actions. Another press release by Helm (2010) comments on a recent incident in the Ashrafiye district of Beirut (a district know for its openness and liberal environment) where a number of civilians (who may have been intelligence personnel in civilian clothe) have insulted and beaten in public two young men for allegedly being caught practicing sex in a unfinished building.

sexual identities secret and lead a “normal” life, marrying someone from the opposite sex and having children, while having a clandestine life.

2- Violence in the Media²⁰

Violent manifestations in Lebanon’s political and social spectrum are heavily reflected in news and political coverage by the various media outlets.

Media in Lebanon is patronized, owned and used as a tool by political factions. According to the Minister of Information, Dr. Tarek Mitri, politicians have used the media as channels to manipulate people and mobilize them for specific goals. Ms. Rita Charara from National Council for Media notes that the media are very reluctant to cover torture issues unless there is a political objective/message behind it.

During times of political tensions and election campaigns, violence incitement and mobilization grow as the report of the Supervisory Commission on Electoral Campaign (SCEC) claims²¹. Electronic media not included in the SCEC work were covered by the Lebanese Civic Media Initiative (LEBCMI) observatory in 2009, which reported many breaches of journalism ethics²² such as rejection of the other, rejection of dialogue, use of derogative terms, victimization of a political/sectarian group, stereotypization and legitimization of the use of violence (LEBCMI 2009, pp. 4-5).

On the other hand violence is used against the media to ensure control and conformity by the authorities and de-facto powers through censorship, funding and threats. Journalists have been threatened, bribed, insulted, blackmailed, beaten and killed on several occasions and by different political factions. TV stations, radios and newspapers have been politically condemned, pressured and even shut down.

The critical political and sectarian situation in Lebanon makes the role of the media very significant in promoting peace, tolerance and dialogue or to the other end in instigating hate, demonizing, blaming and provoking popular reactions.

²⁰ The word Media is used in this paragraph in its broader sense including all its different forms including TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and internet.

²¹ The Committee reported 2626 violation of the electoral campaigning law during two months by the different political side media. Of these violations 44% were defamation and diminishing personal insults; 20% threatening and instigating fear; 13% accusation of treason; 10% incitement to hate; 5% soliciting confessional division (SCEC 2009, pp.119-121)

²² LEBCMI based its research the journalism ethic used on the code issued by the Lebanese Association for the Democracy of Elections (LADE) and that of the International Federation of Journalists

3- Violence in popular culture

Lebanese proverbs, songs, slang language and other popular expressions include violent terms used to express feelings or attitudes.

Some examples include: a lullaby “I will slay/butcher a flying pigeon, Oh pigeon! Don’t confide, we are lulling Rima to sleep - l’adbahlak tayr el hamem, ya hamem la tsadie am nedhak 3a rima ta tnem”; correctional smacking is often referred to as “I’ll break your bones - beddi kassrak” or in some regions “I’ll kill you-beddi eetlak”; a proverb says “kiss the hand that you cannot bite and wish for it to be broken - El id yalli ma fik 3alaya, boussa wed3i 3alaya bel kasser”; another proverb compares “women to carpets that need hitting frequently in order to remain clean and in better shape - el mara metel l sejede, ma btemche ella bel dareb “; “Weapons are men’s ornament - al silah zinat el rijal” is also a traditional proverb that incite the use of violence; another saying is “It is a pleasure to be tortured by you - Azabak Raha” .

Academic curriculum contains material about human rights and civic issues; however, not enough focus is given to the culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence.

4- Statistical Findings & Analysis

The statistical data reveals the ongoing rejection of LGBTI, as people agree to forcefully oppress them (average of 3.56 over 5) and do not agree to recognize their rights (average 2.18). However, people rejected beating them (only 1.67) or expelling them from society (2.71). The Christian community is the most tolerant towards LGBTI then the Druze, followed by the Sunni and then the Shiite, as these sects respectively gave 2.96, 3.67, 3.81 and 4.32 points to the question of whether LGBTI should be forcefully oppressed. This clearly highlights the tendency to use force to ensure conformity to social and cultural norms.

People in Lebanon consider media as very violent with an average reaching 4.66 (on a 1-5 scale).

Respondents believe that “parents should monitor what their children are watching on TV” (4.57 over a 5 pts scale) and 74.61% of the parents, who have young children, know what their children watch, while 25.39% do not. On the contrary, only 54.55% of respondents below 18 years of age stated that their parents know what they are watching. Although most of the parents said their children watch children programs (75.69%), they also watch TV soaps (62.50%) movies

(45.83%) and entertainment programs (57.64%). Moreover, 37.61% of parents do not remember what kind of programs their children watch clearly showing that parents do not give significant importance to the issue or simply ignore the side-effect of it.

IV- MAIN CONCLUSIONS: IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF TORTURE.

