

EXPLORING A GLOBAL RESEARCH AGENDA ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

LESSONS FROM A DECADE OF FEMINIST
MOBILIZATION IN THE ARAB REGION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRTDA	Collective for Research & Training on Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDHS	Egypt Demographic Health Survey
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
ISF	Internal Security Force
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual
NCW	National Council for Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WEF	World Economic Forum

01

Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Arab uprisings in 2011 marked a significant turning point in the political landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Sparked by grievances against authoritarian rule, corruption, economic inequality, and lack of political and individual freedoms, these protests swept across several countries, demanding democratic reforms and social justice. However, the aftermath of the uprisings highlighted the complex challenges facing the region. While some countries witnessed regime change or political reforms, albeit for a short period of time, others descended into prolonged conflict, violence, instability, and authoritarian backlash.

Concerns over demographic shifts became more pronounced in the wake of the uprisings, as youth populations played a central role in driving demands for change. With many of the population under 30, governments in the region struggled to address the aspirations and grievances of young people, who often faced high unemployment rates and limited prospects for the future. Sectarian tensions, which simmered beneath the surface in several countries, were exacerbated by the uprisings and subsequent power struggles. In some countries, conflicts escalated along sectarian lines, leading to devastating humanitarian crises and further polarizing and militarizing societies.

Moreover, patriarchal norms continued to hinder progress towards gender equality, despite the prominent role that women played in the uprisings. Although women participated in protests and advocated for change, their representation in decision-making roles remained limited, reflecting broader societal challenges to their empowerment and participation in governance. In many MENA countries, legal frameworks and social customs reinforce patriarchal mindsets, behaviors, and practices, often relegating women to subordinate roles within the family and society at large. Laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody that discriminate against women, perpetuating their economic dependency and limiting their autonomy, were in most cases left unchanged.

In many instances, the failure to address these underlying issues contributed to the resurgence of authoritarianism and the rollback of limited democratic gains. Governments cracked down on dissent, curtailed civil liberties, and marginalized opposition voices, perpetuating cycles of repression and unrest. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the landscape of social movements in the MENA region, disrupting protests, limiting public gatherings, and diverting resources towards public health responses, while also exposing and exacerbating existing socio-economic inequalities.

The Arab uprisings served as a wake-up call, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of political unrest and social discontent. Despite these challenges, grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and feminist activists continued to advocate for women's rights and gender equality in the MENA region. Through campaigns, protests, and legal advocacy, they sought to challenge patriarchal norms, promote women's rights, and advance inclusive governance structures that recognize and value the contributions of all members of society, regardless of gender.

In this sociopolitical context, exploring the advocacy strategies used by intersectional feminist civil society groups in the region is significant. Not only does it offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of diverse tactics employed in advancing gender equality and women's rights, but it is also helpful in identifying best practices and lessons learned that can inform future advocacy endeavors. Moreover, examining the interactions between feminist groups and governmental bodies or decision-makers provides critical understanding of power dynamics and influence within the region. This insight helps in identifying avenues for more impactful advocacy and policy change by addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities.

This research delves into the factors influencing the success or failure of advocacy efforts and offers crucial insights into the complex socio-political landscape of the MENA region. This understanding informs the development of tailored strategies better suited to address the specific contexts and challenges faced by feminist activists in the region. Additionally, assessing the broader impact of feminist advocacy on civic engagement helps us understand how these movements contribute to broader social and political change.

Through an examination of how feminist advocacy efforts mobilize communities, shape public discourse, and influence public policy, we can acknowledge the potential of feminist activism in the region. These insights inform policymaking, support grassroots movements, and advance the cause of gender equality and women's rights within the region and globally.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Given the context, this research report explores advocacy strategies employed by feminist civil society groups in the MENA region, with emphasis on their mobilization efforts in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, within the last decade. It explores how feminist activists and groups have been advocating for change as well as their interactions with governmental bodies and decision-makers. It also assesses the factors influencing the success or failure of their strategies, their impact on civic engagement, and the perception of activists regarding the strategies and outcomes of their campaigns. It also aims to bridge a knowledge gap by examining the complex interplay between feminist activism and accountable governance in contexts that are both fragile and transitional.

Research Objectives:

- 1 **Analyze** the origin, demands, and initial strategies of feminist civic actors in the MENA region, including their forms of mobilization and tactics.
- 2 **Examine** the coalitions formed during the advocacy journey for gender equality, encompassing engagement with decision-makers, political parties, and other campaigns and non-governmental organizations.
happy to spend freely on experiences and products
- 3 **Assess** the engagement of feminist activists with decision-makers and their role in policymaking and lobbying for change within the MENA region.
may be members of fan clubs and societies
- 4 **Evaluate** the influence of donors and the international community in advancing women's rights causes in the MENA region.
- 5 **Track** the evolution of mobilization strategies over recent decades, including changes in tools, strategies, and levels of creativity employed by feminist civil society groups.
- 6 **Investigate** the role of knowledge production in mobilizing for changes to discriminatory laws and practices in the MENA region.

METHODOLOGY

To address these objectives, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis and comparative analysis. It utilizes a broad range of resources, including academic articles, reports by international and local NGOs, media coverage, and first-hand accounts from activists and experts in addition to interviews and focus group discussions with activist and leading campaigns.

The research focuses on three comparative case studies based on advocacy campaigns to analyze the past decade of feminist social mobilization in the MENA region:

1

Navigating **Gender Equality**

Challenges and Strategies in Nationality Laws Reform in Jordan and Lebanon: The first case study examines the challenges and evolving strategies of feminist social mobilization in Jordan and Lebanon aimed at advancing gender equality in nationality laws. By analyzing first-hand accounts from activists, campaign leaders, and representatives from local and international organizations, the study reveals the complexities of pursuing equal nationality rights. It sheds light on the interplay of demographic concerns, entrenched patriarchal systems, and the involvement of international actors.

2

Breaking the Silence

Feminist Campaigns Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Egypt and Lebanon: The second case study delves into feminist campaigns combating GBV in Egypt and Lebanon, highlighting the strategies and approaches employed by these movements in the face of significant challenges. By exploring the specific socio-political contexts, legal frameworks, and tactics employed, this study illuminates the critical importance of intersectional approaches, coalition-building, and sustained advocacy for comprehensive legal reforms and societal transformation.

3

Diverse Paths to **Equality**

Dynamics of LGBTQIA+ Movements in Tunisia and Lebanon: The third case study explores the dynamics of LGBTQIA+ movements in Tunisia and Lebanon, shedding light on their unique origins, evolving tactics, and the multifaceted dimensions that have shaped their paths, including internal dynamics, stakeholder engagement, and navigation of the broader political climate. The aim is to reveal the complexities and divergent perceptions of success within these movements, underscoring the need for unity and collective action.

By integrating these three distinct but interrelated narratives, this report offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of feminist social mobilization in select countries within the region. It identifies common themes, trends, and variations, providing an in-depth perspective on the diverse contexts in which these movements operate. It also aims to present practical recommendations to inform decision-making, with the objective of promoting unity, advocating for intersectional approaches, and ensuring the long-term viability of these important efforts.

02

Advocating for Gender Equality in Nationality Laws

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges and evolving strategies related to feminist social mobilization efforts aimed at advancing gender equality in nationality laws in Jordan and Lebanon over the past decade. Despite both countries ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which calls against gender-based discrimination, they continue to lag behind in establishing equitable outcomes¹.

This report draws valuable insights from semi-structured interviews with activists, campaign leaders, and representatives from local and international organizations that have been actively involved in these feminist social mobilization efforts in Jordan and Lebanon.

POLITICAL CONTEXT AND REASONS FOR STAGNATION

Demographic and Sectarian Concerns:

One of the most significant obstacles cited by decision-makers in both Jordan and Lebanon is the deeply rooted fear of demographic and sectarian imbalances that could potentially arise from amending the discriminatory nationality laws. In Lebanon, this fear is inseparably linked to concerns over disrupting the delicate sectarian equilibrium that underpins the country's fragile political system. This fear has been exacerbated by the presence of Syrian and Palestinian refugees within Lebanon's borders², leading to a pervasive "culture of fear" regarding the "other." Similarly, in Jordan, the government's reluctance stems from apprehensions about increasing the number of Jordanians with Palestinian roots, as a considerable proportion of Jordanian women are married to Palestinian men³. This concern is rooted in the desire to avoid perceived implications for the long-standing Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the fear of contributing to the "emptying of Palestine from its people."

¹Avis, W. (2017). Gender equality and women's empowerment in Lebanon. K4D Helpdesk Report 175. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

²Masri, N. M. (2010). Why the Lebanese NGOs didn't Succeed in Reforming the Citizenship Law?. *Al-Raida Journal*, 56-59.

³Halasa, A. (2016). *The status of children of Jordanian mothers: The discourse of demography*. Legal Agenda.

Underrepresentation of Women in Political Spheres:

The underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions and political spheres emerges as another critical factor impeding progress on gender-equal nationality laws. Respondents highlighted the lack of women in parliament actively advocating for these rights and the perception that political parties in both countries insufficiently prioritize women's issues on their agendas. This underrepresentation not only limits the voices championing gender equality but also reflects broader societal norms and power dynamics that marginalize women's participation in decision-making processes.

Influence of Patriarchal Systems and Norms:

Entrenched patriarchal systems and deeply ingrained societal norms also play a significant role in perpetuating discriminatory nationality laws in Jordan and Lebanon. In Jordan, respondents noted instances where decision-makers attempted to link the issue of nationality laws to guardianship and religious interpretations, necessitating engagement with religious figures to clarify the distinction between nationality rights and guardianship. This highlights the pervasive influence of patriarchal narratives and the challenges activists face in countering deeply rooted cultural and religious narratives that have historically subjugated women's rights.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

Origins and Key Figures:

The feminist movements advocating for gender equality in nationality laws in Jordan and Lebanon emerged from diverse origins and were propelled by the efforts of prominent activists and coalitions, each with distinct approaches and strategies tailored to their respective contexts.

In Jordan, two influential coalitions played a pivotal role in shaping the movement's trajectory. The first, led by the renowned activist Neemah Habashneh, adopted a grassroots approach, organizing protests, sit-ins, and leveraging social media platforms like Facebook to mobilize affected women and families. Habashneh's pioneering use of Facebook in 2009 marked a turning point, creating a virtual space for affected individuals to share their stories, connect with one another, and collectively raise their voices against discriminatory laws. Despite facing challenges such as page hacking and temporary shutdowns, Habashneh's unwavering determination inspired countless others to join the cause. The second coalition, spearheaded by Aaroub Sobeh, focused on policy discussions, advocacy efforts through conferences and panel discussions, aiming to influence decision-makers through informed dialogue and evidence-based proposals.

In Lebanon, the movement's origins can be traced to regional dialogues and projects that facilitated cross-border collaboration and knowledge-sharing among activists from various countries. Figures like Laure Moghayzel and Lina Abou Habib played instrumental roles in initiating and sustaining these advocacy efforts, leveraging their expertise and networks to amplify calls for reform at regional and international levels. Moghayzel's tireless efforts contributed significantly to advancing women's rights in Lebanon, although she did not live to witness the desired changes in nationality laws. On the other hand, CRTDA's regional project provided a platform for activists to strategize, share best practices, and forge coalitions that transcended national borders.

