

## **Lebanon: Criminal justice system inadequately addresses sexual and gender-based violence**

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In a memorandum released today, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) published guidance and recommendations aimed at assisting Lebanon's criminal justice actors in addressing significant gaps in evidentiary rules, practice and procedures undermining the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) crimes in the country.

The 42-page memorandum, *Sexual and Gender-based Violence Offences in Lebanon: Principles and Recommended Practices on Evidence* (available in English and Arabic), aims to advance accountability and justice for SGBV, and is especially designed for investigators, prosecutors, judges and forensic practitioners.

"Criminal justice actors are indispensable to eradicating harmful practices and curbing entrenched impunity for SGBV in Lebanon," said Said Benarbia, Director of the ICJ's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

"Rather than buying into false, stereotyped narratives that impugn survivors' credibility and call into question their sexual history, the criminal justice system must adopt and enforce gender-sensitive, victim-centric evidence-gathering procedures that put the well-being of SGBV survivors at the forefront."

The memorandum provides criminal justice actors with guidance and recommendations on the identification, gathering, storing, admissibility, exclusion and evaluation of evidence in SGBV cases, as well as on their immediate applicability in practice, pending consolidation and reform of Lebanon's existing legal framework and procedures for the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of SGBV offences.

"Lebanon's legal framework fosters and perpetuates a systematic denial of effective legal protection and access to justice for women survivors of SGBV," said Benarbia. "The justice system must counter harmful gender stereotypes and attitudes rooted in patriarchy, which continue to undermine survivors' right to effective remedies."

The memorandum's release is particularly timely given the escalation of SGBV witnessed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The memorandum builds on previous research undertaken by the ICJ in this area, including [\*Gender-based violence in Lebanon: Inadequate Framework, Ineffective Remedies\*](#) and [\*Accountability for Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Lebanon: Guidance and Recommendations for Criminal Justice Actors\*](#).

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