The root causes of torture were elaborated in a study by the World Organization against Torture (OMCT), which proved a statistical correlation between poverty, income inequality and violence. The study concluded that non-state violence (including homicide, using firearm, and major assaults rate) is higher in countries, where a high proportion of people are economically deprived and where unemployment (in particular youth male) is rampant. As for state violence (including political terror, torture, corruption, detention rates, absence of rule of law and excess of rights violations), the study found that, although there is no necessary link, state violence is positively related to lower levels of economic freedom, democratization and gender empowerment.²³

The study argued that “the socio-economic status of poor and marginalized groups and individuals, including those marginalized on the grounds of their cultural identity, makes them particularly vulnerable to violence, including torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and its effects”. Poverty and marginalization that vulnerable groups and individuals experience do not allow them to defend themselves and demand their rights. This in turn helps create a climate of impunity favorable to torture and other forms of violence.

“Violence can undermine people’s spiritual and material well-being, compromise human dignity and create a climate of fear that endangers personal security and erodes the quality of life”; it is antithetical to the notion of rights and the realization of human rights in general. Torture is an offence to human dignity that has long-term effects on the victim at different levels; the banning of this practice becomes increasingly difficult in a climate where violence is spread and accepted at the various layers of the society.

An adequate explanation of torture goes beyond the profiling of the individual perpetrators and the situations where torture occurs; it requires looking at the larger context where the practice of torture is embedded. Therefore the purpose of this study was to dig deep into the socio-political, economic and cultural arenas to explore the various aspects of the Lebanese life that include one form or the other of violence and to link it to the acceptance of torture.

²³ The study based its conclusions on statistical data and scientific indexes including: GDP, Gini Index, ISI, a positive Gender-related Development Index (GDI), the Economic Freedom Index, Vanhanen’s Democracy Index:
http://www.omct.org/files/2010/09/20948/omct_action_files_guide_rev_02_09_10.pdf

The study suggests several conditions where torture becomes an instrument of state and political powers. The political affiliation of some security apparatus provides an official coverage of practices against certain groups, thus making the use of torture a political tool. The fear of constituencies from each other's exacerbates acts of violence and annihilation, aiming at inflicting more harm on "the other", maintaining control over them and preserving their "power" and false sense of security. Resorting to torture produces devastating ripple effects that extend way beyond the individual torturer and victim; any person in society can be subject to victimization (as a relative, friend, potential suspect, innocent victim etc.).

Acts of torture are conceptualized as crimes of obedience and inevitably linked to crimes at higher levels of the hierarchy, where orders are issued, policy is formulated and the atmosphere conducive to acts of torture is created. Whether or not some of the specific abuses and acts of torture were directly ordered, indications are that they were expected, condoned, and encouraged by higher officers. Commanding officers along with the different tiers of the hierarchy can be thus accountable for not exercising sufficient oversight.

Allowing torture produces a social class of trained torturers. Criminals, who commit violent crimes, are imprisoned in order to keep society safe while torturers, who are capable of physically mutilating a human being, will walk and live freely if torture is permitted and state-sponsored.

The main obstacles to the implementation of policies prohibiting torture in Lebanon are:

On the political level

- Political defragmentation and political violence;
- Spread of arms;
- Weak rule of law, poor law enforcement and poor protection of human rights;
- Impunity;
- Corruption;
- Nepotism.

On the Socio-Economic level

- Discrimination & social exclusion;
- Use of violence in upbringing and education;
- Poverty and unequal opportunities;
- Limited access to social justice;
- Economic exploitation.

On the Cultural level

- Tendency to impose conformity;
- Weak tolerance to diversity;
- Denial of problem.

It is worth mentioning the existing gap between “what is said” and “what is practiced”; Lebanese express rejection of violence²⁴, however the actual attitude and practice of violence in various situations uncover a duality or even a contradiction that can pose a serious challenge to efforts to eradicate torture.

²⁴ As mentioned before 66.75% of the interviewee think that violence should be “always” considered as a crime under law, and another 26.27% said it should be considered so “in most cases”, giving a total positive response of 93% in favor of criminalizing violence.

V- RECOMMENDATIONS

Fighting torture in Lebanon requires a long comprehensive process targeting main stakeholders such as the government institutions, the security forces, political parties and leaders, the judiciary, the social welfare network, the education system, the parliament, and the general public.

On the political level:

- Establish a new political pact that will denounce the use of political violence;
- Maintain strict control on the spread of arms amongst political parties as well as amongst civilians;
- Establish equality before the law; equal and fair access to justice without discrimination or nepotism;
- Fulfill duties of protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups mainly migrant workers, LGBTI, drug dealers and addicts, political prisoners and refugees;
- Apply the rule of law and enforcing order will be a major step towards decreasing all forms of violence;
- Re-establish the trust of the citizens by ending the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations;
- Enhance the promotion of human rights and their protection;
- Establish a monitoring mechanism and set up an accountability procedure to combat impunity;
- Work on a process of peace building, true reconciliation & transitional justice.