Multitude of Slogans and Campaigns:

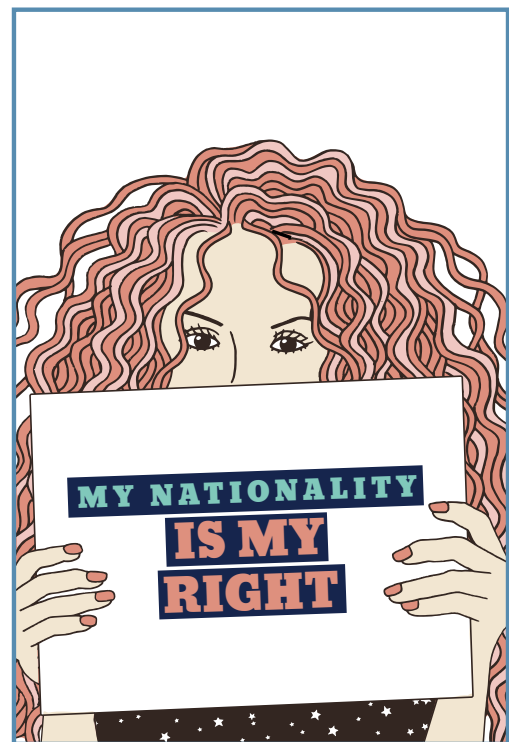
As the movements in Jordan and Lebanon gained momentum, a multitude of campaigns and slogans emerged, each advocating for various aspects of the discriminatory nationality laws. This proliferation of voices reflected the diversity of perspectives and approaches within the broader feminist movement but also presented challenges in maintaining a cohesive and unified narrative.

In Lebanon, respondents acknowledged the chaotic nature of these multiple campaigns, with slogans such as "My Nationality is my Right and the Right of My Family," "Father and Sons for Citizenship Campaign," "Jinsiyati Karamati" (My Nationality is My Dignity), and "My Nationality is my Right and the Right of My Children" competing for attention and support. While this diversity demonstrated the depth of commitment to the cause, it also risked fragmenting efforts and compromising the visibility and unity of the overarching demand for comprehensive nationality law reform.

Similarly, in Jordan, various campaigns and coalitions emerged, each with its distinct slogan and focus area. Respondents acknowledged that this multiplicity, while reflecting the passion and determination of advocates, sometimes led to a diffusion of efforts and a lack of strategic coordination among diverse groups working towards the same goal.

The multitude of slogans and campaigns highlighted the complexity of the issue and the diverse perspectives within the feminist movements. While this diversity enriched the discourse and brought different facets of the problem to the forefront, it

also underscored the need for effective coalition-building and strategic alignment to maximize the impact of advocacy efforts.



STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Protests and Sit-ins:

Protests and sit-ins were widely employed by activists in both Jordan and Lebanon as a direct means of influencing decision-makers and raising public awareness about discriminatory nationality laws. In Jordan, the protests led by Neemah Habashneh's coalition played a pivotal role in pressuring the government to grant "Mazaya" (privileges) to children of Jordanian women married to foreigners in 2014, although the implementation of these privileges was initially delayed⁴. Activists staged sit-ins and protests in front of government buildings, including the parliament and the Council of Ministers, to demand the immediate implementation of the granted privileges. In Lebanon, protests gained significant momentum during the October 17 uprising in 2019⁵, with demands for comprehensive nationality law reform featuring prominently among the protesters' slogans and chants.

Role of Media and Visuals:

The strategic use of media and visuals played a pivotal role in raising awareness, garnering public support, and amplifying the voices of those affected by discriminatory nationality laws. In Jordan, Neemah Habashneh's innovative use of Facebook in 2009 marked a turning point, providing a platform for affected women and families to share their stories and mobilize support. In Lebanon, campaigns produced powerful movies, documentaries⁶, and YouTube series featuring testimonies from affected women and prominent celebrities⁷, effectively highlighting the far-reaching impact of these discriminatory laws on families and society at large.

Engaging Decision-Makers and International Standards:

Activists in both Jordan and Lebanon recognized the importance of engaging decision-makers directly through meetings, lobbying efforts, and leveraging international conventions ratified by their governments, such as the CEDAW Convention. By invoking their countries' commitments to international human rights standards, activists sought to exert pressure on decision-makers and hold them accountable for upholding gender equality principles. Additionally, some campaigns targeted religious figures and institutions to address misconceptions linking nationality laws to guardianship and religious interpretations, aiming to dispel the notion that gender-equal nationality laws contradict religious teachings.

⁴Mauvais, L. (2022). Jordanian women's long struggle for nationality rights. *The New Arab*.

⁵Lebanon Support, "Setting the Agenda towards Gender Equity", Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 2020-02-01 00:00:00. Doi: 10.28943/CSKC.002.80000

⁶Baltaja, From My Nationality is my Right and the Right of my Family Campaign.

⁷"I am Lebanese" series, from My Nationality is my Right and the Right of my Family Campaign
"Excuse, us lady" from My Nationality is my Right and the Right of my Family Campaign

Involving Victims:

A key strategy adopted by activists and campaigns in both countries was to directly involve victims of discriminatory nationality laws in their advocacy efforts. By giving a platform to affected women and their families to share their personal stories and experiences, activists aimed to humanize the issue, foster public empathy, and challenge decision-makers to confront the real-life consequences of these discriminatory laws. In Jordan, the involvement of Jordanian mothers affected by the nationality laws was instrumental in mobilizing support and “setting the wheel in motion,” according to respondents. Similarly, in Lebanon, campaigns like “My Nationality is My Right and the Right of My Family” created forums and spaces for women married to foreigners to lead the movement, share their struggles, and directly engage with decision-makers. This strategy not only amplified the voices of those most impacted but also provided opportunities for capacity-building and empowerment, enabling affected individuals to become effective advocates for their own rights.

ROLE OF DONORS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Regional Dialogues and Capacity Building:

International organizations and campaigns, such as the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, played a significant role in facilitating regional dialogues, capacity-building workshops, and resource sharing among coalition members from various countries. These efforts aimed to elevate the cause of gender equality in nationality laws on regional and international platforms, fostering cross-border solidarity and amplifying calls for reform. By providing spaces for activists and stakeholders to exchange learnings, strategic messages, and innovative advocacy tactics, these international initiatives sought to strengthen national campaigns and support their advocacy efforts.

Fragmentation and Sustainability Concerns:

Respondents raised concerns about the fragmentation caused by project-based funding from donors, which led to the proliferation of campaigns advocating for various aspects of the nationality law, rather than a unified and comprehensive approach. This fragmentation not only diluted the impact of the overall movement but also raised questions about the sustainability of efforts once funding cycles ended. Respondents emphasized the importance of long-term partnerships and commitment to the cause beyond financial support, recognizing that achieving lasting change in discriminatory laws requires sustained, coordinated, and well-resourced advocacy efforts over extended periods.

SUCCESSSES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

While incremental successes were achieved, such as the granting of “Mazaya” (privileges) to children of Jordanian women married to foreigners in Jordan, and limited legal proposals in Lebanon, respondents unanimously agreed that significant work remains to secure the full and equal right of women to pass their nationality to their spouses and children. The challenges persist due to the complex interplay of demographic concerns, sectarian dynamics, entrenched patriarchal systems, and the persistent underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions across both countries.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate landscape of feminist social mobilization efforts in Jordan and Lebanon, shedding light on the diverse strategies employed, the multifaceted challenges encountered, and the complex role of donors and international organizations in supporting these advocacy efforts. By analyzing the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders, including activists, campaign leaders, and representatives from local and international organizations, the report contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the pursuit of gender equality in nationality laws in these countries. The findings underscore the critical importance of sustained advocacy, coalition building, and addressing underlying societal norms and power dynamics that perpetuate gender discrimination. Achieving lasting change in discriminatory nationality laws will require a multi-pronged approach that combines grassroots mobilization, strategic engagement with decision-makers, and leveraging international human rights mechanisms to create an environment conducive to comprehensive legal reform and societal transformation.



03

Feminist Movements Combating Gender-Based Violence

This research focuses on providing an in-depth narrative analysis and framing of the innovative tactics and future actions employed by feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon to address gender-based violence (GBV). The overarching goal is to examine how these movements can achieve long-term sustainability, solidarity, and effective coordinated actions to combat the pervasive issue of GBV in both countries.

It adopts a feminist action research approach, which aims to reinvent the methodologies and tactics used by feminist movements in their work against GBV. This approach is grounded in participatory methods that center women's lived experiences as the core of the analysis. It values the knowledge production of women researchers and activists as a vital resource. Furthermore, it prioritizes women's well-being and positions it as the guiding principle for developing appropriate approaches to this research.

The action research approach is particularly relevant for studying the ongoing struggles against GBV in Egypt and Lebanon. While there are similarities and differences between the socioeconomic conditions in Lebanon and Egypt that have influenced the feminist movements in those countries, academic research has often failed to adequately address these factors. In particular, Lebanon's feminist movements have received less scholarly attention compared to those in Egypt, especially over the past ten years.

Additionally, most existing research has analyzed these movements through a Westernized lens, perpetuating a colonial understanding of women and their activism. The interviews conducted as part of this study corroborate these arguments, with young feminists expressing frustration over previous interactions with academics who failed to adopt sensitive approaches or provide tangible benefits to the movements, often triggering re-traumatization by requiring activists to recount their experiences.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Understanding the political contexts in which the feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon operate is crucial, as these contexts significantly shape their strategies, tactics, and mobilization efforts in combating gender-based violence.

In Egypt, the 2011 uprising and the changes that followed caused feminist groups to become more involved in politics. The public sphere was transformed, and this led to the increased political engagement of feminist movements. This politicization gave rise to new tactics and mobilization tools to address GBV, particularly

in response to the increasing incidents of mob sexual assaults and gang rapes in public spaces like Tahrir Square. The emergence of new generations of activists and their engagement in the public sphere brought alternative mobilization approaches and tools to respond to the evolving contexts and challenges.

However, the securitized and non-democratic regime in Egypt, which has targeted civil society and feminist groups, posed challenges, hindering structural changes and progress. Some academics interviewed argue that the politicization of feminist movements, while initially beneficial, has ultimately led to a systemic crackdown and slowed down the pace of reforms after 2014.

In Lebanon, the feminist groups have navigated a complex political environment marked by religious divisions and the sway of different political parties. This study underscores the interconnectedness between the feminist movements and other social movements, like the anti-globalization movement and the widespread protests that erupted in 2015 and 2019.

These protests, which initially focused on issues like the garbage crisis and deteriorating government services, provided opportunities for feminist movements to amplify their demands and advocate for political and economic reforms that address gender inequality and violence against women. This research accepts the obstacles caused by feminist topics becoming politicized within political parties. Some activists argue traditional parties failed to provide effective democratic ways to address women's issues and raise political awareness.

This report stresses understanding the ongoing gender-based violence faced by women in Lebanon and Egypt. It highlights legal and security circumstances in both nations, which can impede enforcing laws and policies to combat GBV.

DEFINITION AND FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the world's most prevalent human rights violations, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries, and regions, and can impact individuals regardless of their geographical location, socioeconomic background, race, or religion. At the same time, GBV against women is often aggravated by cultural, economic, ideological, technological, political, religious, social, and environmental factors.

GBV is defined by the UNHCR as "any act that results in physical, sexual, mental, or economic harm, including threats of violence, coercion, and manipulation". It can take many forms, such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and so-called 'honor crimes'⁸.

⁸UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency

Among the many forms of violence against women (VAW), sexual violence (SV) is particularly pervasive. The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.” This includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part, or object⁹.