On the legislative and judicial levels:

- Reform the law in order to criminalize of torture;
- Reform the law towards criminalization all forms of violence including violence in the family, and in education;
- Reform the law towards decriminalization of LGBTI;
- Reform laws to protect rights of Women, children, migrant workers, refugees as per the international standards;
- Adopt legislative reform towards banning death penalty and human trafficking;

- Apply strict rulings on cases of violence;
- Investigate each torture allegation case that occurs in prisons and detention centers and have results made public;
- Investigate complaints related to torture and ill-treatment allegedly committed by law-enforcement officials, along with investigations, prosecutions, penalties and disciplinary action related to such complaints;
- Take effective judicial measures not only to repress but also to prevent acts of torture.

On the Security level:

- Train detectives from the General Criminal Investigation Unit and Special Criminal Investigation; Unit in the ISF on forensic science, investigating crime scenes and techniques of interrogation in respect of human rights;
- Train eligible inspectors on inspection mechanisms in prisons and detention centers on the prohibition of torture and minimum rules concerning the treatment of prisoners according to international standards;
- Establish effective mechanisms to ensure the internal discipline, external control and supervision of law enforcement officials.

On the cultural level:

- Promote values of tolerance and respect to diversity;
- Work on community reconciliation;
- Work on community non violent conflict resolution; mediation, and problem solving;
- Raise awareness on respect of human rights;
- Raise awareness on respect of privacy;
- Raise awareness on issues of violence in the family, and gender-based violence;
- Raise awareness on the prohibition of the crime of torture on the community level.

On the Educational level

- Introduce concepts of non-violent discipline and non violent pedagogy;
- Introduce concepts of non-violence discipline non violent parenting;
- Provide practical non-violent tools to assist teachers and students to practice

- nonviolent problem solving and conflict management;
- Provide support mechanism and a supporting environment for possible victims of violence;
 - Attend to bullying cases in schools;
 - Provide practical non-violent tools.

On the Socio-Economic level:

- Improve governance and basic social security, to ease the different forms of violence;
- Prepare policies and measures to address issue of discrimination & social exclusion;
- Work on measures to alleviate poverty;
- Provide equal labor opportunities; and full access to social justice.

For these approaches to be effective, the main stakeholders identified in this research are: legislators, concerned ministries (including justice, education, media/information, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Social Affairs), security forces (notably Internal Security Forces and General Security), educational institutions, the media and non-governmental organizations.

Continuous consultation between governmental institutions, educational institution, the civil society and the media plays a role in preparing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to limit use of violence in the society.

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ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

	Name	Position	Date	Place
1	Bernard Gerbaka (Dr.)	Ministry of social affairs - Ministerial Advisor	8/7/2010	Clinic/ Jounieh
2	Elie Mkhayel (Dr.)	Higher council for childhood - MSO	29/7/2010	Higher council for childhood/ Badaro
3	Georges Azzi (Mr.)	Helem NGO	9/7/2010	AFE/ Achrafieh
4	Ghassan Mukhayber (M.P.)	Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights	9/7/2010	Parliament/ Down Town
5	Hala Abou Samra (Ms.)	Ministry of Justice Juvenile justice department	29/7/2010	Ministry of Justice/ Aadlieh
6	Joseph Ajami (Dr.)	Expert on media - (NDU)	4/8/2010	NDU/Zouk
7	Joyce Kawkabani (Ms.)	Himaya NGO	15/7/2010	Arc en ciel/ Jesr bacha
8	Michel Awad (Dr.)	Expert on sociology - (LU)	11/8/2010	Residence/Hrajel
9	Mirna Mzawak (Dr.)	Expert on sociology - (USEK)	8/7/2010	USEK/ kaslik
10	Najla Chahda (Ms.)	Caritas Migrant Center	16/7/2010	Caritas/ Sin el fil
11	Ogarit Younan (Dr.)	Academic University for Non-Violence and HR	4/8/2010	Our lady of the Mountain/ Fatka
12	Pierre Atallah (Mr.)	Eelamiyoun dedda l'ounf (Member)	27/7/2010	Al Nahar/ Down Town
13	Renee Sabbagh (Ms.)	UNODC - Lebanon	12/7/2010	Escwa/Down Town
14	Rita Charara (Ms.)	National council for media	30/7/2010	Ministry / Hamra
15	Sevag Kichichian (Mr.)	Umam NGO	12/7/2010	Umam/ Ghobayri
16	Suzanne Abu Rjeily (Dr.)	Expert on education - (USJ)	16/7/2010	Residence/ Bhamdoun
17	Suzanne Jabbour (Ms.)	Restart NGO	15/7/2010	Restart /Badaro
18	Tarek Mitri (H.E.M.)	Ministry of information	16/8/2010	Ministry / Hamra
19	Ziad Kaedbayh (Mr.)	ISF Human rights department chief	27/7/2010	Down Town
20	Zoya Rouhana (Ms.)	KAFA NGO	21/7/2010	Kafa/ Badaro

عذابه مش راحة