The Egyptian feminist movements have worked over the past decade to contextualize the definition and practices of sexual violence within the Egyptian context. A paper published by Nazra for Feminist Studies in February 2014 referred to sexual violence against women as a multifaceted issue, influenced by multilayered social traditions and practices aimed at oppressing women. It highlighted that some forms of sexual violence are perpetrated by state actors with official state authority, while others are conducted by non-state actors who wield patriarchal authority based on social acceptance¹⁰.



*any act, abstention therefrom,
or threat thereof committed
by a family member against
one or more family members
as construed in the definition
of family, involving one of the
offenses set out under this
Law and resulting in death
or bodily, mental, sexual, or
economic harm*

Domestic violence (DV) is another pervasive form of GBV in both Lebanon and Egypt. It is recognized by Lebanese Law under article 293 titled “On the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence” promulgated in 2014 and defined as “any act, abstention therefrom, or threat thereof committed by a family member against one or more family members as construed in the definition of family, involving one of the offenses set out under this Law and resulting in death or bodily, mental, sexual, or economic harm¹¹.” In Egypt, although article 11 of the 2014 Egyptian constitution stipulates that “the state shall be committed to protecting women against all forms of violence”, gender-based domestic violence is not criminalized according to Egyptian law¹².

⁹World Health Organization. *Violence info – sexual violence – sexual violence*. World Health Organization.

¹⁰*Concept paper: Different practices of sexual violence against women*. Nazra for Feminist Studies. (2014).

¹¹*On the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence*. (2014).

¹²Mecky, M. (2019). *Alternative Policy Solutions | Criminalizing Gender-based Domestic Violence in Egypt*. Aps.aucegypt.

FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EGYPT AND LEBANON

Various forms of gender-based violence (GBV), that women and girls face in Egypt and Lebanon, are highlighted, providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue's complexities and contexts within each country.

In Egypt, several forms of GBV are prevalent, including:

1

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): A widespread practice with severe adverse effects on women's physical and mental health, such as shock, pain, sexual dysfunction, complications during childbirth, infertility, and other health issues. Research has also found a correlation between FGM and increased risk of child abuse and violence against women later in life.

2

Child Marriage: Egypt is among the top eight countries in the Arab region for child marriage, which is often referred to as "tourism marriage¹³." This practice involves families "selling" their young female children, under the age of sixteen, to older men from neighboring countries in the form of temporary marriages during the summer months. While some families justify this practice using Islamic interpretations, studies have revealed the devastating psychological, social, and physical impacts of this form of sexual violence and exploitation on the girls involved.

3

Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Violence against women in Egypt takes various forms, with domestic violence being a major social issue that has been extensively researched in recent decades. Studies by civil society organizations and state institutions have investigated factors such as domestic violence, recognizing the large-scale elements that regularly affect the Egyptian female population. Research, including the Egypt Demographic Health Survey (EDHS), has explored attitudes toward wife beating, physical, emotional, and sexual violence by current husbands, and other relevant variables.

4

Sexual Violence (SV): Egyptian women are also exposed to other forms of sexual violence, such as the "tourism marriage" phenomenon mentioned earlier, which can be considered a form of child sexual abuse and sex trafficking. Additionally, mob sexual assaults and gang rapes in public spaces like Tahrir Square have been a significant issue, especially after the 2011 revolution¹⁴.

¹³UNICEF. (2022) Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa

¹⁴UNHCR Web Archive. (2014).

In Lebanon, while FGM is not a practice among Lebanese or other populations living in the country, several other forms of GBV affect women and girls:

1

Child Marriage: According to a UNICEF survey, child marriage rates vary among different communities in Lebanon, with higher rates observed among Palestinian refugees from Syria (25%) and Syrian refugees (40.5%), compared to Lebanese citizens (6%) and Palestinians refugees in Lebanon (12%)¹⁵.

2

Domestic Violence (DV): Lebanon faces challenges in obtaining comprehensive statistics and institutional information on GBV. However, reports indicate that the situation deteriorated further in 2021, with more than 80% of residents lacking access to basic rights, including healthcare, education, and adequate housing and electricity, disproportionately affecting women.

3

Sexual Violence (SV): A 2017 report by the International Men and Gender Equality Survey in Lebanon and UN Women found that 60% of women respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment in public spaces, many within the three months preceding the survey¹⁶.

It is essential to emphasize the importance of understanding the continuous forms of GBV that women in Egypt and Lebanon face in order to examine and analyze the actions of the feminist movements effectively and identify gaps in the legal systems of both countries.

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

It is crucial to analyze the legal systems concerning gender-based violence in Egypt and Lebanon, along with the initiatives of feminist movements aimed at addressing these issues through legal reforms and advocacy.

¹⁵Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Lebanon Country Brief, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (IRCW), 2017

¹⁶International men and Gender Equality Survey Images. (2017).

In Egypt, significant developments have been achieved, including:



However, several forms of sexual violence remain non-criminalized in Egypt, and state-perpetrated violence continues to be a concern. For example, while the Military Council issued Decree Law No. 11 in 2011, increasing penalties for rape crimes to life imprisonment or the death penalty, the definition of rape remained limited, covering only cases of penetration.

In Lebanon, the feminist movements have achieved notable progress, such as:



¹⁷Egypt: *Sexual violence against women - loc.* (2016).

¹⁸The National Strategy for Combating Violence Against Women (2015).

¹⁹*National strategy for the empowerment of Egyptian women 2030*. National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 - National Women Machineryes. (2017).

²⁰Dissecting Lebanese Law 293 on Domestic Violence. (2017).

²¹*Lebanon: Sexual harassment law missing key protections*. Human Rights Watch. (2021).

Law 205 defines sexual harassment as



any bad and repetitive behavior that is extraordinary, unwelcome by the victim, and with a sexual connotation that constitutes a violation of the body, privacy, or emotions²²

It recognizes that sexual harassment can occur through speech, actions, and electronic means, and considers single or repeated acts that use psychological, moral, financial, or racist pressure to obtain benefits of sexual nature as forms of sexual harassment.

While there have been some accomplishments, feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon still face several difficulties. One major issue is the absence of comprehensive legal systems that address all types of gender-based violence (GBV). Another challenge is that violence against women is often seen as normal and acceptable in society. Additionally, the complicated political and security situations in both countries make it harder to properly enforce laws and policies related to GBV. As a result, despite some progress, significant obstacles remain in the fight against gender-based violence in these two nations.

TACTICS OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

Feminist movements in both countries utilize various tactics, including:



Coalition-building and collective action: Feminist movements have recognized the importance of solidarity and collective action in achieving their goals. Coalitions and alliances have been formed to protect and amplify the voices of survivors, advocate for sensitive and responsive laws and policies, and ensure ownership of the movements' work.



Advocacy and awareness campaigns: Feminist movements have engaged in various advocacy efforts, from lobbying policymakers to organizing public campaigns and events, to raise awareness about GBV and push for legal and social reforms.

²²Lebanon: Sexual Harassment Law Missing Key Protections. (2021). Human Rights Watch.



Engagement with state institutions and security forces: In some instances, feminist movements have worked to establish dialogue and collaborations with state institutions, security forces, and the judiciary to address GBV, provide training, and ensure effective implementation of laws and policies.

However, challenges posed by NGOization and funding constraints exist and remain a main limitation. The reliance on project-based funding and the inequitable distribution of resources among organizations can create power dynamics and divisions within the movements, hindering democratic practices and collective decision-making. Additionally, international donors' agendas and priorities can sometimes shape the actions and narratives of local movements, posing risks to their autonomy and responsiveness to local contexts.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The limitations include:

- 1 **Lack of documented knowledge:** Limited academic research and documentation on the feminist movements, particularly in Lebanon, pose challenges in comprehensively understanding their work and strategies.
- 2 **Contextual complexities:** The unique socio-political and cultural contexts of Egypt and Lebanon, including factors such as the presence of refugees and migrant communities, sectarian divisions, and political instability, add layers of complexity to this study.
- 3 **Limited availability of stakeholders:** Due to the current situations in both countries, the availability of stakeholders, activists, and feminists to participate, was limited, affecting the depth and breadth of data collection.
- 4 **Emotional burden and well-being:** Re-narrating traumatic experiences related to GBV can be emotionally taxing for survivors and activists, potentially hindering their willingness to participate in research or share their stories.

Based on these findings, several recommendations for future collaborative work between feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon can be deduced:

1

Promoting intersectional and intergenerational approaches:

Addressing GBV requires acknowledging the intersectionality of different forms of oppression and discrimination, as well as fostering intergenerational collaboration and knowledge sharing within the movements.

2

Strengthening solidarity and coalition-building:

Enhancing solidarity and coalition-building among feminist movements and organizations can amplify their collective voice, leverage resources, and enable more effective advocacy and action.

3

Advocating for comprehensive legal reforms and effective implementation:

Continuous efforts should be made to advocate for comprehensive legal frameworks that address all forms of GBV and ensure effective implementation of existing laws, including through engagement with state institutions and the judiciary.

4

Engaging with state institutions and security forces:

Establishing dialogues and collaborations with state institutions and security forces can help address state-perpetrated violence, ensure accountability, and provide training and sensitization on GBV issues.

5

Challenging societal attitudes and norms:

Awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives should be designed to challenge societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate GBV, promoting cultural shifts and creating an environment that rejects violence against women and girls.

6

Addressing the impact of economic crises, political instability, and conflict:

This study recognizes the need to address the intersections between GBV, economic crises, political instability, and conflict situations, which can exacerbate women's vulnerability and limit access to resources and support services.

7

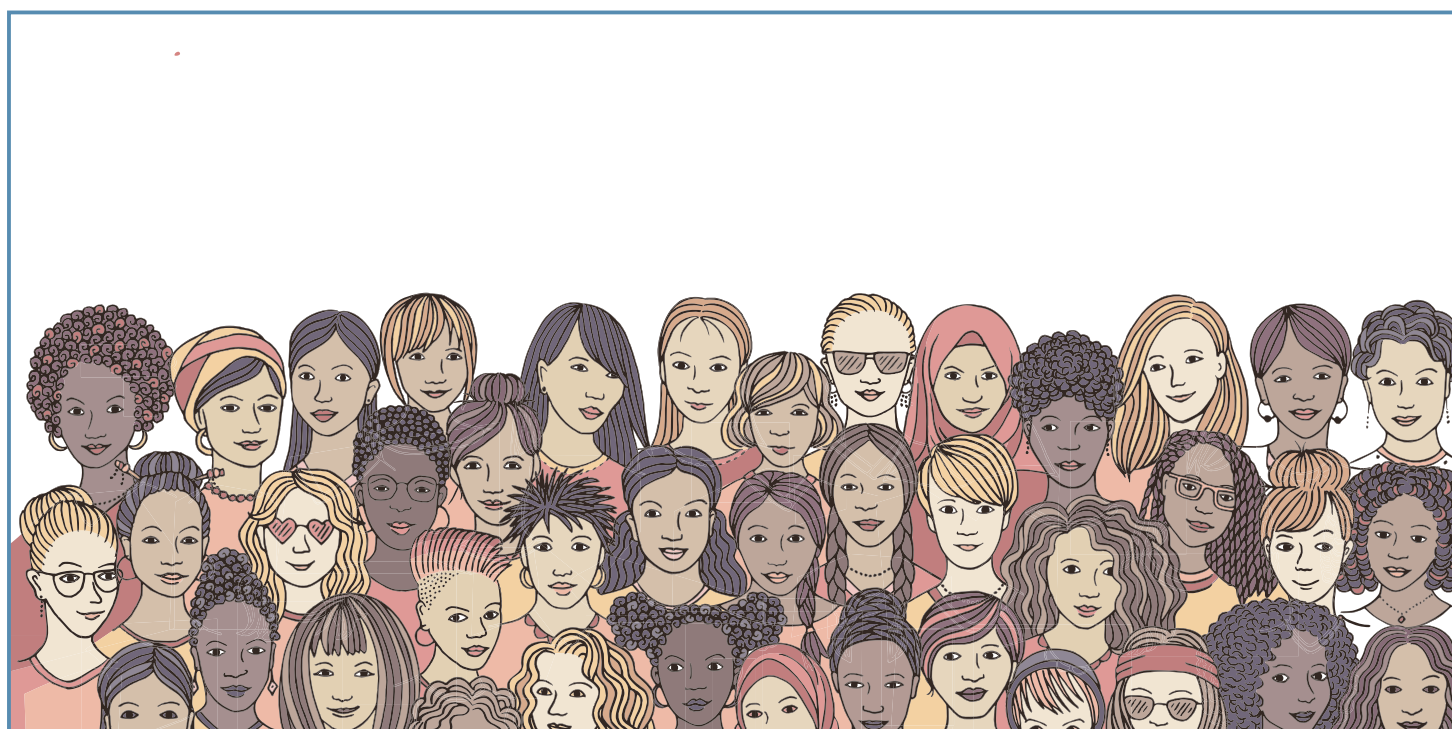
Ensuring sustainable funding and resources:

Securing sustainable funding and resources for feminist movements and organizations is crucial for their long-term effectiveness and impact. However, this should be accompanied by efforts to address power dynamics and inequalities in resource distribution, promoting transparency and democratic decision-making within the movements.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study on feminist movements combating gender-based violence in Egypt and Lebanon highlights the resilience and innovative tactics employed by these movements in the face of significant challenges. Despite operating in complex socio-political and cultural environments, these movements have achieved notable progress in legal reforms, raising awareness, and providing support services for survivors and victims of GBV. By contextualizing their actions within the specific ecosystems in which they operate, the feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon have demonstrated their commitment to achieving gender justice and creating safer and more equitable societies for women and girls. The recommendations emphasize the importance of fostering intersectional and intergenerational approaches, strengthening solidarity and collective action, advocating for comprehensive legal reforms, engaging with state institutions, challenging societal attitudes, addressing the impact of economic crises and political instability, and ensuring sustainable funding and resources.

Through this comprehensive analysis, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts of feminist movements in both countries and to promote collaborative work and knowledge-sharing towards a future where gender-based violence is eradicated, and women and girls can live free from violence, discrimination, and oppression.



04

LGBTQIA+ Mobilization in Tunisia and Lebanon

The paths of LGBTQIA+ mobilization, in Tunisia and Lebanon have followed trajectories, influenced by the social and political landscapes and the specific challenges encountered by queer and trans communities in each country. While both movements share goals such as advocating for the decriminalization of same-sex relationships (Article 230 in Tunisia and Article 534 in Lebanon) and fighting against practices like forced anal testing, their approaches to activism are diverse and cannot be categorized under a single Arab queer mobilization umbrella.

Although these movements share overarching objectives, they employ strategies and tactics that reflect the historical contexts that led to their formation. In Tunisia early initiatives focused on providing services such as shelter, sexual health education and legal assistance to LGBTQIA+ individuals facing violence and discrimination, laid the foundation for activism. Conversely in Lebanon, an organized queer movement emerged partly as a response to events, like the U.S. Invasion of Iraq and the Cairo 52 case, which sparked solidarity efforts and activism. Despite these divergent origins, both movements initially followed a similar trajectory, mobilizing through online platforms, networks, and legal support mechanisms. Their paths gradually diverged as they navigated the distinct socio-political landscapes of their respective countries. The Lebanese movement gained visibility and momentum earlier than the Tunisian one.

As the movements evolved, their tactics and strategies further differentiated, reflecting the distinct challenges and opportunities presented by their contexts. The multifaceted dimensions of these movements, including their internal dynamics, dialogues with stakeholders, engagement with funding structures, and navigation of the broader political climate, have profoundly shaped their trajectories and outcomes.

LGBTQIA+ Mobilization



POLITICAL CONTEXT

In Tunisia, the political situation played a pivotal role in shaping the queer movement's trajectory. The first two years after the 2011 revolution (2011-2012) witnessed monumental success, as more individuals, organizations, and parties integrated the scene, and LGBTQIA+ collectives became officially registered and recognized, thanks to the optimistic political climate²³.

However, the situation became dangerous in 2013 when the Muslim Brotherhood seized power, and political assassinations resumed. Consequently, groups that were either supporting or could have supported the queer cause disassociated themselves from anything LGBTQIA+, leading to asylum-based migration.

The period between 2014 and 2019 was more promising politically, reflected in the emergence of several LGBTQIA+ organizations—Chouf, Mawjoudin, and Shams—the increased acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ cause by certain political parties, the successful banning of anal testing in 2017²⁴, and more visible civic engagement through protests and demonstrations.

Nevertheless, the political landscape took a concerning turn after President Saied annulled the parliament in July 2021 and worked towards implementing Sharia law²⁵. With religion becoming inseparably linked to governmental functioning, upholding religious ideology became the state's job. As a result, the queer movement's progression faced severe threats, exacerbated by the president's crackdown on foreign-funded CSOs, leading to stagnation in initiatives and protests. The fear-mongering rhetoric around protests being labeled as "national treason" also contributed to the decrease in LGBTQIA+ protests and initiatives since 2021.

In Lebanon, the political situation influenced the queer movement differently. The 17th of October 2019 protests, where queer feminism was at the forefront, were followed by a series of crises—the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, and the Beirut port explosion—which forced civil society organizations to shift to service provision and humanitarian aid²⁶. The re-establishment of sectarian political parties and their stronghold to power during this crisis period also posed threats to vulnerable communities.

²³Fortier, E. A. (2015). Transition and marginalization: Locating spaces for discursive contestation in Post-Revolution Tunisia. *Mediterranean Politics*, 20(2), 142–160.

²⁴*Tunisia: Doctors oppose "anal test" for homosexuality. Human Rights Watch (2017).*

²⁵*Coup in Tunisia: Is democracy lost?* Journal of Democracy. (2022).

²⁶Mourad, Sara. The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, 2020, *Women's Activism in the Lebanese October Uprising: The Promises and Pitfalls of Women-Centered Politics.*

TACTICS, DEMANDS, AND TOOLS

Demands and Catalysts

In Tunisia, initial efforts at offline mobilization, such as shelter provision, sexual health education, and legal aid, began because of violence directed towards queer and trans individuals in the country. These early efforts were led by organizations like the not-yet-officially-registered Damj and intersectional feminist, SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights), and legal initiatives that indirectly aided the queer and trans cause. In Lebanon, on the other hand, transnational activism, particularly in the aftermath of the United States (U.S.) invasion of Iraq and the Cairo 52 incident, was a main incentive for the emergence of the queer movement.

Strategies and Tactics

Both movements initially mobilized through online initiatives, networks, and legal support for queer and trans individuals. However, Lebanon kickstarted its queer movement towards the end of the 1990s²⁷, while Tunisia's online networks emerged between 2002 and 2004, indicating a faster evolution in Lebanon.

In the early 2000s, the Lebanese queer movement was aggressively visible, with bold tactics such as protests, demonstrations, and media campaigns, leading to the birth of numerous local organizations. In contrast, queer mobilization in Tunisia occurred in a more structured and underground manner through organizations like Damj (not yet officially registered) and intersectional initiatives focused on shelter provision, sexual health education, legal aid, and feminist causes.

During the period after the Arab Uprisings (2011-2014), personal and ideological splits emerged within the Lebanese queer movement, leading to the split between Meem and Helem in 2014 and a stagnation in mobilization. Some believed this stagnation was due to a shift towards "softer Western strategies" and advocacy campaigns, as well as the co-opting of the movement by events like Beirut Pride and the rise of NGO-ization.

Tools

Both movements utilized similar tools, including capacity building, knowledge dissemination, creative writing, storytelling, arts (film industry, theater, performance arts), and alternative media outlets such as social media. In Lebanon, the film industry faced limitations due to the audiovisual law vaguely banning "promoting homosexuality" and the presence of a censorship office hindering inclusivity in film festivals. Self-censorship among Lebanese filmmakers due to education reinforcing heteronormativity was also a challenge.

²⁷Nagle, J. (2022). 'Where the state freaks out': Gentrification, Queerspaces and activism in postwar Beirut. *Urban Studies*, 59(5), 956-973.

In Tunisia, the queer cinema scene witnessed some tensions with law enforcement during the recent Mawjoudin Queer Film Festival, as the organization was under observation due to the current socio-political climate and the president's crackdown on content deemed against socially acceptable norms. However, the Tunisian arts scene still maintained impressive public feats, such as Mawjoudin producing an openly queer play, *Flagranti* (2022), which received visibility and closed the International Carthage Festival, a first in Tunisian history²⁸.

DIALOGUE AND COMMUNICATION

In Lebanon, intergenerational gaps, ideological splits, and personal disputes prevented fruitful coalitions on a local level. There were also conflicts regarding dialogue with decision-makers and key stakeholders, with some colluding with decision-makers and alienating non-Lebanese experiences, while others refused to negotiate, believing it would water down their demands. The NGO-ization of the Lebanese queer movement reinforced existing power dynamics.

In Tunisia, several coalitions emerged, such as the Queer Maghreb Coalition (2013), Etihad-MENA, the Public Coalition for Individual Freedoms (2015), Manbouthat, Kayan (2015), and the Tunisian Coalition for LGBTQI+ Rights (comprising Damj, Mawjoudin, Chouf, Shams, and Kelmti/Kalimati). The dialogue with decision-makers was more productive, with limited interactions with unions and syndicates. However, after the revolution, some entities, including the General Tunisian Union of Students, the Tunisian General Labor Union, and the Union for Unemployed Graduates (UDC), started indirectly integrating queer rights into their work.

The only notable internal issue in the Tunisian context was the request by Damj, Mawjoudin, and Chouf for the removal of Shams from the Tunisian Coalition for LGBTQI+ Rights due to Shams' actions, history of perpetuating Zionist rhetoric, and allegations of its ex-president abusing relationships with minors and young individuals in the community.

NGO-IZATION AND FUNDING

In Lebanon, NGO-ization led to CSOs working in silos, gatekeeping, and monopolizing resources. Some interviewees believed that NGO-ization made the queer movement apolitical, as most organizations had to switch to service provision due to a lack of resources. Larger international and humanitarian organizations actively excluded the Lebanese LGBTQIA+ community, further complicating the work of smaller local CSOs. In Tunisia, the scene was less fragmented, with no explicit mention of unfair resource allocation. However, a

²⁸Flagranti: Queer Play – Mawjoudin Website.

rift within Chouf occurred due to disagreements over accepting funding for salaries and consistent financial compensation, as Chouf was initially constructed as a radically leftist, anti-NGOization communal space.

Both contexts faced challenges related to the distribution of funds and accompanying requirements. In Lebanon, most core and sustainable funds were given to larger, less radical organizations willing to negotiate. In Tunisia, organizations were selective about funding entities, choosing only those that aligned with their politics and having strict selection criteria for donors.

Other limitations in Lebanon included the intergenerational gap, lack of continuity, structure, and knowledge exchange, language barriers, and the presence of a “Beirut queer bubble,” alienating numerous experiences and initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The perception of success and failure differed significantly between the LGBTQIA+ movements in Lebanon and Tunisia. In Lebanon, the fragmented dynamics of activism led to discrepancies in the perception of major events and key moments in the movement, with what was considered a success for one party being seen as inconsequential or a failure for another.

In Tunisia, despite different organizations working on different activities with different end goals, the movement as a whole was more united in its perception of progress. When it came to failures, there were no explicit mentions, as losses and victories were largely dependent on the country’s sociopolitical situation.

While Tunisian LGBTQIA+ mobilization suffered primarily due to external factors, mainly the country’s sociopolitical situation, the Lebanese movement faced challenges due to internal factors such as the personal grievances, exclusionary politics, and individualized, non-collective efforts of CSOs.

Sought-after victories in both countries included achieving inter-CSO solidarity, achieving queer and trans visibility such as normalizing certain terms and concepts via media and the performing arts, abolishing anal testing, dismantling Articles 534 in Lebanon and 230 in Tunisia, and furthering the integration of art into queer activism.

05

Common Themes Across the Studies

Despite the diverse contexts and focal issues, several common themes emerged across the studies, highlighting the shared challenges and strategies employed by feminist movements in the MENA region. One recurring theme was the pivotal role of the political context in shaping the trajectories of these movements. In Egypt, the securitized and non-democratic regime has targeted civil society and feminist groups, hindering structural changes, according to academics. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, feminist groups have navigated a complex political environment marked by religious divisions and the sway of different political parties. Tunisia's case underscored the volatility of the political situation, with periods of optimism followed by concerning turns, such as President Saied's crackdown on foreign-funded CSOs after 2021²⁹.

Recognizing the power of collective action, feminist movements across the region have embraced coalition-building as a strategic imperative. In Egypt and Lebanon, coalitions and alliances have been formed to protect survivors' voices, advocate for laws and policies, and ensure ownership of their work. Similarly, in Tunisia, several coalitions emerged, including the Queer Maghreb Coalition, Etihad-MENA, the Public Coalition for Individual Freedoms, and the Tunisian Coalition for LGBTQI+ Rights.

Furthermore, engagement with legal frameworks has been a cornerstone of these movements' efforts. In Egypt, progress has been made, including the criminalization of sexual harassment and the adoption of a National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women. Lebanon witnessed the passage of laws criminalizing domestic violence and sexual harassment, providing important protections for survivors.

TRENDS

The strategic deployment of social media and communication strategies emerged as a notable trend across the case studies. In Egypt, following the 2011 uprising, new generations of activists brought alternative mobilization approaches and tools, including social media, to respond to evolving contexts and challenges. Similarly, in Lebanon, the queer movement utilized online initiatives and legal support mechanisms in its initial stages, while in Tunisia, the film industry and arts scene played a vital role in amplifying LGBTQIA+ voices, despite challenges such as censorship and self-censorship.

Engaging with decision-makers and invoking international standards also featured prominently in these movements' advocacy efforts. In Jordan, activists like Neemah Habashneh and Aaroub Sobeh employed

²⁹Human rights under assault two years after President Saied's power grab. Amnesty International. (2023).

diverse approaches, from grassroots protests to policy discussions and advocacy efforts, to influence decision-makers on nationality laws. In Lebanon, figures like Laure Moghayzel and Lina Abou Habib played instrumental roles in initiating and sustaining advocacy efforts at regional and international levels, leveraging conventions like CEDAW to exert pressure on decision-makers.

The impact of funding and international support, however, presented both opportunities and challenges. In Lebanon, NGO-ization and project-based funding led to fragmentation and concerns about the sustainability of efforts once funding cycles ended. In contrast, in Tunisia, organizations were selective about funding entities, choosing only those that aligned with their politics and having strict selection criteria for donors.

DISCREPANCIES

While common themes and trends emerged, the case studies also revealed discrepancies in the origins, trajectories, tactics, and internal dynamics of these movements. In Tunisia, early initiatives focused on providing services like shelter, sexual health education, and legal assistance, laying the foundation for activism, while in Lebanon, an organized queer movement emerged partly as a response to events like the U.S. Invasion of Iraq and the Cairo 52 case. In Jordan, two influential coalitions, led by Neemah Habashneh (grassroots approach) and Aaroub Sobeh (policy discussions), shaped the movement's trajectory on nationality laws through different mechanisms.

The tactics and strategies employed also varied. In Egypt, the emergence of new generations of activists after the 2011 uprising brought alternative mobilization approaches and tools to address gender-based violence (GBV). In Lebanon, the queer movement initially employed online initiatives and legal support mechanisms, later adopting bolder tactics like protests and media campaigns. In Tunisia, the arts scene played a significant role, with organizations like Mawjoudin producing openly queer plays and films.

Perceptions of success and failure differed across movements and contexts. In Lebanon, the fragmented dynamics of activism led to discrepancies in the perception of major events and key moments, with what was considered a success for one party being seen as inconsequential or a failure for another. In contrast, in Tunisia, the movement as a whole was more united in its perception of progress, with losses and victories largely dependent on the country's socio-political situation.

Internal dynamics and challenges also diverged. In Lebanon, intergenerational gaps, ideological splits, and personal disputes prevented fruitful coalitions on a local level within the queer movement. In Tunisia, a rift within Chouf occurred due to disagreements over accepting funding for salaries and consistent financial compensation. In Jordan, while multiple campaigns and coalitions emerged, reflecting the passion and determination of advocates, respondents acknowledged a lack of strategic coordination among separate groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the synthesized findings, the following recommendations are proposed to guide decision-making and strategic planning for feminist mobilization efforts in the MENA region:

- 1 **Promote** intersectional and intergenerational approaches to address diverse forms of oppression and ensure the sustainability and continuity of movements.
- 2 **Prioritize** solidarity and coalition-building among feminist movements and organizations, transcending personal grievances and ideological differences to amplify collective demands.
- 3 **Advocate** for comprehensive legal reforms that address all forms of violence and discrimination, ensuring effective implementation and enforcement mechanisms.
- 4 **Engage** constructively with decision-makers, state institutions, and religious authorities to address misconceptions, alleviate demographic and sectarian concerns, and advocate for policy changes aligned with international standards.
- 5 **Implement** long-term strategies to challenge societal norms and patriarchal systems that perpetuate violence, discrimination, and underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions.
- 6 **Embrace** digital platforms, social media, and innovative communication strategies to raise awareness, mobilize support, and amplify the voices of feminist movements, while ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.
- 7 **Advocate** for sustainable funding mechanisms and equitable distribution of resources among feminist movements and organizations, ensuring long-term continuity and minimizing fragmentation caused by project-based funding cycles.
- 8 **Recognize** and address the impact of intersecting crises, such as economic instability, political turmoil, and armed conflicts, on the vulnerability of women and the sustainability of feminist movements.
- 9 **Encourage** regional dialogues and knowledge-sharing platforms to facilitate cross-border learning, collaboration, and amplification of feminist causes on regional and international levels.
- 10 **Implement** self-care practices and mechanisms to support the well-being of activists and movement leaders, acknowledging the emotional toll of addressing traumatic experiences and societal challenges.

06 | Conclusion

Across the Middle East and North Africa, social justice movements weave a tapestry of resilience and innovation in their fight for equality. LGBTQIA+ movements in Lebanon and Tunisia illustrate this beautifully. In Lebanon, fragmented activism leads to differing perceptions of success. Victories in abolishing anal testing or promoting queer art might be celebrated by some as milestones, while others view them as insufficient progress. This fragmented approach creates a complex landscape where a unified sense of achievement can be elusive. Tunisia, on the other hand, presents a more united front. Diverse LGBTQIA+ organizations, though working on different activities, share a more cohesive understanding of their progress against external challenges like the country's sociopolitical situation.

This focus on internal versus external challenges extends beyond LGBTQIA+ rights. Feminist movements in Egypt and Lebanon, for example, demonstrate unwavering resolve in combating gender-based violence (GBV). Despite significant hurdles, they have secured legal reforms, raised awareness, and provided support services for survivors. However, the fight for gender equality in nationality laws, explored in the case on Jordan and Lebanon, highlights the intricate landscape these movements navigate. Sustained advocacy, coalition building, and addressing underlying societal norms and power dynamics remain crucial for dismantling discriminatory nationality laws that often leave women and girls especially vulnerable.

The feminist social mobilization efforts documented in this synthesis highlight the resilience, determination, and innovative strategies employed by various movements across Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia. Despite operating in complex socio-political landscapes and facing numerous challenges, these movements have achieved notable progress in combating gender-based violence, advocating for legal reforms, and raising awareness about gender inequality.

By identifying common themes, trends, and discrepancies, this document provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of feminist social mobilization. The recommendations offered serve as a blueprint for decision-makers, activists, and stakeholders involved in advancing gender equality and women's rights. Implementing these lessons learned will require sustained commitment, effective coalition-building, and a holistic approach that addresses legal, cultural, and structural barriers to gender equality.

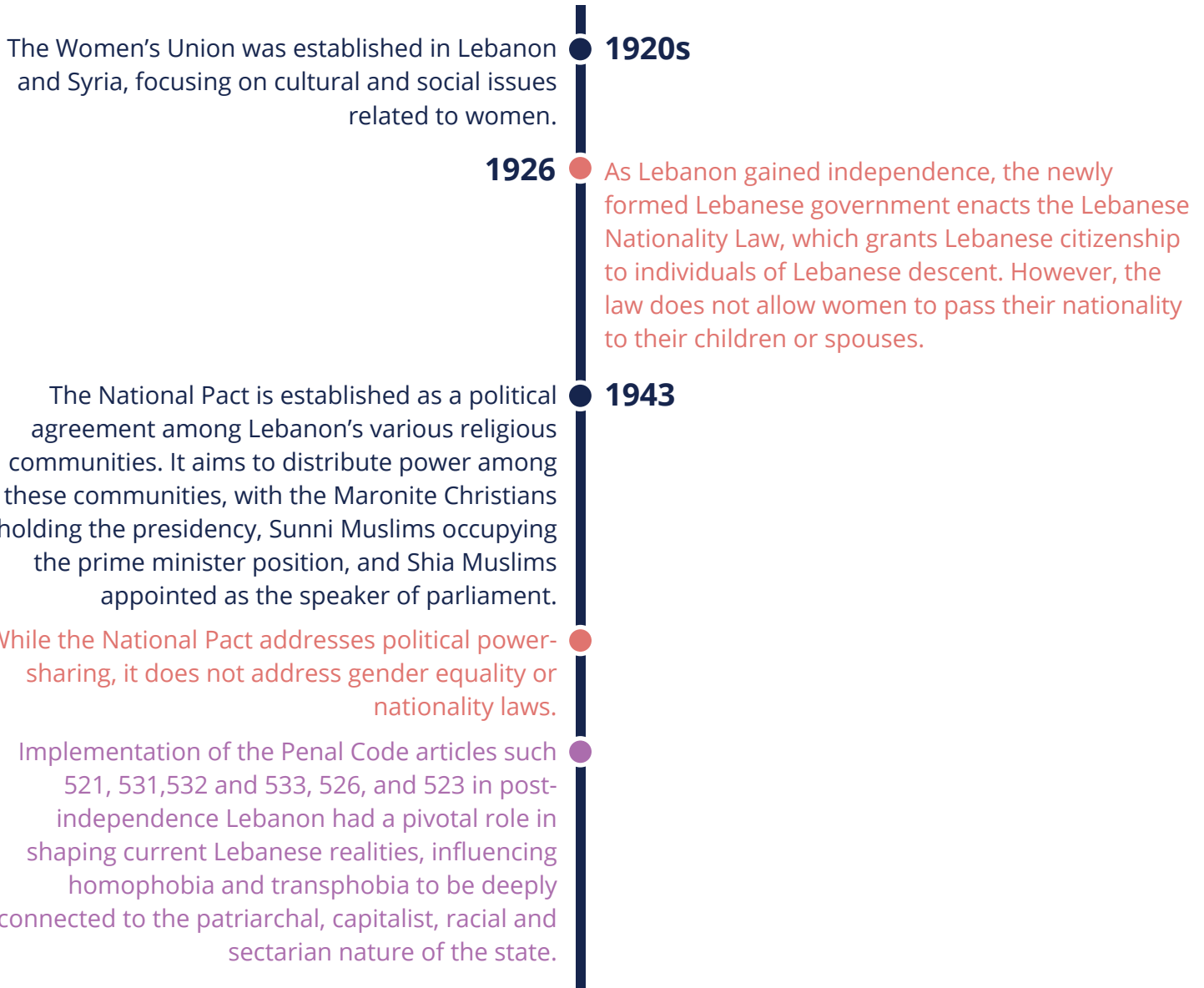
The journey towards achieving gender equality and eradicating gender-based violence demands a collective and intersectional effort, drawing strength from the diverse experiences and strategies of feminist movements across different contexts. By embracing the recommendations outlined, stakeholders can contribute to a more equitable and just society for all.

07 | Timelines

FEMINIST SOCIAL MOBILISATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN LEBANON

COLOR CODING:

- Campaigning for Gender Equality in Nationality Law
- Campaigning Against Gender-Based Violence
- Campaigning for Recognition and Voice of Queer Movement



An amendment to the Nationality Law grants foreign women married to Lebanese men the right to obtain Lebanese nationality highlighting a new type of legal discrimination against Lebanese women married to foreign men. In the 60s, Lebanese women married to a foreigner was subject of denationalization.

1960

1975-1990

The Lebanese Civil War breaks out, lasting for 15 years and resulting in significant political, social, and economic instability. The Lebanese Civil War officially ended with the signing of the Taif Agreement.

The Taif included a clause calling for the reform of the discriminatory nationality law.

Queer theory started engaging with feminist theory, post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and critical race theory. This has influenced the term “queer” to be seen as a “western invention” in the MENA/SWANA region.

1990

1994

Lebanon’s government controversially issued Decree #5247, granting citizenship to over 150,000 foreign residents, mainly Syrians (Sunni and Christian) and Palestinians (mostly Shia from the “Seven Villages”). This mass naturalization sparked debates over transparency, sovereignty, and sectarian tensions. While it addressed some statelessness issues, it failed to address the underlying discriminatory law and raised fears of demographic shifts.

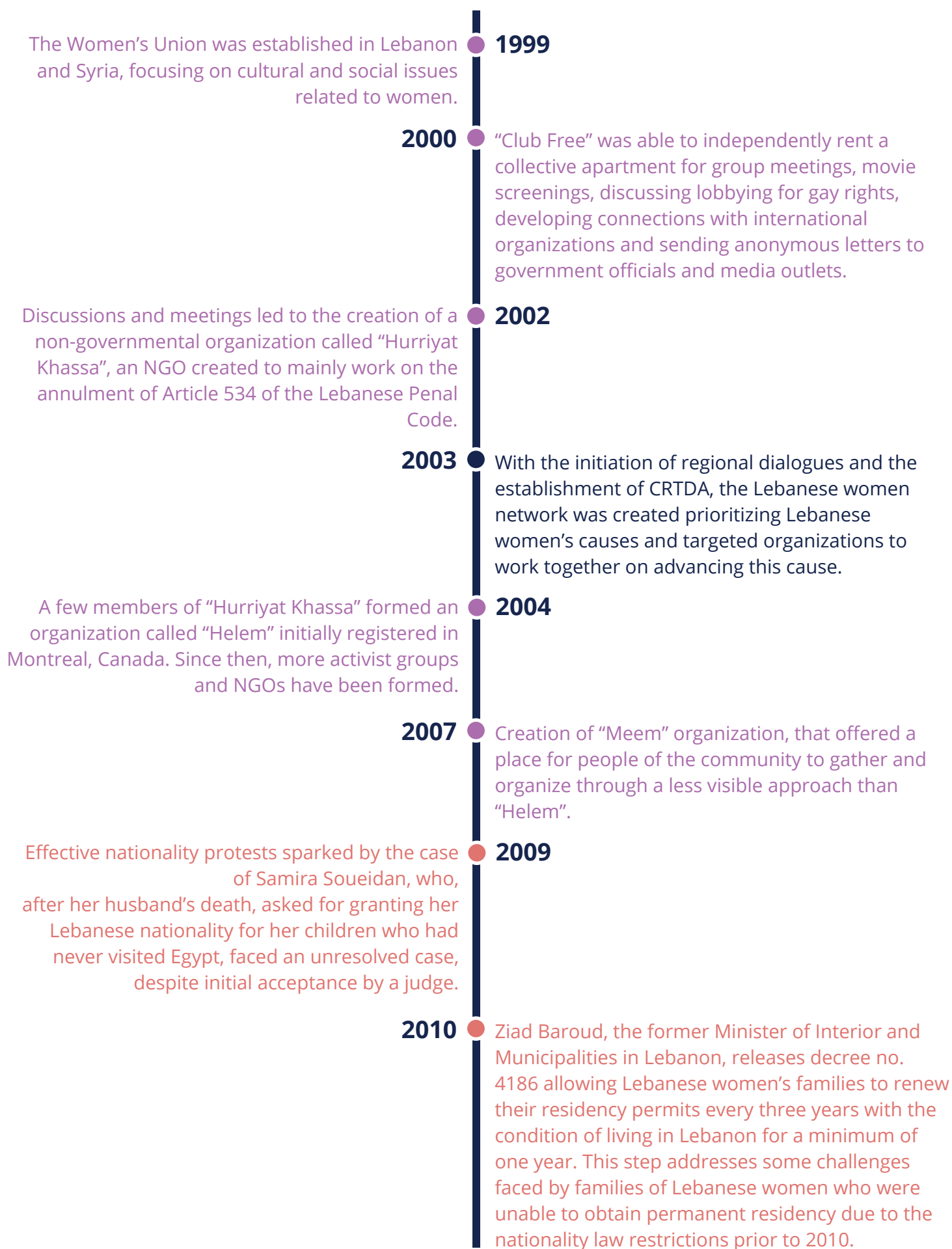
Lebanon ratifies the CEDAW with reservations on articles 9 (2), 16 (1) (c), (d), (f), (g), and 29 (1) including the right of women to pass their nationality to their spouses and children, indicating that gender-based discrimination in citizenship rights persists.

1996

1998

Start of Lebanese queer activism online, through a mailing list on Yahoo that was created by mostly anonymous queer Lebanese people.

Founding of an underground social support group called “Club Free”, strictly for the queer community.



- Article 562 of the Lebanese Criminal Code, which had provided mitigating circumstances for honor crimes, was abolished. ● **2011**
- Labor regulation no. 122.2 is issued in Lebanon, aiming to remove discrimination against the spouses of Lebanese women in terms of job opportunities. The regulation grants them work permits without requiring a sponsor, thus providing greater employment opportunities and rights for foreign spouses married to Lebanese women. ●
- Beginning of the 2011 uprisings - Queer feminist intersectional and transnational interconnecting thought emerged in the region, influencing queer feminist organizing of today. ●
- 2011-2012** ● With the onset of the Syrian War, Lebanon faced a massive influx of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria making it the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. The influx of Syrian refugees has strained the Lebanese economy, leading to increase tension and resentment between both the local Lebanese host community and the Syrian refugees.
- A raid by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) accused screening gay movies and “posing a threat to public morality on a cinema in a working-class Armenian neighborhood,” leading to the arrest of 36 individuals. People were tortured and subjected to forced anal examinations or anal-probe instant tests, also known as “homosexuality tests”. ● **2012**
- 2013** ● Kafa signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ISF to collaborate on protecting women from abuse and violence.
- Between 2010 and 2013, 26 Lebanese women were killed in domestic settings.
- “Meem” organization adopted strategies grounded in feminist politics, as well as created a community in the form of an organized social group emphasizing on its members’ confidentiality. ● **2007-2014**

2008-2014

● There were around 5 campaigns working exclusively on Nationality law, each with a different slogan.

● Following years of lobbying by civil society, the Lebanese Parliament introduced a law that aims at protecting women and the rest of family members from DV and physical abuse that excluded refugee women exposed to domestic violence.

● Fourteen Lebanese women were killed in domestic crimes after the statement of Law 293.

● A raid set on a Turkish “Hammam” in Hamra in Beirut led to the arrest of 27 people, including several refugees employed in the establishment.

● The Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights was formed, uniting national and international organizations, activists, academics, and UN agencies. It aimed to strengthen collective voices, share insights, and advocate for nationality law reforms, gender equality, and increased recognition at regional and international forums to support national campaigns.

2014**2018**

● **May 2018:** Lebanon faced a massive influx of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria making it the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world which strained the Lebanese economy, leading to increase tension and resentment between both the local Lebanese host community and the Syrian refugees.

● **May 2018:** The ISF detained an activist and pressured him to cancel events associated with Beirut Pride, including a poetry reading, a karaoke night, a discussion of sexual health and HIV, and a legal literacy workshop.

● **Sep 2018:** Raid set by the General Security on the annual NEDWA conference on gender and sexuality hosted by the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE), while also imposing an entry ban on non-Lebanese queer participants. Such efforts led to the cancellation of the conference on the grounds of “incitement to immorality”.

The **October 17** uprisings erupt due to Lebanon's worsening financial and economic crisis. Protesters voice grievances against corruption, economic mismanagement, and inadequate public services, demanding systemic change, and there was an emergence of slogans advocating for women's rights amidst the demonstrations.

2019

October 2019: Start of the 2019 Lebanese protests, where hundreds of protestors took the streets for rights, including marginalized and oppressed minorities demanding the introduction of legislation that protects LGBTQIA+ people's rights to respect, bodily autonomy, socioeconomic mobility as well as freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

August 9, 2019: Cancellation of Mashrou' Leila's concert at the Byblos International - an indirect catalyst to the movement. Such led to self-censoring in order to avoid being called in for interrogation in such circumstances, as well as reflected the government's increased reliance on "overboard and abusive laws" to censor not only artists, but activists and journalists as well.

December 9, 2019: March considered as the most impactful of gatherings against sexual harassment.

2020

The Beirut Port Explosion occurred, further deteriorating the socio-economic conditions in the country.

Parliament passed Law No. 204 to amend the Law on the Protection of women and other family members from domestic violence.

The Parliament passed the landmark Law 205 against sexual harassment that criminalized sexual harassment and outlines whistleblower protection, and seeing perpetrators spend up to four years in prison and pay fines up to fifty times the minimum wage.

The nationality law movement has strategically integrated advocacy efforts with audio-visual content, including visuals, films, and interviews, to broaden its reach, raise awareness, and cultivate sensitivity towards the cause.

- **February 2020:** The pandemic affected the local queer movement due to its extremely restrictive, heightened gender-based violence and domestic violence against women and children. Restrictions led to the closing of “safe” queer spaces due to the safety measures put members of the queer community at-risk and forced members to go through the lockdown with transphobic and/or homophobic family members.
- **April 20, 2020:** Due to Covid-19 restrictions, protestors went down to the streets while staying in their cars thus maintaining social distancing.
- Existential loss occurred to queer safe spaces and/or neighborhoods where queer people had found a community, livelihoods, refuge, art and intimate expression had been completely destroyed. Numerous queer activists and artists assembled, organized and went to the streets of Beirut, as well as opened their homes and offices for accommodation in the absence of a rapid humanitarian response and provisions from the government.
- Creation of the “Yalla Care Coalition” which is another form of humanitarian activism emerged among queer artists and activists: Partnership including a multitude of organizations and initiatives, as well as worked towards and providing support and aid to marginalized communities’ post-blast.
- Digital exhibition “Molding the Lost Space” displayed work done by marginalized artists from the community who reflected on the intimate after-effects of both the lockdown and the blast.
- Creation of The Queer Relief Fund (QRF), a form of humanitarian activism emerged among queer artists and activists established by a group of activists from the queer community who worked together to help the most marginalized groups affected by the blast.

● 2023

Ranking 132nd out of 146 countries in the WEF’s 2023 annual ranking, Lebanon has fallen 13 points from 119th in 2022.

CAMPAIGNING FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN NATIONALITY LAW - THE CASE OF JORDAN

The initial Nationality Law was enacted, three years after the independence of Transjordan, marking the formal establishment of nationality regulations in the region.

● 1928

● 1951

Following the assassination of King Abdullah in July 1951, King Talal succeeded him and introduced an innovative constitution in 1952, setting the base for subsequent legal reforms.

Significant amendments were made to the Jordanian Nationality Law during the reign of King Hussein, focusing on expanding women's and children's rights amidst evolving social and political landscapes.

● 1961 & 1963

● 1987

The nationality law was amended, introducing provisions for dual nationality, and expanding women's rights, reflecting changing attitudes towards gender equality and international pressures.

Queen Rania's participation in the Arab Conference for Women in 2002 marked a significant moment in raising awareness about gender inequality in nationality laws in Jordan.

● 2002

● 2008

The campaign "My Mother is Jordanian, and her Nationality is my Right" was initiated by the activist Neemah Habashneh to defend the rights of her children born from a Moroccan father.

Neemah Habashneh's initiative to use social media, particularly Facebook, to raise awareness about gender inequality in nationality laws in 2009 played a crucial role in mobilizing public support for the cause.

● 2009

● 2011

In July 2011, the **Ministry of Social Development's National Registry of Societies** declined to approve a **CSO** advocating for citizenship rights for children of Jordanian women married to foreigners, citing insufficient justification.

November 2012: The Jordanian Prime Minister promised to seek the total implementation of CEDAW and eliminate all remaining discriminatory laws.

A coalition of NGOs and activists listed the issue of gender equality in the Constitution and demanded the elimination of legal discrimination against women.

2012

2013

February 2013: A coalition of NGOs and activists “My Nationality is my family’s right” was formed and submitted a draft law to the Jordanian parliament requesting civil rights for children of Jordanian women.

November 2013: Discrimination in nationality law was discussed during the UN Human Rights Council’s assessment of Jordan.

Late 2013: A group of liberal MPs in Jordan, known as the ‘Mubadara’ initiative, began a concerted effort to advocate for the rights of families of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians. Despite facing challenges and resistance, they engaged with the government, proposed solutions, and fiercely lobbied for improved rights and recognition for these families.

The Jordanian government introduced the “Mazaya” program in **November 2014**, which provided certain privileges to children of Jordanian women married to foreigners, albeit falling short of granting full nationality rights.

2014

2015

February 8, 2015: Habashneh passed away from liver cancer. Following her passing, Rami Wakeel and other activists pledged to continue the campaign she initiated.

Equality Now and the Arab Women Organization organized a national conference to address the need to amend the Jordanian Nationality Law.

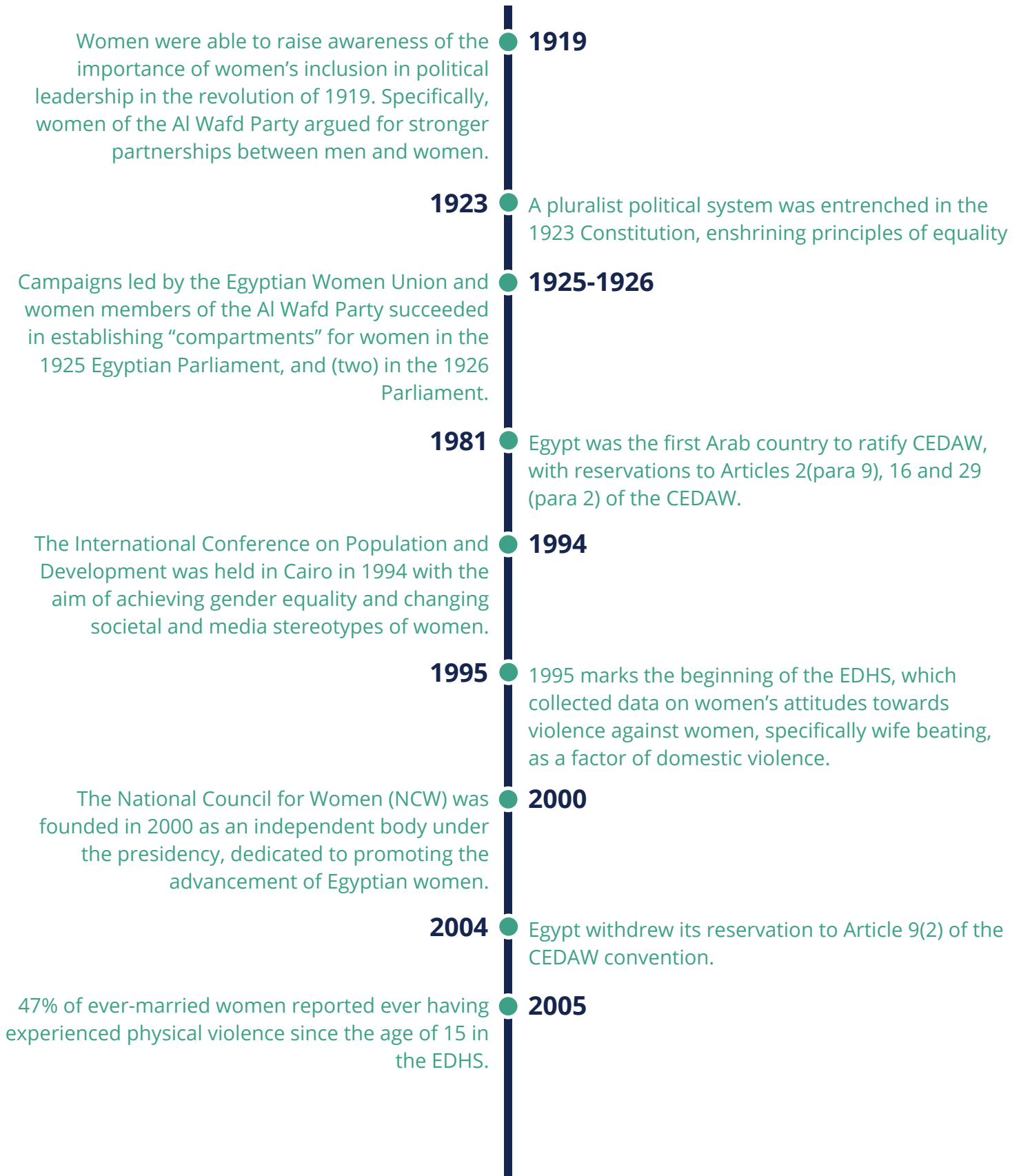
Changes to the Labor Law granted the children of Jordanian women the privilege to work without the necessity of securing a work permit or incurring any charges.

2018

The Lower House Legal Committee approved amendments to the Jordanian Nationality Law. These changes favor Jordanian women married to foreigners, allowing them to retain their nationality and restore it even if they had renounced it after acquiring their husband’s citizenship.

2022

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EGYPT



2008

● The EDHS collected data on women's attitudes towards wife beating as the only factor for domestic violence. It showed that 39% of women agreed that beating the wife was justified in certain circumstances.

● A special module in the EDHS was included focusing on domestic violence, encompassing physical, emotional, and sexual violence against women by their current husbands.

● A study published by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights in 2008 found that 86% of men interviewed admitted to having sexually harassed women.

The National Council for Women in Egypt led a conference on violence against women, with a focus on domestic violence and available services. The research affirmed the existence of violence against girls as young as 15 years old.

2009**2010**

● In 2010, the CEDAW Committee urged the Egyptian government to "give priority attention to combating violence against women and girls and to adopt comprehensive measures to address such violence".

2011

● During the 18-day uprising of the Egyptian Revolution, numerous cases of sexual assault and rapes of female protesters in Tahrir Square were reported.

● On the day Mubarak was deposed, journalist Laura Logan was violently attacked by a mob of more than 40 men, while she was reporting from Tahrir Square.

● Caroline Sinz, reporter for the French television channel, France 3, was assaulted in a street near Tahrir Square.

2012

● A study on FGC was conducted with women living in Giza (73.8%) and Cairo (26.2%), showing that 65.6% of educated women in the sample had undergone FGC.

● There were over 250 documented cases during the period from **November 2012 to July 2013** of women being targeted by mobs of men and boys, many carrying weapons.

● At a demonstration calling for an end to sexual harassment and assault on women protesters, demonstrators were groped and punched by a mob of men in Tahrir Square.

● 2013

According to a survey by UN Women, 99.3% of Egyptian women reported having been sexually harassed, with 91% saying they feel insecure in the street as a result.

On **16 August 2013**, when security forces raided Al-Tawheed Mosque, over 20 women were assaulted by officers from the Special Forces Unit. On **26 November 2013**, police violently dispersed a protest in front of the Shura Council in Cairo, arresting and physically and sexually assaulting women protesters.

In **February 2013**, women's rights organizations addressed a petition President Morsi, denouncing "the trend of targeting female activists, to punish them for participating in the public sphere and to exclude them from political life."

2014 ●

● An incident of mass sexual assault was caught on live television in Tahrir, during protests commemorating the third anniversary of the revolution.

● Another EDHS conducted this year included a module specifically on domestic violence.

● The Egyptian Penal Code was amended to define and criminalize sexual harassment for the first time and increase penalties for other related crimes.

According to the Economic Cost of Gender-Based Violence Survey conducted in 2015 by UNFPA, the NCW, and the CAPMAS, around 7.8 million women suffer from all forms of violence yearly, whether perpetrated by a spouse/fiancé or individuals in her close circles or from strangers in public places.

A 2015 survey on the Economic Cost of Gender Based Violence in Egypt estimated that 9 out of 10 women aged between 18 and 64 were exposed to FGM.

2015

2017

The year 2017 was declared by Egypt's President to be women's year, with Egypt being the first country globally to launch its national women strategy 2030 aligned with the UN SDGs, 34 SDG's indicators and comprises four main pillars including political empowerment and leadership, economic empowerment, social empowerment, and protection.

Egypt's first-ever judgment issued for a case of sexual harassment, though penalties were criticized as too lenient.

#AnaKaman social media movement shares accounts of rape, gender violence and calls for legal reforms.

2020

2021

Article 306 bis(a) of the Penal Code was amended to turn sexual harassment from a misdemeanor into a felony and increase penalties for it, with setting a greater punishment for repeat offenders.

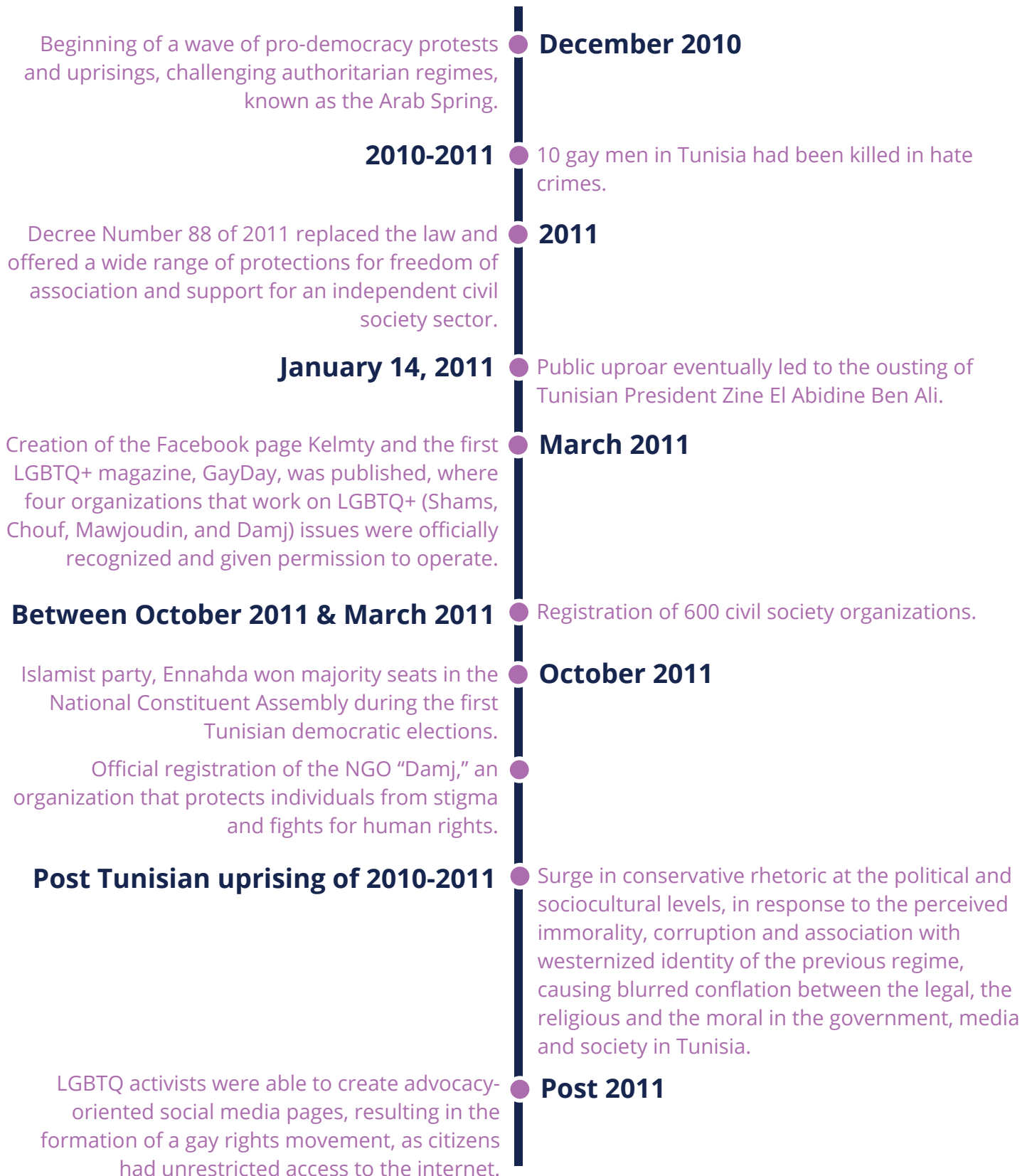
High profile case of a group of young men accused of raping and sexually assaulting multiple women and girls sparks renewed activism.

Ranking 134th out of 146 countries in the WEF's 2023 annual ranking, Egypt has fallen 5 points from its 2022 placement.

2023

CAMPAIGNING FOR RECOGNITION AND VOICE OF QUEER MOVEMENTS IN TUNISIA

(Post Arab Spring)



Registration of LGBTQ+ entities as official, legally recognized organizations.

2013

The queer scene radically changed in Tunisia. With the Muslim Brotherhood in power and then with the Salafi and Takfiri Muslim groups, the use of media platforms and other modes of information dissemination, speeded an extremely problematic rhetoric regarding civic society values—gender quality, women’s right to vote, the right to work, freedom of thought, and freedom of belief.

The 2013 assassinations of Chokri Belaid⁸ and Mohamed Brahmi were especially shocking, as assassinations of this kind had not taken place for an extremely long time in Tunisia. This led groups in Tunisia—that were either supporting the queer cause or that could have supported the queer cause—to disassociate themselves from anything LGBTQ+.

Establishment of three new queer organizations – Chouf, Mawjoudin and Shams.

Between 2014 & 2015

2014

Establishment of “Chouf” as a Tunisian and feminist organization, that focused on advocating for the individual and bodily rights of individuals identifying as “women”. Transformations within the Chouf organization including offering legal and psychological assistance to individuals within the queer community, including asylum seekers and migrants.

Ratification of a new Tunisian constitution due to Ennahda’s victory of majority seats in the National Constituent Assembly.

December 2014

“Mawjoudin” organization received official status, leading to several projects that focus on advocacy, capacity building, legal support, psychological counseling, asylum seeking, coalition building, and queer activism in the form of comic books, plays...

2015

Establishment of the “Chouftouhonna festival” as a feminist and queer form of activism, led by the Chouf organization. Ratification of a new Tunisian constitution due to Ennahda’s victory of majority seats in the National Constituent Assembly.

Registration of “Shams” organization, one of the main LGBTQI+ organizations in Tunisia that aims to promote and protect the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in Tunisia by raising awareness and support for change while campaigning against article 230 of the penal code.

May 18th, 2015

September 6, 2015

Case of a 22-year-old student sentenced to jail in 2015 due to WhatsApp exchanges with someone of the queer community. Marwan’s case garnered substantial national and international attention, leading to public outrage and unprecedented action against the criminalization of same-sex activities and compulsory anal inspections.

The Minister of Justice took a ground-breaking move to acknowledge that Article 230 violates personal freedoms and choices. He was dismissed from his post after calling for the abolishment of article 230 of the penal code.

September 28, 2015

January 2016

Damj organization played a crucial role in forming the Collective for Individual Liberties.

Government presented a lawsuit against Shams organization, to suspend its activities for a month, as it accused it of violating article 230 of the penal code and promoting same sex relations which are against Islam and societal norms.

January 4th, 2016

February 3, 2016

Court revoked charges on Shams organization.

Shams organization set up a radio station that acted as a platform for talking about individual rights and freedoms, especially for the LGBTQI+ community. Due to Tunisian police relying on anal tests to prove that men and transwomen engaged in anal sex with men, Tunisia’s National Council of the Medical Order instructed doctors to ask for individuals’ consent before conducting the test.

2017

Activists in Tunisia utilized the United Nations periodic review to produce a report on LGBT rights in Tunisia, including the abolition of article 230 and stopping the anal exams, to which 22 countries raised their concerns in front of the Tunisian government. Human Rights Watch documented the violation of LGBTQI+ individuals' rights by authorities.

The President of Tunisia of the time, Essebsi, established the Individual Freedoms and Equality Committee (COLIBE) to ensure that the country's laws aligned with its constitution.

2018 ● Expulsion of Shams organization from the LGBTQI+ non-governmental organizations' coalition, due to its overt confrontation tactics and its outing strategy.

● Start of Mawjoudin's annual queer film festival, a space for networking and queer art creation in the MENA region and the global south, as described by cofounder, Ali Bousselmi.

● End of Chouf organization's operations, due to structural changes from a horizontal volunteer based collective to an organized and wage-based structure which affected its internal dynamic.

● Final report of the COLIBE committee which included a recommendation to eliminate article 230, and another to retain the penal code but reduce the punishment from three years in prison to a fine of 500 dinars.

According to Human Rights Watch, more than 90 organizations and civil society groups in Tunisia issued a Pact for Equality and Individual Freedoms, outlining fundamental rights for Tunisians to enjoy.

● **July 24, 2018**

2019 ● Shams Association's appeal was dismissed, as the court recognized that it has set clear objectives in its rules of procedure, and its focus on sexual minorities is aimed at protecting human dignity while preventing violence against individuals with different sexual orientations.

● Tunisia was the only country among (MENA) nations that supported the renewal of the mandate for the independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity at the UN Human Rights Council.

● Launch of “Etihad” or “the Union”: coalition of CSOs from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and Lebanon that works to achieve social change and promote the rights and inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community across the MENA region.

● July 2019

Shams’ director, Mounir Baatour, announced his candidacy for president of Tunisia, but despite his eligibility got rejected by the election authority. Petition of several activists and NGOs denouncing Mounir Baatour’s candidacy, declaring that he cannot claim to represent the community due to Shams’ reprehensible outing tactics and disclosure of individuals’ confidential information on media

October 6, 2020

● Tunisian LGBTQ activists protested a draft law that protects police from being held accountable for using excessive force, as this law would impartially target minority groups who are already subjected to police misconduct, including the queer community.

● Between March & September 2020

21 incidents of violence occurred against trans people in public, 10 cases of torture, and 2 of bullying by security officers in detention facilities.

August 5, 2020

● Trans activists, including Ahmad El Tounsi, founder of the Trans organization “Outcasts” was asked for their identification cards by police officers outside the embassy. When not match to their gender expression, they were verbally and physically assaulted, and denied treatment in several hospitals because of their gender identity. Activists resorted to filing a complaint to hold the police and embassy officers responsible for the assaults.

Mass protests broke out across Tunisia, triggered by the worsening economic situation, compounded by the pandemic, and by the police's use of excessive force and violence against protestors.

2021 protests were much more intersectional. Queer, trans, and intersex individuals openly protested alongside other individuals sharing the same demands.

Mid-January and Mid-February 2021

January 15, 2021

At least a thousand youths were arrested in protests, where political trials were used as a tool to terrify their families and communities. LGBTQ activists were specifically singled out for mistreatment by the police.

Leaders of the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements were also faced increased police arrest, including Rania Amdouni, a well-known LGBTQ+ and political activist. Her visibility at the protests led to a campaign of vicious online harassment linked to the police union's activities. When filing her complaint, officers harassed her, and she wound up arrested for allegedly assaulting one of them. Nongovernmental associations and lawyers intervened and released after 19 days (about 2 and a half weeks) and given asylum in France, where she now resides.

Hamza Nasri, an activist with Damj organization, was held for three days after being arrested during a demonstration.

Saif Ayadi, a social worker at Damj organization, had his home raided by police without a warrant.

Amina Mdawkhy an LGBTQI+ rights activist who works with Damj, office was raided by police.

February 2021

Ayoub Boulaabi, another activist with Damj, was forcibly disappeared in February and forced to sign a false confession admitting to assaulting a police officer.

March 2021

Badr Baabou, leader of Damj organization, violently attacked by four men, while police looked on.

The same month, a plainclothes officer tried to enter Damj's office without a warrant and questioned employees about their activities.

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